

The Fall of Babylon

December 24 – Revelation 18:1-24

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT
Day 358 – 7 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

We continued the fall of Babylon, the Mother of Harlots, from the previous chapter (*Rev. 17*). **The great harlot, Babylon, is a global political, economic, and religious system in which all nations participate, and which is under the control of the Anti-Christ.** This confederacy was defeated by the Lamb, who is the true King of kings and Lord of lords (*17:14*). He turns the earth's rulers against the harlot, and they devour her and burn her with fire (*17:16*).

After her defeat, John hears an angel declare that Babylon the great has fallen (*18:1, 2*). Though Babylon is the hub of all demonic forces and the one to which all nations and merchants were joined, she is destroyed and laid desolate (*v.3*). The Lord repays her for all her evil deeds, for the immorality she promotes, the corruption she invites, and the religious idolatry and Christian persecution she invokes (*v.6-8, 24*). "Her sins are piled up as high as heaven, and God remembers her iniquities" (*v.4, 5*). Notice the subtle reference to Babylon reaching as high as heaven, a flashback to the Tower of Babel. Its builders attempted to reach the heavens without God's help (*Gen. 11:1-9*).

Scholars have attempted to identify Babylon the great for centuries. They have suggested the resurgence of the Roman Empire or some other Euro-centric confederacy (like the European Union), perhaps behind the leadership of the Pope. Others have pointed to the United Nations, which currently incorporates and manipulates every nation on earth. Still others believe Babylon is the United States, China, or some other dynamic nation or enterprise which influences the rest. Simply put, we just don't know. Perhaps, the first city of Babylon will rise from its ashes and reclaim its former greatness.

Whatever it is, Babylon the great influences, or controls, everyone and everything, and when it falls, the world's nations either lament or celebrate (*v.9-24*).

Daily Reflection

From the beginning, Satan has attempted to build a global kingdom (one world government) by manipulating the people of the earth. A brief study of history reveals the rise of one empire after another — Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and others. Even in modern history, dictators have risen to power, seeking global conquest. Why?

Before Christ returns to set up his earthly kingdom, Satan desires to build his. Remember, when tempting Jesus in the desert, Satan showed Him all the kingdoms of the earth that were under his control. Thus, since the beginning, the tendency of human rulers has always been toward building a global system. Today, with modern technology and travel, the world has shrunk, making it much easier for global confederacies to develop (i.e., the U.N.).

But while sin exists on the earth, any global system will be fraught with human frailties, lusts, and power plays. The more centralized the world becomes, the easier it is to control. Furthermore, great power in the hands of one or a few has never ended well for everyone else. When godless men acquire great power, they tend to abuse others. Babylon the great, or any other global entity for that matter, is no exception. Satan and his forces will always seek to use any agency at its disposal to domineer those who are made in the likeness of God.

What signs do you see that the enemy is working to build "Babylon the great," or a global system, today? What should be our response?

There will never be a perfect global kingdom until Jesus returns and sets up His own.

The Marriage of the Lamb

December 25 – Revelation 19:1-10

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT
Day 359 – 6 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

John records his visions of the events that follow the doom of Babylon, the great harlot, which the Lord destroys (*Rev. 17, 18*). Next, all of heaven anticipates the return of Christ, the end of the beast and the false prophet, the judgment of Satan and his demons, and the establishment of Christ's earthly kingdom (*19:11-21:27*).

But first John witnesses another time of worship, which includes the angels, the 24 elders, the four living creatures, and the saints (*19:1-10*). Each of these groups uses the word *hallelujah*, a Hebrew word that means "praise the Lord." While the word *hallelujah* is used frequently in the Old Testament (especially in the psalms), it is only used four times in the New Testament, all in this chapter (*v.1, 3, 4, 6*).

Note the five reasons for the four hallelujahs. First, God "judged the great harlot, Babylon, for corrupting the earth with her immorality" (*v.2*). Second, He executed justice for the blood of His saints (*v.2*). Third, God crushed His earthly enemies, those who rebelled against Him (*v.3*). Fourth, God's sovereignty is praised, for He is the Almighty One (*v.6*). Finally, the saints of heaven praise God for the Lamb (*v.7*).

Regarding the Lamb, John sees a vision of the marriage to His Bride (*v.7-9*). The Bride, of course, is the Church, believers in Christ (the Messiah) from all periods of history, and from every tribe, nation, and language. Once the saints from the tribulation make it to heaven, then the ceremony is ready to begin.

The best way to understand the ceremony of the Lamb is to be familiar with the three parts of a Jewish marriage. First, there is the betrothal period, usually arranged by the parents, when the man and woman commit to be married (*Matt. 1:18; Lk. 2:5*). The groom (or his family) usually pays a dowry to the bride (or her family), expressing his intentions. The

dowry is a gift that may include money, land, or other valuable assets.

The second part of the marriage is much later. After the groom prepares a place for his wife to live, he returns in a wedding processional to receive his bride. She and her family and friends are informed of the timing so that they can be ready any minute (*Matt. 25:1-13*). Finally, once the bride and wedding party meet the groom, the great celebration begins (*Jn. 2:1, 2*).

These three parts of marriage are evident in our relationship to Christ, as His Bride (the Church). **First, we are "betrothed" to Christ through faith.** He has committed Himself to us, and we are committed to follow Him faithfully (*2 Cor. 11:2*). He has even given us "a dowry," a sign of His commitment, by the shedding of His blood. He has bought us with a price (*1 Cor. 6:19, 20*).

Second, since our betrothal to Christ through salvation, **He has gone away for a while to prepare a place for us to live** (*Jn. 14:2, 3*). When everything is ready, He will return to take us to be with Him forever (*1 Thess. 4:15-17*). **Finally, once His Bride arrives in heaven, the great party will begin** (*Rev. 19:7-9*).

Daily Reflection

"Let us rejoice and be glad and give glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready" (*v.7*). Notice that we will be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean, which represents our sinless state before the Lord. Because of His blood, our sins are no more, and we will be like Him, without spot or blemish! Compare the beautiful and pure Bride of the Lamb to the reproachful harlot of Babylon (*Eph. 5:26, 27*).

The glorious wedding of the Lamb — what a day that will be! "Blessed are those who are invited" to that great marriage supper. All we can do now is prepare ourselves for the Groom to arrive and say, "Hallelujah! We are ready!"

The Second Coming

December 26 – Revelation 19:11-21

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT
Day 360 – 5 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

We finally reached the climactic event for which all believers have been eagerly waiting — the return of Jesus to earth, often referred to as the **Second Coming of Christ**. This glorious event is different than the Rapture that Paul described (*1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:50-54*). In the Rapture (meaning to be snatched up or transported), the saints meet Jesus in the air. At the Second Coming, Jesus comes with His saints to the earth. Also, the Rapture is imminent, meaning the timing is unknown. It could happen any day. But the Second Coming occurs after a period of great tribulation.

In his vision of the Second Coming, John sees Jesus on a white horse (*Rev. 19:11*). "His eyes are flames of fire, and on His head are many diadems" (*v.12*). Though the saints who follow Him are dressed in clean white linen, Jesus has a robe dipped in blood (*v.13, 14*).

John notes several names for Jesus. First, he calls Him Faithful and True, meaning that He is trustworthy and always keeps His promises (*v.11*). Here He is fulfilling His promise to return. Second, there is a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself (*v.12*). Perhaps, we will discover that name someday. Third, John calls Jesus "the Word of God" (*v.13*), a title he gave Jesus in his gospel, when He wrote, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God..., and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us..." (*Jn. 1:1, 14*). Fourth, John points out a name on Jesus' thigh that says, "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" (*Rev. 19:16*).

Jesus is, indeed, a king. That title and position were prophesied in the Old Testament (*Isa. 9:6, 7*). The wise men asked Herod, "Where is He who is born King of the Jews?" (*Matt. 2:2*). During Jesus' trial, Pontius Pilate asked Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" (*Mk. 15:2*). Jesus replied that He was a king, but that His kingdom was "not of this world" (*Jn. 18:36*).

The Jews placed a sign above Jesus' head on the cross that read, "King of the Jews" (*Mk. 15:32*). Clearly, Jesus was (and is) a king.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem for the last time, just before His crucifixion, the people cleared the way and honored Him with palm branches in the road. They shouted, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel" (*Jn. 12:12, 13*). This event fulfilled Zechariah's prophecy, which says, "Rejoice, Jerusalem! For your king is coming to you..." (*Zech. 9:9*).

However, though He was a king when He came into Jerusalem, Jesus was humble and lowly, mounted on a donkey. When He returns for His second coming, Jesus will be mounted triumphantly on a white horse (*Rev. 19:11*). **What's the difference? At His first coming, Jesus' mission was salvation, "to seek and save the lost"** (*Lk. 19:10*). Within just a few days of His arrival to Jerusalem, Jesus laid down His life for our salvation. **But at His second coming, Jesus' mission will be judgment.** He is coming to wage war against and defeat His enemies, to judge all those who rebel against Him, and to set up His earthly kingdom (*Rev. 19:11*).

Daily Reflection

Jesus' second coming is the culmination of the great spiritual war that has been raging since the beginning. We have even been participants in that war (*Eph. 6:11, 12; 2 Cor. 10:3, 4*). When He returns, Jesus will finally put an end to those who have been antagonists in that war, beginning with the beast (Anti-Christ) and his false prophet (*Rev. 19:19-21*). Then, Jesus will deal with the dragon (Satan) and his demons (*Rev. 20*).

Though this spiritual war has been long, difficult, and discouraging, we can rest assured that it will end someday. **Jesus, our conquering King will return and defeat His (and our) enemies! Let us rejoice, for our King is coming!**

The Great White Throne Judgment

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT
Day 361 – 4 Days to Go

December 27 – Revelation 20:1-15

Today in Your Reading

John sees a vision of the demise of Satan, the millennial kingdom of Christ, the final earthly battle, and **the great white throne judgment**. These events take place before the new heaven and new earth are created (21:1-8). Let's look briefly at each of them.

First, John sees an angel descend from heaven, arrest God's enemy, bind him in chains, and throw him into an abyss (20:1, 2). He uses four names for God's enemy — the dragon, the serpent of old (from the Garden of Eden), the devil (which means deceiver), and Satan (which means adversary). The abyss seems to be a holding place, a prison of some sort, where Satan is kept for a thousand years (v.2, 3). What happens during this millennial period? That leads us to the second event.

John notes a period of one thousand years (millennium), during which Christ reigns on earth (v.4). This millennial reign fulfills many prophecies about a Messianic kingdom (2 Sam. 7:12-16; Isa. 11:6-12; 24:23; Matt. 6:10; Lk. 1:33; 22:30; 23:42; Mk. 11:10; Acts 1:6). There are, of course, different interpretations of the millennium. Some believe it is figurative or symbolic, so it is not a literal thousand years. Others believe that the millennium began at Christ's resurrection, and Jesus will return after the millennium is complete. Still others believe that the millennium is a literal period and will happen in the future.

John also sees the saints (followers of Christ) sitting on thrones during the millennium, given authority to rule over the nations (1 Cor. 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:12). The saints here include those who return with Jesus as part of His glorious army — Old and New Testament believers (19:8, 14) — as well as those martyred during the tribulation (Rev. 20:4). Together, they comprise the people of "the first resurrection" (v.5, 6). "They will be priests of God and of Christ," John says, "and will reign with Him for a thousand years" (v.6).

The Bible speaks of two resurrections. The first resurrection is that of believers (v.5). The second resurrection is that of unbelievers, those who are still dead in their sin (v.5, 12, 13). These unbelievers will not be resurrected to life in heaven; rather they will be resurrected to stand for judgment before God.

The third event that John records takes place between the millennium and the final judgment (v.7-10). Satan is released from the abyss and rallies his earthly troops to wage war against the forces and city of Christ. But Satan is easily defeated, then thrown into the lake of fire (hell), along with the beast (Anti-Christ), the false prophet, death, and Hades (v.14).

Finally, **John sees a great white throne and the dead from the second resurrection standing before God for judgment** (v.12, 13). There were also open books before them, in which are written every thought, word, and deed for which they will give account. Every person in line will be found guilty of sin and condemned to eternity in hell, unless his name is written in the other book — **the book of life** (v.15). But, sadly, no one standing in that line will find his name in the book of life. All are destined to hell (v.15).

Daily Reflection

These are incredible events — the violent demise of Satan, his demonic host, and those on earth who belong to him. Once again, it is difficult to read such words and not be thankful to God for our salvation in Christ!

The other sobering thought is that there are piles of books with our names on them, all with our sins and shortcomings recorded, evidence of our fallen nature and self-indulgent ways. **But then, there is that other book — the Lamb's book of life — and if our name is in it, then the books of our sin are destroyed and forgotten. THE book saves us from the other books.** Praise God for the Author of THE book, and for the fact that He penned our name in it with His blood!

All Things New

December 28 – Revelation 21:1-8

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT
Day 362 – 3 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

John sees a vision of what will take place after the judgment of the wicked (20:11-15; 21:8), the reward given to those whose names are in the Lamb's Book of Life (20:15). He describes an incredible renovation in which God replaces the old world and makes all things new (21:5). This vision recounts many of the themes of the Old and New Testaments. Let's look at a few examples.

First, notice that the old world (the one in which we live) is destroyed and removed (20:11; 21:1), and a new one is put in its place. The activities of God in the beginning, when "He created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1) are repeated here in the end. He recreates a new heaven and a new earth, this time without any sea (Rev. 21:1). In other words, it will be much different than the earth today.

Second, in this new earth, there is a new holy city, a new Jerusalem, that God prepares for His people as a bride (v.2). Here, again, we see the wedding imagery between the Bride (Church) and the Groom (Jesus). The holy city (Bride) is beautiful and ready to be united with her beloved Savior.

Third, in this new creation, God Himself dwells with His people (v.3). Here we see another flashback to the beginning, when God dwelled with Adam and Eve in Eden (Gen. 3:8). But, because of sin, God could not dwell with people intimately. Sin had broken their fellowship. Thus, God dwelled with His people in a tabernacle or temple for a time, until He came in the form of His Son, Jesus (Jn. 1:14). As a man, God tabernacled (dwelled) among the people. He is named Emmanuel, meaning "God with us." But now, in eternity, after sin has been abolished, and the saints have been reconciled to God, He can freely dwell among them again. Three times in one verse, John says that God will be among them (Rev. 21:3).

Fourth, because God will be among His people, we will be blessed by His presence. We will never again worry about death, for death will have been eliminated (20:14). Thus, there will be no need for mourning or crying (21:4). There will be no more pain or suffering (v.4). Sin and its consequences will be forgotten, and we will only experience pure and endless joy.

Daily Reflection

John hears the Lord say to him, "It is done" (v.6), just as Jesus said to him before, "It is finished," when he was standing at the cross (Jn. 19:30). What does that mean? It means that everything that was prophesied from the beginning has been fulfilled. Everything that God intended from the beginning has come to pass. That chapter of His story is over. There is no more to be written.

The only way that God can say, "It is done," is if He is the Author of the story, which He is. He tells John, "I am the Alpha and the Omega (first and last letters of the Greek alphabet), the beginning and the end..." (21:6). He existed before the beginning of the first earth, and He will exist at the creation of the second earth, and He will exist forevermore.

Finally, the Lord says to John, "Write, for these words are faithful and true" (v.5). Everything he has seen, and everything he has heard, will come to pass. The Lord will make it so. All that He has promised to those who overcome will be given to them (v.6, 7). They can count on it, for He is faithful and true.

The Lord will make all things new! What about these verses excites you most?

The Holy City

December 29 – Revelation 21:9-22:5

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT
Day 363 – 2 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

After John sees the new heaven and the new earth (21:1-8), an angel takes him to a high mountain and shows him the new Jerusalem (21:9, 10). The Apostle gets a firsthand look at the future residence of the Bride of the Lamb (the Church). He describes it as best he can.

First, **John says that the new Jerusalem is a holy city** (21:2, 10). God the Father is there, along with the Lamb (Jesus), which means that nothing unclean is there (21:22, 27; 22:3). There is no presence of sin, corruption, or temptation, “only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of Life” (21:27). There is also no danger or fear, as the city’s gates are always open (Rev. 21:25).

Second, **the holy city is filled with the glory of God** (21:11). The glory of God (referred to as the Shekinah glory) is a description of His awesome presence, often portrayed as a brilliant light, fire, smoke, or cloud (Ex. 13:20-22; Ezek. 1; 1 Tim. 6:16). God’s presence was veiled from men in the Old Testament, because no man could see His face and live (Ex. 33:9-11, 20). But then, Christ was (and is) the visible manifestation of the glory or presence of God (Col. 2:9; Jn. 14:9), and in heaven — the holy city — we will get to see His face in all His glory (1 Jn. 3:2; Rev. 22:4).

The glory of God is magnificent. John describes its brilliance like a gleaming jewel. In fact, it is so bright that the holy city “has no need of the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God illumines it” (Rev. 21:11, 23). As a result, “there will no longer be any night” (21:25; 22:5). In that brilliant light — the glory of God — His people will dwell. It will be as if we are standing in the Holy of Holies, which is why **John describes the holy city as a cube**, just as the inner room of the tabernacle, when the High Priest stood in the presence of the Ark of the Covenant (Rev. 21:16, 23).

Third, **to display the radiance of the glory of God, the holy city is crystal-clear, as glass** (Rev. 21:11, 18, 21). Its walls and its streets are transparent, so the light of the Lord will constantly shine. Furthermore, John sees that the foundation is made of precious stones, all of which exhibit a different color in the glorious light of God’s presence (Rev. 21:19-21).

Fourth, **the holy city is a massive square** (Rev. 21:15-17). Each side is 1500 miles long, which is the distance from Maine to Florida. The footprint of the city will cover 2.25 million square miles, and that’s just the ground floor. By comparison, Anchorage (Alaska), the largest U.S. city by area, covers 1700 square miles. Simply put, the holy city is a big place.

Next, **the holy city includes all believers from the Old and New Testaments**. Notice that John sees names of the twelve tribes on the gates (Old Testament, 21:12), and the names of the Apostles of the Lamb on the foundation (New Testament, 21:14, 27). These two eras are two halves of one story. In heaven, they will unite.

Finally, **the holy city is the return of the Garden of Eden**. Through it flows the river of life, and on either side of the river is the Tree of Life (22:1, 2). In the holy city, as in Eden, there is no curse of sin (22:3). We have not seen the Tree of Life since the fall of man (Gen. 3:22-24). Then, mankind was not allowed to eat from it, but now in the holy city, the nations will eat of its fruit and live forever!

Daily Reflection

What an amazing place is the holy city! This is what Jesus had in mind when He told His followers, “In My Father’s house are many dwelling places... and I go to prepare a place for you. Then, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also” (Jn. 14:1-3). **As breathtaking as the holy city will be, the best part is that we will get to be where our Savior is.** O, what a glorious thought!

Are You Ready?

December 30 – Revelation 22:6-21

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT
Day 364 – 1 Day to Go

Today in Your Reading

We have come to the final page of the Bible and the last passage of *Revelation*. John restates the purpose of the book, the promises of God, and the proper response of His people. Let's finish by looking at each of these elements.

First, **John restates the purpose of this book.** "God sent His angel," he says, "to show His servants the things which must soon take place" (22:6). Like a good author, John reminds his readers (that's us) of the information's source and significance (1:1). But there's more.

Since *Revelation* is the last book, it is a summation of all that has occurred throughout Scripture. Furthermore, ***Revelation provides us closure to all that was done or undone at creation.*** For example, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, but in the end, God will destroy and replace the heavens and the earth. In the beginning, Satan began his "reign" on earth, but in the end, Satan is bound and exiled to hell. In the beginning, mankind is cursed with sin and death, but in the end, these curses are eliminated. In the beginning, access to the Tree of Life is forbidden, but in the end, access to the Tree of Life is granted. In the beginning, the first Adam married Eve, but in the end, the second Adam (Jesus) marries His Bride (the Church).

Second, **John reminds us of the promises of God.** For example, as fantastical and overwhelming as *Revelation* is to read and imagine, the angel tells John, "These words are faithful and true" (22:6; 21:5). They are faithful and true because the One who shared them is Faithful and True (3:14; 19:11). "God is not a man, that He should lie... Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?" (*Num. 23:19; Heb. 6:18*).

Another promise of God that John reiterates is that these things will soon take place (*Rev. 22:6*). In fact, five times in this passage, John

states this point, "for the time is near, I am coming quickly" (22:6, 7, 10, 12, 20). While we might look at these words and dismiss them, because it has been 2000 years since Jesus left, we must remember that God views time differently than we do. He stands in eternity, where He is not restrained by time. What the Lord is saying is that the end times are next (after the current Church Age), and His return is imminent; and when it happens, it will be quick. The people of the Old Testament waited 4000 years for the Messiah to come, and He came. If God has said it, it will happen. Be patient.

Another promise of God that John recalls is this — "Blessed is he who heeds the prophecy of this book" (22:7; 1:3). **Again, as crazy as *Revelation* is, it is meant to give us hope.** God is sovereign, evil will be abolished, justice will be served, and God's people will be reunited with Him forever. How can we not be blessed by that news?

Daily Reflection

Finally, John gives the proper response of God's people to such a fantastic revelation. **First, we respond with worship, as John did.** He was so overwhelmed by what he witnessed that all he could do was bow down and worship (22:8, 9). A similar response from us is appropriate.

Second, John writes, "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come... Let the one who is thirsty come and drink the water of life (salvation) without cost'" (22:17). **Knowing these things are true, and that there is not much time left, we must beckon the lost to come and be saved today.**

Finally, John responded, "Come, Lord Jesus" (22:20). John was ready to see Jesus again. Many saints were ready to see Jesus. **Are you ready to see Jesus? Are you prepared for His return?** "Wash your robe (in the blood of Jesus) so that you may have the right (and pleasure) to the Tree of Life and enter by the gates of that holy city" (22:14). Don't wait another day, for the time of Jesus' return is near.

Congratulations! Now What?

December 31

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT
Day 365 – The End!

Well Done!

If you truly finished the *Daily Reflections*, you are part of a rare breed. **Pat yourself on the back because you have read the New Testament from start to finish!** I am impressed, and you are to be congratulated. I applaud your courage and diligence; and I trust that God has blessed your time and efforts in His Word.

What thoughts encourage you most as you stand at the finish line?

What about the New Testament surprised or challenged you most this year?

How would you describe your discipline with finding time to read each day — swimming nicely, treading water, or drowning? Explain.

Describe your experience with the *Daily Reflections*. Would you recommend them to someone else? Why or why not?

The big question, after a huge endeavor like this one, **is what should you do next?** Perhaps you could go back and take your time reading and studying a part that you would like to learn more about. You could start another devotional or Bible study, or you could start over and read through the New Testament again!

Whatever you do, don't lose the momentum that you have right now. The enemy wants to see you get away from God's Word. No matter what you decide to do next, make sure to stay in the Bible and become a student of Scripture!

I Would Like to Hear From You

Please let me know that you completed the New Testament and *Daily Reflections*. I want to know that you made it! Email me at this address — aferguson@biay.org.

Also, please consider sharing the *Daily Reflections* with others.

There's More!

I am constantly studying and writing, as God allows. **Visit BiAY.org** to see what is available. There you will find lots of helpful resources, including a *Study Guide* and *Daily Reflections* for the *One Year Chronological Bible (NLT)*. There are also other devotionals, as well as materials I've written on history, government, and biblical worldview. Don't stop learning!