

Session 12: Babylon the Great

What We Found

Babylon's file opened, and she turned out to be the counterfeit of a mother. Chapter 12's woman: clothed with the sun, in labor, hunted, fed by God in the wilderness. Chapter 17's woman: purple and scarlet, gold and pearls, enthroned on the beast, golden cup full of abominations, drunk with the blood of the saints. Her first-century face was the least mysterious symbol in the book: seven mountains, heard as the famous seven hills; the city with dominion over the kings of the earth; the code name early Christians used for Rome, as tradition reads St. Peter's own sign-off (1 Peter 5:13): the empire that martyred the saints. And she outruns Rome by design: dressed in Jeremiah's Babylon and Ezekiel's Tyre, she can stand for the world-city of every age: wealth, pleasure, and status purchased at the price of blood and souls: seduction where the beast is coercion. Chapter 18 sang her funeral in borrowed prophetic dirges, and the cargo manifest carried the sharpest verdict: gold, silk, spice, cattle... and slaves, that is, human souls: an economy that lists people last, priced with the freight. The command that interrupts the funeral is addressed to believers inside her: Come out of her, my people: primarily not relocation but disentanglement: repentance, simplicity, generosity, clean allegiance. And the file closed with its gravest charge: in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. Augustine · *City of God, Book 18 (summary)*

St. Augustine treats Babylon as the standing capital of the earthly city across history, and speaks of Rome, in substance, as a second Babylon in the west. The study's application: Babylon is less a dot on a map than a citizenship of the heart.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom · *Homilies on Lazarus and the Rich Man (summary)*

St. John Chrysostom preached, in substance, that not to share one's wealth with the poor is theft from the poor, for the goods we hold beyond our need are theirs. Babylon's ledger prices souls last; the Church's Doctors price them first.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH

St. Bernard of Clairvaux · *On Consideration (summary)*

St. Bernard warned Pope Eugene III, in substance: in pomp and bustle you risk seeming the successor not of Peter but of Constantine; remember you are heir to a fisherman. The saints call the Church's members away from Babylon's style: love reforms what polemic only defames.

Live It This Week

- Make one concrete exit from Babylon this week: cancel, fast from, give away, or repent of the one thing you named. Small and real.
- Do one act of mercy toward the people the world's manifest lists last: give to or pray for an anti-trafficking apostolate, a crisis pregnancy center, or the working poor of your own town.

- Memorize the memory verse.

Memory Verse

Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues. (Revelation 18:4, RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Revelation 19–20.

Catechism references from this session: CCC 827; 1867; 2113; 2423–2425.