

Work that Lasts

From the Theology of Work Bible Commentary on Revelation

What does the Book of Revelation mean for everyday life in the workplace? While Revelation does not provide detailed instructions for best workplace practices, it does provide some important guidelines, especially with respect to big picture issues. It is not enough to burrow our heads down and do our jobs and mind our business. We have to have some sense of where things are going, and why we are doing what we are doing.

The greater one's position of authority, the greater one's responsibility is to see that organization is directed toward ends that will glorify God, and that it is practiced in a way that expresses love for neighbor. In contrast to the exploitative nature of Babylon, Christian business should strive for mutual benefit: a fair exchange of goods and services, just treatment of workers, and a view toward the long-term good of the people and societies partnering in the enterprise.

While most workplaces today are not formally or informally affiliated with pagan gods (as they often were in the ancient world), subtler forms of idolatry can creep in unawares. One contemporary analogue to biblical Babylon would be a company that sees its own profit and continuity as the

ultimate goals of its existence (with perhaps the CEO on the cosmic throne!). We must always remember that all of life is open to God and subject to his approval or disapproval. The annihilation of Babylon serves as a grim reminder that God is not mocked, and that this goes for our workplace dealings as much as religious concerns.

Ultimately, these loyalties reveal themselves in deeds. Those who commit themselves to the way of Jesus must strive to be above reproach in their ethics. The saints stand in abiding need of the forgiveness available through Jesus' blood, and they are called to imitate his faithful witness in their everyday lives.

But it is appropriate to conclude with the positive vision of the New Jerusalem. While there is necessarily a radical break between the now-world and the new-world, there is also a strong sense of continuity between the two. After all, the New Jerusalem is still the New Jerusalem. It shares things in common with the earthly city; indeed, it can be seen at one level as the consummation of all that the earthly Jerusalem aspired to be. In the same way, our future is ultimately a gift of God. Yet in the mysteries of his creative goodness, our deeds follow after us—certainly our deeds of kindness and our worship to God and the works of our hands as well.