

Communication And Leaving Babylon (Part One)

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Forerunner, "Personal," December 2005

Revelation 18:4 records this sobering command: "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, 'Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.'"

This is sobering because the course of this world is closer than ever to reaching its anti-God fullness. There has never been a time in the out-working of God's purpose when this advice is more urgently needed.

Among mankind, the course of the world did not begin in the original Babylon but in the Garden of Eden with the disbelieving conduct of Adam and Eve. They introduced the alien spirit and conduct among mankind—they *were* mankind at that time. Under the deceitful influence of Satan, they disbelieved God, following the Devil's line of reasoning and conduct. They spread it to their children, who spread it to their children, and so forth.

In that manner, it became the way of life of all of mankind until God called a few, and they repented. It was in the city of Babylon, first under Nimrod and then under Nebuchadnezzar, that its concepts were perfected and forced on concentrated masses of people. These people then imposed it on others through whatever methods necessary.

God dealt with those two Babylons, destroying them. God directly confronted the first by destroying the people's ability to communicate with each other, and they were thus scattered over the face of the earth. He dealt with the second less directly by raising up the Medo-Persian Empire to destroy Babylon's powerful influence.

With both of those Babylons, the influence was localized. The first was concentrated in a small area, and its ways were imposed on relatively few people. The second Babylon's geographical influence was greatly expanded, but it was still contained within the Middle East's Fertile Crescent. However, its armies, economic and educational policies, and religions forced anti-God ways on many more people. Most importantly, among those affected were the ancestors of the peoples who make up the modern Western world—the part of the world now known as the bastion of Christianity—and they were among those most strongly affected. The effects of that contact reverberate to this day in our cultures.

Now we have reached the time the Bible calls "the last days" or "the end time." We stand on the cusp of the Tribulation and Day of the Lord, and God's Word prophesies that Babylon will once again be on the scene of events—only this time its powerful influence will be felt worldwide. This time, Babylon not only has dominant armies, powerful economic and educational systems, and strongly entrenched and popular religions, it also has extremely effective mass communication networks to disseminate its ways into the minds of men, influencing men against their Creator and His people.

Thus, God's urgent warning to take action while one can. The influence of Babylon is imposed through communication. It occurs when we experience countless examples of misguided conduct by those who—unknown to them—are already enslaved by its evil influence.

The Battle to Resist

The apostles Paul and John speak of this largely unrecognized burden mankind carries. In II Corinthians 4:3-4, Paul writes, "But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them."

Additional subtle influence occurs when a person experiences Babylon's ways and words and fails to monitor the attitudes he picks up and lives. Perhaps above all, men must deal with the inaudible but nonetheless attractive and powerful spiritual communication of Babylon's invisible ruler, the prince of the power of the air, and his hordes of equally invisible demons. Resisting it can be a daunting task even for those aware that this communication is occurring; it calls on one to be constantly on guard. Nevertheless, resisting the communication is the key to blunting Babylon's siren call.

God admonishes us to come out of her, but there is physically no place to go! The influence of Satan through Babylon's powers of communication is everywhere. In Revelation 12:9, the apostle John confirms we have no place to run because this world's ruler and his assistants have been permitted to communicate with and deceive mankind over the whole earth: "So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, *who deceives the whole world*; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." We have been born into this ready-made, deceived world, taken it for granted, and absorbed it until God revealed an alternative.

Compared to previous Babylons, the major difference in what we now face in modern Babylon lies in the intensity, availability, and receptivity of its communication. As far as we know, mankind has never before been confronted by these twisted, persuasive, demonic powers as he is today. They now have the global use of the visible and audible influence of radio, music, movies, television, and the Internet, in addition to the entrenched systems of thought and standards of conduct.

There is no place to run. The battle to resist, then, is almost entirely internal—it is fought right where we live and conduct the business of life. What we must believe, and trust with steely determination and discipline, is that God never gives a person a responsibility impossible to perform (see the principle in I Corinthians 10:13). What God commands of us we can do! Therefore, if He commands we come out, we can come out right where we are. The coming out will not be a physical leaving of a geographical area but a departure from Babylon's spiritual and physical influence.

This is not to say that changing one's physical location will not be helpful in fighting the spiritual battle—just as not frequenting a den of iniquity has definite advantages! It is logical to assume that the intensity of evil communication would be worse in the heart of Babylon than out in the hinterlands. However, we must acknowledge the reality that we can take Babylon's influence with us wherever we might go on earth. Even going to live on a deserted island will not spare us the burden of the influence Babylon has already exerted on us.

The Power of the Air

Revelation 18:2 adds additional information regarding the ubiquitous nature of evil communication: "And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, 'Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a habitation of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated

bird." In God's description of Babylon's evil qualities, He links demons with birds—not just any birds but unclean and hated birds, ones that display in their natural characteristics activities humans find disgusting and revolting.

America's national symbol, the bald eagle, is beautiful to behold and majestic in flight, but it is also a carrion eater, feeding on the dead, and a vicious killer, relentlessly and ruthlessly seeking to devour. Then there is the vulture, ugly to behold, which strips the flesh of anything, including unburied human dead. Other birds, like certain types of owls, have somewhat similar characteristics, yet are nocturnal in their habits, seeking to attack and kill under the cover of the darkness of night. They also seem to seek out ruins of buildings as their habitats, places that men perceive to be cursed.

God paints Babylon as a dangerous place inhabited by predators, as if it is the very generator and purveyor of all evil on earth. Babylon has spread its influence over the whole earth, but in another sense, its heart and core are in one place. Paul writes in Ephesians 2:1-3:

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

In this chapter's first ten verses, Paul is showing that the children of God—us—who were once objects of God's wrath, are by His grace legally and spiritually freed from the clutches of Satan's dominion. However, the influences of the world Satan has fashioned remain to be dealt with and overcome.

Satan is described as a spirit who is "prince of the power of the air." This phrase has a familiar ring to it, but alternative translations may be better suited to understanding. The *New English Bible* calls him "commander of the spiritual powers of the air now at work among God's rebel subjects." The *Concordat Literal New Testament* renders it as "chief of the jurisdiction of the air, the spirit now operating in the sons of stubbornness."

Webster's gives as one of the usages for *jurisdiction*, "the limits, or territory within which authority may be exercised." This particular jurisdiction is where air exists, tying in with the word "heavenly" in Ephesians 6:12: "[We wrestle] against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." Here, "heavenly" (*epouranios*) refers, not to the place of God's throne, but to the first heaven, the air surrounding the earth in which birds fly. This also links with Revelation 18:2 and its "unclean and hated birds," symbolizing demons. Birds operate in the same heaven Satan commands.

God gave Satan and his demon assistants substantial authority over everything from the earth's atmosphere on down to the earth itself, which includes us, its inhabitants. We must never forget that, in large part, our wrestling, as Paul terms it, is with these spirits. We inhabit the same space they do.

These evil spirits indeed use deceived people to carry out their plans to destroy those in whom God lives. These people are likely under the strong influence of those spirit authorities, and because they are deceived, they are unaware that they are being used! They are not necessarily possessed, as the Bible shows some are, but influenced by demons to act against our best interests.

Communicating Through Air

Air is that substance, that realm, through which most communication travels. Sound is possible because of the vibration of air. Communication involving electronic media, satellites, television, radio, the Internet, etc., travels through the air. In fact, when speaking of radio transmissions especially, it is common to refer to them as "airwaves."

An amazing discovery is worth considering in terms of the transmission of attitudes and thoughts. There are forms of communication that require no sound, but they nonetheless involve the ability of air to be the common medium for communication.

Japanese scientist Masaru Emoto authored a small book, *Hidden Messages in Water*, which is a brief explanation of things he discovered in his studies of the crystallization of water. In it, he writes of vibration, saying that every cell in our body is vibrating at the rate of 570 trillion vibrations per second. Perhaps the major reason we are able to see, in addition to being able to hear, is because of the vibrations of the air we breathe and live in! Air makes visible communication possible in addition to audible communication.

The bulk of Mr. Emoto's book is concerned with the structure of water and how it is affected by its environment. As we know, each snowflake, which is nothing more than frozen water, is made up of an endless series of six-sided, crystal-shaped ice formations. It is claimed that nobody has ever seen two of the exact same formations. Emoto discovered that the crystal formations of water become distorted and misshaped under negative circumstances. As long as the water is pure, its crystals are beautifully shaped, but when it becomes poisoned in some way—say, with bleach—the crystals become ugly. In some cases, they will no longer even form.

More amazingly, he also discovered that the crystallization of even pure water becomes distorted in the presence of a human in a negative attitude. Simply, in the presence of anger, envy, frustration, or a negative fear, the beautiful crystals of even pure water begin to deform. Somehow, the person's negative vibrations, their self-centered, angry, and envious thoughts, are communicated to the water, and it reacts.

From our own experiences, we know that things of this sort are possible in the human world. If a person comes into our presence in an angry attitude, we quickly know it because it is communicated. The communication may not be verbal—visual communication is enough. We sense it, and almost immediately, we react by putting up our guard.

Plants, too, respond positively to the loving concern of those taking care of them. We find this acceptable because we know that plants are living entities. But this is water. Is there some form of life in water itself? In John 7:37-39, the apostle writes:

On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If any one thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of *living* water." But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, which those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Is there more to His statement than meets the eye? I do not know.

I cannot personally account for what Mr. Emoto reports. No one can say how the person's attitude is transferred to the water. Is there demonic influence? At present, it seems likely that this ocean of air, in which we move and which supports our lives, communicates the vibrations that alter the crystals.

A factor God wants us to realize more completely and fully is that we are not alone in this ocean of air. Even as vicious sharks and barracuda prowl the water, their demonic counterparts, symbolized as foul and unclean raptors and carrion-eaters, inhabit the ocean of air right along with us. It is essential to our spiritual well-being to heed Paul's warning in Ephesians 6:10-12 that our battles are against these creatures, and they are fighting tooth-and-toenail to hang on to what they believe is theirs by first-occupancy rights. Earth, the Bible plainly tells us, was "their first estate" (Jude 6, KJV). They hate us because we are becoming like the Father and Son, and because they know this earth, our inheritance, will be taken from them and given to the sons of God, those who are in His image.

On the surface, they have advantages over us because they are invisible to our eyes. As spirit beings, they apparently vibrate at a different frequency than we do, thus our eyes are not naturally equipped to see them. In addition, they can communicate their thoughts and attitudes to our minds through the very air that supports our lives without us even being aware.

If human thoughts and attitudes can be communicated through the air to plants and water, why can demonic thoughts not be communicated to another living being—us—without them overtly revealing themselves? Most people in this world do not know they are deceived or how they became deceived. Satan and his demons have not sat us all down to tell us, "We are here to deceive you." We know only because God's Word reveals this truth to us, and we believe it. Despite this happening in our lives, deception can still be communicated to us unless we are astute enough to take care that it does not happen again.

Nevertheless, deception and its resulting behaviors have been communicated to us through the culture we were born into. The culture, the world around us, is the medium of this corrupting communication. We have been freed from deception by God's revelation of Himself, but the urgent admonition from our Lord and Savior is, "Don't be passive concerning the responsibilities your liberation has imposed. Take action because the communication can be reabsorbed, enslaving you once again."

This World's Course

In Ephesians 2:2, Paul writes of "the course of this world." The Greek word *kosmos*, translated into the English word "world," essentially means an "orderly system." To human eyes beholding all the activity throughout the earth, the world looks anything but orderly. It looks confusing, to say the least. However, that conclusion depends on one's perspective.

What is going on to discerning eyes, the eyes of one to whom God has revealed Himself, is an orderly system of *deception* cloaked by restless activity among humans involved in constant wars, thousands of religions, evil conduct, corrupting entertainments, and other distracting, time-wasting business and social vanities. All of this restless activity is in reality nothing but a smokescreen hiding a sinister influence from discovery.

Notice something to which we generally do not pay much attention. The word "world" appears as the object of the preposition "of." This prepositional phrase modifies "course," showing us that Paul is

speaking of a specific "course" available to us to choose from among others. The Greek word translated "course," *aion*, is especially interesting. At first, it indicates "an age," "an indefinite period of time," and by extension, "perpetuity."

However, *Vine's Dictionary of New Testament Words* provides an interesting alternative, saying that it also means, "Time viewed in *relation* to what takes place during that period" (emphasis added). *Aion*, then, does not have to mean simply "time" in some form: Vine shows that it is correctly translated "place" in Hebrews 5:6. Other commentators go into greater detail, but we will quote only two highly respected ones that other commentators frequently cite as authorities.

First, Richard C. Trench is a resource virtually every commentator eventually quotes on the definitions of biblical words. He defines *aion* as:

. . . all that floating mass of thought, opinions, maxims, speculations, hopes, impulses, aims and aspirations at any time current in the world, which is impossible to seize and accurately define, but which constitutes a most real and effective power, being our moral or immoral atmosphere which at every moment of our lives we inhale, again inevitably exhale.

Aion, translated as "course" in Ephesians 2:2, is the vague, ever-present immaterial realm that we are surrounded by and live in. It is interesting that Trench ties his definition to air, in that, even as we unconsciously breathe air in and out to sustain life, the course of the world is every bit as necessary to carnal life and is affecting us invisibly and constantly.

Second, Johann A. Bengel adds that *aion* is, ". . . the subtle informing spirit of the Kosmos, or world of men who are living alienated and apart from God." This is what Germans termed *zeitgeist*, the spirit of the age—the "informing spirit"! The term "spirit" is used to indicate the invisible, immaterial influence whose characteristics are absorbed and then manifested in the attitudes and conduct of the general population of a given people.

An American commentator, Kenneth Wuest, is very helpful at this juncture:

To distinguish between *aion* and *kosmos*, *kosmos* gives the over-all picture of mankind alienated from God during all of history, and *aion* represents any distinct age or period of human history as marked out from another by particular characteristics.

Course in *Roget's International Thesaurus*, under the heading "tendency," has such synonyms as "thoughts," "zeitgeist," "spirit," "disposition," "character," "nature," "makeup," "bent," "slant," "frame of mind," "attitude," "inclination," "mind-set," "drift," "perspective," and many more. It may be easier to understand "course of this world" by rephrasing it into statements such as, "according to the disposition of this world"; "according to the character of this world"; "according to the nature of this world"; "according to the makeup of this world"; "according to the mindset, drift, or perspective of this world."

This is the spirit from which we must be converted. It is the unseen foundation and fountain of our pre-conversion conduct, and it is the same spirit still motivating us when we act carnally or in the flesh. Despite conversion, it remains within us, compressed like a spring that is ready to jump into action and influence our conduct.

Men Choose Evil

A major characteristic of this spirit is that it is habitually self-centered rather than God-centered. A simple example illustrates how it became this way. In Genesis 1:31 God takes satisfaction in all He had made, declaring it "very good." Included in this is Adam and Eve's nature, as they were already created by this time.

Thus, at the beginning, mankind's nature was not corrupted by contact with this world. Genesis 3 records the episode of their confrontation with Satan that began the evil transformation of their basic nature. God did not create their nature as evil, but it *became* evil through the influence of another spirit that *they* chose to follow without any intervention from their Creator.

The same process continues to this day, as each of us is born into this world and comes under the influence of the same spirit that influenced Adam and Eve to turn from God. We are all born with a slight pull toward self, but not with the evil that eventually develops and manifests itself in our conduct. Evil is not—cannot be—passed on through procreation, but it is fashioned anew by the spirit of the age into which each person is born. It is a converted parent's responsibility to God and his children to ensure the right spirit dominates his home so the children can be properly nurtured.

People in the world understand this to some extent when they observe with maxims like, "The apple doesn't fall very far from the tree," "Like father, like son," or "Like mother, like daughter." This world's Christians, to avoid responsibility for their evil, have blamed God for creating us this way. But God did *not* make us this way. Mankind, represented by Adam and Eve, *chose* to become this way, and all of their descendants, including us, have chosen the same path under the influence of the same evil spirit who offered Adam and Eve the choice. This accounts for the course of this world.

Jeremiah 17:9 shows us how evil God judges the source of our unconverted motivations to be: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" The *Revised Standard Version* translates this as, "The natural heart of man is desperately corrupt; incurably sick." It is so bad, so evil, it cannot be salvaged by repairing it! It must be completely replaced. This is what the conversion process—our calling, repentance, justification, and sanctification—accomplishes.

We need to understand more completely why this aspect of God's command to flee Babylon is so important. We can be easily deceived about it, misunderstanding why God says the human heart is incurably sick. In Luke 11:13, Jesus makes an easily overlooked comment: "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" The way He says this implies that those before Him were thoroughly, not partly, evil.

He flat out calls them evil! There is no equivocation, no modification of this verse in the heart of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus Himself was called "good" in Matthew 19:16, but He immediately corrects the speaker, saying, "No one is good but One, that is, God." This is God's assessment of human nature, not man's.

Jesus is saying that, just because human nature knows how to and actually does some good things, it does not alter the fact that it is still incurably evil. Our pride tends to blunt God's assessment, rising to defend us from the condemnation of what we are compared to, the standard—God.

Consider this example: Most people judge Adolph Hitler to be thoroughly evil. However, many of his closest companions claimed that he loved children and dogs. Most people would judge that as good. This dichotomy even in such a man begs a look into another set of scriptures.

An Evil Mixture

The apostle writes in James 3:8-12:

But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.

People say human nature is a mixture of good and evil, but in terms of living in the Kingdom of God, that evil mixture is unacceptable. Is God Himself a mixture of good and evil? I John 3:2 makes abundantly clear that we shall be like Him, and there is not one spot of evil in Him.

We are seeing what we need to repent of. Unless we realize that it is not merely what we have done but what we *are* that needs radical changing, we will have a terribly difficult time overcoming and growing.

By now, we should have plenty of evidence to understand that salvation absolutely must be by grace. Human nature is an evil mixture that we cannot make good. Even in a converted person led by the Holy Spirit, the course of this world is still just below the surface. Matthew 16:21-23 shows how easily a disciple of Christ can become the means of communication from demons:

From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

Peter did the speaking, but Jesus spoke to Satan, attributing the source of the disciple's action. His verbal outburst was against God's will that Jesus suffer and die. Without recognizing it, Peter permitted himself to be a willing conduit for Satan's will!

Several years ago, I clipped an abstract of a book, *Wrestling with Dark Angels*, which was advertised in a book catalog. The abstract reads:

They're those inner "voices of reason" that try to convince you that wrong is right, that evil is good. They're Satan's dark angels, and you fight them every day. Some of today's most respected theologians help you better understand these supernatural forces so you can combat them effectively—and win the war for your mind.

There is a time coming, represented by the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day, when these dark forces of reason will no longer be free to influence mankind as they can now. Those who are now facing them without understanding what is happening will have died, been resurrected, and will live again with the knowledge of why life was so difficult before. God will not make them face these dark angels' subtle but powerful influence again. It will have had its effect, which will still have to be overcome. However, the possibility of that influence being refreshed each day will not exist.

The solution for us today is to combat that influence by means of the continuous influence of God's Holy Spirit flowing from our relationship with God through Bible study, prayer, meditation, occasional fasting, and obedience. Being in the spiritual presence of God and His Son Jesus Christ is the antidote. It is our shield and the means to flee Babylon, but expounding these areas will require further articles.