

What's So Bad About Babylon? (1997)

Present Day Evil

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Regardless of what has happened in other parts of the world during our lifetimes, life for those of us in Israel and especially in the United States of America, has been relatively good. Overall, the economy has been fairly steady. We have had no major wars for quite a long period of time. Every once in a while, there is an occasional disaster affecting, usually, just a small part of the country, and we are, of course, sorry that those things occur, but they do not really affect us very directly at all for a very long period of time. And it has not caused a disaster to our lives.

But yet we are told by God that we should come *out* of the world, in spite of the fact that we are living quite comfortably, in most cases, *in* the world. Why? You see, what is so bad about this world that we live in? What is so bad about Babylon that we should be coming out of it?

I want you to turn to Genesis the 11th chapter, verses 1 through 9, and we are going to develop this theme throughout this sermon. But in Genesis 11 we find a very significant stage in the development of what God calls "Babylon." It says,

Genesis 11:1-9 Now the whole world was of one language and one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. Then they said one to another, "Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth." And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built.

And the Lord said, "Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

God felt so strongly about this brief nine page reporting of something that was occurring there that He directly, along with His Son, intervened to slow down its development. Now I say slow down because it is very evident from the book of Revelation and other places in the Bible as well, that He did not stop it entirely, but He did slow it down so that now we see in the 20th century that elements of it have continued to develop over the years regardless of what God did at that time.

But it was a serious thing to Him. A serious enough thing that He not only slowed it down, He scattered them. That gives you some indication. Here we are scattered, and when God scatters, it is a pretty good indication that He is highly displeased and there are some very serious sins involved as well. Now it says here that their reason for doing this was to make a name for themselves and not be spread abroad. They wanted to remain unified, they wanted to stay where they were.

As we heard yesterday from Harold [Way's] sermon that God does not destroy things that are good, but He *is* going to destroy Babylon. And here He intervened strongly enough to stop what they were doing for a goodly period of time, but it continued to develop. So we are looking at something here that is beginning to show all the elements of something that would be disastrous to God's purpose if it is allowed to continue.

Now, a name indicates distinctiveness and it can also indicate preeminence. Each and every one of you for the most part have different names. I do not know how many men I have run into here who have the name John. But our

last names are different and we are distinctive from one another because there is a name that is different. And so our mail does not get the least mixed up because there is a distinctiveness here. So these people wanted a name, they wanted to be distinctive from something else.

In addition to that, a name indicates preeminence. Many people are addicted, they have a fad, they buy name clothing because that name carries a preeminence with others that they want to impress and so they wear that. We have gone so far in this, brethren, in letting people know that we like certain clothes that we will advertise for these people and pay for the privilege of doing it. Izod all the way across, you know, that kind of thing. Well, I refuse to do that. I have done it and still do it. But every chance I get, if something has a name on it like that, I do not buy it. I am queer that way, I guess. But at any rate, a name indicates preeminence.

Now, I think that this thing about a name indicates or was probably (that would be a better way of putting it) a cry of the few in leadership, a slogan that they promoted, rather than the multitude using it. But usually when something like this occurs and people begin to follow a leader, they pick up on the leader's slogan, whatever it is that he is trying to accomplish or which indicates what he is trying to accomplish. But the multitude was being used or persuaded or maybe even forced to do the building of this tower. But it still became, I think nonetheless, a popular exclamation because people can be led to believe that the glory of the despot or the glory of the leader will somehow reflect upon them and they will have some of that glory. Izod, Nike, Reebok, and so forth.

This project was done in rebellion because they knew that they were supposed to scatter abroad. Their cry was, "Lest we be scattered abroad." They did not want to be scattered abroad. They wanted to unify because they were, by and large, of common minds and they did not want to get separated because many people make for strength.

We know the story of course, that Nimrod was really at the base, or the foundation or the head, however you want to look at this, and he was a mighty hunter against the Lord. He rallied the people around him because apparently there were certain dangers, physical dangers, involved in being scattered abroad. At least the story goes that he was going to protect them

from the wild animals that were out there and that was part of his way of selling the idea, the concept. But this concentration of people, of a heavy population, he was going to use to be a despot against them and he would use them, really, as his means of increasing his power. So we can see that this project was done in rebellion because they knew that they were to spread abroad and fill the earth.

If you want to see the account there, I believe it is in Genesis 9 that the instruction was given by God to Noah to replenish or to fill the earth. It was very clear they were to leave from that point and they were to spread all over the face of the earth and fill it once again with people.

Now, there is more here than meets the eye at first glance because contained here is the lurking desire for empire and self-aggrandizement in the design of the leaders for themselves and slavery for the unnumbered people who are being used at this point. Now, these people had one purpose and they understood each other's minds. This was a major step in the building of something that could quickly become an incredibly evil system. And that is why God stepped in while it was yet small in order to forestall what we are seeing taking place in our day.

Here in Genesis 11:9, they were concentrating ambition and power by which they could bring about, even by God's admission, whatever they could think. We can really let our minds run on that because we are beginning to see the power that God instilled within the human mind in making use of the environment that God has given to us. What we see here, then, is a system that is not built on trusting God, but is yet another attempt of finding success through the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Now, there is a word here that is quite interesting. It is the word "tower," "Let us build a tower." Tower is normally thought of as being a fortification, a military fortification, but symbolically in the Bible, it is also used as a place of safety. It has elements of both aspects to it. God is our high tower. He is the one who fights for us and He is also our place of safety. In this case here in Babylon, that tower represented both elements. It was going to be a symbol of their power and strength. And at the same time, it was going to be symbolic of their place of safety as well—a security, their stronghold.

What it does is it represents what we put our trust in for our well being. That is its spiritual application. It is what we put our trust in for our well being. Now, men have thought that by their own devices, in this case, it was the building of Babel and the tower, that they could determine their own destiny.

Pharaohs built those huge pyramids, their tombs, to preserve records of their accomplishments. But where is Egypt? Greece's towers were somewhat different because they consisted in what they thought was good and great. It was knowledge. They were always seeking after knowledge and the beauty of their architecture and their beauty of their literature and their beauty of the body and the beauty of anything that was Greek. That was their high tower. But where is Greece? Assyria had its own towers, Persia and Rome. All three of those bring to mind military power, you know, tramping other nations into the dust, great military machines that moved across the earth and crushed the enemies giving security, of course, to Assyria.

But we Israelites have our own high towers as well. Speaking of the nations, and most specifically of the United States, immense material resources, scientific inventiveness, technology. We are an economic powerhouse and our military might is unmatched in all of the world. Other nations have gone the same direction. Germany and its 1,000-year Reich. What happened to them? There will always be in England. America, God's country. Are not these the last bricks out of which men will find the power to supplant God once again?

It is blind pride is what we see here. Let us make a name! Let us build a tower lest we be scattered! Let us be concentrated in our power, in our energy, in our zeal, in our drive, in our intelligence against God, right at the root of Babylon.

Now, the original Babylon here stands as a monument to this truth. Mankind has to stop trusting in its towers because there are eternal principles which cannot be defined. All of history, when it is understood in the light of biblical revelation, testifies to the fact that men *must* answer to God. His purpose will stand. Man does not have unlimited freedom from God to determine his destiny. God is the sovereign.

With this thought, what is so bad about Babylon? In Revelation chapter 18, verses 2 through 4, we have the end time view of this system growing great.

Revelation 18:2-4 And he [that is, an angel] cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, and a prison of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hated bird! For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury." 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."

There is no doubt from the description that is given here in Revelation the 18th chapter and from the experiences of our own lives—we can see with our eyes and we can hear with our ears and we have senses by which we can evaluate and judge these things—that there is no doubt that the world is powerful. There is no doubt that the world is appealing and it is very attractive to the senses.

"Who can make war against the Beast?" it says just a little bit earlier here in the book of Revelation. And spiritually, much of the world, much of Babylon's power, lies in its attractiveness to the senses and its appeal to the ambition of men who want to get ahead, who want to be somebody, who want to have a name, who want to have preeminence, who want to be acknowledged by neighbors as being someone of some consequence.

Now, is God against power? No. Is God against attractiveness? No. Is there any greater artist than God? That is the way He is and we are to be in His image. No, He is not against things that are attractive. Is God against wealth? Of course not. He is the wealthiest Being there is! He owns the whole earth and everything within it. And He made some of His servants exceedingly rich.

So God is not against power, per se. He is not against attractiveness and beauty. He is not against wealth. No, not at all. And yet He tells us here in

this book of Revelation that we are to come out of this or we are going to perish with it. So the coming out must be a spiritual coming out because in reality, we have to live in this world.

It is not a matter of retiring and being cloistered away like a monk in a monastery. It is a question of spiritually being different, of having different attitudes, having a different worldview, different perspectives about things, living differently within the world without being taken in or taken captive or enslaved by it, without being molded by it and shaped by it because of an ugly fascination for its beauty or its power or its wealth.

In verse 7, the same chapter, it says,

Revelation 18:7 In the same measure she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, "I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will see no sorrow."

One commentator said in regard to this verse that wherever there is idolatry, prostitution, self-glorification, self-sufficiency, pride, complacency, reliance on luxury and wealth, avoidance of suffering, and violence against life, there is Babylon. It is everywhere.

Now notice Babylon's threefold web of sin. Notice the arrogant pride that is so great that it is incapable of self-analysis and therefore, repentance. In order for a person to repent, there has to be dissatisfaction with the self. There has to be a sense of guilt, a consciousness of falling short, an awareness of being in need, a desire to change. Luxury, pride; "I sit as queen," and avoidance of suffering. There it is, the threefold web of sin in this case. "I will see no sorrow," she says, and so luxury can lead to boastful self-sufficiency. The proverb says, "The rich is wise in his own conceit." The Laodicean who feels that he is spiritually rich says, "I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing."

Power in the form of wealth has that powerful persuasion within it to make a person feel as though he is secure in that wealth. And as another proverb

says, that "a rich man's wealth is his high tower." That is what he puts his faith, his trust in. Here is Babylon doing exactly the same thing. Its trust is in its luxury, the power of its wealth, the avoidance of suffering.

Do you know what that does? It leads to compromise in the seeking after ease, compromise with principle. If we feel that something is going to hurt us, if we feel that something is going to be painful and we are going to sorrow because we have ventured into this thing, we will do almost anything we can to avoid it rather than face it and deal with the hand that we have been given in order to not compromise. And so we find that Babylon compromises in order not to suffer. And so she pursues, avoids suffering through satiety.

It is interesting that as we read further in Revelation the 18th chapter, that almost every item that is mentioned there is a luxury item. It shows what gets the attention.

Let us go back to the book of Proverbs because before we get to run through the rest of Revelation 18 very rapidly, I want to go to Proverbs the 20th chapter, verse 1. This is a well known principle, but it is important in regard to Proverbs.

Proverbs 20:1 Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.

Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler.

Now back to Revelation 18.

Revelation 18:3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

Drunk the wine, the mocking, the symbol of mocking. And it is so interesting that wine is enjoyable. In the book of Judges it says that it "cheers the heart of both God and man." Of course it does, as long as it is taken in moderation. So here is something that is enjoyable that is also used in the Bible as indicating a deceptive quality to it.

What we have to be careful of here is this deceptive quality that lies within Babylon: Babylon's attractiveness, Babylon's power, Babylon's wealth, somehow or another it has a way of intoxicating us. And so at first it makes us feel good, it cheers us up. But when we become intoxicated with it, it gives the other side of the coin because when we are intoxicated, we generally think that we are doing better, that we have been enhanced by what we have done, that we are actually functioning better than we did before, when actually we are unaware that we are staggering all over the place and making a fool of ourselves because our judgment has been impaired.

In short, drinking of Babylon impairs the judgment. It impairs our thinking, it screws it up. And at the same time, it makes us think that it is enhancing us and making us better for what we have partaken of. Be not deceived.

And so what God is portraying here is that Babylon is the fountainhead of instruction that impairs people's ability to function properly, function the way He designed us to function. But if we are not careful. . . It is so weird. We think we are actually doing better for having imbibed of it.

Back to Revelation 18. It says that all have already imbibed and are infected or affected. Everybody, you and me as well.

Revelation 18:9 The kings of the earth who have committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning.

Notice the various segments of population as God goes down the list here. Kings represent those who are in political leadership and stands for the small and the great in terms of the political figures. Verse 11, the merchants of the earth, the business interests, those who buy and sell. In verse 12, it is interesting that he mentions the silver and the gold and the precious stones. All of those luxury items. In verse 17, "for in one hour such great riches come to nothing and every shipmaster," those who are involved in transportation, carrying the business items back and forth. Interesting to think upon that because of the mention of merchandizing in reference to Lucifer.

Down in verse 21, "A mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and cast it into the sea." The millstone represents manufacturing. I worked in a steel mill for 16 years. That term mill came out of the old mills that used to grind the grain and was applied to other manufacturing industries. So productive toil is involved in that. Verse 22, "The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and the trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore." Entertainers have really imbibed in Babylon. I mean, they are deeply involved and are one of the main means for expanding Babylon's power over people's minds.

In verse 23, "The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of the bridegroom," representing families, also representing hope. But now you see there is no hope at this point in this prophecy. And notice in every case, the sore cry that goes up from every segment of the population in Babylon. And we have all been a part of that.

Let us drop back to verse 20 again.

Revelation 18:20-21 "Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!" Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore."

Not like the Babylon of Genesis the 11th chapter where God simply interrupted and stopped for a time the building of this great system. When this happens, He is going to destroy it and no more shall it be found its existence and its use by God will have concluded.

Revelation 18:22-24 "The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore. No craftsman of any craft shall be found in you anymore, and the sound of a millstone shall not be heard in you anymore. The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of the bridegroom and the bride shall not be heard in you anymore. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery [that is interesting, indicating demons, drugs] all the nations were

deceived. And in her [this is very significant] was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain upon the earth."

What a murderous system that has led one nation after another into war. And God lays that responsibility right on Babylon's doorsteps. Is there anything wrong with this system out here? What is so bad about Babylon?

The insight of these four or five verses beginning in verse 20 going through 24, is that it is against God as evidenced by its killing of His ambassadors to it. God avenges the blood of His saints. And so all of these people, all of these categories of people weep and lament because when this system comes to an end, *they know that they have nothing left*. And mark this well, because that is very important. They have nothing left. And those who imbibe and refuse to separate themselves, they will share in God's judgment of her. That is why He says, "Come out of it!" lest you share in her penalties.

Babylon is shown in verse 7 to be completely unconcerned. Now, should we be concerned? We enjoy a great many of the things of this world. So again, what is wrong with them? What is wrong with Babylon? We will continue to add to this. Let us go back to Daniel again to Daniel the 12th chapter, verse 4. We were already in this verse at least one other time.

Daniel 12:4 "But you, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; and many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased."

Here we have another view, a brief view of this end time system. I want you to reflect back just a little bit because life went on in the world up until this time, up until the last, say, 100, 150 years, life went on pretty much without change from Genesis 11 up until Daniel 12:9 and the present. But this verse shows that as we approach the end, that there is going to be a surge of knowledge.

Now, if we look out on the world scene, I think that we would have to say that there has been a tremendous surge of knowledge. I believe the knowledge now is at least calculated or said to be doubling about once every

5-6 years. It was just a short time ago they said it was doubling about every 10 years. And who knows if we go on long enough, the fund of knowledge may be doubling every 2 1/2 years. So what are we going to do with it?

I think that there is ample evidence that this surge in knowledge is not all materialistic because there has been a surge of knowledge in things pertaining to the Bible, things pertaining to the spiritual as well. Now, we have to ask the question: is this increase good? Has this increase even of spiritual knowledge actually benefited mankind?

The word that is translated "to and fro" indicates an intensive back and forth movement and is used in secular literature to indicate the strokes of an oar, back and forth just like that or a swimmer's arms back and forth. It is also used for somebody hunting for a desired object, and you can see somebody looking in a drawer and their eyes and their head are going back and forth, looking for something, or somebody's walking around the room, pacing back and forth for something that was dropped on the floor and their eye does not immediately catch it.

It also is used too of a person looking for somebody in a crowd, his head and eyes going back and forth, looking over, trying to catch someone's face, someone's attention as well. It is even used for somebody gleaning a field, following behind the reapers and zigzagging back and forth in the field to pick up that grain that fell behind them. It is also used for somebody's mind going back and forth and back and forth, weighing options about how or what to do about something.

Now, the New English Bible gives an interesting twist to the scripture that fits to the last one, because they have translated that phrase, "People are at their wits end." Let us just feed that into this. "But you, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book even to the time of the end; and people shall be at their wits end, and knowledge shall increase."

You see, they have chosen from all that variety of options that they have of translating that word to indicate that the time of the end there is going to be a tremendous increase of knowledge, spiritual as well as physical, and people are going to be wondering what in the world is happening. What is going on? What am I going to do with this? How can I use this information? Because

there is in this verse, in this phrase or word, a feeling of intenseness; that the activity, whether in the mind or the feet or whatever, is intense. And so there is movement taking place within the form of the word.

So we have to ask, is it possible that this tremendous increase of knowledge is allowing us or God is allowing us to see that the increase of knowledge is not all that good unless there is a corresponding increase of the ability to use it rightly? And there has not been. So the verse, at best, tends to show that the increase of knowledge is, at best, a mixed blessing.

With that thought in mind, let us go to Ecclesiastes the first chapter, verse 18. Now, I want you to think of this in the overall sense of the book. Solomon was casting about in his mind as to what in the world is going on on earth. And by what means can people have a truly enjoyable life, one that produces positively, gives a person the right sense of well being. And of course, we know that at the end, he reaches a conclusion that a man should fear God and keep His commandments because that is the whole man or the whole duty of man. And that is going to produce the most and the best within the situation that we find ourselves. But in verse 18, he had not reached that conclusion yet. And it says,

Ecclesiastes 1:18 For in much wisdom is much grief, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.

Hey, this was written 900 years before Christ but already Solomon had reached a conclusion that a mere increase of knowledge does not cut it for producing a good, abundant life. So how can a person have a really meaningful life in a very perplexing world?

Now Solomon wrote this when Israel was at the height of its power and grandeur. And Solomon is saying that as we extend the frontiers of knowledge, all we do is succeed in opening doors to more mysteries! Power, grandeur, and knowledge were not solving the problems of the kingdom of Israel and the seeds of its eventual break up were already showing.

What Solomon continues to show is that the more we know, the more dissatisfied we become because the possession of more wisdom shows evermore clearly the imperfections of the system. Because an increase of

knowledge really leads nowhere as far as solving the problems of Babylon. Each increase only makes us more aware of our ignorance and our impotence. Every discovery only makes us more aware that much more remains concealed of which we had no suspicion of until we discovered this knowledge. And so the increase then brings with it a sense of weakness and defeat. And there is a frustrating quality to life because he finds that he can do nothing with the increase that will really help.

Now, I want you to think about the scripture that we went through in a bit of detail yesterday, Matthew 7:17-18, where a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit and an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit. It is absolutely impossible. But it shows us a principle there that it is what a man or a system produces that determines whether it is good or bad. A corrupt system cannot produce good fruit. Remember that word "corrupt" does not indicate a tree in that metaphor that Jesus used there, that was at one time good and then went bad. But rather it was corrupt from the very beginning, it was bad from the very beginning, and that kind of a tree which would be bad by nature, it is impossible for that tree to ever be converted and become a good tree because it is bad by nature.

You can see this illustrated in the Bible in the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares. The tares associate with the wheat and the tares receive the same instruction that the wheat does. They are sitting in the congregation. And yet God shows that at the end, the tares, which have been corrupt from the very beginning and never had the miracle performed on their mind by God's Holy Spirit to change them and to be given the divine Spirit, which is good from the very beginning, from the root, but instead they are left with human nature with the human spirit which is corrupt from the very beginning, and at the end of the process, they are still tares. Nothing changes. Well, that is what Jesus is illustrating here.

Now, apply that to Babylon. Because, you see, Babylon is a corrupt tree and it is putting forth fruit in the form of instruction, most importantly to us, spiritual instruction. And there is nothing good that can come out of it. I mean, that is pretty devastating to think about, that there is nothing good in terms of what God is doing that can come out of it. It *cannot* produce good fruit. And as Harold [Way] showed yesterday, there is nothing God can do with it except destroy it. And by the same token, there is nothing that God

can do with human nature. We have to be *changed*, given the divine nature, and *it* has to grow within us completely, or at least as far as God is satisfied, supplanting the human nature, the spirit in man, which is dominated by that spirit.

There are three things that need to be considered in regard to a teacher. And we will consider Babylon as a whole system as a teacher. We are told in Romans 12:1 not to let the world squeeze us into its mold. First, what is its character and conduct like? What is the teacher's character and conduct like? Two, is its teaching truth? And three, what has the teaching produced in those who are adherents to its teaching?

What has Babylon produced? A lot of good things, but they are all material. It is a system that is fraught with problems that reveal that it is a corrupt tree that cannot produce good fruit. It cannot solve anxiety, hopelessness, fear, war, famine, violence, divorce, estranged children, drug addiction, thievery, chicanery in government, abuse of power. I could go on and on here. And in many cases, it may take a while for the fruit to be seen, but seen it will be. A wolf with sheep's clothing is still a wolf. James puts it very simply. He says, "Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter?" Impossible. What would it be? It would be all salty. No good.

Back to Ecclesiastes again, this time in verse 15 of chapter 1. Maybe this statement will mean more to you now.

Ecclesiastes 1:15 What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be numbered.

Again, as long as you understand what Solomon is talking about, that makes sense and it is true. Babylon cannot be straightened out. Its incorruption cannot be purified. Even God can do nothing with it except destroy it. He who has all power and all might and all wisdom and all love finds it impossible to do anything with it. So corrupt is it in its attractiveness that He, despite its attractiveness and power and its wealth, is going to wipe it off the face of the earth. And brethren, He wants to wipe it from our minds, wipe it from our minds as being the source of anything that is good.

Let us go back now to Hosea 4, verses 1 through 6. I am reading this because here we have a little peephole view of Babylon Israelite style.

Hosea 4:1 Hear the word of the Lord, you children of Israel, for the Lord brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land: "There is no truth nor mercy, or knowledge of God in the land."

Brethren, he is talking about Israel. No *truth*, no *mercy*, no *knowledge of God*. What do we mean? There are churches all over this land! It is nowhere more evident in this nation than down in the Southeastern United States where it seems like every corner has a church, at least one there and sometimes two or three of them competing. And everywhere you go out in the country, there is little buildings that have churches on them and you see signs (this is no kidding), The Swamp Hollow Baptist Church. No knowledge of God? Is God telling us a fib there? Look at this evidence that He begins to pile up:

Hosea 4:2-6 "By swearing and lying, killing and stealing and committing adultery, they break all restraint, with bloodshed touching bloodshed. [it is like our daily newspaper] Therefore the land will mourn; and everyone who dwells there will waste away with the beasts of the field and the birds of the air; even the fish of the sea will be taken away [just like Revelation 18]. Now let no man contend, or reprove another; for your people are like those who contend with the priest. Therefore you shall stumble in the day [a very short time]; the prophet also shall stumble with you in the night; and I will destroy your mother. My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you from being priest for Me; because you have forgotten the law of your God, I will also forget your children."

Now, this is especially poignant because of the metaphor that God used through Hosea in actually having Hosea marry a prostitute and produce children from that prostitute. And so the metaphor that is in the background of this is a betrayal of love to Israel, "My people." And God has a lawsuit against them and the charge is our moral condition. It is interesting when you read that, that the charge is not against the economic or political condition,

but the moral condition. Brethren, this is the fruit of Babylon's way in Israel. Because we have imbibed of it as much as anybody, maybe more than anybody who has ever lived on the face of the earth.

This word truth there in verse 1 is *emet* in the Hebrew and it includes not merely *saying* what is right in terms of what we give witness to, let us say, not merely uttering what is right, but it includes *doing* what is right. And so its most accurate and specific translation is really faithfulness, fidelity, stability, dependability, responsibility, a highly developed sense of obligation, being trustworthy and reliable. God says there is none of that. It is just like we are leaning on something that cannot possibly hold our weight.

Then there is the word mercy. It is *c hesed*, and it is kindness, but it is a very intimate kindness. It indicates a living bond of relationship and fellowship between two who have accepted obligations in a spirit of trust and goodwill, as in a marriage and family. And so God's complaint is that there is no faithfulness. "Israel, you can't be relied upon to keep your word. You won't keep your contracts, you won't keep covenant with Me. How can I have a relationship with you when I can't trust you? And besides that, you're not very kind, you're not being intimate to Me. You're rejecting Me, the very epitome of goodness and mercy and of love." So we have a land filled with the kind of things that people who are not responsible do.

What we see then produced as fruit is a spiritual, social, and ecological crisis that threatens all life in the United States. And that is why He says that the land is going to vomit us out. Symbolically, it means that life is going to become so precarious in the nations of Israel that we will not be able to live here. We will have to emigrate. We will have to go somewhere else in order to even be able to live; and the land has vomited us out because it will not respond to the punishment that we have inflicted upon us.

Brethren, that is a metaphor for what Babylon does to God's creation. It uses and abuses. It takes unmercifully because it does not love the land. It only loves what it can *get* from the land. And so what this is picturing here is a way of life, a way of living, the way Babylon lives, in which people will sacrifice a whole future for the craving of the moments to satisfy the immediate desire.

What is wrong with Babylon? We just keep piling things up in order to convince us that there is nothing out there that is any good, save some good technological advances that we might be able to use rightly.

Here is where the problem lies. There is no knowledge of God. Now, it is interesting because this does not picture ignorance but rejection, *willful* rejection. I will tell you, Israel is going to get it, get it worse than any nation on the face of the earth because we have no justification for what we are doing in treating this nation and each other the way we do. God's Word has blanketed this nation! Virtually every home has a Bible in it, or two or three or four. And God has made that possible as a witness against us in that we will never be able to come to Him as a people and say, "God, you never gave us a chance." So God says, "You have willfully rejected My word." That is what Babylon does. Babylon acknowledges the *existence* of God, but it does not *know* God. There is a big difference between those two.

It is interesting that somewhere around verses 5 or 6 He blames the priests, meaning the ministry, and there is no doubt that we bear first responsibility. But then in verses 7 through 10, He lays it on the laity and holds them responsible because nobody is supposed to follow anybody, whether it be a priest or a minister, into sin. And so there is individual accountability as well. Paul says in Romans 10:2, that Israel has "a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge."

So what we have here in Hosea is that there is knowledge about God, but there is no *acknowledgement of God* by the way the people are living. If there was a true acknowledgement of God, what we would see then would be a sturdy, stable, committed loyalty and responsibility to God in the lives of our fellow Israelites. So the world acknowledges the fact of God, but it does not know God. And the knowledge that this world lacks comes from the experience of living life that results from believing God, walking with Him, talking with Him, submitting to Him in one's marriage, on the job, in child rearing, in obedience to parents, managing one's money, using one's time, doing all in life because God is part of it and because God said that this is what we are to do.

Now, in everything in life, in our lives, God is the reason and the focus. It is our relationship with God that gives us our worldview, the way we look at

things, our perspective. This Babylon will not do, because they will not accept the revelation. And because of that, they miss the true meanings and they have created a system that is self-destructive. And there is the basic problem.

Babylon, despite all its attractiveness, its power, cannot produce life—God life, eternal life, abundant life—because it will not believe revelation. It is so simple. Is that not what Genesis 3 shows? There is the real foundation of Babylon. Babylon was begun by Adam and Eve. That is the foundation of the world. And what did they do? They rejected God's revelation. And so with the influence of an evil spirit, they decided instead to pick from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. That is that tree that represents human experience. And so Babylon is founded on the basis of human experience and is therefore limited by human intelligence. It is so simple.

The difference between you and those outside is that you believe what God says. And that is what is wrong with Babylon. All the rest that we see that is wrong with Babylon are merely the fruits of humanism, of materialism, rather than true spiritualism that has its origin in God. Babylon is founded in disbelief.

I John 2:15-17 Love not the world or the things that are in the world. [notice, all encompassing, even the things in the world, the good things that are there, do not love them, do not place your devotion, do not have a deep affection for them] If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. [that is pretty sobering] For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

That last phrase there is so telling because the world will not believe God, the world will not do the will of God. It is just that simple, nothing complicated about it. It always comes down to a matter of obedience, a matter of faith.

The world is the evil system and that connects directly to Genesis the third chapter because that is where the foundation of the world is. So each

generation that lives comes along and is confronted by the enormous problems that are left over by the previous generation. And each generation makes a futile effort to try to straighten things out. But as Ecclesiastes 1:15 said, it is impossible. They cannot be straightened. And so each generation proceeds to compound the original problem because the spirit of the system is in them.

Everybody that is a part of that system has been motivated by the same level of influences that God names as the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. The lust of the flesh indicates a self-oriented way of living; the lust of the eyes the tendency to be captivated by show, by splendor, to be aroused by eyesight; and the pride of life is pretentious display, arrogant ambition, self-importance, and it usually has social connotations involving status, reputation, and what one as an individual defines as being important to his status and reputation. And what this produces is life that has a frustrating treadmill-like quality, the kind that Ecclesiastes the first chapter describes.

I John 2:17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

Now, these three verses make it very clear that God is forcing a choice upon us. In spirit, this is the same as Deuteronomy 30:19 where God says, "... I have set before you life and death." And He commands us to choose life. But the sense is from I John, just like Deuteronomy and Moses, God is forcing us to choose. There cannot be a blending of the two. They are a bad mix. Galatians 5 makes it very clear that these two are opposed to one another, and they fight with one another, and struggle within one another within a person. God wants us to make the right choice to go in the right direction. And the reason for that is that the world is passing away, it is dying, and anybody who is a part of it is going to die with it. It cannot give life; and so permanent value lies only with that which is within God's purpose, and anything that is not within God's purpose will simply pass away. It dies.

Immortality is inextricably bound up in the kind of life that a person lives in the flesh. Did you get that? Choose life! Believing certain doctrines, being able to logically prove the case for immortality, having the hope of eternal life, believing that this is the true church or the true ministry, those things of

and by themselves are good, but they do not cut the ice. What God is looking for is people who will live like He does. Not perfectly but doing the best we can with what we have got.

Eternal life is not merely length of life, it is *quality* of life. Giving us immortality is an easy thing for God. But if we are living the kind of life that the world out here is living, all it would do is eternally, everlastingly, reproduce the same problems eternally—without end. And so what God wants us to do now is change the way that we live so that when He gives us immortality, we will continue to live exactly the way we have always been living, His way. Then we will eternally produce the same kinds of things: the same kind of love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, meekness, and so forth that He always produces by the way He lives.

So eternal life, then, is quality of life combined with length of life.

Now let me summarize what I have said here. What is wrong with Babylon?

First, it was begun on the wrong foundation. It was born out of arrogance and defiance against God and His purpose. The foundation is in human reason, not revelation and trust in God. Thus, Babylon knows about God, but it does not *know* God.

Two, it is a system designed to produce commitment to the self. And thus each generation compounds the problems because it is driven by the same spirit that began Babylon. And thus Babylon cannot give due heed to the shortcomings and inconsistencies of human nature. It cannot be straightened out.

And three, despite being able to produce good things, history proves the fruit to be bad as witnessed within the cultures of people worldwide. And thus, Babylon is passing away, cannot produce life, either abundant or eternal, and anyone driven by Babylon's way will pass away.

The ultimate Babylon is forming and it will exert more pressure than ever before upon the citizens of this world to conform to it. So now is our time to use this time to be prepared for God's Kingdom because God's purpose will stand.

