

## What's So Bad About Babylon? (2003) (Part 2)

### Babylon's Corrupt Foundation

John W. Ritenbaugh

Given 13-Oct-03; Sermon #FT03-03

In my previous sermon, I wanted to show that there is an unbroken connection between Genesis 11 and Revelation 17 and 18. Babylon began in revolt, and it was begun by leaders of overweening pride under the influence of Satan. They rejected the word of God and began building a city and a tower that figuratively reflected the grandiose visions and opinions of themselves, and what they dreamed of accomplishing apart from God. They took of themselves God-like prerogatives in order to produce a unity of mankind of their own devising.

Today, in our time, because Satan is still manipulating from behind the scene, we see the same goal in its finishing stages of development. It is still anti-God, but now it is a worldwide system epitomized in the Great Whore Israel, and the forming Beast.

We are surrounded by it, but we must resist its influence, framed to conform us to its image. We must be alert to its persuasions because it is very appealing to human nature, and it has an addictive drugging quality. The whole system creates the perfect environment for Laodiceanism to develop in the Christian.

Today I am going to continue to expound upon Babylon's deceptive qualities, and to show you, that despite its fascinating appeal, God shows what it is in reality, and that it cannot deliver on its promises.

**Revelation 17:2** With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

**Revelation 18:3** For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

We are going to be looking at "wine" here for just a little bit, but before we get to that I want to look at this phrase, "the wrath of her fornication." That is a rather awkward statement, but here is what it means: The wrath is God's wrath which the Great Whore is going to receive, and the wrath is directed at the fornication, or the sexual perversity of the Great Whore. As we found in the sermons, that sexual perversity is in reality *faithlessness* to her marriage vows uttered when she, Israel, made the Old Covenant with God.

The nations have been made drunk with the " *wine* of the wrath of her fornication." I feel that this word "wine" is representative of the Whore's appeal. This is the very thing we have to resist being deceived by.

The word "wine" appears over 230 times in scripture, and overall it is used in a positive manner. It holds a place amongst milk, honey, olive oil, and grain as being symbols of God's great gifts not merely given to sustain life, but to add enjoyable blessings as well. But there is also a negative use quite a number of times to be exact, and here in Revelation 17 and 18 is one of them. Too much wine can very quickly produce bad fruit in a person because the drugging effect of its alcoholic content alters a person's thinking.

From here we are going to go to the book of Proverbs as we look at some of what God's word says about alcohol and its effects.

**Proverbs 20:1** Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.

I believe that Babylon's wine on which the inhabitants of the earth become drunk is the exhilarating-to-anticipate mixture of all of Babylon's intoxicating delicacies. There is something anti-God for anybody to taste and become addicted to.

Anything with alcohol in it has the potential to enslave one to it because of its quality. It has to be used with serious caution. I think it especially interesting that God uses wine as representative of this in that it is something that God gives us the opportunity to use. It is good in small quantities, but its use has to be controlled because it has that deceptive power within it to actually enslave somebody in an addiction.

Babylon has a similar quality to it. It too is a mocker and a deceiver, and it too has an indicative quality that can enslave human nature. And as I said in the previous sermon, there is no way to physically escape Babylon. It is here, and we are to use it; but like the wine, it has to be used in very small amounts. Our use of it has to be controlled. We can taste of it, but we cannot allow ourselves to imbibe of it so much that we become enslaved by it, because Babylon is appealing to human nature.

Now to mock is to treat with ridicule, scorn, or contempt. Wine, like sin, deceives through guile, ensnaring one even as it is enjoyed. The alcohol in wine does not care who you are, because it treats everybody the same way, and all can become caught up in its effects regardless of one's station in life, and so everybody has to deal with it cautiously, and so it is with Babylon. This is why we have to be so careful.

The wine of Babylon's wrath does not care who we are. We must not allow ourselves to presumptuously think that somehow or another we can outwit it. "I am strong enough to take it." "I can handle my booze." Oh, yeah! Joseph had the only safe course of action. He fled from its temptation, setting an example for mankind for all time.

We will read Proverbs 23, beginning in verse 27. I want you to notice carefully the wording here, and to notice some of the words that are in it, and I want you to apply it to your relationship with Babylon.

**Proverbs 23:27** For a whore is a deep ditch: and a strange woman is a narrow pit.

That word "whore" also appears in Revelation 17 and 18, and refers to Babylon, does it not? The words "strange woman" is more synonymous with

the English word "seductress." Babylon is a seductress. "For a whore is a deep ditch: and a seductress is a narrow pit." In other words, one easily falls into it and is trapped by it, with no easy way out.

**Proverbs 23:28** She also lies in wait, as for a prey, and increases the transgressors among men.

My Bible margin says for transgressors "unfaithfulness." It increases unfaithfulness among men.

**Proverbs 23:29-30** Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has babbling? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.

Babylon has to be treated very carefully, in small amounts.

**Proverbs 23:30-33** Look not you upon the wine when it is red, when it gives his colour in the cup, when it moves itself aright. At the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like an adder. Your eyes shall behold strange women, and your heart shall utter perverse things.

The scripture goes on to describe what happens to the mind and behavior when it becomes ensnared by the mocker wine—by the mocker Babylon.

**Proverbs 23:34-35** Yea, you shall be as he that lies down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lies upon the top of a mast [rocking to and fro]. They have stricken me, shall you say, and I was not sick: They have beaten me, and I felt it not: [You do not feel very much when you are drunk, except bad things.] When shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.

God is talking about an addiction.

Now just as in the Garden of Eden, Babylon's attractiveness is in the form of an appeal to one's senses for fulfillment and pleasure. It stimulates and

invigorates one's desire to reach out and partake of its fruit. But it cannot deliver on its promises, because it is from a false source whose desire is to destroy.

Notice how powerful the alcohol's addictive quality is. I want you to turn to Psalm 107, verse 27. He is talking about something very close to drunkenness when he says the following:

**Psalm 107:27** They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end.

That last phrase literally means that all their wisdom is swallowed up. Babylon is the fountainhead of instruction that impairs peoples' ability to function properly. Because they are spiritually drugged, those who partake cannot think properly, and herein lies its grave danger. They become confused and helpless.

We know that the term "Babel" means confusion, and that those who are going to partake of its way of life are going to be led into confusion. Spiritually they are going to be staggering like a drunken person, having lost all perception virtually of anything that is right and good, just going from pillar to post. They then, being unable to break themselves of it, partake of it again, and again, and again. And so people have formed in them wrong values, wrong perspectives, the wrong vision, and that, brethren, is a deadly combination for a Laodicean. We will get to that in another sermon.

The sermon is going to take a little bit of a bend from this foundation. I want you to turn to the book of Ecclesiastes. It will still be connected to the same subject, but we are going to go off on a little bit of a tangent here that is related though. Notice how he describes cyclic life.

**Ecclesiastes 1:4** One generation passes away, and another generation comes: but the earth abides forever.

The book *The Fourth Turning* kind of fits in here somewhat because he is describing a continuous round of cycles that occur every 80 to 100 years.

**Ecclesiastes 1:9** The thing that has been, it is that which shall be: and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.

The names change, and the dates change, but human nature never changes, because it is generated from Satan the Devil who never changes, and so mankind keeps repeating the same general pattern of life over and over and over again. That is Solomon's concern here. He says, "How in the world can we get out of this mess that we have gotten ourselves into, with the same bad cycles keep repeating over and over again?"

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

Now life went on pretty much unchanged from Genesis 11 until about 1850. But since that time knowledge, especially technical knowledge, has increased spectacularly. Man takes a great deal of pride in his accomplishments, giving himself credit for making life easier and better. But is it really better?

Things have gotten to the place now where we yearn for simpler times. But was life really simpler then? Was it really any simpler in Solomon's day than it is now? This is hard for us to properly evaluate, because we did not live in those times, and so for us it is almost like trying to compare apples and oranges. But there is one who has done this, and he has given us a great deal of insight into this, because he has the wisdom to properly evaluate.

I want you to think of this verse 18, first in terms of the overall theme of the book of Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes is asking, "How can a person have a really meaningful life in a very perplexing world?" If you think it is perplexing now, it was perplexing for them. He would not be asking these questions if it were not all that simple, as we would tend to look at it.

Maybe life back then was a great deal faster than we think it was. We think we live in fast times, maybe time for them was pretty fast as well. If Solomon had all the answers in his day, he would never have asked the question. And so like us in *our* day, Solomon was reflecting on the past as compared to his day. Solomon wrote this when ancient Israel was at the

height of its power and grandeur. He is saying that as we extend the frontiers of knowledge, all we do is succeed in opening doors to more mysteries.

Power, grandeur, knowledge were not solving Israel's problems in Solomon's day, and they are not solving them in our day either. In Solomon's day were the seeds of Israel's breakup, which did not occur for another three or four hundred years, but it was already showing in his day, and it depressed him. I think you can tell there is a great deal of depression that is evident in the book of Ecclesiastes.

There is a saying that "ignorance is bliss," and there is an element of truth to this cliché, because the more that we know, the more dissatisfied we become. The possession of more knowledge shows ever more clearly the imperfection of the system and its potential for further dysfunction, and the system's problems are never really solved, and thus the increase of knowledge seems to lead nowhere. This was what was so frustrating to Solomon.

In terms of a person's sense of real well-being, it does not matter when a person lives. The times were always perplexing and confusing, because the system did not, and does not have the answers to the problems. It has no solutions.

We can see and evaluate the same today. Each increase only makes us more aware of our ignorance and impotence, because each increase never brings solutions to the problems. Each discovery only makes us more aware that much remains concealed of which we had no awareness of before. Have computers, automobiles, refrigerators, and television banished fear? Have they destroyed greed, solved marital problems, and ended family breakups? Have they removed murder from the streets, or stopped war? None of that increase of knowledge has.

The creations of the heavens, I think, is a very clear example of this. Some of you have seen that Moody Bible Institute film on the heavens, which shows the awesome magnitude of what God has created. After that film was over, I thought, "Wow! This is really glorious!" And it is. But the next day that knowledge of how glorious God's creation is, and how magnificent, how big, how awesome, and how much power and wisdom there is left me with a feeling of dissatisfaction, because I am going to have to wait for Christ's

return to see all these problems solved. I am sure that men who are looking out there, without taking God into consideration, see that magnitude, but they know in them that this is not going to solve the problems.

Every time an advancement is made enabling us to see farther and deeper into space, or any other material thing, or anything that lies beyond that which we did not dream of before, becomes just another mystery. And so the technical increase can actually bring with it a humbling sense of weakness and defeat so that there is a frustrating quality to life, because man finds that he cannot use the increase to really improve the quality of life. And so technology changes, but the quality of life remains the same. I think that I would use the word Solomon used in Ecclesiastes, that life is just so much vanity, futility. "Vanity of vanities," he said. "All is vanity."

In a way this increase of knowledge depicts Babylon's futility, and as it is increased, the futility increases. So neither Israel in Solomon's time, nor Babylon in the time of the end can deliver on its promise. Why not? Because the underlying human nature rages unchanged, destroying virtually any good use a civilization might make of an increase of technical knowledge. Human nature, inspired by Satan, is driving the Babylonish system.

Jeremiah 17:9 is a very well-known scripture to us. It says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: Who can know it?" The Hebrew more literally says that "the heart is incurably sick." Babylon, the system, is evidence of that. This is amplified by Paul back in Romans 7, verses 22 through 24.

**Romans 7:22-24** For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

That was written a little over twenty years after his conversion, and so the implication of this is that this wretched nature still rages against the law of God. This in turn explains why God must give a *new* nature—a new heart—upon conversion. And so we can reach a conclusion that is correct. The solution to your problems and to my problems lies within our own personal

relationship with God. That is the only way to bring to us the fruit that God wants to be part of our life so that we live life in well-being. Human nature cannot be changed any other way. It is the driving force that still rages on earth. Jesus had an interesting, very needful-to-understand statement in Matthew 7:17-18, when He said, "Even so, every good tree brings forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit."

Here is a very important principle of judgment. Regardless of how exciting, or how attractive a person, a product, or a system is, it is what they produce that determines their value. Jesus said here that a corrupt tree *cannot* — absolutely cannot—produce good fruit.

Sometimes we misunderstand, because there is within us a very strong possibility of misinterpreting what Jesus meant by "a corrupt tree." We kind of approach that with the notion in our mind of a tree that *had* been good, but became corrupt in the process of time. But "corrupt" here indicates something that was *bad* from the very beginning. It had never been good. It was bad from the get-go.

Was Babylon bad from the very beginning? Absolutely! That is why I spent so much time on the foundation laid in Genesis 10 and 11. Babylon was formed in rebellion against God, and it derives its powerful influence from the Prince of the power of the air. Now look at Babylon's fruit. There are three major fruits to look for in a teacher, especially of this sort. This includes me too. I am a teacher. But right now I am thinking about the system out there where we all got our education. There is no avoiding it. We have been conformed to the image of that system out there, and conversion consists of being "dis-conformed," (if there even is such a word), and converted over to conformation to God's system.

These are the three things you want to look at:

1. What are the character and conduct like of the teacher?
2. Is the teaching true?

3. What has the teaching produced in those who are adherents to the teaching?

Consider what Babylon has produced. In general, it has produced a lot of good things, but they are all material. But as a system, it is fraught with problems that reveal it is a corrupt tree that cannot produce good fruit. It cannot solve anxiety, hopelessness, fear, war, disease, famine, violence, divorce, estranged children, drug addiction, thievery, chicanery in government, abuse of power, and on and on. In any given institution, it may take a while for the fruit to be seen, but seen it will be. "Your sins will find you out."

The background of this statement in Numbers 32:23 is kind of interesting. Moses was warning the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh about following through with what they promised to do. Yes, they could have their land on the east side of Jordan River, but they had to follow through on their vow that they were going to assist their brethren, their fellow-Israelites, in the conquering of the land. Moses warned them that if they failed to follow through and support their brethren in the way they said they were going to do it, Moses said, "*Do not think you are going to get away with it. Your sins will find you out.*"

**Numbers 32:23** But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the LORD and be sure your sin will find you out.

Brethren, Babylon lies exposed. A wolf may hide in sheep's clothing, cloaking its true nature, but it is still a wolf, and that nature will explode on a hapless victim. The apostle James asked the question, "Can a spring bring forth both pure water and poison from the same source?" Do you see James' point? What comes out of a spring where both are coming out together is all bad. It is a bad mixture. And so the answer to James' question is that it is impossible. What one gets is a bad mixture, and that is what Babylon is. That supports what Jesus said that a corrupt tree cannot produce good fruit.

Added to this "What Is So Bad About Babylon?" I John 2:17 says that the world (*cosmos*) is passing away, and brethren, those conformed to the world

will pass away with it. There is no future in the World Tomorrow for those who are conformed to Babylon. Why? Because their conformation to the world confirms them as God's enemy (James 4:4).

**Ecclesiastes 1:15** That which is crooked cannot be made straight:  
and that which is wanting cannot be numbered.

Again Solomon is talking about quality of life in this world. This confirms again what Jesus said. It cannot be made straight! It cannot produce good fruit, and it cannot be changed by us. The only One who can change it is God, and He is going to destroy it and start all over again. The same is true of our heart. It has to be gotten rid of and replaced with a circumcised heart that can come only from God.

Babylon is a system that was twisted from its very genesis and produces a drunken-like confusion so that life is reduced to a series of complex and frustrating futilities. It can produce futilities, but solutions it cannot. Babylon's foundation was laid in pride, rebellion, and human technology, and the source of its driving spirit is therefore Satan the Devil.

Genesis 11, time-wise, is a long period of time from Hosea the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter. We are going to go to Hosea 4, and we are going to see examples of what developed in Israel, because Israel adopted the Babylonish system.

**Hosea 4:1** Hear the word of the LORD, you children of Israel: for the LORD has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.

Think of that "no truth." It is one of those three tests of a teacher. Is what the teacher says true? God says there is no truth in the land.

**Hosea 4:2-6** By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood touches blood. [There are so many crimes that the blood of different victims is running together.] Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwells therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and

with the fowls of the heaven: yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away. Yet let no man strive, nor reprove another: for your people are as they that strive with the priest. Therefore shall you fall in the day, and the prophet also shall fall with you in the night, and I will destroy your mother [meaning the whole land.] My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because you have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you, that you shall be no priest to me: seeing you have forgotten the law of your God, I will also forget your children.

Hosea lived and wrote about 200 years after Solomon. Even before this time, they had rejected the law of God as we saw in I Samuel 8 in Samuel's day. Hosea points out both the cause and effect of the system that Israel adapted to itself. That system did nothing good for the people, because it was only about 40 or 50 years after Hosea wrote that Israel went into Assyrian captivity, and that certainly is not an indication that they pleased God.

What Hosea does in the whole book is to paint a poignant picture of Israel's betrayal of God's love. What we see specifically in chapter 6 is God's response. He is bringing a lawsuit against them on the basis of their moral condition. It is interesting that even though Israel also adopted Babylon's economic and political approaches, it is their *immorality* that has the greatest impact on the quality of life.

Now here is the fruit of Israel's Babylonish adaptation. The first thing God says is that there is no truth. That word in the Hebrew is *emeth*, and it is not merely uttering what is right, but it includes within its usage *doing* what is right. It indicates a very highly developed sense of obligation, and it could rightly be translated "righteousness."

There is a broad application to this word *emeth*, but within the context of the *whole* book, it more clearly indicates *faithlessness*. In other words, the people are not true to their word. They do not keep their word to each other, and they, above all, did not keep their word to God. In other words, whenever Israel was not true to her marriage vows—when she said there in Exodus, "All that the Eternal has said, we will do,"—she was capricious and devious, and fickle, lacking in fidelity, stability, and dependability. She was

irresponsible, untrustworthy, and unreliable. She sought fulfillment in entertaining pleasures rather than a loving relationship expressed in an understanding obedience to God.

He also says that there is no mercy. This is the word *chesed*. It literally means kindness. But like *emeth*, it is more than that. It indicates a living *bond* of relationship and fellowship between two who have accepted obligations in a spirit of trust and goodwill. It is a further extension of them being so faithless in breaking their marriage vows to God to be obedient to the covenant. *Chesed* is talking about the bond of obligation, of trust that a husband and wife have with each other, and which children have in their relationship with their parents, and their parents in the rearing of their children.

So what does Israel reveal in regard to this fruit? He goes right on, and He says, "Here is what I see: swearing, lying, killing, stealing, adultery." All this is taking place in an atmosphere where people do not have a highly developed sense of obligation. Competition and enmity prevail. Commitment to the self is greater. What we are looking at here is *Babylon within Israel*.

Do you see these things right outside your doors in your city? That is *exactly* what you see. This is the fruit of Israel's adaptation of the Babylonish way. It breeds competition, and thus divorce, disunity, war, and death. It does not produce qualities and virtues that really matter to a relationship. The record shows that the fruit produced is, in a spiritual, moral, social, and ecological way, a crisis that is threatening all life on the face of the earth.

What nation on earth has the greatest ability to *do* this? I mean, to wipe out all life? It is the Great Whore that has taken Babylon's way to the *n*th degree. But eventually we see (and I do not know whether you call it good news), that the Great Whore is going to be replaced by the Beast as the worst one on earth.

The roots of our crisis are found right back in Genesis 11 again: arrogance, irreverence, selfishness, and greed. And eventually, as God says, the land will vomit us out because it can no longer bear our way of living in which we will sacrifice a whole future for the cravings of the moment.

I remember that about 15 or 20 years ago, big banner headlines appeared in one of the major news magazines in an article by Jack Anderson, who I think has died since that time. But he, looking over the United States of America, came to the conclusion "*We are selling our birthright for a night on the town!*" It is even more true today than it was then. But never forget, brethren, Babylon has an addictive appeal that is very alluring to human nature. Though we may not become involved in the worst of Babylon's sins, we can be lured into Laodiceanism.

The worst perhaps of this triumvirate of sins—no mercy, no kindness, no truth (I gave you three there)—is "no knowledge of God." I would have to say this is the major root of the problem. Again, combining this with the understanding of Babylon's formation with what we find here in Hosea in regard to Israel, we can understand that this is not mere ignorance, but rather it is *willful rejection*. Notice again in verse 6: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: [and] because you have *rejected* knowledge." We are not rejecting technical knowledge. We suck it up like a swamp, but we have rejected the knowledge of God. Now is that not what is happening today as the Bible is being rejected piece-meal all across our culture?

We have to be a little bit careful here, because Babylon acknowledges the fact of God, and our land is dotted with church buildings from one end to the other. It is interesting that God first places blame on the priests—those responsible for teaching. However, let us look at what He says in verses 7 through 11:

**Hosea 4:7-10** As they [the people] were increased, so they sinned against me: [They sinned just like the priests.] Therefore will I change their glory into shame. They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity. And there shall be, like people, like priest [Both are alike.]: and I will punish them for their ways, and reward them their doings. For they shall eat, and not have enough: they shall commit **whoredom**, and shall not increase: because they have left off to take heed to the LORD.

Verse 11 is interesting again in relation to Babylon, and Revelation 17 and 18.

**Hosea 4:11** Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart.

The apostle Paul stated in Romans 10:2 that Israel has a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. So what we have here is that there indeed is knowledge in Israel *about* God, but the people do not *know* God, and thus there is no acknowledgment of God in the way life is lived. If the people had true knowledge of God, they would show it in a steady committed loyalty and responsibility to God in their lives.

On the one hand, we have experienced a surge of material knowledge, but as a nation we have not experienced a corresponding surge of the true knowledge of God. The result is that immorality has broken out, and our transgressions pass all bounds of reason, conscience, and God's law, with an endless stream of violence in the street. It is right there out of Hosea 4.

The world acknowledges the fact of God, but it does not know God. It lacks *this* knowledge because it lacks the experience of living life with God that results from *believing* God. This knowledge accrues to those who walk with, talk with, and submit to Him in marriage, on the job, in childrearing, obedience to parents, managing your money, and the use of one's time. In everything in life, God is the reason for *what we do* ! This Babylon *will not do* ! It will use His name, but it will not believe Him, and will not do what He says, except at the very lowest level of requirement.

Babylon will not accept revelation, but relies on its own intelligence and experience; thus they miss the true meanings, and create a system that *seems* right but is self-destructive, and that is Babylon's basic problem. It is a man-built creation apart from God, and thus the fruit produced can only reach as high as human nature will permit it. Everything that is produced will be a mixture of good and evil, just like James said.

We are going to turn to some very familiar scriptures in I John and touch bases with them.

**I John 2:15-16** Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust

of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

Did you catch that? It is not of the Father! The word "world" is *cosmos*, meaning an organized system, and here and elsewhere we find that it is the anti-God system that dominates this world. These verses bring us right back to the beginning once again, but this time not Genesis 10 and 11, but Genesis 3. We are not going to go back there because you are so familiar with it. There is no doubt that these verses provide us with a direct link right back to Adam and Eve, because it says there in Genesis 3, "they saw the tree was good for food." It was pleasant to the eye, and a tree to be desired to make one wise." Adam and Eve set the pattern for the formation of the Babylonish system by rejecting revelation. God shows, in simple terminology, the foundation of Babylon is in human reasoning based upon experimentation and influence by an antagonistic spirit, not revelation.

The origin, the foundation, the premise, upon which Babylon was built is wrong, and if the foundation of a structure is wrong, compensations must be made to the super structure. And so each generation comes along. Remember Ecclesiastes chapter 1. One generation comes, and one generation goes. Another generation comes, and another generation goes.

Each generation comes on the scene and is confronted by the enormous problems left over by the previous generation. Here we come back to the Fourth Turning. The same cycles keep occurring over and over again. Approximately every 80 to 100 years you will have 4 specific generations impacted by what is going on. And so each generation makes a futile attempt to straighten things out, but ***it cannot be straightened out!*** "What is crooked cannot be made straight." Do we believe God? That is what He said. When He came to earth He said, "A corrupt tree cannot produce good fruit." He probably picked that up partly from the principle in Ecclesiastes 1:15.

Each generation makes a futile attempt to straighten things out, but it cannot be straightened out. Each generation then proceeds to compound the original problem, because the spirit of the system is in them too. We are caught in a web of our own making, aided by Satan; but unless God comes to our rescue, there is no solution because we cannot change our own heart, let alone somebody else's. We can only assist, go along with, submit to God in order

that He can change it. We must drop our rebellion, and humble ourselves before Him, and do what He says to do. The two of them—what God does, and our little tiny efforts will help to ingrain that as part of our character.

All has been motivated by the same influences that God names as lust of the flesh, which is a self-orientated desire for bodily pleasure. There is the lust of the eyes, which is the tendency to be captivated or aroused by show, splendor, celebrity, as beheld by the eyes. There is the pride of life, which is a pretentious display, arrogant ambition, competition, and self-importance which usually has social connotations involving status, reputation, and what one as an individual defines as important to one's status or reputation. And so life, by and large, has a frustrating treadmill-like quality to it like Solomon describes in Ecclesiastes 1.

Again repeating, "What is so bad about Babylon?" is that it was begun with the wrong foundation, and it has continued to be motivated by the same spirit that began it—a system of disbelief, self-centeredness, lust, greed, and antagonism against God—all of which are sin. Even though the system produces good things, it cannot produce life. "There is a way that seems right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25)

When Evelyn and I came into the church, Herbert Armstrong was doing about 90% of the broadcasts on radio, and he used that verse as often as he did the two trees when he was an old man, and I did not understand it. I do now.

Regardless of how attractive Babylon is, regardless of its appeal to the senses, regardless of the rewards that it seems to hold out as a promise if we will allow it to conform us to it, it will only produce death! It is that simple. Maybe we ought to go back and read what Proverbs 23 says. He says, "Beware of the whore!" You can understand that in the context of the whole Bible that He is talking about Babylon, that she is a deep pit.

Babylon fails to give due heed to the shortcomings and inconsistency and antagonism of human nature. Babylon represents the futility and emptiness

of human effort divorced from the acknowledgment and service of God. All of man's systems have been produced apart from God without any benefit of His Holy Spirit. All we see out there is the fruit of these influences.

In I John 2:17 it says, "The world passes away, and the lust thereof: but he that does the will of God abides forever."

Now why is God against Babylon? Do you see the implication of death in that verse, and the direct contrast of eternal life that is also contained within it? God is against it because it cannot produce eternal life. Eternal life is the kind of life that is lived by God in immortality. It is the kind of life that is mentioned in John 17.

Babylon is on a course of self-destruction, and it is going to carry all who are a part of it on the same course. And so if one wants to live, one has to come out of it. One of the important lessons of these verses is that they show the profound cleavage between God and the world. If we are of the world, we die. If we are with God, we live. You cannot get two things that are farther apart than that: life and death.

**Deuteronomy 30:19** I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life that both you and your seed may live.

The Christian must make a conscious choice between the two. We must decide between life and death. We must consciously choose which one we are going to give our devotion to in regard to moral, spiritual, and ethical decision. Is it going to be God's, or is it going to be the world's? To refuse to choose *is* a choice, and the choice is the world.

It is in the many decisions that we make every day that we make the choices, and so Babylon contains the seeds of its own destruction. That is why letting its drive dominate our decision-making process is vanity. It is useless. There is nothing more futile than death. Those kinds of decisions will always produce what the world is today. They cannot lead to eternal life.

A stream can rise no higher than its source, and if the source of our spiritual bread and water is this world, we die. If we were given everlasting life, still

led by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, we would eternally produce what the world is today, and so we must come out. This means we must quit being like the world. Instead we are to live by the revelation of God, do the will of God, *be* like God, and live eternally.

Permanent value lies only in that which is within God's purpose. Anything that is not within God's purpose will simply, like I John 2:17 said, pass away. Therefore, a conclusion, is that immortality is inextricably bound in the kind of life a person lives in the flesh. Merely having the hope of eternal life, being able to logically prove the case for immortality, believing certain doctrines relative to immortality, and believing that we are part of the true church of God, does not cut the ice.

Babylon was produced, created, and brought into being by mankind living, yielding, and working, and influenced by human nature and Satan, doing the will of Satan. So when we are called, it is the only thing that we know. In like manner, the Kingdom of God will be produced by God through human beings who are living and working God's way, yielding to His Holy Spirit, and doing His will. It is following the same pattern as Babylon, but having a different vision, a different spirit, and following different rules for living. Eternal life comes from following truth.

**John 7:17** If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

We come to know God, to understand Him, to be intimate with Him by doing His will. I do not care how much knowledge one has about God, or how many technicalities one may understand about the Bible, or how much one can recite of it by memory; one comes to know God and His way of life by *doing* His will. It is by this same manner that the validity of Jesus' teaching is proved, and it is only by submitting to God willingly that we are in a position to evaluate Jesus' claims of Himself—that He indeed is Savior.

Christianity is a hands-on, intensely practical way of life. It is by this same means that something interesting happens as we follow along, by submitting to God's will. At first, what I am talking about seems almost contrary to what one would expect. That is, as one grows in the grace and knowledge of Jesus

Christ (becomes sanctified ever further), becomes holier, the more intense one's awareness becomes of immorality within one's self. It almost seems as though we become greater sinners than ever before, and it was this very reaction that led Paul to exclaim twenty-some years after his conversion, "Oh wretched man that I am!"

Can you understand the principle, that when he was just converted he could see and understand very little, but as he grew, he came to be able to see more and more all of the discrepancies within his character. He began to learn how tricky and hypocritical he was, that he said, "O wretched man that I am!" As he grew he began to understand and was able to comprehend more and more of the purity and the holiness of God. As he grew, he became worse, and God became holier. It is a very humbling experience.

Someone can tell you or me how to ice skate. They can tell you and me how to play a piano, bake a cake, fly to the moon, or how to obtain eternal life, but until one actually does the disciplines, the procedures and the exercises that are required, one can in no way understand or appreciate the subtleties, difficulties, or the beauties involved.

I really had a learning experience which I had told you of before, but it really rattled on my mind. Back in the late 70s, two times one of the deacons in the Augusta church was able to get tickets for his whole family and me to go and see the Masters Golf Tournament in Augusta.

The first time around, I was following Arnold Palmer for a good while. One of the things I noticed was how appreciative the people were, not only of Arnold Palmer, but also of the other golfers on the course as well. That bugged me. I could not figure out why. I had been to oodles of sports events—baseball, football, basketball, hockey, you name it—but this was my first time to a major golf tournament.

The people who were there at this golf tournament were different from any other spectators I have ever seen at any other sporting event. It finally dawned on me. The people who were watching had all tried to do what the golf professionals were doing, and they knew they could not do it, and they appreciated it. They could see the subtleties involved in what these men were able to accomplish. They had swung a club at a little white pill that was

standing still on the ground, and they still could not hit it where they wanted to hit it.

That is the same way with a Christian. As the Christian grows, he begins to appreciate all the subtleties that he sees in someone who does it far better than he can. He begins to appreciate, and he is humbled by how weak and desperately inept he is at doing what his mind wants him to do, but he somehow always falls short of the perfection that his mind envisioned. The solution is that God is with us, and He says, "Do not give up. I am with you. I can bring you to the end of the course. Do not give up! Keep on going!" Just because you fail from time to time, that does not mean you are not going to do it right the next time. Our hope lies in Him, and our trust that He will indeed enable us to do what He wants us to do, and He will bring the growth that He says He will do.

Brethren, eternal life cannot be slipped into like a suit of ready-made clothes, but rather it is something created by God through us, making the efforts to live it. There must be a definite act of the will to do God's will—a settled determined purpose to fulfill it. We cannot do this if we are allowing Babylon to constantly lure us back into its grip. We have to be very aware of the alluring appeal out there to participate within it, as fascinating as it is. We have to do what Joseph did, and turn away from it, to make that sacrifice in order to be one who is going to be in God's kingdom.

I am going to give you 4 things about Babylon:

1. Babylon was begun on the wrong foundation. It was born out of arrogance and defiance against God and His purpose. The foundation is in human reasoning, not revelation and trust in God. Thus Babylon knows about God, but it does not *know* God.
2. Babylon is a system designed to produce commitment to the self, and thus each generation compounds the problems of the previous generation because the same spirit still drives it. Thus Babylon cannot give due heed to the shortcomings and inconsistencies of human nature. It cannot be straightened out.

3. Despite being able to produce good things through technology, history proves the fruit to be bad, as witnessed in the cultures of people worldwide. Thus, Babylon is passing away. It cannot produce life, either abundant, or eternal, and anyone driven by Babylon will pass with it.

4. The wonderful world tomorrow will be produced following the same general pattern as Babylon, but the difference is that those in it will have been led by, yielded to God through His truth, His Spirit, His vision, His way, and these will produce His fruit.

So that is what is so bad about Babylon. The ultimate Babylon is formed, and it is producing its evil fruit, and it will exert ever more pressure upon the citizens of this world to conform to it, and so we had better use the time to be prepared for that pressure, because God's purpose for it will stand. Babylon will be destroyed.