***Separation from the World System

RV219-01***

Our subject is "Political Babylon," number 3, in Revelation 18:1-24.

**Babylon**

We have seen in this that an angel from heaven reflecting the glory of God appears to John. The angel announces the fall of Babylon, which is the origin of false religion and of tyrannical government. The site of the city of Babylon, following God's judgment, will become a wasteland occupied by demons and loathsome birds. This event will take place near the end of the tribulation era.

God's severe judgment on Babylon is due to the city being the origin of the religion of idolatry under Nimrod. The religion of idol worship is accompanied by immoral practices violating the laws of the Creator. The political rulers of nations over the centuries, we were told, have condoned this system of religion, and of tyrannical government, and have practiced the moral practice taught them by Babylon. Babylon has instructed mankind on how to commercialize sin – how to cash in on sensuality, and to become wealthy. The sensual lust patterns of the old sin nature are dignified as the means for worshiping the idol gods, and to experience (supposedly) personal freedom: "Break the moral code, and be really free."

**Another Voice**

So, the end of the evil of religious and political Babylon at the end of the tribulation has finally run its course, and God's wrath descends upon Satan's city on the Euphrates. In verse 4, we read, "And I heard another voice from heaven saying, 'Come out of her, My people.'" The apostle John hears a voice from heaven. It's a voice other than the angel who has been speaking to him. It comes from the presence of God, and it says, "Come out of her." The word "come out" the strong Greek word "exerchomai." "Erchomai" means "to come." This first part of the word "exerchomai" is a preposition added to indicate "come on out," and physically separate yourself. Then in the Greek language, to emphasize this even more, God the Holy Spirit adds this word again: "Come out, out of." So, you almost have to translate it as "Come out of out of." It's hitting away: "Get out of Babylon – physically separating yourself." And in the Greek, it just jumps out on the page as a strong emphasis to separate from Babylon.

It's addressed to someone that the voice calls "My people," which indicates that the speaker is addressing believers, and that that speaker is, in all likelihood, God the Father Himself. He is speaking to believers who are still living in Babylon near the end of the seven-year tribulation period: "Come out of her (out of Babylon, the city), My people," the believers of God."

**Separation from Evil**

Throughout Scripture, we read of the principle of separation from evil. This is a tough nut for Christians today, because to be separated from evil puts you in the position of being separated from a lot that surrounds us in our society – people we associate with, and the institutions of society. But God has always required that His believers live by a different moral standard than that of Satan's world.

I have had Christians tell me that when you deal with the world, especially in business, you have to act like them. You have to deal the way they deal. If they're dirty, you must be dirty. If they're cheaters, you must be cheaters. That is not a biblical point of view. Christians are called to a standard of separation from that which is the standard of the world's practice.

**Be Transformed**

Nowhere is that enunciated more forcefully than Romans 12:2, which says, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is; that which is good and acceptable and perfect." "Do not be conformed to this world" means do not be patterned after this world system of Satan with its evil basis of morality. But it say, "Be transformed" (be completely changed). The Greek word means to be changed from the inside like a caterpillar worm is transformed internally to become a butterfly externally. It says, "Be transformed from within by the renewing of your mind." "The renewing of the mind" can only come through the intake of doctrine into the mentality of the soul. As the result of that doctrinal orientation, you will not be operating on the world's standards. You will be operating on the will of God, and you will therefore produce that which is inherently good and that which is acceptable; that is, it is well-pleasing to God; and, that which is perfect (spiritually mature).

So, it is clear that this is God's plan for believers. We are not to walk along and to live our lives as if we were part of the messy system.

The whole Jewish race itself began, you remember, with a divine call to Abraham to separate himself from the evil culture of Babylon that was preserved for us in Genesis 12:1: "The Lord said to Abraham, 'Go forth from your country (Ur of the Chaldees), and from your relatives, and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you.'" Historically, as God's judgments are about to descend on a place, God, in grace, warns the believers to get out of that place.

A classic example, of course, is the nephew of Abraham, Lot, who chose to live in the vile city of Sodom. Finally, God's judgment was going to destroy that place and reduce it to ashes such that there was nothing left of it, yet He was going to preserve the believers. So, in Genesis 19:12-13, we read that God sends these angels (they looked like men): "And the men said to Lot, 'Whom else have you here? A son-in-law and your sons and your daughters, and whomever you have in the city, bring them out of the place; for we are about to destroy this place, because their outcry has become so great before the Lord that the Lord has sent us to destroy it." I want you to grasp the principle of physical separation from evil. You get out of evil places. That's one of the first things that's involved in separation. Yes, separation involves spiritual detachment. It involves your thinking, but you don't go to places where evil is being performed that you are going to take in; that you're going to absorb; that you're going to be impressed with; and, that you're going to have mental images of (portraits in your mind) that you won't wipe out, and that will be there.

Drop down to Genesis 19:15:16: "When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Up. Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be swept away in the punishment of the city. The son and the son-in-law didn't want to go. So, the angel says, "Get your wife; get those two daughters; and, go out of here." Can you believe what happened next? "Lot hesitated, so the men seized his hand and the hand of his wife and the hands of his two daughters, for the compassion of the Lord was upon him, and they brought him out and put him outside the city. The two angels simply grabbed him and jerked him out forcefully without any further delay, and got them outside the city.

Sometimes God's grace is so great that it overrides our stupidity of where we place ourselves (from which we should have been separating ourselves), and He manages to get us out. Other times, He leaves us to the consequences of our stubbornness.

**Physical Separation**

Physical separation is a big part of separating from evil. This same kind of warning was given to the Jews when ancient Babylon was about to be brought down by God. Jeremiah 50:8-9 refer to this. God says, "Wander away from the midst of Babylon. Go forth from the land of the Chaldeans. Be also like male goats at the head of the flock (leading his female goats out of the presence of danger). For, behold. I'm going to arouse and bring up against Babylon a hoard of the great nations from the land of the north. They will draw up their battle lines against her, for there she will be taken captive. Their arrows will be like an expert warrior who does not return empty-handed. The time came for the Babylonian empire to be brought down. And God warned that that destruction would center upon that city of Babylon, its capital. He warned his believers, the Jews, to get out of the city.

Jeremiah 51:45 also says, "Come forth from her midst, My people, and each of you save yourselves from the fierce anger of the Lord." If you're going to stay in a place where God's judgment is going to be impacted, then you will suffer from the consequences of that judgment. Just because you're a believer, you will not escape the consequences of not separating yourself from evil places.

So, God warns the righteous here in Babylon to separate themselves from this city upon which His imminent wrath is to be imposed. The final seven bowl plagues are about to be poured out on the earth at this point of warning in Revelation 18:4. That's one of the reasons he is saying, "Get out." The final plagues are about to turn loose. The bowl plague judgments place special emphasis upon Babylon's punishment. It is at this point, at a previous warning of three angels, that we read about in Revelation 14 probably is made. In Revelation 14:6-12, we have four angels who make a proclamation to the tribulation world, and each angel's message is significant for a final opportunity before God's wrath is poured out.

**The First Angel**

In Revelation 14:6-7, one angel proclaims the Creator's eternal gospel of grace salvation: "And I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people. And he said with a loud voice, 'Fear God. Give Him glory because the power of his judgment is come, and worship Him who made the heaven, and the earth, and the sea, and the springs of heaven." He tells them that they should stop following Nimrod's religion of worshiping idols; worship the real Creator (the real God); and, worship Him most of all by believing His gospel of grace salvation.

That's one of the first steps in separation – spiritual separation from evil. You do not sit in a place where you have a con artist like the charismatic preachers who are teaching you falsehood, and making you of your treasures, and making fools of you in the way they cause you to conduct yourselves. You don't sit there in that congregation. You don't sit there in a room with those false leaders. You get out. You don't want your ears to hear the corrosive message that they're preaching to you.

**The Second Angel**

The second angel, in verse 8, reveals the imminent destruction of Babylon: "And another angel (the second one) followed, saying, 'Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great; she who has made all nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality.'" God hates Babylon with a great passion, because out of Babylon has flowed all the evil under which mankind has suffered from time immemorial.

**The Third Angel**

The last angel warns against accepting the mark of the beast on penalty of entering hell. Once you take the mark of the beast on your body, you're going to spend eternity in the lake of fire with that mark. There's no turning back. So, in verse 9, another angel (the third one) followed them, saying with a loud voice, 'If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or upon his hand, he also will drink the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full-strength in the cup of His anger. And He will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest day and night – those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.

So, believers, are you thinking of changing your mind? Or, those of you, more specifically in the tribulation, who have not taken that mark, and you are considering whether you should commit yourself to Christ. This angel says, "Do it."

Verse 12 says, "Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus." Those who have believed in Christ are not going to make the mistake of changing your mind and taking the mark. They can't do it. They're secure. Those who take the mark are going to be doomed. So, these angels with these terrible proclamations probably come in right at this point when God is saying to believers and to potential believers, "Make your choice, and get out of Babylon. I'm about to judge the city as I did Sodom of old. That's the comparison that the Bible makes to the destruction of Babylon. It's going to be like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah – nothing but ashes, and nothing whatsoever left of the place.

What is it that God is asking us to separate ourselves from? One way the Bible describes it is by the word "world" ("cosmos"). And that refers not just to this earth, but it refers to an organization on this earth which Satan has created. It is a call to separate ourselves from the world system. This is where it comes to touch with us, because every moment of our day, we are moving through this world system of Satan, and we are obligated before God to be on our guard of not picking up the ways of the world system.

**Scriptures on Separating Ourselves from the World**

Let me lead you through a few Scriptures that will describe that system for us, and give you a perspective on it.

**Every Nation is Governed by the Devil**

First of all, Matthew 4:8-9: "Again the devil took Him to a very high mountain (that is Jesus, here at the mount of temptation), and showed Him all of the kingdoms of the world in their glory. He said to Him, "All these things I will give you if you fall down and worship me.'" Every nation on the face of the world is governed by the devil. He possesses all the nations on the face of the world.

If within that nation there is a large number of believers who are oriented to the Word of God, they give the devil a fit. They just create a lot of devilment for the devil, because those believers are operating on a different standard, and they put a crimp in his operation. That's what the United States has been like. That's what any country that has been the inheritor or reformation Christianity, where it is centered in the Bible as the authoritative, inerrant Word of God, has blossomed out. Every aspect of society has found mercy brought to it because of that kind of biblical Christianity. Women have been elevated to their proper role in the biblical standard instead of being treated like some chattel that you buy and sell. Children have been cared for instead of abused. Orphanages and hospitals have been created. All of the things that are the normal expression of biblical Christianity have come to bless a nation that has that viewpoint, because it's anchored to the Bible as the Word of God.

That can neutralize the fact that Satan ultimately runs things, and he does. And in time, God will permit the best of nations to generate, which is what you are seeing happening before your eyes in the United States today. That's why I stress to you these articles in the handouts, because this is being made possible by the fact that the restraint of the Constitution is being outflanked. And anybody in Congress who raises that question is looked at strangely by his colleagues. I have read where congressmen have been said, "Can we do this? This isn't authorized by the Congress." They said that the other congressmen have looked at like, "Are you weird or something? We're a democracy. As long as 51% of us agree to do something in Congress, we can do it." Where's the Constitution? It has been outflanked. All that's necessary is the power of force of driving through.

It's like that ad you're seeing on TV about this football team that is bringing a truck on the line. They create a hole, and this truck drives through. The two commentators who are calling the plays are describing how this team never loses since they have this truck on the line, and have it driving through. One commentator turns to the other and says, "Can they do that?" And the other one looks at him and says, "Are you nuts? What kind of a question is that? That's what Congress does about the Constitution: "Can we do this to the Constitution?" They respond, "What do you mean? Are you crazy? What's that got to do with anything?"

Be aware of that. This is separation from our biblical heritage, and it is costly, and it is bringing us national destruction. And in time, you and I (if the rapture doesn't take place) are personally going to suffer. Don't make any mistake about that. We are going to suffer the consequences of the inroads against our Constitution and its biblical principles, and against the socialism that's being imposed upon us. We're going to suffer.

John 12:31 adds this to the world system: "Now judgment is upon this world. Now the ruler of this world shall be cast out." Well, Satan is the ruler. He is the controller, but judgment has been passed on him. He's not going to win.

John 14:30 says, "I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me." Jesus said, "I have very little more to say to you, because the one who runs this world is now going to be permitted to take over and to do his work, which will lead to My death. And out of that will come the plan of God for the salvation of the world.

Ephesians 2:1-2: "You who are dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience." The course of this world is evil. It is according to the prince of the power of the earth, which is Satan. He is the one who is the dominating person, and his realm is the atmospheric heavens.

Ephesians 6:12 gives us another perspective on the world system: "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers (these are spirit rulers – demons), against the powers (demon powers), against the world forces of this darkness (demon powers – demon darkness), against the spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places." All of this is description of demonic activity in the world system.

So, while there are terrible human beings who are doing terrible things that are undermining our wellbeing and our liberties, please remember to look behind those faces and behind those eyes. Look deeply into those faces on TV who are now in charge of the tyranny that is being imposed upon us. Look deeply into those eyes. Behind that, you will see glowing back the red eyes of a demon. That is the force that is driving.

Turn to 1 John 3:15-15. This is what the world system is all about: "Do not love the world or the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world: the lusts of the flesh (the sin nature); the lusts of the eyes; and, the boastful pride of life is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away, and also its lusts, but the one who does the will of God abides forever.

So, these few verses give you a very grim picture of the world system. The world of Satan is a structured social system organized to oppose God and His Word, the Bible, and to enslave people to Satan and to his evil ways. That's the whole point of the world system. Every person you do business with; every person you are in social relationships with; every entertainer; every course of government; every liberal religious structure; and, every educational institution – they're all organized by Satan to do one thing: to oppose God and His moral principles, and to exalt Satan and enslave men to the evil of satanic activities. Satan has organized his world system to function on the principles of force, greed, selfishness, ambition, and pleasure. These very topics (these very characteristics) are what are promoted in what is called the satanic Bible, written by the high priest Anton LaVey. All of the things that God says, "Don't do," the satanic Bible says, "This is what you should do."

The world system of Satan, or you might call it by its Latin term "Cosmos Diabolicus," is imposing; it is powerful; it enforces its will on humanity; and, it attracts humanity at the same time. Outwardly, this world system, please remember, is religious; it is scientific; it is cultured; it is fashionable; it is intellectual; it is elegant; it is wealthy; and, it is politically correct. That's the way the world system is on the outside. Those of us who have been trained in the Word of God should have the capacity not to be impressed by some scientific gobbledygook like evolution, or the earth warming, or the ozone holes, or any of these pseudo-scientific conclusions which real science regularly refutes.

We should not be impressed by the fact, when the award ceremonies of Hollywood are held, that all these people come on stage with fashionable gowns, and they act with such cultured refinement. They are brute beasts. They are the outward display of Satan's vulgar, corrupt world system. They may look elegant and gorgeous, and they are wealthy, and they wear their various ribbons for being politically correct. All of them are incorrect with God. The world system of Satan's expresses simply the lust patterns of the sin nature as its lifestyle.

So, separation from the world system is very definitely call upon for the believer. Here in Revelation, it's a physical separation from the world system as it exists in the tribulation at that time – to get out from the very judgment of God by getting out of the city.

Now, having said that, I must tell you also that separation from the world does not mean no contact with the "Cosmos Diabolicus" for our witnessing ministry. We have to be in touch with the world if we are to fulfill our mission of being witnesses to that world. What "separation" means is no complicity and no conformity to the moral wickedness of that world. Jesus made this clear in John 17:15 when He said this prayer: "I do not ask You to take them out of the world (believers), but to keep them from the evil one." Jesus was saying, "I want them separated from the world, but I don't want them out of the world where they cannot witness to the world. I want them uncontaminated from its evil.

**Do not be Unequally Yoked Together**

Separation from the world is demanded simply because there is a wide chasm between what constitutes the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan; and, that which is appropriate for those in the Kingdom of God, as over against the kingdom of Satan. Turn to 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. This is a classic passage on what is appropriate for those of us who are in the Kingdom of God, and what we are to be separated from: "Do not be bound together with unbelievers." Here is a divine command to believers not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. You cannot pull a wagon if you are unequally yoked. You cannot have a weak animal and a strong animal, and expect to be able to pull the wagon smoothly.

You can apply that to all kinds of relationships in life, not the least of which is marriage. If you marry somebody who is beneath you spiritually, you're in for big trouble, and you will not be able to pull the wagon equally. What happens too often is that the strong person and the right person finally gives up; sets back; and, let the weak take charge, and that's how the wagon is pulled. Do not be bound together with unbelievers for.

Then we have five rhetorical questions, with no answers given. You should be able to sense the answer to yourself.

**What Partnership has Right and Wrong?**

First, for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness? What partnership can exist between what is right and what is not right? How can there be any relationship, socially or economically, with doing things that are right and doing things that are wrong? This is a contrast between Bible doctrine (righteousness) and negative volition to that righteousness. You can't have them both. If you are going to be true to doctrine, that's one thing. If you're not going to be true to it, that's another thing. You can't have them both.

**What Fellowship has Light with Darkness?**

The second question: "Or, what fellowship has light with darkness? What fellowship can light have with darkness? Spiritual precepts and spiritual blindness? How can the two be related? How can seeing and being blind be there at the same time? How can the way things ought to be, be the way things are under Satan's dark system. They can't be.

**What Harmony has Christ with Belial?**

Question number three: "Or, what harmony has Christ with Belial?" "Belial" here refers to Satan. What kind of harmony is there between Jesus Christ and the devil? Between the Creator and the creation? Are there on the same level? No. Look at the contrast on the Mount of temptation. While Satan scurried around, trying slyly to cause Christ to sin by worshiping him, Jesus acted with enormous dignity and answered him from doctrine every time, and stopped him dead in his tracks. That's because there was no harmony between what Satan wanted to do and what Christ wanted to do.

**What Commonality have a Believer and an Unbeliever?**

Question number four: "Or, what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? That's a good question. What's the relationship between human viewpoint and divine viewpoint? If you get into a marriage with an unbeliever, what makes you think that you're going to have a common ground with that person? It's going to be horrid? It's bad enough if you marry somebody with whose old sin nature you're not compatible. That creates enough problems in itself, let alone if you don't have spiritual compatibility.

**What Agreement has the Temple of God with Idols?**

The fifth question: "Or, what agreement has the temple of God with idols?" What agreement is there between God's temple and idol temples? What agreement is there between grace salvation in God's temple, and works salvation in the idol temple? In God's temple, there's uplifting worship. In the idol temple, there is degrading. And you will see in the next session what degradation really means, when the East enraged the Christianity of the West.

All five rhetorical questions here indicate that there's no compatibility between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. That's why it is right for us to be separated from the world. So, don't play that compromise like you can play ball with the world system. You cannot you. You can only walk through it and try to keep yourself clean, as indeed you can.

Then, interestingly enough, at the end 2 Corinthians 6:16, God the Holy Spirit says, "For we (Christians) are the temple of the living God, just as God has said, 'I will dwell in them, and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people. In the church age. God's temple is the Christian's body. That tells us that God the Holy Spirit is constantly with each of you believers. Please don't insult Him, and grieve Him by being part of the world's system of Satan. Don't humiliate Him by pretending that He's not there. Don't ignore Him as if He were not present. At the worst time that you're acting like a dog, He's there. Remember that. He will never leave you nor forsake you.

Have you ever been in the presence of two people who are fighting with each other like a cat and a dog? It's embarrassing, isn't it? You say, "Well, listen. Maybe this is a bad time for me to call, ugh," and you try to figure out how to evaporate while these two beasts are snarling at each other. Well, if those are two believers, there is someone else who is there even after you leave: the Spirit of God.

So, the next time you want to raise your voice, and be a screaming banshee, and a violent character or whatever, just remember that the Spirit of God is sitting there holding His head, and grieved, and in great tears over what you're doing.

The divine command in verse 17 is basically to separate yourself from the world system: "'Come out from their midst and be separate,’ says, the Lord, "and do not touch what is unclean." And what is unclean is what is sinful.

The separated believer is welcomed warmly by God as a father receiving His children. Verse 18 says, "'And I will welcome you, and I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters to Me,' says the Lord Almighty." Isn't it nicer with the Holy Spirit feels at ease in your presence? He's not embarrassed by your conduct, or where you've taken Him. And God the Father is proud to call you His Son or His daughter.

The Lord Jesus Christ, of course, is the believer's ultimate great pattern of this principle of separation from the world. Hebrews 7:26 says of the Lord, "For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest: holy; innocent; undefiled; separated from sinners; and, exalted above the heavens." These are persons separated from the sin system of Satan.

**Great Fellowship with God**

Separation from the world system has great benefits. If you separate yourself from the world system and its lifestyle, you will find that you will have a great and intimate relationship of simple fellowship with God the Father (2 Corinthians 6:17-18 – we just read it).

**Great Fruitfulness in Christian Service**

You also find that there will be great fruitfulness in your Christian service. 2 Timothy 2:2 promises that.

**The Friend of God**

And, wonder of wonders, James 4:4 says that if you separate yourself from the world, you will be the friend of God. No greater honor could have been heaped upon Abraham than to have had said of him that he was a friend of God: God, your friend.

Here in Revelation 18:4, we are given the reason for this call to separation. To whatever believers are still in Babylon: "In order that you may not participate." "Participate is this Greek word "sugkoinoneo." The word "koinoneo" comes from the Greek word "koinonia," which means fellowship. Sometimes you hear about a Bible class called the "koinonia" Bible class. They're getting that from this word: the "fellowship” Bible class. "Sug" adds "with:" "together with" – "fellowship together with," and it is emphatic on the idea of your sharing something with someone else.

So, God, get out of the physical presence of Babylon so that you do not share in the fellowship of her sins. This is the word for sin, which is "hamartia." This is the word for sin in the Bible which is describing the target in summer camp. You have the bull's eye, and every time you shoot, your arrows go everywhere but on the bull's eye. Those of you kids who are in summer camp are spending your time walking behind the hay bales, finding your arrows, which have gone over the target. In my day in the Marine Corps, when you go to the final qualifying on the rifle course, every time you missed the target, they used to have a pole on which they had a pair of red women's bloomers, and they would wave those red drawers over from the guys who were behind the embankment (who would pull the targets down and paste them up). They would wave the red drawers, and you would know that you didn't even hit it. That was very humiliating.

So, this word "hamartia" means you've miss the mark of God's standard of absolute righteousness. It says here that Babylon is a filth hole of immorality that misses the mark of God's standard of righteousness. That is her sins. Do not have common fellowship with her. Get out of her. Separate from her. This is a call to flee from sharing in the sins of Babylon. It is a lot easier to avoid sinning if you're not on site where you can do it. Don't put yourself in the position of opportunity to do evil.

2 Timothy 2:22 puts it this way: "Flee from youthful lusts." That means just get away from it. If you're with somebody, and immorality is threatening, then get away. Walk out. If you've had it up to your neck, and you're about ready to shoot your mother-in-law, get away from her. Don't kill her. Just get away from her. Flee the opportunity and the temptation for sin. That's the way you pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace – all those who are called by God from a pure heart. Get out of town to escape the fellowship of the evil that these believers are potentially threatened by in Babylon.

**That you may not Receive her Plagues**

The second reason for getting out is: "That you may not receive." That means to be given something personally by God. This is in the subjunctive mood which says that this is potentially something that can happen to you if you stay in Babylon, Christians. And what potentially can happen is: "That you will receive of her plagues" (her "plege"). This is referring back to Revelation 16, specifically to the seven bowl plagues of God, and especially (in Revelation 16) plague number seven, which is against Babylon itself. The events that you are reading of here in Revelation 17, remember, come after the seventh bowl plague on Babylon has been poured out. Revelation 18 is describing the end of political and economic Babylon after the seventh bowl plague has been executed. Believers that are in a place under God's divine judgment are going to suffer the effects of that judgment along with unbelievers. So, get out.

So, the believers in Babylon are under intense, personal, mental, emotional, spiritual, physical pressure. They are the objects of societal hatred at that time, and of government persecution. They refuse to participate in the worldwide worship of the antichrist. Therefore, they are not welcome. They have rejected the mark of the beast, so they can't buy and sell. They have to live in some way. Personal financial resources are all under government computer control. So, you don't have access to your wealth, such as it may be. Believing Jews are especially under the attack of the society, and they are going to survive at the hands of the help of the believing gentiles.

However, believers still are able to leave the city. That's why the admonition from heaven is: "Get out of the city."

This does raise the question: why are there any believers in Babylon near the end of the tribulation? They know the city's moral degeneration. They know it's destined destruction. Why would they be there, to have to be told now to get on out? Well, it may be similar to the deadly attraction that was that Sodom was to Lot and his family. There were certain personal benefits. That's why Lot went there. And believers are always tempted to compromise, and you and I are no different. We're always tempted to compromise with Satan's world system in order to get some ambition fulfilled, or to get some financial gain.

There is a strange attraction to the world for Christian intellectuals; for Christian entertainers; for Christian businessmen; for Christian professionals; and, for Christian liberal ministers. There's a strange attraction to the world's system for these people who ought to be among the most who should know better. Seeking the acceptance and the approval of one's colleagues in the world comes at great cost to one's walk with God the Father. So, you have to decide whether you care, in your profession, whether they approve of you.

Suppose that you're a creationist scientist. If you want the approval of your evolutionary colleagues, you're going to have to compromise, and play ball with them, and that isn't working as a friend of God. You take your stand, and there is a subtle attraction. I don't want you to think that this separation is so easy, even for these people in the tribulation.

I recognize that the desire to survive in the tribulation world may entice some of these believers to play ball, short of taking the mark of the beast. It may even rationalize their compromise with the evil system as a way of witnessing to it. But you cannot effectively witness to something in which the people that you're witnessing to know you're a hypocrite. God's message to the believers here is not: "To be like her, My people, and be part of her lifestyle, so as to appease her and win her to God." That isn't what He said. He said, "Don't be like her. Get out of her. Then sound your message, and I will bring those out who should be won."

God's message to believers is to separate so as to distance ourselves from the sins of Babylon, and from the plagues of God that are about to come on her. Recall (and you may look up on your own) Jeremiah 51:45, which was another occasion when God called His people to get out. The travesty is to give your love and your loyalty to the world system instead of to Christ. That's a false allegiance, and it leads to a false conduct.

So, persecuted believers are always tempted to compromise with Satan's world to take off the pressure. But it brings you divine retribution. You will be tempted to compromise to take off the pressure.

Believers remaining in Babylon will not escape the consequences of God's instructions if they don't get out. Lot's wife, when she turned and looked back at Sodom was, in effect, going back to Sodom, and the destruction of the judgment of God came on her, and she turned into a pillar of salt.

Separation from the world system is what we are called upon to do. When we say that, it comes to the heart of who has your ear. What preacher has your ear? Next time, we will look at the preacher who holds your ear, and who will destroy your separation from the world system.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1993

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