***The Mourning of the Mariners  
  
RV224-01***

We are studying "Political Babylon," segment number 13, in Revelation 18:1-24.

Wonder of Wonders: the nation of Israel is now asking for membership, or some kind of association, with NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Would you believe that? Why would the Jews want to be associated with a military alliance such as NATO? Israel wants to be part of an alliance of nations that have gathered together for mutual military assistance. So, an attack on one of those nations would be viewed as an attack on them all, and they will all come to the defense of that one nation.

Israel wants to be part of NATO because the Jews increasingly realize that they need someone to help protect them against the potential onslaught of a United Arab world equipped with nuclear weapons. This is becoming a serious matter. When you saw Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin, you saw Yitzhak reach over, with some hesitancy, and shake the hand of that brutal terrorist Arafat, who had killed busloads of Jewish children to attack the Jews, and to declare that they had no right to exist, that took a lot for the premier of Israel to reach over and shake that bloody hand. Nothing could have forced him to do that except his internal turmoil over the survival of his nation. The Jews need somebody to protect them. The Jews are, therefore, even willing to come to some agreement with someone like the PLO group, giving up (of all things) areas of Judea and Galilee, that West Bank territory, just so they could have a right to exist. That's a big chunk of Israel. That's a big part of their country now, and Jerusalem is in it. All of this is because things are getting desperate.

This action on the part of Israel, however, is exactly what the Bible predicts will drive Israel into a treaty arrangement with a super powerful personality known as the antichrist, with whom they will enter a seven-year period. At that time, the Bible indicates that the Jews will finally come to where they know something in the way of peace. They will then resume their temple sacrifices by building the third temple, and the animal sacrifices will resume. They're ready to do that now. They've got all the instruments of sacrifice worked out. All they need is someone that says, "Yes, you can exist," and they don't have to look over their shoulder that they're going to be attacked and destroyed.

The current movements for peace by Israel have been taken, interestingly enough, apart from the leadership of the United States. President Clinton was an addition that was in the way when the peace between Arafat and Rabin was signed in Washington. It was done there just because they need America's help. But the United States had nothing to do with that. These countries are bypassing the supposed superpower. However, I remind you again that there is no indication in the Bible that the United States is a power factor in the end time events. So, the United States is not going to be a potential protector for Israel. And she seems, almost by divine guidance, to recognize that, and to be moving in a different direction for her help. The United States, as a matter of fact, is going to decline as a superpower. The power center will move from North America to Western Europe. The United States is nowhere in that picture. This is just as the Soviet Union, almost overnight, is no longer a force to contend with, the same thing is going to happen to the United States, as unbelievable as that seems.

**National Decline of the United States**

However, there are a number of factors which are contributing and signaling this national decline of the United States. The liberals in our country don't recognize this. They're the ones who are promoting these factors because they think that that is freedom and justice and equality. But these factors are the things that are bringing the United States down from being a superpower. They're readily evident today.

**Morality**

For example, the abandonment of the moral principles of Scripture, both in public and private life. Only this morning on TV, a discussion program was again arguing that character doesn't count in public figures: We don't care how much of an animal an elected official is. We don't care how dishonest he is, or what lack of integrity he has – just so he can do the job." That was unthinkable only a short time ago in American history. And, of course, it's wrong. Character does count, as we're learning very readily.

What we have is an immorality being promoted in the public media and in the entertainment world, and we're tolerating it. That brings a nation down, because it has no anchor point of what is right and what is wrong.

**Women Leaders**

There's the fact of the increasing role of women in government, who are in places of authority over men; in religion, women are in authority over men; and, in the family, we cannot find men with command spiritual presence to lead the family and to make the decisions – and for the woman to at least say, "Well, I don't know if this is the right thing to do, but I will respect your authority. We'll go with it and see what God does." That kind of a domination of the female is what Israel was told by God when He said, "I want to tell you how you've degenerated: your women rule over you." That cannot work. It brought destruction in the Garden of Eden. It's nothing wrong with women, and it's nothing inferior in women, but it's a system of an order of authority, and it doesn't work any other way.

**Crime**

There's the rampant crime of a heartless and mindless nature, like the shooting at the Irving Mall between a couple of punks; and, a father who was sitting there in an afternoon, having lunch with his family after shopping, lies dead on the floor, and simply in front of them. The outrage has swept through this city. People are walking around with guns, and shooting at each other because they're gangs, and they're looking for trouble.

**Family Values**

Children are being reared by others then their own mothers. The family's first step to being destroyed is mothers not rearing their small children.

The undisciplined, disrespectful youth are out of parental control. Watch the conduct of the children around you, sometimes in the very presence of their parents. That's what appalls me. I stand around here at some events, like social events, and I watch what children do, and their parents are standing right next to them, and there's no hand of restraint put out upon them. We have undisciplined, disrespectful youth. We got a lot of that in the academy where we are appalled by what a child will say to a parent – a new kid coming in who hasn't learned the discipline and the restraint that eventually they'll learn with us.

We have the tragedy of single parent families, where a child grows up lacking the distinction of gender roles.

We have the high rate of the brutality of divorce. One of the sorriest things I ever heard recently was some woman who was pursuing divorce, and her reason for it was, "I just wanted to be happy." Who told you that you had to be happy in life? All you have to do is be faithful to God, and sometimes that's not always fun. God says in Scripture, "I hate divorce," and the reason He hates it is because it's such a brutal thing to do to each other, let alone to the children.

A nation that is degenerating will take this 50%-and-more divorce rate that we have.

We have a huge number of illegitimate births without shame. In some cities, 80% of the children are born out of wedlock, and it's done without shame.

**Abortion**

There's the enormity of the murder of millions of unborn children through abortion. What a heartless act that is! It's a heartless act. How can a doctor or a nurse participate in the snuffing out (the tearing apart in the womb) of a child? Have you seen Schindler's List at the theater? Steel your stomach, and you'll see what really happened in Nazi Germany. You'll come out wondering, "How could a soldier; how could anybody; and, how could even the military, under orders, do that to other human beings – look in their eyes and do what they did to people? But we do the same thing. We sacrifice to the god of Baal our unborn children.

**Sexual Perversion**

There's the public acceptance of sexual perversions (abominations). They call it an alternate lifestyle, but it's not an alternate lifestyle with God. And at the highest echelons of even the American government, abominations are not only condoned, but everything is done to incorporate them into our public life.

**Government**

There's the great dependence upon government to provide for one's needs and desires at the price of personal freedom. Remember, that is the name of the game for a liberal: get people to be dependent upon the government so that you will constantly reelect him to public office.

There's the undermining of free enterprise capitalism with creeping socialism. One analyst the other day said that 50% of America is now, according to the laws that Congress has passed, and every one of those laws should have been declared unconstitutional, therefore, by the Supreme Court. That is the deterioration of the core basis of our freedom.

There's the violation of the United States constitutional principle of limited federal government within its enumerated powers. Instead of the states being supreme, we now have a national government so that they tell the states what to do.

There's the non-payable national debt, which is constantly being increased by political leaders for the benefit of getting the votes of the beneficiaries. We're told that within a matter of less than two years, the interest on the national debt will be greater, at this rate, than all the income tax which is collected. Then what?

**The Military**

There's is the undermining and the quiet dismantling (most of you don't even know it) of the American military establishment, while promoting at the same time, a superior United States military force to be dominant over all nations.

**Public Schools**

Public schools, which increasingly cannot educate, substitute OBE (Outcome-Based Education) to create citizens for a new world order. The concentration is on your attitude and your emotions, not on your ability to do reading, writing, and arithmetic. And when I say this, I get public school people who get mad and say, "No, it's not like that." I must think that they must not even know what's going on under their nose, because it is like that.

**New Age Religion**

There is the popularity of New Age religion, and its claim to human godhood, and that you are independent of the God of the Bible. That's heady stuff. That'll bring a nation down.

**The Environment**

The creation of false environmental crises are all created as an excuse to add new layers of federal government controls over the states. There's not an ozone hole. There's not earth warming. There is not the loss of wetlands. There is not the loss of the forests. We have more forests growing now than when the pilgrims came over. All of these are lies. But the American public, unless they happen to come to Berean Church and get it out in the handouts on the chairs where you learn a few things, has no idea what's going on, because the public media is aiding and abetting this deceit.

**Taxation and Regulations**

There's the excessive taxation and government regulations inhibiting the creation of wealth and jobs. Just wait and how you feel a year from now when these new taxes have kicked in, as they did the first day of this year.

**Competition**

One of the worst things is the belittling of competition because it creates winners and losers. They have attacked national spelling bees, where children spell and see who is best, because somebody wins and somebody loses. And somebody has to say, "Doggone it. I'm not a good speller." This is competition: "We can't have that." If there's anything that makes a nation wealthy, wise, and competent, it is the fact that people can compete to get your services that are what you want.

**Thought Crimes**

Not the least of these issues is the new thing of creating thought crimes – laws against thought crimes. Judges are deciding that you did something because you had a prejudice against somebody.

All of this is creating the terrible condition of the destruction of the United States.

So, what we read here in Revelation about a powerful world government is not hard to understand. It would be if the United States were what it once was. In that case, it would be tough to see how that could happen. But I'm trying to show you that the United States is doing everything possible to destroy itself. It will not be a factor to contend with for very long.

**The Mourning of the Mariners**

In Revelation 18:17-19, we have the mourning of the mariners. In verse 17, we have the destruction of wealth: "For in one hour, such great wealth has been laid waste." The Word introduces here the reason for the grief over the destruction of Babylon. The divine destruction of Babylon is sudden. It is accomplished in the space of one hour. Once God's justice turns loose His holy wrath, things move with unbelievable rapidity. Near the end of the tribulation, none of the merchants or the inhabitants of Babylon dreamed that morning, as the day began, that it would end with such horror, with the destruction of Babylon, the core feature of all the financial world, and of all their lives.

**Comparable to Hiroshima**

To get a feel for the suddenness of the destruction of the key factor in all the world, and the key anchor point of all of life for all of mankind at the end of the tribulation, this is something comparable to when the first atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, in World War II on August 6th, 1945. That day dawned in Hiroshima, clear and hot. By 8 o'clock that morning, the 245,000 inhabitants of that city were settling into a routine wartime day, as three silvery B-29s came over at 30,000 feet. At 8:16 A.M., an unimaginable incandescence suddenly swallowed the sky, and outshone the sun as the atom bomb exploded. Instantly, thousands of people were killed, while thousands more were to die painfully and more slowly over a period of time to a total of 170,000 people with one bomb. Buildings were vaporized; masonry was melted; and, fires raged in all directions. Houses were torn apart into twisted rubble, sending shattered glass and shredded metal flying in all directions as lethal projectiles.

The effect was inconceivable. The hot air in the bomb's rising mushroom cloud condensed the atmospheric moisture, causing rainfall. This was rainfall which was made up of drops as large as the end of a man's finger, mixed with radioactive material, so that when it struck the skin, it left a gray spot that couldn't be washed off. And people were becoming contaminated by radioactive material. As you looked across the countryside in a moment of time, Hiroshima no longer existed. The result was that there were few medical services which were needed to deal with the survivors. The place was gone. That's what's going to happen in the case of Babylon.

People at a distance from Hiroshima watched in horror as they heard the thunderous explosion, and saw the enormous fireball rising into a column of smoke and debris, and fanning out into a mushroom-shaped top. But interestingly enough, of all things, in the midst of this horror, while this is going on, and people are burned, and flesh is falling off their bodies, and they're struggling to find some relief in the nearby water areas, in the midst of this suffering and death, they're still honoring their Babylon religion, which is what they had, the worship of the emperor as the sun-god. This was in the midst of the grief that following Satan had brought upon this nation.

Let me read a paragraph to from a book entitled The Fall of Japan, page 124: "As Tanimoto continued his rescue work, a party of four men, government functionaries, arrived at the park, and pressed into the solid mass of desperate humanity, heading toward the river. They were shouting, "The emperor's picture, the emperor's picture." One was in the lead; two served as flank guards; and, the fourth bore on his bent back a portrait of Hirohito in a heavy frame. The men had rescued the portrait from the Endangered Communications Bureau, and were taking it away from the rapidly approaching fires. The throngs of maimed, bleeding, burned, and naked in the park drew back, and made a pathway to the water. Soldiers drew themselves to attention and saluted the picture. Civilians who are able to stand bowed in reverence, and those who could not stand put their hands together in prayer. An officer on the bank drew his sword and bellowed at some passing boatman. A boat made its way among the corpses to the shore, and bore the portrait away to a safer place."

In the midst of all the horror and the pain, they're still bowing to the picture of their god, the Emperor Hirohito. Is Satan the deceiver? Yes. Are people blind spiritually by nature? Yes, they are, even in the midst of this kind of horror.

The divine obliteration of Babylon on the Euphrates, will be just as sudden and just as quick, and its inhabitants will, to the end, be honoring the idol religion of Babylon, looking to their god, the antichrist, to do something to save the day. In one hour, such great wealth has been laid waste. The enormous wealth of Babylon is that which is described up there in verse 16. A few years before this destruction of Babylon, men marveled at the rapid rise and construction of Babylon as the world's commercial control center. That's going to happen. I can't explain to you exactly how it's going to happen, but suddenly, it's going to move into high gear, and Babylon will be the linchpin of everything that goes on in the world. Babylon has created the conditions which enable these merchants to prosper so enormously. Now, it's all laid waste – the wealth and the system is destroyed. The power of wealth is suddenly stripped away from Babylon by divine destruction, and world maritime industry is brought to a halt. The merchant marine observers are standing afar, watching Babylon's obliteration.

So, we read, "Every ship master, every passenger, and sailor, and as many as make their living by the sea, stood at a distance." The ship masters, the captains, the passengers, and those sailing from place to place, perhaps people even on a cruise who have been at sea when all this happened, are crowding to the rail. It is unbelievable. They're in this area, and they can see what is taking place. The destruction of world maritime industry is right there before their eyes. Everything is brought to a halt. There are the sailors themselves, and those who make a living by the sea (the people who own the vessels), and they stand and watch in horror. The vessels at sea heave to, to observe the destruction.

It says, "They watch at a distance." They stand on deck at the ship's rail. They watch in impotent disbelief. From all parts of the world, these ships have brought valuable cargoes, but now there's no market. They do not dare get any closer, as the fireball rolls skyward from Babylon. The glory of Babylon turns on that day, in one hour, into a fiery destruction from which her inhabitants are taken by death from the fire on earth to the lake of fire of eternity.

**The Consternation over Babylon**

Verse 18 is the consternation over Babylon: "And were crying out as they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, "What city is like the great city?" "Crying out" means "loud outbursts," verbally expressing their grief. In the Greek language, this word "crying out" is "krazo." This is in the imperfect tense, and that tells us that they kept doing it again, and again, and again. They just kept saying it, and saying it. They just couldn't come to the end of expressing their grief.

It says that they were crying out as they saw the smoke. This Greek word for "saw" is "blepo." This word is the word for looking at things in detail – focusing up close. Their eyes are looking at this and looking at that, one thing after another. And they're focusing on this mass destruction with all these little pieces taking place at one time.

The main thing is the cloud and smoke billowing skyward from Babylon. The sky gradually darkened as the smoke obliterates the sun. At the heart of it is the burning. The source of the smoke is the fires that are raging the city – glowing flames, probably punctuated by explosions. Other cities, you remember, have been devastated earlier by God's judgments during the tribulation. But Babylon had survived untouched. This gave the impression of some special protection by the power of the antichrist. People saw, in surviving Babylon, the antichrist's invincibility against God, but they were wrong. Yes, God was saving Babylon. He was saving Babylon for His big finale. That's why Babylon had not been touched. Instead, they were attributing this to the power of their god, the antichrist.

Now Babylon is a ruined, burned-out shell, and they can't believe their eyes. So, they moan and say, "Oh, what city was like this great city;" that is, the great city of Babylon? No city had ever been the center of world power and world commerce upon whom all of mankind depended. There has never been a city like that. The tribulation, under Babylon's leadership, looked like an unending era of prosperity for the seafaring merchants. Everything seemed secure as the wisdom of the antichrist used the government to triumph over all social needs with prosperity for all.

Now, suddenly, Babylon is obliterated. The world's financial structure has been brought down by God. The wheels of world commerce grind to a stop. The grief of the merchant marine here is worldwide as vessels glut the harbors now with no buyers. There was no evil, you understand, to the cargoes of the merchandise, which were part of God's creation for man's enjoyment.

You should not feel intimidated that you can go from driving a Volkswagen to driving a Cadillac. The sooner, the better, as God enables you to do so. The sooner you can drive a gas guzzling car, which is made of heavily protective metal, the better. All of the good things of life that man's skill and craftsmanship has made are for your enjoyment. So, don't think that we're badmouthing being rich. The greatest saints in the Old Testament were wealthy people. This was not true in the New Testament. The great people like Paul and Peter were poor people, but in the Old Testament, God prospered and blessed those that were true to Him.

The sin here was in substituting for God, the Creator, the materials which He had created, and the things that man's craftsmanship had turned into objects of use and luxury. That's what's wrong. But to enjoy the material things of life that God enables you to purchase through your efforts is legitimate. The idea is not using things for God's glory and service. That's the problem – when you don't use your things for God's glory and service. You enjoy it, but you also remember to give your surplus to Him.

Jesus warned very specifically about this problem that all these merchants in Babylon got caught up with. He warned against building a life on the basis of the material things that one possesses. In Matthew 6:19, the Lord says, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroy, and where thieves do not break in or steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be." Got it? If your treasure is in heaven, that's the focus of your attention. But if your treasure is all these things that you have here on earth that you're preoccupied with, that's what your focus is going to be.

Here, even before the church-age announcement, while they're still on Matthew / Old Testament ground, Jesus says, "I'm going to reward you when you invest your material things in My work and in My service. And that's how you keep it for all eternity."

I think that it is so nice for a believer to be financially prospered by God so that he can be a generous supporter of God's work on earth. I think it is superb when a Christian can come up and say, "I have now attained a place in life where I can equal a Jew as a 10% giver." I think it is wrong to place upon believers that God's way for them is 10% of their income. That's not true, because it all belongs to God under the church age. But I do agree that 10% is a good starting point. And I do agree with what has been pointed out by many people – that if every member of a congregation (of any gathering of people) gave 10%, that congregation would have ample funds for its work. That's always true. It is always true. But it is your own priesthood that must decide to do that.

So, it's nice to be financially prospered, and to really do the work of the Lord. This keeps God's work from being hindered. It provides generous returns to the giver in rewards in heaven. The temptation is to be greedy and hang on to your surplus wealth. You're tempted to use it in ventures where you'll lose it. And when you lose it, please remember, it's both a temporal and an eternal loss. It's not a trivial thing.

**The Agony of the Mariners**

In verse 19, we have the agony of the mariners: "And they threw dust on their heads, and were crying out, weeping and mourning." These people throw dirt upon their heads. This is an ancient sign of personal grief. You'll find it expressed in Job 2:12, Lamentations 2:10, and Ezekiel 27:30. All these verses describe this ancient custom of expressing sorrow by throwing dirt up in the air, and letting it fall down upon you. It's almost a symbolic act here, on the part of the mariners, symbolizing their own imminent entrance into the grave, which is what is awaiting them.

I don't know whether this is a symbol of expressing grief, which in a modern way will be done in some other way. In our culture (in our society) this is not the way to express grief. On board ship, how they would throw dust on their heads would possibly pose a problem. But I think the point here is that they're going to do something that expresses their grief, in some modern context, if not in these specific ways.

However, they are crying out. These are vocal outbursts: moanings; and, groanings. This, too, is that imperfect tense. They just keep it up, and keep it up, and keep it up. The whole deck of the ship is covered with people who are moaning and groaning in verbal outbursts over what they're seeing. They are also weeping, which means that they are shaking and sobbing with tears. This is in the present tense in the Greek language, which means that they do it constantly. They don't just cry and then stop. The tears just keep flowing. And "mourning" refers to internal emotional agony. This, too, is a constant act on their part. They're just torn inside emotionally by what they see. And they shout out, "Woe, woe, the great city."

We would expect that the cause of all this sorrow is that: "We have been guilty of sin." This is what you would expect people to act like who suddenly realized their moral guilt. They would be in such trauma where they would have expressions verbally of grief. They would weep. They would have great emotional trauma as they realized how guilty they have been of sin. But that's not the case with these people. Their sorrow is for the destruction of the great city Babylon. This city once stood prosperous, powerful, beautiful, and glittering in the sun as a mistress of the whole world's financial institutions. Now her devotees watch in fear from a distance as she is suddenly reduced to ashes, and nothing can be salvaged.

The final memory about Babylon with these mariners is that she has made them rich. They have no other fondness for her: "The great city in which all who had ships at sea became rich by her wealth (by her costly things that she had)." The costly things that she provided was the center of world commerce. Babylon for centuries had seduced mankind with her religion of idolatry, and her wickedness, and her government, giving favors and wealth and luxury to exercise power over people. Both those things are wrong with God. Government is not to exercise power over people by giving them things; and, we are not to worship any God but the Creator God.

Now God suddenly terminates this evil city. But the merchants are not concerned that they are viewing the wrath of God, which they too will face. That's one of the most amazing things, you would think, that would make them begin to put things together – that, indeed, what they've been told, and what they've been warned about is something that they should now consider: that they may be facing a God who is out there, who is greater than their god, the antichrist. Psalm 52:7 puts it this way: "Behold, the man who would not make God his refuge, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and was strong in his evil desire." That's these people. They don't want to make their refuge in God, but in the abundance of their riches. That's where they had their power, and that made them strong in indulging their evil desires.

What is it they're worried about? Their wealth is gone. All the filthy abominations and dirty things that they could do, they won't be able to do anymore. They won't be able to afford it. God terminates the city, and the only future that concerns the merchants is now: where are we going to get our wealth?

This is where, for you and me as a Christian, comes in the doctrine of the mastery of the details of life. That principle is that we do not live to hoard wealth for the future. It is a great personal deception for any believer who thinks that he can serve God, and he can serve the accumulation of wealth. We have it on the Word of the authority of Christ Himself, when Matthew 6:24 says, "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money." It could not be simpler or more clearly stated. You cannot serve God and money. The two cannot go together.

The doctrinal principle is to serve God through one's money as you accumulate it – not someday, but as you accumulate it. Here, in the case of Babylon, they've been accumulating it. Now suddenly all of their investment (their inventory), and all that they had for the future is destroyed before their eyes: "In one hour she has been laid waste." The sea merchants had gained great wealth. It did not occur to them that overnight they could lose it all. It did not occur to them that suddenly overnight they could not make money anymore. How many people had thought that they had a source of income, and that they owned something that was going to bring them a steady stream of money, and something happened, and it was gone. They have indebted themselves. They have put themselves in positions of financial responsibility, and there is no way they can meet it now. Then they have to go through the process of declaring bankruptcy, and cheating people out of the things, by that process, that they have taken for themselves in an improper way.

**The Rich Young Fool**

We have the idea that the wealth that we have will always be there, and that the source of that wealth will never cease. This, of course, is the rich young fool syndrome. People turn to Luke 12:16-21 where we have the parable of the rich fool. This parable, I want to remind you, is an illustration created by Jesus to teach a spiritual truth. He is making a point. You should not dismiss this parable because you don't think you fall into the category of being rich. Believe me, there is not a poor person in this room, because if you compare yourself to what most people in the world have, and to what people have in the non-developing countries of the world, you get a frame of reference for what it is to be poor.

I've had the occasion to be in a place of great poverty like China. I've had the occasion to see people who were delighted to be able to come and scrounge in the garbage pile of the Marine Corps commissary and mess, to be able to get what we wouldn't eat, and have thrown away as refuse. To them, it was a luxury.

I was walking down a path, and the Chinese man on our compound that was working for us on one occasion was walking in front of me. And all of a sudden, he looked down and there he saw a cookie on the trail. I could see that it had been stepped on by some Marine boot. He reached down, picked it up, and tenderly was brushing it off, and started to eat it, and then turned around and saw me, and put it down in great embarrassment, and lowered his head. He was ashamed to be eating something that we had held in contempt and had thrown away and dropped on the trail. We wouldn't pick it up to eat it because we're rich.

This little story (this little paragraph – this little parable) that was put together by Jesus to teach us a point should not pass you by. You will regret it for all eternity if you miss the point here. Here's a man who is preoccupied with one thing – accumulating wealth, but to use for this life only. He is doing this so that he can tell his soul to: "Eat, drink, and be merry. Take your ease for all these many years that you're going to live." He gave no thought to storing abundant treasures in heaven by giving to God's work to enjoy his eternal rewards. That never occurred to him when he said, "I can't stand this stuff anymore. The banks won't take my money anymore. I've stuffed them full." It never occurred to him say, "Ah, I'll give it to the temple treasury. That's what I'll do with it now." Instead, he said, "I'll build my own treasury." So, he kept it.

Then we come to verse 20. We have such a poignant, sobering question at the end of that verse. Now, after being told that he would die that night so there would be no longer any temporal use for his wealth. Now we have this poignant question: now who will own what you have prepared? Have you asked yourself that question? Whether you have little or much, you should. The mariners should have asked themselves that question, but they were so out of it (blinded spiritually) that they couldn't even think of the question. But we who are believers should be able to realize that this is a warning given to us by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who is using this parable to teach us a point. And that's the point. "Now who will own what you have prepared?"

Then he says, in verse 21, "So, is the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." Those mariners are going out, poverty struck, into a poverty eternity.

Well, it's a new year. Perhaps it is a fitting time to answer this vital question, while you can do something about it. Once you're gone, now who will have what you have prepared? Into whose hands are you happy to entrust what God has entrusted to you, His steward?

Now is the time to make the decision. Now is the time to beware of worshiping the idol of greed that Colossians 3:5 tells us, which keeps us from turning loose our surplus funds to God today. We are forever wasting our wealth and enterprises that are unproductive instead of investing in the sure thing, the treasury of heaven. And that you will enjoy in eternal rewards.

The people who stood on the decks of those ships (with their wealth going through their fingers before their very eyes) thought they had a tragic condition. But the great tragedy waited for them on the other side. So, too, from this little parable of the Lord, we should learn that the mariners went out with nothing, but you and I know better, and we should not do the same.

We should have a new resolution for a new year on how we deal with what we have. Make no excuse. Make no doubt about it. I've heard all the excuses. I keep hearing them. You don't have any circumstance in life which excuses any of us from being a financial supporter of God's work today, in whatever degree we can be. Thank God for information that comes to us in time to do something about it.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1993

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