

COME OUT OF BABYLON

Revelation 18:1-8

Well let's turn in our Bibles please to Revelation chapter 18. I want to read to you today the entire chapter, since it is a new chapter, but the focus of our study is going to be on the first eight verses. So, Revelation chapter 18, beginning at verse 1:

“¹ And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. ² And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. 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.

“⁴ And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. ⁵ For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. ⁶ Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. ⁷ How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. ⁸ Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.

“⁹ And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, ¹⁰ standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. ¹¹ And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: ¹² the merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, ¹³ and cinnamon, and odors, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. ¹⁴ And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all. ¹⁵ The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, ¹⁶ and saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! ¹⁷ For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, ¹⁸ and cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! ¹⁹ And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were

made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate. ²⁰ Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.

“²¹ And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. ²² And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; ²³ and the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived. ²⁴ And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.”

Well, we just completed our study of Revelation chapter 17 last week, and at the conclusion of that chapter, we saw a brief summary of the future destruction of Babylon, in verses 15 to 18. We saw that the final manifestation of the beast, which is the Antichrist and his worldwide kingdom, is going to turn on Babylon, and is going to destroy Babylon.

And so, very near the conclusion of this age, and just before the second coming of Christ, anti-Christian government will turn on anti-Christian society and destroy it. Anti-Christian society, symbolically represented by Babylon the harlot, will be completely decimated. God will put it into the hearts of Satan’s helpers to turn on each other and to destroy one another.

But having seen last week a summary of the destruction of Babylon in chapter 17, we now have an extended description of the destruction of Babylon in chapter 18. Here in chapter 18, we are given considerably more detail about the nature of Babylon, about the evil of Babylon, and about the downfall of Babylon.

Chapter 18 can be divided into three sections. First of all, there is the exhortation to the saints to separate themselves from Babylon in verses 1 to 8. Secondly, there is the anguish of the ungodly over the fall of Babylon in verses 9 to 19. Then thirdly, there is the rejoicing of the believers over the destruction of Babylon in verses 20 to 24. We will look at each of these three sections in turn as we come to them. But for today, we want to look at the first of these sections in verses 1 through 8, in which the saints are exhorted to separate themselves from Babylon.

Now Babylon, as we have said many times, represents anti-Christian society in its economic, social, and cultural aspects. And nowhere is this more clearly seen than in this chapter. However, the major emphasis that is at the core of the concept of Babylon is the economic aspect of anti-Christian society.

The major driver and the central issue of anti-Christian society is the worship of material wealth. The god of materialism, and the worship of self-indulgent luxury as the highest goal and as the greatest good, lies at the very heart of Babylon.

I would like you for a moment please to turn in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 6. Now in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus addresses this issue of materialism and the worship of material wealth. Notice Matthew chapter 6, verse 19:

“¹⁹ Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: ²¹ for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. ²² The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. ²³ But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

“²⁴ No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. ²⁵ Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? ²⁶ Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? ²⁷ Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? ²⁸ And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: ²⁹ and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? ³¹ Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? ³² (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. ³³ But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. ³⁴ Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”

Now I want you to especially notice verse 24 in this reading: “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye *cannot* serve God and money.”

Now Jesus had a great deal to say about money and materialism, because money is the greatest idol of humanity, and it is the primary false god that is worshiped by mankind. It is the love of money that is the root of every kind of evil, and all the evil of Babylon rises out of that root, whether it is social evil, or whether it is cultural evil.

Gross materialism has always been the central manifestation of Babylon in the past. Gross materialism is the central manifestation of Babylon today. And gross materialism will be the

central manifestation of Babylon in the end. The world finds its fulfillment in things rather than in God, and the world loves materialistic self-indulgence more than it loves God. It worships the creation more than the Creator.

But this spirit of Babylon can also infect Christians as well. We see this in the church of Laodicea in Revelation 3 and verse 17, when it says, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." The church at Laodicea thought that material gain was a sign of godliness, and material blessing meant that God was favorable toward them. But Jesus corrects them and makes it clear that they were in sin for their inordinate esteem of their material possessions, and for their trust in them, and for their affection for them. The church at Laodicea needed to repent of their esteem of their possessions, which caused them to value things more than they valued Christ.

If there is one thing this passage in Revelation 18 makes clear, it is that this materialistic world, with its obsessive attachment to luxury and pleasure, will utterly perish. And all of those who sought and served wealth as their ultimate good will be cast into everlasting hell.

This passage teaches us that wealth is *not* the highest good, nor is wealth a permanent good. Wealth cannot save us from the wrath of God, and wealth will desert us in the hour of greatest need. In a word, wealth is a very poor god. It is both too weak to meet our greatest need, and it is too temporary to provide us with any long-lasting security.

Now clearly, Christians have to earn money and use money in this world. But it is imperative that we never compromise our values or our faith or our witness for Christ in order to do so. If while faithfully living for Christ and serving Christ, we become successful in business and we make a great deal of money, there is nothing wrong with that. Indeed, many of the most godly men in the Bible were very, very wealthy.

But wealth must be viewed for what it is. It is a gift of God that is a means to provide for the physical necessities of the body, it is a means to promote the gospel, and it is a means to be able to help the poor. It is not to be used as a basis for pride and superiority over others, nor is it to be trusted in for our security.

Wealth is neither good nor bad, in and of itself. It is our attitude towards it and it is our use of it that can either be a manifestation of evil or a means of bringing glory to God. As a redeemed and yet fallen people, it is easy for us to adopt the attitude of the world toward wealth. And that was the problem with the church at Laodicea.

You see, we live in a very wealthy place here in America. We see the riches of the ungodly, we see the luxury in which they live, we see the pleasure they are able to purchase, and it is easy for us to envy that and to wish that we had that, and to start to compromise in order to obtain that. We can become utterly compromised in our moral conduct and abandon our obedience to Christ when we covet what the rich have, and set ourselves on a course to obtain it.

I would like for you now to turn to First Timothy chapter 6. We're going to read verses 1 through 19. First Timothy chapter 6, beginning at verse 1:

“¹ Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. ² And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort.”

So immediately, this chapter opens with a description of economic disparity. You have servants; they're poor. You have masters; they're rich. Now he's going to go on in the rest of the chapter and talk about the issue of economics. He's going to talk about the issue of money and wealth, and what our attitude should be towards it, and what our attitude must not be towards it, especially in a context of economic disparity. Now notice verse 3:

“³ If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; ⁴ he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, ⁵ perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth,”—now notice—“supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. ⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. ⁸ And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. ⁹ *But* they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. ¹⁰ For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

“¹¹ But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. ¹² Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. ¹³ I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; ¹⁴ that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: ¹⁵ which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; ¹⁶ who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen.

“¹⁷ Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; ¹⁸ that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; ¹⁹ laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”

So what he is talking about in this chapter is the fact that people worship money instead of worshiping the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only Potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of

lords. And the point that Paul is making here is that a servant is not worse because he is poor, and a master is not better because he is rich. It is the true wealth of godliness with contentment that really matters, and anyone in any socioeconomic status can have that true wealth. If we have food and clothing in the material realm, we have enough to be content.

Our great concern in life, then, is not to gain more wealth. Our great concern is to obtain greater righteousness, and godliness, and faith, and love, and patience, and meekness, as it says in verse 11. It is those things that constitute true wealth, and it is those things that we give our lives to pursuing. Money is subordinate to that, it's incidental to that, and it is a means to accomplish that pursuit of righteousness, and godliness, and faith, and love, and patience, and meekness.

So then, the message of our passage today in Revelation chapter 18 is simply this: Come out of Babylon. Step away from the mad materialism of our age. Cast off the infatuation with luxury and reject any offers for the acquisition of wealth that would require you to compromise your Christian principles. God's wrath will fall upon those who idolize wealth. Don't be among them, and thereby escape the judgment that the worshipers of wealth will receive for their idolatry. That is the message of Revelation chapter 18, verses 1 to 8.

Well let's consider together then our passage in particular, and turn in your Bibles now to Revelation chapter 18. Having set the framework of the teachings of Jesus and the teachings of Paul in Matthew 6 and First Timothy 6 on the subject of wealth, let's then consider the particular teaching of Revelation 18, verses 1 through 8.

In the first place then, let's consider together, the announcement of the fall of Babylon, in verses 1-3

It says in verse 1: "And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory."

Now when it says in verse 1, "And after these things," what that means is that this is the next vision in the sequence of visions. Throughout the book of Revelation, the phrase, "and after these things," refers to the order in which the visions of John came to him, and not the order of the events portrayed *in* the visions. That is, the phrase, "after these things," does not mean that the events recorded in chapter 18 will occur chronologically after the events in chapter 17. This phrase, "after these things," only means that after John received the vision of chapter 17, John received the vision in chapter 18 next. And that's the way this phrase is always used in the book of Revelation, and it is used many, many times in this book.

Now then, what did John see in this vision? He saw a mighty angel and a glorious angel, and this angel made a very powerful and very loud declaration. Notice if you will, verse 2. It says, "And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." The glory of this angel and the loudness of his voice is designed to get the

attention of believers who are in danger of falling under Babylon's spell and yielding to Babylon's seduction. The angel makes it clear to us that Babylon is doomed to destruction, and therefore it is the height of folly to listen to her voice and to join in her idolatry.

Allow me to illustrate. If you knew a business was certain to fail in the future, would you buy stock in it? And since you know that Babylon is certain to fall under the wrath of God, should you participate in its worship of wealth? Notice in verse 2, so certain is the fall of Babylon in the future, that the angel proclaims its fall as having already occurred. Now Babylon has not yet fallen even to this very day, but it's going to fall. And yet he states it as though it has already occurred. This is what we call the prophetic aorist—where something is so certain to occur in the future, that it can be stated in the present as though it's already a past event.

The fall of Babylon is so great that it is compared to a completely destroyed and deserted city, into the wreckage of which the unclean animals and even the demons have moved in to take up habitation. Notice he says, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird."

Now the closest analogy we see in our day are the ghost towns of bombed out cities that are destroyed in the violence of modern warfare. You've all seen the photographs of places like Aleppo in Syria. Only the hulks and the rubble of bombed out and burned out buildings remain, and rats and birds are the main inhabitants of those structures. This is the destiny of the economy of this world in the end times, and all of the wealth that it contained. The greatness of Babylon is no protection for it when God is determined to destroy it.

Now what's interesting is, once again, we see that Old Testament Babylon is a very clear picture and foreshadowing of this New Covenant Babylon that is spoke of in Revelation. In Isaiah chapter 13, in verses 19 to 22, it says of Old Testament Babylon: "¹⁹ And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. ²⁰ It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. ²¹ But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. ²² And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged." And you see the same language is brought directly over into Revelation chapter 18 and applied to New Covenant Babylon.

In Revelation 18 and verse 3, the angel goes on to identify the cause of the destruction of Babylon. Notice verse 3 of Revelation 18: "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."

Now here in verse 3 is a declaration of the cause of the destruction of Babylon. Babylon is destroyed because she seduced the kings and the nations and the merchants to commit

fornication with her. Now this fornication is a spiritual fornication. This fornication is that of forsaking the true God and engaging in the worship of another god, namely the god of money and material wealth, expressed in the mad pursuit of luxury as mankind's greatest good and as mankind's greatest fulfillment.

God says in the First Commandment, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me." And it is the violation of that commandment that brings the wrath of God to bear on anti-Christian society and all who participate in her idolatry.

When you sacrifice loyalty to God in order to obtain economic advancement, when you sacrifice obedience to God in order to obtain economic security, when you sacrifice Christian principles in order to obtain material wealth, then you have committed fornication with Babylon. In a word, you have sold your soul for a mess of pottage.

Kings and nations and merchants will violate any principle of morality if it means they can multiply their wealth. Money becomes the justification for every behavior, no matter how wicked, and money is the goal of every policy, no matter how evil. And the idolatry of wealth and all that it can purchase is what constitutes the fornication of Babylon. It is serving money rather than God. Remember this: Behind the facade of luxury and wealth lies the certainty of the impending judgment of Almighty God.

That brings us then to our second major point this morning. Having seen the announcement of the fall of Babylon in verses 1 to 3, notice secondly, the admonition to believers regarding Babylon, in verses 4 to 5. Notice verse 4: "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."

Now verse 4 tells us that a different voice from heaven now speaks—different from the angel that spoke in verses 1 to 3. And this voice seems to be the voice of God Himself, because He addresses the believers, and when He does, He calls them, "my people." Now the message God gives to His people is this: Come out of Babylon. Do not partake of her sins. Only by this means will you avoid participating in her judgment. That's the message of God to His people.

Now clearly, Christians have to engage in economic activity. They are instructed elsewhere in Scriptures to work hard to earn money and to store up and accumulate wealth. Christians should be economically self-sufficient through their own labor, through frugality, through saving, and through investment. God requires those things of us; in fact, the goal is to acquire sufficient wealth so that we can not only meet our own needs throughout our entire lives, but have enough to be able to give to the poor who are unable to meet *their* own needs.

Christians are not called to withdraw from economic activity and the society in which they live. "Come of Babylon" does not mean stop all your economic activity, take a vow of poverty, and

live as a beggar in the streets. It does not mean that. What it does mean is that Christians must refuse to compromise with any demands the world makes upon them to violate any Christian principle in order to be employed, or in order to do business, or in order to acquire wealth.

Christians must refuse any line of work, and Christians must refuse any working conditions, that would involve them in disobedience to Christ. Here's the principle in a nutshell. Anything that would involve Christians in the compromise of any of the Ten Commandments must be rejected and withdrawn from, no matter how lucrative it might be, and no matter how great their need for money is.

I'll repeat that. Anything that would involve Christians in the compromise of any of the Ten Commandments must be rejected and withdrawn from, no matter how lucrative it might be, and no matter how great their need for money is. God will provide for His people without involving them in sin in order to do it.

And so, Christians must refuse to compromise with any demands the world makes upon them to violate any Christian principle in order to be employed, in order to do business, or in order to acquire wealth. That's what God means when He says, Come out of Babylon.

Now notice verse 5: "For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities." The iniquity of this world's economic systems and this world's economic activity is not small. The iniquity of this world's economic systems and this world's economic activity is gigantic. The economic, social, and cultural sins of anti-Christian society is without measure. Metaphorically speaking, if all of the sins of Babylon were stacked up, they would reach to the edge of the universe.

Verse 5 says, "Her sins have reached unto heaven." The sins of Babylon are uncountable in their number, and they are infinite in their evil. The economic crimes that have been performed, and the violation of God's principles and God's commandments are unable by us to be counted. And what is being said in verse 5 is that God has not overlooked or forgotten even one of those sins. Not one act of economic wickedness has gone unnoticed by God, and every act of economic wickedness is going to be requited by God. "Her sins have reached unto heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities."

Now it may seem that fortunes are made by wicked commerce and out of idolatrous motives, to indulge in ostentatious, self-serving luxury, and God has done nothing about it. Governments and individuals have stolen trillions of dollars from those who have rightly earned them, through both outright theft and through unjust and wicked taxation. Do not be deceived or think that because God has not acted yet to punish those sins, that God will not act at all.

Fear God, and observe His ways, knowing that though God is patient with the wicked, their foot will slip in due time, and at the appointed hour, *every* sin will be remembered, and every idolatry

will be punished. Those who have stolen from others and those who have compromised moral principles to get more will all face their sins in the wrath of God on the day of judgment.

The rich man was clothed in purple and fine linen, and he fared sumptuously every day; but soon enough, he found himself in hell, a beggar for a drop of water. And what happened to the rich man in his time, is going to happen to the entire world economic system at the end of time. Babylon will be brought to judgment for her wickedness, and all who participated in that economic wickedness will be brought to judgment.

And so the admonition to believers, both now and throughout this age is this: Do not participate in Babylon's sins. Live separated lives, lives that refuse to practice or participate in Babylon's sins. Refuse the temptations of sinful materialism and reject materialism as a motivating factor in your life. Instead, seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all you need in the material realm will be given to you by God.

That brings us then to our third and final point this morning. Having seen the announcement of the fall of Babylon in verses 1 to 3; having seen the admonition to believers regarding Babylon in verses 4 to 5; notice thirdly, the awfulness of the judgment upon Babylon in verses 6 to 8.

Now the judgment that is promised in verse 4, that Babylon would receive her plagues, is now set forth in very explicit terms in verses 6 to 8. Notice verse 6: "Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double." Here in verse 6, God says that Babylon will reap what she has sown. As Babylon has persecuted and punished the believer for refusing to participate in its sins, so let Babylon be persecuted and punished by God. God's justice is certain, and God's justice is exact.

God's justice will be a mirror image of the sin that was committed. This is the meaning of the threefold use of the word "double" in verse 6. Three times he says, Give her double for her sins. Now this does not mean, Give Babylon twice as much for her sins as she has committed, as though God would punish Babylon twice as much as her sins actually deserved. That's not what the passage means. If God punished people twice as much as what their sins actually deserved, God would be unjust. What it means when it says to give her double for her sins is that what is given back to Babylon is an exact double, an exact mirror image, of what Babylon gave out.

Now when you look in the mirror, what do you see? Well, you see a double of yourself, don't you. So what is being said is, Give back to them exactly the same as they gave out to others. This is simply the law of an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. Nothing more and nothing less than that is just. You don't take out two eyes for one eye, and you don't take a finger for an eye. You take an eye for an eye. So God gives an exact double to the people of what they gave to the believers.

Now notice verse 7: "How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her." Now this first phrase in verse 7 confirms what I said about the

meaning of the word “double” in verse 6. However much, verse 7 says, she glorified herself and lived in self-indulgent luxury, give her that exact same amount of torment and sorrow.

You see, Babylon’s sin is that of pride and self-indulgence. She should have cultivated humility and servanthood toward others, but she didn’t. The spirit of Babylon is, How can I pamper myself and how can I exalt my name among men? The spirit of Christianity is, How can I serve others and exalt the name of Christ among men?

The spirit of Babylon is that stated in the second half of verse 7: I am a queen. I sit on the throne. I am sovereign. I am secure. I am in control. I need to answer to no one. I will never regret my decisions and choices. I will never have any sorrow over my deeds or in my future. I am immune to judgment. I have it made. I sit as a queen, and am no widow, and will see no sorrow. Thus the hubris and the arrogance and the self-confidence of those who worship wealth as their god and as their protection.

Verse 8: “Therefore”—because of that attitude—“shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.” Such arrogance as expressed in verse 7 will not go unpunished by God. Babylon will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. Babylon will be destroyed in a day. Fullness of bread and abundance of pride will be replaced with death and mourning and famine and fire. Her destruction will be complete, and her destruction will be final. She will not be able, with all of her resources and all of her wealth, to resist the judgment of God, for strong is the Lord God who judges her.

Well, in light of the judgment of Babylon, how should we as Christians view the subject of wealth? There’s a great deal that could be said about that, but I want to leave you with two thoughts.

First of all, remember that riches can never provide redemption, and therefore they should be of little concern to us. Riches can never provide redemption, and therefore they should be of *little* concern to us. Listen to the words of Psalm 49:

“¹Hear this, all ye people; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world: ²both low and high, rich and poor, together. ³My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding. ⁴I will incline mine ear to a parable: I will open my dark saying upon the harp.

⁵Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about? ⁶They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; ⁷none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: ⁸(for the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever;) ⁹that he should still live for ever, and not see corruption. ¹⁰For he seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others. ¹¹Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own

names. ¹² Nevertheless man being in honor abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish. ¹³ This their way is their folly: yet their posterity approve their sayings. *Selah.*

“¹⁴ Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling. ¹⁵ But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me. *Selah.* ¹⁶ Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased; ¹⁷ for when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him. ¹⁸ Though while he lived he blessed his soul: and men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself. ¹⁹ He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light.

“²⁰ Man that is in honor, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.”

And so what David is saying here is, Money is meaningless. What matters is that God will redeem your soul from the power of the grave. And what wealth does He use to accomplish that? “You were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold from your vain manner of life, received by tradition from your fathers. You were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

And you see, the true riches are the redemption that Christ provides, not the gold and the silver that the world holds out as being the true riches. So recognize that riches can never provide redemption, and therefore they should be of little concern to us.

The second admonition I would leave you with is this: The path of modest wealth is the safest path. The path of modest wealth is the safest path. In Proverbs 30 and verses 7 to 9, the author of the book of Proverbs says, “⁷ Two things,” Lord, “have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die: ⁸ remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: ⁹ lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.”

You know, there’s none of us in this room that are either poor or rich. We have modest wealth. We have food, we have clothing, we have a little money in savings, we have a roof over our heads. God has provided well for us. That’s the safe path. Those who will to be rich pierce themselves with many sorrows. They fall into many snares, and hurtful lusts, which drown men in perdition. And then of course, if someone is so poor they have nothing—and usually that’s the case because they are slothful and lazy—then they don’t have anything to eat, and so they wind up stealing, and taking the name of God in vain and cursing Him because He didn’t give them what all the wealthy have. So because of their envy and sloth, they petition the government to steal from those who produce and to give it to those who refuse to work.

And so the path of moderate wealth is the safest path. Thank God you’re not dirt poor, but also thank God you’re not incredibly wealthy, because with great wealth comes great temptation. Not many mighty, not many noble, not many wise are in the kingdom. It is so easy with great wealth

to fall into great sins, because you have great opportunities to do it. One wise man said, Poverty has slain its thousands, but prosperity has slain its ten thousands.

And it is so true that we are likely fall into terrible sins if we had enough money to have enough leisure and enough opportunity to do it. Be thankful you don't have that much wealth. You and I probably couldn't handle it, and if we had it, we would be ruined by it. And we see those who do possess it *are* ruined by it in the vast majority of the cases.

So do not envy the wealthy. Do not indulge in the sins of Babylon to have the empty promises of Babylon, which is happiness through possessions. Happiness comes through a relationship with Jesus Christ and a clear conscience. And if you have those things, you have the everlasting riches of Christ. And those are the true riches that we want to aspire after and pursue.

Do you need to have a job and money? Yes. I've made that clear. But don't make them your god, and don't root your happiness in those things. Root it in Christ and in the pursuit of righteousness and seeking first the kingdom of God, and as you do those things, your material needs will be taken care of. And you know, as soon as you die, you don't need any of those material things ever again. They're just temporary—here to get us through life. And when life is done with us, we're done with them. So let us not set our heart upon them. Shall we pray together.

Father, thank you for these admonitions to come out of Babylon and not partake in her sins, and in particular, her sin of idolatry in worshiping money and the luxury that it can purchase. Father, I pray that if we are given the stewardship of great wealth that we would use it for great purposes, and that is to further the kingdom of God and not simply to further our own self-indulgence.

Thank you, Father, that we can enjoy many pleasures in life, many things that are not absolute necessities, and yet even those things must be kept in their proper place. And so Lord, we just pray that we would live lives of service and we would live lives of worship, and that we would use our money to facilitate that service *in* that worship, and that we would be found in that day to have been good stewards of what you have entrusted of your wealth for us to manage. Father, we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.