

Spiritual Thinking About Life

Rich Nathan

July 2-3, 2005

Revelation: Looking at Life From the Perspective of Heaven Series

Revelation 17 and 18

As we celebrate America's Independence Day this weekend, one of the things that thinking people wonder about is why do countries develop as they do? Why does America have the shape that it does this Independence Day? What determines why people in one place live a certain way and their neighbors live so differently?

For example, in Korea, which was split in two just 55 years ago, the difference between the North and the South is stunning. Here are people who speak a common language, share a common history and geography. Yet the South Koreans are free and the North Koreans live in constant fear. In South Korea you can criticize the government, as South Koreans are prone to do. In North Korea dissidents are put in labor camps and shot. South Korea exports tens of billions of dollars worth of goods each year. In North Korea hundreds of thousands of people have been reduced to starvation. The only people in South Korea who go hungry are fashion models.

Or consider Europe and North America.

- Why do so many people on both continents live with so much inner emptiness?
- Why is there so much confusion about the most basic issues of civilization, the meaning of a family and the most appropriate use of sex?
- Why is there a growing lack of concern for ethics in government at the highest levels of business?
- Why is Europe committing demographic suicide systematically depopulating itself in what one British historian called "The Greatest Sustained Reduction in European Population Since the Black Death of the 14th Century"?
- Why does no western European country have a replacement level birthrate? (The replacement level, according to demographers is 2.1 children per woman. As of 2004 Germany's birthrate was 1.3, Italy's was 1.2, and Spain's 1.1.)
- Why is it that by the year 2050 60% of all Italians will have no brother, or sister, or aunt, or uncle, or cousin?
- What is happening when an entire continent wealthier and healthier than ever before refuses to create the next generation?
- Why in the United States does an endangered species of bird in the national forest enjoy more legal protection this Independence Day than a 6-month old unborn child?

- Why does the death of the bird get way more media coverage than the death of the baby?
- Why does the U.S. experience such high rates of divorce and out-of-wedlock births?
- Why do all of our debates about the meaning of marriage and stem-cell research get carried on either in completely sentimental terms, or in utilitarian terms?
- Why can't we carry on ethical debates in America?

Today, as we continue in this series on the Book of Revelation, I've called my talk "Spiritual Thinking About Life." Let's pray.

Revelation 17:1-5

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Rev 17:1 One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters.

Rev 17:2 With her the kings of the earth committed adultery and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries."

Rev 17:3 Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns.

Rev 17:4 The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries.

Rev 17:5 This title was written on her forehead:

MYSTERY

BABYLON THE GREAT

THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES

AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

John's book is now coming to an end. He has shown us how those followers of the beast refuse to repent even when they experience the great plagues of the seven trumpets and the great plagues of the seven bowls. The pouring out of the seventh bowl brings about the destruction of a city that John calls "Babylon the Great."

Now Babylon is a city of Old Testament fame. It was located about 80 miles SE of today's city of Baghdad on the Euphrates River in Iraq. John tells us in verse 1 that Babylon the City is seated on many waters.

Revelation 17:1

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Rev 17:1 One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters.

He is quoting from the book of Jeremiah (Jer. 51:13):

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Jer 51:13 You who live by many waters
and are rich in treasures,
your end has come,
the time for you to be cut off.

This historic Babylon of Old Testament fame was built on a network of canals.

But it is clear here in Revelation 17 and 18 that John, the writer of Revelation, is speaking not of the literal historical Babylon, but he is speaking metaphorically. He is using Babylon as a symbol of wickedness, as a country or place that expresses a thoroughly anti-God culture.

Using Babylon symbolically, metaphorically, is not uncommon in the Bible. As Peter writes his first letter, from a place he calls the city of Rome, Babylon in 1 Peter 5:13

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1Pe 5:13 She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark.

Now what are the marks or features of Babylon? Babylon is called:

- The Great Prostitute in Revelation 17:1

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Rev 17:1 One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters.

The idea here is probably a combination of spiritual faithlessness and the prostitution of every thing for the almighty dollar. Every thing is for sale. In fact, government and business leaders share in Babylon's sins by their intimate dealing with her, Revelation 17:2.

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Rev 17:2 With her the kings of the earth committed adultery and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries."

Leaders in business, leaders in government, leaders in education, in the arts, are seduced by the financial opportunities offered by Babylon. They commit adultery with her. In fact, the seductive power of money that Babylon offers is so great that it reaches down to all the inhabitants of the earth. Revelation 17:2

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Rev 17:2 With her the kings of the earth committed adultery and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries.”

What for sale in Babylon? What is prostituted for the almighty dollar?

When Babylon is finally destroyed, we read these words in chapter 18:11-13,

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Rev 18:11 “The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes any more—

Rev 18:12 cargoes of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet cloth; every sort of citron wood, and articles of every kind made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron and marble;

Rev 18:13 cargoes of cinnamon and spice, of incense, myrrh and frankincense, of wine and olive oil, of fine flour and wheat; cattle and sheep; horses and carriages; and bodies and souls of men.

I want to pause for a moment and consider together this last phrase in verse 13,

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and bodies and souls of men

Anything and everything is bought and sold by Babylon the prostitute, including human beings – body and soul.

Certainly, when John wrote this the Roman Empire was largely populated by slaves. As Rome conquered more and more lands, it turned whole populations into slaves - Carthaginians, Greeks, and Macedonians. Whereas, at one time owning a slave in Rome was a sign of great wealth, by the first century every farmer and every citizen owned slaves. There were millions and millions of slaves serving as cheap labor on gigantic plantations. Slaves served as Gladiators for entertainment. Slaves served as tutors in schools or as cooks.

Babylon the prostitute enslaves people by selling crack cocaine in the inner-city. Babylon the prostitute enslaves people through online pornography and gambling sites. Anything and everything can be bought and sold in Babylon including human beings body and soul.

Sadly, trafficking in human beings for profit didn't end in the first century. Currently, tens of thousands of human beings are bought and sold in countries like Niger, Indonesia, and Saudi Arabia. If you add in the sex slave trade, I am not talking about prostitution, the choice of a woman to sell her body for profit, I am talking about the sex slave trade, the involuntary sale of human beings against their wills to satisfy the lust of customers for a profit. If you add in the sex slave trade in Eastern Europe, India, Thailand, Africa, Mexico, and in the United States, the numbers of bodies and souls purchased as if they were just a pound of meat or a piece of furniture totals in the millions worldwide.

I want to read to you one story of a woman who represents tens of thousands of women worldwide. This is from the New York Times. The woman's name is Andrea.

"Andrea" is just one name she was given by her traffickers and clients; she doesn't know her real name. She was born in the United States and sold or abandoned here—at about four years old, she says—by a woman who may have been her mother. She is now in her early to mid-twenties; she doesn't know for sure. She says that she spent approximately the next twelve years as the captive of a sex trafficking ring that operated on both sides of the Mexican border.

Because of the threat of retribution from her former captors, who are believed to still be at large, an organization that rescues and counsels trafficking victims and former prostitutes arranged for the New York Times Reporter to meet Andrea at a secret location in the United States. The reporter writes:

In a series of excruciating conversations, Andrea explained to me how the trafficking ring that kept her in work, moving young girls (and boys) back and forth over the border, selling nights and weekends with them mostly to American men. She said that the ring imported both through abduction and outright purchase toddlers, children, and teenagers into the United States from many countries. An organization spokesperson said, "We went to this house that had a goat in the front yard and we came out with a 4-year old boy. The boy cost about \$500." She said that many poor parents were told that their children would go to adoption agencies and on to better lives in America.

Andrea goes on saying, "When we crossed the border into Juarez all the border guards wanted to see was a birth certificate for the dark-skinned kids." She said she was transported to Juarez dozens of times. During one visit when she was 7-years old the trafficker took her to the Radisson Casa Grande Hotel where there was a "john" waiting in a room. The John was an older American man and he read Bible passages to her before and after having sex with her.

"When I was taken to Mexico," Andrea said, "I knew that things were going to be different. The 'customers' were American businessmen. The men who went

there had higher positions, more to lose, if they were caught doing these things on the other side of the border. I was told my purpose was to keep these men from abusing their own kids.” She said, “The white kids you could beat, but you couldn’t mark. But with the Mexican kids, you could do whatever you wanted. They were untraceable. You lost nothing by killing them.”

It is estimated that:

- 500,000 children in Brazil
- 400,000 children in India
- A half million children in Thailand
- 100,000 in Taiwan
- 200,000 children in Nepal

And several hundred thousand children in North America will be bought and sold in the sex trade industry this year.

Costa Rica receives thousands of tourists from the United States each year that have one purpose in mind: To purchase a young boy or girl for the purpose of sex.

If you are interested in learning more about this worldwide crime, and what you might be able to do about it, you can get online at www.ijm.org. It is the International Justice Mission that works for social justice around the world.

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www.ijm.org

But it is not only Babylon’s subordination of everything to the almighty dollar. It is also the spiritual character that Revelation focuses upon in Revelation 17:3-4,

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Rev 17:3 Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns.

Rev 17:4 The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries.

The color of the beast is the same as that of the dragon, or Satan in Revelation 12:3.

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Rev 12:3 Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads.

Both are red, or scarlet, indicating that the beast shares the character of the dragon. And the beast is full of blasphemous names. Revelation 17:3

SLIDE

Rev 17:3 Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns.

Not only because it speaks blasphemous things against God, which by the way is becoming more and more common in Europe and the United States. In Europe, there is a commercial in which the crucified Christ is selling toilet paper. It is becoming more common in comedy and in advertising and movies to mock and demean Jesus Christ. But that is not all that is meant by the beast blasphemous names. In addition, the beast does worship himself. It is blasphemous because it demands that people worship it and not God. The defining mark of the beast is self-deification.

The woman is the prostitute named Babylon and she rides on the beast. She draws her strength, wealth and character from the blasphemous dragon-like beast.

What John is doing here in the book of Revelation is giving us an amazingly penetrating look into the nature of countries and cultures. John is saying if you really understand a country; don't just explore its geography or mineral wealth. If you want to understand a country, don't just look at its economic or political systems, or its music or art. These are just symptoms of something deeper. Look deeper. Look at what men and women cherish, honor and worship. In other words, don't just look at a country through an economic lens or a political lens. You have to look at countries through a spiritual lens, through a theological lens.

There is a reason, according to New York University International Law scholar, Joseph Weiler, who is an orthodox Jew, why Europe is committing demographic suicide. There is a reason why whole countries in Europe are so concerned about personal convenience and self-interest that they won't even do the most basic thing to sustain a civilization, which is to have children. There is a reason why Americans offer more protection to endangered birds than to unborn children. Joseph Weiler, an orthodox Jew, calls it Christophobia – the fear of allowing Christ to influence any aspect of life. The severing of Christianity from the roots of culture.

See, countries, according to this brilliant law professor, according to Revelation twenty centuries ago, always go in the direction of people's worship. Whatever men and women cherish and honor and worship at the deepest part of their beings, will show up in their families, marriages, governments, and business practices. Revelation tells us to look at life through spiritual lenses. Consider

what a man or woman worships at the core of their being and it will show up in the rest of their lives.

- What is the danger of living in a Babylon-like country?
- What is the danger of a business or a government that is heart and soul devoted to subordinating everything for the almighty dollar?
- What is the danger posed by attending a spiritually faithless university?
- What is the danger of living in a spiritually faithless home?

The first great danger of living in Babylon is conformity. Babylon is not content to be a prostitute. Babylon insists on reproducing in kind. Revelation 17:5

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Rev 17:5 This title was written on her forehead:

MYSTERY

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Babylon is called the Mother of Prostitutes. In other words, Babylon stamps its citizens with its own character. Babylon molds its children in its own image. Conformity.

You know, one of the most influential spiritually-shaping environments in the United States is the 4-5 years a young adult spends in college. It goes way beyond the specific content of lectures. Attitudes, values, and practices are formed in college that will last a lifetime. It amazes me that Christian parents pack their kids off to college at age 18 with very little thought given to the spiritual environment of living in a dormitory, or the spiritual resources available to sustain their son or daughter's faith. Parents, do you not understand the power of attending Babylon State University? Or living in the Babylon dorms?

Patrick Glynn wrote a wonderful book several years ago titled God the Evidence. It is all about how an intelligent 21st century person could become convinced that the God of the Bible actually exists. Patrick Glynn talks about his own experience attending Harvard in 1969. He says, "When I left my Jesuit high school to attend Harvard in 1969, I plunged into an environment where the death or disappearance of God was simply taken for granted. In those days, the era of the New Left ascendancy and anti-Viet Nam war protests, the curriculum was dominated by the writings of atheist Karl Marx, whose work assumed an importance that professors at an earlier age might have granted only to the Bible. Western intellectual history was taught as the story of the disappearance of God, the loss of faith by novelists, poets, and great thinkers.

It was not so much that professors who taught me were anti-religious. There were a few church goers. It was simply that everyone assumed that religious belief had become impossible for a rational human being in the modern era. God was dead and traditional religious beliefs were assumed to be a thing of the past invalidated by science and incompatible with a modern outlook.”

It was years before Patrick Glynn was able to break free from the spiritual formation that he received in Harvard University’s English department.

Most of us don’t choose our worldviews or our spiritual attitudes after careful investigation. We just go along with the crowd. If it is assumed that following Christ is uncool, or unattractive, or unintelligent, we don’t check Jesus out for ourselves, we just never consider him. I wonder how many of you were kept from a relationship with Jesus perhaps for years because that was not what the crowd you hung around with or grew up with was in to? It wasn’t a conscious decision. You just flowed with the crowd. Maybe some of you are still flowing with the crowd and you are not checking out Jesus.

The workplace can have the conforming character of Babylon, particularly if you work for a hard-driving, financially obsessed workplace like a large law firm, bank, insurance, or real estate company.

I talked with a Christian lawyer who attends our church and works for a large law firm. He said he is fortunate that at his firm there is generally accepted standard of abiding by the law in all the law firm’s actions. No one at his firm, to his knowledge, has forged documents, or filed false financial statements. But he said in this big business law firm the pressure to conform is enormous.

I asked him what ways does he feel the pressure to conform?

He said, “It’s lots of things. There is a constant pressure to prioritize your work over your family. If you leave work at 5:30 to coach your son or daughter, when you could be billing more client hours, you are penalized. There is pressure concerning what you do at night. Are you spending your weekend with your family, or are you taking your clients to play golf? At evaluation time there are subtle comments like, ‘We’re concerned that you aren’t really a team player.’”

He said that people at his firm move to Powell or Muirfield, or New Albany, and there is real pressure felt regarding the kind of home you live in, the kind of car you drive. Is your house a showplace that will impress clients? Are you a member of a country club? Are you willing to spend the \$100,000 membership fee strictly for the purpose of impressing other people?

This attorney was given a country club membership by his parents. He and his wife chose to resign from the club after several years. They wanted to devote more time to their family. He said people at the club were shocked by their

decision. He couldn't even talk to them. He even had this reaction from other Christians.

My friend told me that there is even pressure regarding what church you are a member of. He said that a fellow Christian in another firm remained part of their church simply because their church is perceived as being socially prominent. It is a good place to make contacts; to see and be seen. When he tells people that he goes to the Vineyard, some of the folks in his firm say, "Where?" It is all about social prominence.

He said there is a general ethos that you do whatever you need to do to make clients happy short of breaking the law. Whatever it takes to bring in the money. If you client wants to go to a strip club, you take them to a strip club. You laugh at the client's dirty jokes. This man was told once, "Don't be so squeamish." In other words, suck it up, because this guy's company sends up big checks.

An attorney working in another law firm told another Christian attorney, "Essentially, I am a chameleon. That's what it takes." When this man worked on the Veggie Tales bankruptcy, he never drank when he was with clients because they didn't drink. On the other hand, when he's done other work and his clients wanted to go to a strip club, he happily joins them.

What is the danger of Babylon? Conformity and corruption. Revelation 18:2-3,

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Rev 18:2 With a mighty voice he shouted:

"Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!

She has become a home for demons

and a haunt for every evil spirit,

a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird.

Rev 18:3 For all the nations have drunk

the maddening wine of her adulteries.

The kings of the earth committed adultery with her,

and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries."

This corruption particularly affects business leaders and political leaders. It says in Revelation 18:3 that

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The kings of the earth committed adultery with her,

and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries."

And they get drunk – coupled by Babylon's maddening wine.

One of the things that has come out of the Enron Scandal is the corrupting influence of corporations like Enron upon their employees and even upon their auditors. Part of the reason why the financial markets were willing to go along

with Enron's business practices is because Arthur Andersen, the hugely respected accounting firm, signed off on all of the transactions and business structures that Enron was creating. The Arthur Andersen firm was taken down by the Enron scandal. This was an amazing turn of events because for much of its history, Andersen was the most upright of the nation's accounting firms. They took enormous pride in that reputation.

An accounting firm's primary allegiance is supposed to be to the investing public, not to the company whose books it's auditing. No firm took that mission as seriously as Arthur Andersen. The firm had in its history dozens of stories that had passed along of uprightness. In the early years, when the firm was struggling, Andersen auditors told a railway company that it had to change a certain accounting practice. The company's president demanded that the firm reserve itself or lose the account. Arthur Andersen himself famously retorted, "There is not enough money in the city of Chicago to make me change the firm's decision."

Arthur Andersen's successor, who ran the firm until 1963, was a highly principled man, but then the firm began to change. It entered the consulting business. Along with the rise of consulting came a new focus on the bottom line. Arthur Andersen became less willing, as a firm, to challenge questionable practices of its clients. Arthur Andersen's Houston office worked so closely with Enron that they came to see the world the way Enron executives did. The high standards that the firm used to hold to gradually disintegrated. Andersen's local Houston office became thoroughly corrupt.

Corruption for money. Consider how America has been willing to look the other way regarding Saudi Arabia. *The Atlantic Monthly* published an article titled "The Fall of the House of Saud." It said, "Popular preachers all over Saudi Arabia call openly for jihad against the West in terms as vitriolic as anything heard in Iran at the height of the Islamic revolution there. The kingdom's mosque schools have become a breeding ground for militant Islam. Recent attacks in Bali, in Bosnia, in Chechnya, Kenya, Iraq and the United States, not to mention those against US military personnel within Saudi Arabia, all point back to these schools and to the House of Saud itself, which terrified at the prospect of a militant uprising against it, shovels protection money at the fundamentalists and tries to distract their attention abroad. There is little doubt that money from Saudi Arabia has gone to clerics and causes associated with Osama bin Laden.

In recent years the Saudi education system has been largely entrusted to Wahabi fundamentalists as a form of appeasement. The United States has known since 1994 that the Saudis were supporting Pakistan's nuclear development program, contributing over a billion dollars to develop the bomb there.

Why does the United States look the other way? It is because the Saudis determine more or less the price of oil globally by deciding how much oil to produce, and because Saudi Arabia keeps as much as a trillion dollars on deposit in US banks, and they hold another trillion dollars or so in the US stock market, which gives them incredible leverage in Washington.

Why does the United States look the other way? It is because virtually every Washington politician worth mentioning is involved with companies that do significant business in Saudi Arabia. There is a private investment group called the Carlyle Group. Since its inception in 1987 it has conducted immensely profitable business with Saudi Arabia. The old chairman of the Carlyle Group was Frank Carlucci, who first served as Ronald Reagan's National Security Advisor, and then as his Secretary of Defense. Carlyle's senior counselor is James Baker, who served as the Secretary of State under the first George Bush. Other Carlyle executives are:

- Arthur Levitt, the former head of the Securities Exchange Commission under Bill Clinton
- John Major, the former Prime Minister of Great Britain
- William Kennard, who chaired the Federal Communications Commission
- Richard Darman, who ran the Office of Management and Budget under the first President Bush

Other companies doing business in Saudi Arabia employ dozens of former Democratic office holders including:

- Lloyd Bentsen
- The former Georgia Senator Sam Nunn

Babylon conforms and Babylon corrupts.

How is Babylon defeated? People who defeat Babylon are people who are willing to leave Babylon, Revelation 18:4,

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Rev 18:4 Then I heard another voice from heaven say:

"Come out of her, my people,
so that you will not share in her sins,
so that you will not receive any of her plagues;

The call to leave conforming, corrupting environments or relationships goes back to the very earliest pages of the Bible. In Genesis 12:1, we read these words:

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Ge 12:1 The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.

The call of separation is a continual call to God's people throughout the Bible. So we read in Isaiah 52:11 these words:

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Isa 52:11 Depart, depart, go out from there!
Touch no unclean thing!
Come out from it and be pure,
you who carry the vessels of the LORD.

And the apostle Paul says this in 2 Cor. 6:17,

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2Co 6:17 "Therefore come out from them
and be separate,
says the Lord.
Touch no unclean thing,
and I will receive you."

Sometimes an environment or a relationship is so conforming, so corrupting; it comes between you and your relationship with God and you must literally leave. You need to cut it off. If you are a married person and you are carrying on an emotional affair, much less an actual affair, with someone who is not your spouse; or you are a single person carrying on an emotional affair with a married person, there is only one word from God for you: Cut it off; leave. That relationship is your Babylon. You need to run from the things that destroy your life.

And just as an aside, particularly in the area of sexuality and sexual temptation outside of marriage, the Bible has one continual word of counsel, that is: Flee. It is very realistic, 1 Cor. 6:18,

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1Co 6:18 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.

2 Tim. 2:22

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2Ti 2:22 Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

St. Francis deSales, back in the 17th century in his introduction to the Devout Life said, "I say unhesitatingly to whosoever has become entangled in any such worthless love affairs, cut it short, break it off—do not play with it, or pretend to untie the knot; cut it through, tear it asunder."

Ask yourself this question: Is this friendship, is this circle of people, is this relationship assisting me to grow in my relationship with God, or is it dragging me down?

Sometimes a work environment is so corrupting, it is so conforming that maybe someone else could work there, but you can't. You need to leave. You say: But I'm going to lose money. I can't afford to leave. Jesus says that you can't afford not to leave. Jesus said in Mark 8:36-37,

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Mk 8:36 What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?

Mk 8:37 Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?

You say, "But I don't have a back up plan. I don't have another job lined up."

Friend, there are times in life when you need to step out like Abraham. He left not knowing where God was taking him, in simple obedience to the Word of God. Sometimes you just need to step out trusting God to supply.

Leaving even has to do with certain habits, and certain possessions. If your computer is causing you to sin, throw it out. Don't have a computer in your house. You can live without a computer in your home. People have done it for thousands and thousands of years.

Bottom line: If something or someone, if some involvement, if some set of relationships is dragging you down, then it is time for you to move on.

And people who defeat Babylon are people who have healthy spiritual habits. There was a United States Senator from Wisconsin, who was very well known when I was growing up. His name was William Proxmire. He refused to simply go along with the crowd - the crowd in the United States Senate, the crowd in the White House. William Proxmire constantly broke ranks with the crowd.

If there was ever an award given to a politician for sheer perseverance and the maintenance of healthy daily habits, the award for perseverance would have to be given to Senator William Proxmire. He lost the race for governor of Wisconsin in 1952, 1954 and 1956. The day after losing each of those races, he showed up at Milwaukee factories handing out cards saying: We lost, but...

In 1957 when he ran for the late Joe McCarthy's Senate seat, instead of distancing himself from his prior losses, he embraced the 3-time loser label. Proxmire said, "Let my opponent have the support of the man who has never proposed to a girl and lost. I will take the losers. If all those who have ever lost in business, lost in love, lost in sport or lost in politics will vote for me, as one who knows what it is like to lose and fight back, I will be glad to give my opponent the support of all those lucky voters who have never lost anything."

William Proxmire stood up on the Senate floor in January 1967 to urge the passage of the International Anti-Genocide Treaty, which the US uniquely refused to sign. William Proxmire said in 1967, “I intend to speak day after day in this body to remind the Senate of our failure to enact and of the necessity for proaction regarding genocide.” Proxmire delivered a new speech every day in the US Senate for the next 19 years urging the passage of the Anti-Genocide Treaty. He made a point of never missing a roll-call vote during his 22 years in the Senate. He made 10,000 consecutive roll-call votes.

How do you stand up to conformity and corrupting pressure? Not by being a great hero, not by extraordinary spirituality, but by developing healthy habits of life – spending regular time with God in the scriptures and in prayer, making a commitment to public worship each week, to join a small group. You need an alternative to Babylon to go to, where the shaping pressures move you toward God rather than away from God. Healthy habits – giving financially to the cause of Christ, serving others. If you are married, healthy up-building times each week in your marriage – a date night, times spent in encouraging each other.

Revelation, in these two chapters, gives us spiritual thinking about life, how to live in a healthy way. Let’s pray.

Spiritual Thinking About Life

Rich Nathan

July 2-3, 2005

Revelation: Looking at Life From the Perspective of Heaven Series
Revelation 17 and 18

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