

Rev 26-05-06b

We're resuming our study now in Revelation, looking at the characteristics of Babylon so that we can identify it and ensure that we go from Babylon, that we don't participate, that we don't get sucked into the back streets and the dark alleys that the crafty harlot wants to seduce us into, as we saw back in Proverbs. The first category we have looked at, there are plenty of other passages. You can take any of these verses, and I encourage you to do so.

If any one of these seems to be a soft spot or an area of temptation or failure, find any one of the verses that we look at because they are just representative. Go to the treasury of scripture knowledge or the new treasury of scripture knowledge. Go to that passage and find its parallels and those that shed additional light on that same concept.

It is a fruitful study. You could take one of these areas each morning for a week because there are seven of them, and read what the scriptures have to say about these areas of choice. Am I choosing the world? Am I choosing the priorities that God gives me in the Lord Jesus? Go to the scriptures.

Let the power of the scriptures flow into the soul and fortify us and arm us and shield us from failure or distraction and deception that leads us into these areas. So the first one, and by the way, I have worked very hard to try to develop a memory aid for us. So the memory aid for these points is Babylon, Babylon.

Seven points, seven letters. The first one we're looking at is the gold, silver, precious stones, and pearls. And I'm going to Corinthians with the apostle Paul.

How do you build on the foundation? Do you build internally? Do you build in the soul? What are your resources? Are you pursuing? Are you going after? Are you desiring gold, silver, and precious stones of a spiritual and heavenly nature or an earthly and corrupted nature? So the first B in Babylon, point one, is building internally, building internally. That's number one. Number two that we're about to look at, this is the A in Babylon.

This is appearance. Look at the characteristics here in verse 12. After the merchandise of gold, silver, precious stones, and pearls, the second category is fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet.

Fine linen, purple, silk, and scarlet. Another set of four. Remember number four is universality, northeast, south, and west, four dimensions, and so on.

So what do these represent? This is an investment in appearance. You wear fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet. These are primarily adornment, our appearance.

Who are we trying to impress? Clothing is often used in scripture both literally and metaphorically. You think about 2 Corinthians 5, 2 and 3. Paul says, in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be

clothed upon with our house, which is from heaven. If so be that being clothed, we shall not be found naked.

I want spiritual clothing. I want to walk with the Lord Jesus in white, spiritual white linen, righteous deeds of the saints. My robes washed in the blood of the Lamb and made clean by acknowledging and confessing my sins and walking in the light so that the blood of Jesus Christ keeps on cleansing me from all sin.

1 John 1, 7, as well as 1, 9. Psalm 51, purge me with hyssop, I shall be clean. Wash me, I shall be whiter than snow. Create in me a clean heart, O God.

Renew a right spirit within me. How do I appear before God? The Pharisees whitewashed the outside of the tomb and inside they were full of dead men's bones. Man looks on the outward appearance, the Lord looks on the heart.

What is the appearance? So we saw this last time in 1 Peter 3, 3. Whoever has adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plating the hair, of wearing gold, or of putting on of apparel. It is the inward virtue and beauty of the heart. So the A in Babylon, what do we get sucked into in terms of priorities and ways of thinking? When we think of ourselves, our self-image, our presentation, are we excessively worried about what others think? Is there a flaw in my appearance and I need to hide it or adorn it or cover it up or get better clothes? There's nothing wrong with wanting to look nice, with being respectful, respecting ourselves and respecting others by dressing appropriate to an occasion, dressing in ways that are flattering, not careless, not sloppy, not slovenly or unclean, but still modestly, appropriately.

We don't stand out, we're not drawing attention to ourselves, there are young ladies who dress and you don't even wanna go to the mall because it's distracting, it's too much exposure, it's unseemly, it's dangerous, I worry about them and young men full of hormones tackling them or whatever. It's not modest, it's not appropriate to the occasion. So adornments, outer adornment versus inner beauty.

These riches end up being corrupted, the ability to dress nicely. James 5, verse two, your riches are corrupted, that's the first part we just looked at, and your garments are moth-eaten. However nicely you're dressing, to the world's eye, in God's eyes, you're moth-eaten clothes, they're shabby, they're neglected.

When the Lord Jesus wears a garment, His vesture is dipped in blood and His name is called the Word of God. We'll see this in Revelation 19, verse 13. 1 Timothy 2.9, women should adorn themselves in modest apparel with humility and sobriety, not with broided hair or gold or pearls or costly array.

Very similar to 1 Peter 3.3, modesty, humility, simplicity, rather than extravagance. It is a wonderful thing to look nice, nothing wrong with suiting our appearance to the occasion, but if we

are invested in it in an unhealthy way, it is moth-eaten in God's sight. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught about trusting God for our needs, including clothing.

Matthew 6.25 and 6.31, Jesus spoke and said, "Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, 'what you shall eat or what you shall drink, 'nor yet for your body, what you shall put on. 'Is not the life more than meat 'and the body more than raiment?' 'There's more going on than making a good impression 'or being admired.' 'Therefore,' 6.31, take no thought, saying, 'What shall we eat? What shall we drink? 'Wherewithal shall we be clothed?' 'Our Father in heaven knows what we need before we ask Him.'" Lilies of the field, you remember these passages. When the Lord Jesus was heading into Jerusalem, garments were a part of the parade.

Remember in Matthew 21.8, very great multitudes spread their garments in the way. Others cut down branches from the trees and strewed them in the way. They took off their clothes and put them in the path for the Lord Jesus riding on the donkey to enter the city.

An outer show, an outer display of acceptance and celebration that wasn't reflected in the heart. Four days later, the Lord Jesus is on the cross. And these same people are shouting, crucify Him.

What you do with your outer adornment can't just be a momentary flash in the pan excitement or a viral moment in a crowd. We need the adornment of the heart that will go with us. Can't take anything in the closet when we go, but whatever we have in our hearts is that with which we will be clothed in the eternal future.

So that is point two, the second set of characteristics. Babylon says, buy my Levi's, get my haute couture, get my fancy dresses and expensive clothing and coiffure and cosmetics and so on. We should resist the urge to be caught up in glamor, in style contests, in seeking to impress through outward appearances.

The third characteristic, and you can expect because my acronym here is Babylon, that this one is going to start with another B. The third set of described losses here are every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron and marble. Notice this section beginning with citron wood, objects of ivory, objects of precious wood, bronze, iron and marble. These are objects.

These are external. This is another B for building, but remember the first one was building internally. What do we build on the foundation of Jesus Christ? Now we're looking at what do you build externally? Wood is a building material.

Ivory and precious wood were adornments to make extremely nice buildings. You think of Solomon building the temple. You think of Herod refurbishing the second temple with adornments and with elements designed to impress, designed to speak of wealth and power and prominence.

Do we buy a house? Because when people come over, we want them to be impressed with the entryway. We want them to see the paneling or the yard or the location or whatever it may be. Are we building a life in the material world with earthly objectives, earthly desires to be accepted, to be well thought of, or are we building on the rock of Jesus Christ rather than the sand? So that when the storm comes, does it stand or does it fall? So you can't help but think in terms of building of the man who looked at all of his barns and said, I'm gonna tear those down and build bigger barns, and I'm gonna store even more grain.

In Luke 12, verse 15, Jesus said, "Take care and be on your guard against all covetousness, acquisitiveness, satisfaction in material gain, what I acquire and what I hold as assets, what I build." Jesus said, "One's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." One's life does not consist in how much he's got, building externally. Luke 12 is a great chapter for this. That is in the context of someone in the crowd saying to the Lord Jesus, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." He said to him, "Man, who made me a judge or arbiter over you, arbitrator? Take care." Then he told them a parable, saying the land of a rich man produced plentifully.

And he thought to himself, "What shall I do? For I have nowhere to store my crops." And he said, "I will do this. I will tear down my barns and build larger ones. And there I will store all my grain and my goods.

And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years. Relax, eat, drink, be merry." But God said to him, "You fool, this night your soul is required of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?" Takes you back to Kohelet, to Ecclesiastes.

Solomon addresses this in detail. "So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God." You can see how these overlap and especially building internally and building externally. The B and the B in Babylon are two sides of a coin and you've got the appearances right there in the middle.

So it is important to evaluate ourselves. Wouldn't it be great if from time to time we could sit down and say, let's see, Babylon. Let me just go through these and see if I've been co-opted by spiritual Babylon.

If I'm suddenly moving closer and closer into the capital city of Satan and further and further away from the new Jerusalem. Well, let's see. Am I building the resources in my soul? How concerned am I about appearances and what people think and whether I'm going to achieve success and progress by impressing those around me? What am I building externally? Am I so concerned about ensuring I have a retirement or ensuring I've got a certain amount in the bank and trying to plan long-term? These building materials were used because they were durable from an earthly point of view.

Nothing on this earth is as durable as what we can build in heaven. So B, A, B, those are the first three. And with this, you can put Matthew 6, 19 through 21.

We've quoted it many times. Do not lay up for yourselves treasure on earth. Moth and rust destroy.

Thieves break in and steal. Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven. Neither moth nor rust destroys.

Thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6, 19 through 21.

First Timothy 6.10. Paul says to Timothy, the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. Self-induced misery by getting distracted with what we build externally, what we try to possess and hang onto, our earthly fortress, if you will.

Jesus said in Matthew 6, 24, no one can serve two masters. He will either hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money, possessions, monetary gain.

As a side note, I was researching how one of the current incarnations of Babylon is democratic socialism and researching socialism in general. And if you look at Cambodia and Pol Pot back in the 1970s, Pol Pot's idea was, we're gonna do away with money. They canceled all currency.

You should read about that. An earthly desire to get rid of money does not work. It is the love of money.

It's not money itself. It's investment in it, counting on it, depending on it, placing faith in it rather than in God. Covetousness is idolatry.

1 Timothy 6, 17 through 19, as for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be arrogant nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. The rich are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future so that they may take hold of that which is truly life. 1 Timothy 6, 17 through 19.

Proverbs 23, four and five, do not toil to acquire wealth. Be discerning enough to desist. When your eyes light on it, it is gone.

Suddenly it sprouts wings, flying like an eagle toward heaven. Can't tell you how many times I've seen a small game sprout wings and fly away. You just can't depend on it.

Here today, gone tomorrow. The Lord is always there. That was Proverbs 23, four and five.

James 4, 13 through 17. You remember this. Listen, James.

Come now, you who say today or tomorrow, we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit. Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? This is getting close to our next point.

What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, if the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that. As it is, you boast in your arrogance.

All such boasting is evil. So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him, it's sin. James 4, 13 through 17.

That's the third category, the second B. Where are we building? Are we laying up treasure for the eternal city or are we unconsciously dwelling in spiritual Babylon? That brings us to number four. This one is a surprise. You just can't see this coming until you see it.

What is the fourth category here? Verse 13, cinnamon, incense, fragrant oil, and frankincense. Cinnamon, incense, fragrant oil, and frankincense. Wonderful aromas, pleasant spices, a wonderful euphoric experience.

And we think this is what my life is about. This is what my life is for. This is the why in Babylon.

I challenge you, if you're going to develop an acronym and you've got four spices listed, find a word starting with Y that will sum up their metaphorical meaning. Here is my answer. The Y in Babylon is W-H-Y, why? And it is so apropos.

Remember when you have seven things, they often resolve into a chiasm. And the most important thing is at the center of the chiasm. We have had three things leading into it.

What do we build internally? What kind of appearances do we really care about? How do we appear before God or how we appear before men? What are we building externally with citron wood and precious woods and durable materials? Is this where we're placing our faith? But at the center, what is the pleasure beyond the necessities? These spices and perfumes are not necessities. They are the fruit of peace, of prosperity. It is pleasantness.

It is experience. Am I having a great experience? We're going to see this repeated later on at the close of the description of Babylon in similar terms. But here it's represented by these spices.

Cinnamon is both aromatic and tasty when used in moderation. You have incense. This is pleasing to God.

The prayers of the saints go up from the golden altar of incense. Even God is pleased with incense. Fragrant oil, something to overcome some of the unhappy aromas that might be in the environment.

Fragrant oil and frankincense, another costly and very effective perfume. This is where we can enter into the mystical, into a rising above the physical and into aesthetic experience. What kind of aesthetic experience? Why do we come to worship? Are we looking for an emotional high? Are we looking for a catharsis? Even the godless, or actually godful, I suppose you could say, they had just pantheism everywhere, gods and goddesses all over the place.

But the Greeks and the Romans would go to the theater and watch a play and see a tragedy where someone goes along, makes a bad decision and suffers tragically for it. And they would, in experiencing the story, feel a catharsis, feel a cleansing of their soul at an earthly level. Good literature does this for people who are secular-minded and materialist in outlook.

I read a book and I'm carried along by a story and my soul feels differently afterward. All of these are material, short-term, human, ephemeral and ultimately powerless. You can change the arrangement of things at the dump.

It's still the dump and the things there are still cast off. Only God has the power to transform, to lift up, to bring us out of the miry clay and into the realms of heaven and glory. It is the power of God that we need.

So when it comes to that which seems to be spiritual and aesthetic and holy and something that transcends the material, is it really transcendent? Is it the perfume of Babylon or is it that which is pleasing in God's sight, that which takes us to genuine spiritual reality? Is it a mere substitute, a nice smell here on earth or is it that which partakes of heaven and glory? That is the why. Why are we doing what we do? Why do we care about what we build? Why do we care how we appear? Why do we care about any of these things? Why do we live our lives? What is our purpose? It's right at the center of this grouping. We need to ask ourself the question, why do I get up in the morning? What is my purpose? I've quoted Admiral Stockdale to you any number of times.

I like to get it in two or three times a year. But when he came to the Naval Academy and spoke to us, I was greatly impressed. When he was a vice presidential candidate and was sitting on the stage, his opponent spoke first, grandiose, eloquent political speech.

He sat down and it was Admiral Stockdale's turn. If you remember, he was Ross Perot's running mate and he had these big white bushy eyebrows. He had been a POW, retired Admiral of the Navy, no guff, no nonsense.

He looked out, he wasn't ruffled at all. He looked out and he said, who am I? Why am I here? And then he proceeded to answer those questions. He believed in the agenda.

He believed in the candidacy. He believed in the platform. But I love the questions.

Who am I and why am I here? We can ask ourselves that every day. That is the why. Are you

here to smell the perfume or are we here for the glory of God? That which God apprehended us, we want to now apprehend.

Paul says, I've not yet gotten a hold of it. God got a hold of me so that I could get a hold of something and I'm not yet fully grasp it, but I press toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. That's the why.

You want to smell something nice or do you want to get something eternal done? That's that fourth group right at the center. You can't miss it. And we're going to see, and I'll let you look at the chiasm here in detail.

I'm just going to suggest it. The fifth group after the perfumes is wine and oil, fine flour and wheat. Another group of four.

And this is coming out from the other side of the chiasm. If you had A, B, C, and then D at the center, the why of life. Now this is C prime.

So this is going to go back to that building externally. This is the L and it is composed of flour, wheat, cattle, and sheep. This is substance.

This is business. This isn't just, have I got something in the cupboard? This is what you accomplish, what you lay hold of and what you repose your long-term security. The L in Babylon, I'm going to offer as your long-term security.

Previous things overlap in this some building externally. You can say, I want something that will last, but this is personal long-term security. I'm going to have plenty of wine and oil, fine flour and wheat.

The oil and fine flour are in the center. This is also a little symmetry. Remember the oil and flour is what sustained the widow in the day that she was taking care of the prophet.

And on the outside, you have the wine and the wheat. Wine and oil, fine flour and wheat. Fine flour is that which has already been processed.

The wheat is still in the raw state. Wine has been through a process, oil, you just press it. So there's both the raw materials and the processed materials in this group, but it has to do with self-reliance.

I don't need God to supply my needs because look, I've got oil, I've got wheat, I've got fine flour. I've got wine. I'm good to go.

I have what I need. If we do not have a sense of need, if we do not cultivate and recognize our need before God and we become apathetic and indifferent because we feel well-supplied, we take for granted what we have, our long-term security starts looking like what Babylon reposes

confidence in and faith in the future. Well, we shot some ammunition in the war, but we've got more.

We've expended some of what we have in the larder, but there's plenty more. I'm okay. I've spent some money, but I've got more in the bank.

So I'm at rest, I'm at peace. And I don't address the spiritual side. Am I depending on God? These stocks could disappear in a moment.

They could take wings and fly away. Would I be shocked and dismayed? Would I be knocked off my pins? Or am I like Paul? Whether I am abased or I abound, in whatever state I find myself, therewith I'm content. Job, the Lord gave, the Lord took away.

Blessed be the name of the Lord. That takes spiritual maturity that we want to cultivate. We don't want our faith to be in what we've got in reserve.

Our long-term security should be in the promises of God. Plenty of scriptures that we could appeal to in that, but I will just suggest a couple to you. It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man, Psalm 118.

Psalm 146, three and four, put not your trust in princes, in mortal man who cannot save. Isaiah 30, verse one, woe to the rebellious children, declares the Lord, to those who carry out a plan, but not mine, who form an alliance, but against my will, heaping up sin upon sin. Isaiah 31, one, woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trust in their abundance of chariots and in their multitude of horsemen.

This is getting into our O, the next grouping. And as I said, these tend to overlap. Isaiah 36, six, look now, you are trusting in Egypt, the splintered reed of a staff that will pierce the hand of anyone who leans on it, such as Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to all who trust in him.

Human solutions, human supply, human systems of security can and will fail. Where do we put our long-term trust, our long-term security? It has to be in the Lord. The next group here is cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, another group of four.

Cattle and sheep, horses and chariots. This speaks of the dominating, of overcoming, of being victorious. I don't just have one car, I've got two.

I am not just working at the company, I'm a supervisor. I have possessions with which I can trade. Cattle and sheep were commodities.

You sell them, you buy them. They have multiple purposes. You can be in the wool market, you can be in the meat market, you can be in the milk market, you can be in the next generation of fatlings and lambs and kids of goats.

Multiple ways that you can engage in commerce and business and exchange. And my confidence is in my business acumen and in the assets that I have to declare when I fill out my Schedule C. And this O, I would say, is overcoming. How do we overcome? How do we gain control and assurance of the future in a dynamic sense? Not just have I got something to survive on if things go bad, but where is my victory? Is my victory in doing well in my job or in my social life or online in my followership and my work as an influencer or someone who has a lot of followers and a lot of likes? Or are we overcomers as we saw in chapter two and chapter three of this book? What kind of an overcomer are we? Are we overcoming in the human realm, in the business world, in the social world? I'm on it.

I'm popular. I'm well-known. I'm successful.

Where is our success? O, in Babylon, I want to be an overcomer and walk with the Lord in white. The white stone, the new name, the hidden manna, pillar in the temple, walk with him in white, sit with him on his throne. The overcomer promises, when we measure our life, when we stop and think, what am I really after? Am I endeavoring to be one who overcomes in the eyes of the Lord Jesus? Or do I want to be one who overcomes in the eyes of people? Look at my horses.

Look at my chariots. Look at the extent of my flocks and herds. God allowed Satan to take all of that away from Job.

And he said, though he slay me, yet will I trust him. It didn't throw Job so far away that he didn't end up doubly blessed and offering sacrifices on behalf of his three friends. That's the O in Babylon.

Finally, the N, the final N in Babylon. We come to the bodies and souls of men. The bodies and souls of men.

And do I measure my value by the impact I have had, the esteem with which I am held in the eyes of others? Have I invested to such an extent that it's a Babylon kind of human interaction? It's who you know. It's the fraternity. It's the in-group, we're alumni from the same elite institution.

We are survivors of the same experience. And we have a link and a bond that we will leverage. This is how gangs work.

They supply what families did not to young people. And their bodies and their souls become committed to something other than God, other than the agenda and the purpose that God put us on this earth to serve. It's a helpful way to examine the areas of our life that are under attack, that are targets for seduction by the scarlet harlot, the system that is Babylon and has been from the earliest days of history.

Are we co-opted? Are we deceived? Are we seduced? Or do we remember that we are headed for the new Jerusalem? And in each of these areas, we can claim the promises of God, the power

of the Holy Spirit, the full armor of God, and be thoroughly equipped for every good work through the power of God that comes into our lives through His spirit and through His word. And when we come to the judgment, it is the gold, silver, and precious stones. It is the garment of white.

It is the treasure laid up in heaven. It is the dwelling place prepared for us by the Lord Jesus Himself, for which we have been living and striving day by day. It's a choice we make every waking moment.

Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for this wonderful detailed picture of what the enemy puts before us, where we have decisions to make, priorities to observe, goals to pursue. We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will help us with clear sight, shine the light of the word of God in our souls and on our situations so that we can make decisions that honor the Lord Jesus and are pleasing in your sight.

We ask it in the Lord Jesus' name, amen.