

Rev 26-05-17b

We're now ready to continue our study in the book of Revelation. And the use of religion, some form of mystical satisfaction of our innate knowledge that there is something beyond this life. God has put eternity in our hearts.

It says in Ecclesiastes, God has put the knowledge of himself in the heart of every man so that we are without excuse, Romans chapter one. Trying to ignore that recognition is extremely difficult. Atheism, the new atheism, which just came out 20 odd years ago has endeavored to expunge the notion that there are causes and realities beyond our own universe, despite the fact that science itself has discovered them.

And this is fascinating. I will recommend to you, if it is showing in your area, a movie that just came out the 30th of April called The Story of Everything. If you can find that, it is a condensed version of a 530 page book called The Return of the God Hypothesis, which I'm currently sailing through.

Thank you, Evelyn Wood. Thank you, 1.5 speed on an audio book. But The Story of Everything is a fascinating look at what science has discovered as it pertains to belief in God, recognition of his overarching power, plan and purpose.

That said, false religion is Satan's way of diverting that instinct and that knowledge and that recognition into areas that seem to satisfy it and seem to fulfill it, but are actually blinding the minds of those that believe not. This is what Paul talks about. The God of this world blinds the minds of those that believe not.

Otherwise, the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, would shine under them. So this is the woman. This is what Babylon represents in her finery.

And you will recall, and I just want to review, this is a memory aid. It is not inspired. It isn't derived directly from anything other than my desire.

Most of us that have ever had to persist in academic pursuits, you need a memory aid, some way to recall and remember what we're learning. And so just for the sake of convenience, I've organized the principles of Babylon under that acronym, B-A-B-Y-L-O-N. This helps us review where we are in our life.

Look around. Here's who I'm related to. Here's where my relationships function.

These are my conversations. These are my interactions. I have family.

I have friends. I have work. Now there is a vast landscape of online interaction.

I follow different things. I read different things. I contribute in different areas, these different

services of social media.

I opine on political and international events. These are the things that constitute the practice of my life. Are we unconsciously, perhaps, being led down the crafty harlot's path? Come with me to the casbah so we can make beautiful music together.

And being deceived, being co-opted, being led astray. Well, these are areas that we can check because these are what Babylon, mystery Babylon, the scarlet harlot, this is how her seductions work. These are the areas where she draws and deceives.

So we looked at this under the heading of those things that the merchants mourn when she is destroyed. And this is in chapter 18, verses 11 through 13. But what I want to point out before we review this list, look at verse 14, Revelation 18, 14.

What does it say? The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you. Eve in the garden, the woman, the fruit that you longed for, this is the appeal to the soul. Go back and read what Eve thought in her heart as she considered partaking of that fruit suggested by the serpent.

She saw certain things, she believed certain things. She took and ate. Paul says, Adam was formed first and then Eve.

Eve was deceived, Adam was not. Do not be deceived. This constitutes, all of these things in verses 12 and 13 constitute fruit that is longed for by the soul.

All the things which are rich and splendid have been lost to you, is a good translation. And you shall find them no more at all. Bereft, the emptiness, the hollowness, the deceptive seduction is exposed.

What are these things? Well, you will remember that beginning in verse 12, these things fall into seven categories, each of which up until the last is comprised of four elements. So what was the first? I put this under B and I call it building inward identity and value, B for building. What do you build in your soul? Had a pastor in years past that described what God does in our soul as we learn the word of God and the Holy Spirit creates a structure that gives us strength and stability as edification, the edification complex, some of you may remember.

What do you build in your soul? And he went into detail of its components, the foundation and how it is built. And it starts out with recognition of God's grace. Those of you who will remember, I'll give you a blast from the past.

Grace orientation is the ground floor, the foundation, mastery of the details of life. Then on top of that, a relaxed mental attitude, freedom from worry and excessive care and being distracted by the affairs of this life. Then capacity for life, love, and happiness.

And ultimately the capstone of that pyramid, if you will, is occupation with Christ, fully

appreciating and loving the Lord Jesus. How do you love someone? You come to know them and you appreciate qualities that draw respect, admiration, and love. The old song from the early days, to know, know, know him is to love, love, love him, and I do.

To know the Lord Jesus is to love him. And these other things all create that foundation of genuine love. What was the problem in Ephesus, the very first church that we studied in chapter two of this book? You have lost your first love.

We love because he first loved us. And when we understand that love and explore its details and come to understand it, we respond in love. How do you respond to the command, love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, all your mind? You can't just decide.

We've all tried this. Here's somebody. Someone says, I should love them.

I ought to love them. I want to love them. I just don't.

You can't will yourself to love. Love comes from a different place and it comes from a deep respect, appreciation, and desire to be close to and in contact with wonderful qualities, inner qualities, stable qualities, features of character and personality that draw us in and bring out our love. If you want to love God, study the word of God, both the scriptures and the Lord Jesus himself.

This is why there's nothing better than going through the gospels. If you want to come to know God, look at the Lord Jesus, appreciate his thinking, his actions, his priorities, his wisdom, his time in prayer, his concern and care for his disciples and for those who were wounded and incapable, sick and afflicted. That's how to come to know God.

So what do we build in our souls? Do we build knowledge of God and begin to develop and cultivate that love for him? And with love comes a desire to please. There's many things we do and many things we don't do out of love for those in our near periphery. And it becomes easy to be sacrificial to self and beneficial to the object of our love.

We've studied this in great detail. So the first B in Babylon is a choice. Each of these letters is a choice.

It's not just a bad thing, it's a choice. So what do we build? Do we build with these four elements, gold, silver, precious stones and pearls? Are we building with treasure on earth? Are we trying to acquire these things in the material sense? Or are we building them in our souls and storing up treasure in heaven? And we saw this, Matthew 6, 19 and 20. You know, Matthew 6, as soon as I say that, you say, all right, Matthew 5 through 7, Sermon on the Mount.

Smack in the middle of the Sermon on the Mount. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth. It's a choice.

Here, moth and rust destroy, thieves break in and steal. Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven. So where are you storing gold, silver, precious stones and pearls? Are they material or are they spiritual? That's the first choice that we make.

If we're co-opted by Babylon, we are dazzled by what is on offer. And technology has given us so many dazzling, stimulating, amazing, entertaining, desirable things. And if we lose sight of heavenly treasure, spiritual resources that are valuable and permanent.

We were not purchased with gold and silver, but with the precious blood of Christ, Peter says. The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. You don't necessarily see it.

It's not like the adornments of the scarlet harlot. But the man sells everything he has and buys the field because he knows the treasure that is hidden in it. That's Matthew 13, 44.

First Corinthians three, 12 and 13. If anyone builds on the foundation of Christ, other foundation can no man lay. We found our lives, our hopes, our future, our stability on Jesus Christ.

If anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, that is going to survive the fiery judgment that exposes the nature of our lives. What were our goals, our values, our priorities? Gold, silver, precious stones, or wood, hay and straw? Is it going to be a flash fire or is it going to clear away the dross and expose the treasures that we have received from our heavenly father? That's A, what are the assets? What are the appearances? Is it outward or inward? This comes next, our presentation to the world. The first was B, what do we build with? Build in this life, build in the next.

Build on earth, build in heaven. Build with gold, silver, precious stones or with something else. The second one is appearances.

What do we adorn ourselves with? Gold, silver, precious stones are building materials for structures. These elements are fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet. Outward adornment, our presentation.

Matthew 6, 28 and 29, you know where that is. Why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field. Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

The Pharisees, Matthew 23, 25, you cleanse the outside of the cup and the dish. You whitewash the sepulcher, but inside you're full of extortion, self-indulgence, dead men's bones. You concentrate on appearances, keeping up appearances.

You want to look to the world like all is well. And if you achieve impressing others, well, I can check that off. I've done a good job.

I had a good day. I made others think I'm really with it, on it, perhaps full of it. Let your adornment not be outward, but the hidden person of the heart.

1st Peter 3, 3 and 4. It is not the outward appearance. God looks on the heart. That's where our adornment should be.

And those who have God's viewpoint, God's vision, God's standards, we'll see that inner beauty. Does it mean we should be sloppy, tacky, slovenly? It is a testimony that our outward appearance should reflect what is within, but what is within should be beauty that comes from God, inner adornment of the heart. That's the A, our appearance, our adornment.

Who are we trying to please with that appearance? Number three, this is another B. First one was building on the inside, building in the spiritual heavenly sense. This one is building in the outward sense, building outward security, structural security. I will build savings.

I will build investments. I will build assets. I will make sure that I'm gonna survive if there's an economic storm.

I will, as the man says in Luke 12, 18 through 20, I will pull down my barns and build bigger ones. And I will say to my soul, soul, you have many goods laid up. Take your ease.

My security is in what I have acquired, what I have built. I've built my own security. I'm not relying on God's plan and purpose.

I'm not willing to be abased. I only want to abound. Paul says, whatever state I found myself, I'm content.

I've learned how to be abased and I've learned how to abound. When I abound, it doesn't distract me. I don't start imposing my sense of security or worth in what I have built.

I can just as easily be abased because I don't rely on those externalities. God said to the man that pulled down his barns to build bigger ones, you fool, this night your soul will be required of you. Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it.

Psalm 127, verse one. Abraham, chapter 11 of Hebrews, dwelt in tents. He didn't build a city because he looked for a city whose founder and builder is God.

Hebrews 13, 14, here we have no continuing city, just like Abraham. We seek the one to come. This is the direct conflict between Babylon and the new Jerusalem.

So that's B-A-B, building inwardly. What are the appearances? What do we build externally for security, safety? Lack of worry. Number four, and in a group of seven, this is at the center.

This is the heart of the chiasm. This is the most important element. And look at what it is.

Cinnamon, incense, ointments, and frankincense. Ointments and frankincense. What on earth? Turn with me quickly to Exodus chapter 30.

Keep your place in Revelation. Genesis, Exodus, second book, chapter 30. We are looking at God's instructions for worship in Israel.

Prioritizing God, fulfilling the 10 commandments. Make an altar to burn incense on of acacia wood, cubit in length, cubit in width, square, two cubits high, horns, one piece with it. Overlay its top, the sides all around, its horns with pure gold.

Make for the molding of gold all around, and so on. We know from Revelation that incense represents the prayers of the saints. To what extent, when we think about incense and perfume and pleasant aromas, are we called to remember the privilege of sending prayer to God, of being pleasing.

These are not stink bombs. This is not sulfur. This is not a pulled cat attacked my dog.

These are pleasant. I want you to notice especially verse nine. You shall not offer strange incense on this altar or a burnt offering or a grain offering, nor shall you pour a drink offering on it.

It is only for incense. This has a unique and special place in worship. And we understand this in our day and in our lives as prayer.

Our prayers should be pleasing to God. The safest way to do this is pray scripture. Not selfishly, not wishfully.

If we are invested in a situation and want to pray, what does scripture say? Here is someone who is sick. Maybe they are hospitalized. Maybe they are contemplating surgery or treatment of some sort.

The standard Christian prayer has been for a long time is, oh Lord, please heal Uncle Joe. Please guide the surgeon's hand so that they will successfully ameliorate or repair his problem. Heal him, make him whole, bring him back to us.

We love him. We don't want to lose him. Oh Lord, I want Uncle Joe to go back to being the way he was earlier.

I don't want things to change with respect to this person. Is that the biblical perspective? I am fascinated when you read the epistles to Timothy and you find that Paul the apostle left Trophimus sick in Miletus. This is the apostle Paul.

You know, the apostles, Peter could walk by if his shadow touched someone, they got healed. Paul raised a guy from the dead that fell out of an upper story window. But one of his associates, a dear companion and soldier of Christ, he leaves behind sick in Miletus.

What does that tell us? It isn't always God's will and it doesn't always affect God's best purposes for someone to be healed and well. I suspect when we get to glory and it'll be a lot easier to talk

to Trophimus than it will be to talk to the apostle Paul. I think that's going to be a really long line.

I think it's going to be one of those zigzaggy things like you see at airport security to talk to the apostle Paul but you ask Trophimus, what happened when Paul had to leave you behind sick? And I suspect God had work to do and words to speak and a testimony to bear for Trophimus. And it wasn't God's will that he continue with Paul. He was supposed to stay there.

God had other purposes for him. In whatever happens in our lives, illness, indisposition, economic hardship, thwarted plans, missed opportunities that we see and are worried about, God has a purpose in it. So when we pray, we pray that God's purposes will be accomplished.

Uncle Joe's in the hospital. He's going to be interacting with nurses and physician assistants and technicians and family and friends who come to visit. Can God use those interactions to bless people and accomplish his will? Can the light of Christ shine because Uncle Joe is a faithful believer who knows the word of God.

How many times have we had it happen where we go to visit someone in the hospital and we come away blessed when we thought we were going to go try to make them feel better. And we are uplifted and we are encouraged and God uses them as a blessing in our life when we thought we were going to do the opposite. So prayer is so important.

Pray so that you know God is going to say yes. I try to never pray a prayer where God's going to say, no, sorry. I think about a thing and I try to think at it and look at it, I think at it and I think of it and on it.

What could God be doing in this situation? What might be happening that is beyond shallow knee-jerk human observation? What does scripture have to say? What are God's goals and plans and purposes? And how can I pray in a way where God is going to say, yes, I will do that. I will reflect my glory off this situation. I will draw others to myself through Jesus Christ and perhaps through your testimony in this situation.

Pray so that the answer is yes. The altar of incense, right in the middle, these spices. But now as you finish Exodus chapter 30, the Lord said to Moses, verse 34, look at this, take sweet spices, stacte and oneka and galbanum and pure frankincense with these sweet spices.

The composition of these things is important. Look up above in verse 22. The Lord spoke to Moses saying, this is not a throwaway phrase.

This is direct guidance from God on what to do with spices. Take for yourself quality spices, liquid myrrh, sweet-smelling cinnamon. How often do you see cinnamon mentioned in the Bible? But it is here and it is in our passage in Revelation.

Sweet-smelling cane, cassia, according to the shekel of the sanctuary and a hint of olive oil, you shall make from these a holy anointing oil. An ointment compounded according to the art of the

perfumer. It isn't just will it stick or will it drip as an ointment.

It is the aroma that counts according to the art of the perfumer. It shall be a sanctified, holy anointing oil compounded in such a way that you can anoint the tabernacle of meeting and the ark of the testimony, the table and all its utensils, the lampstand, its utensils, and the altar of incense. The altar of burnt offering with its utensils, the laver and its base.

You shall consecrate them. Notice every aspect of worship is consecrated and anointed with this unique anointing oil. You shall consecrate them that they may be most holy.

Whatever touches them must be holy. And you shall anoint Aaron and his sons and consecrate them that they may minister to me as priests. There is a unique use of the cinnamon and the myrrh and these other sweet perfumes.

When you get to the incense itself, take sweet spices, as we saw below, verse 35, make of these an incense, a compound according to the art of the perfumer, salted. Salt always speaks of recognition of covenant, of vow, of dedication, of agreement. The salt of the covenant, the art of the perfumer.

It is salted, it is pure and holy. You shall beat some of it very fine, put some of it before the testimony in the tabernacle of meeting. This means in front of the veil on the altar of incense, behind which is the ark of the testimony with its lid, the mercy seat.

Beat some of it very fine. Make sure there is no adumbration. There is no alteration.

There is no infiltration of bad ingredients. When you beat something fine, there's no part of it that is not exposed to analysis, to observation. Beat it fine.

It also speaks of physical suffering. Put it before the testimony in the tabernacle of meeting where I will meet with you, it shall be most holy to you. As for the incense, which you shall make, you shall not make any for yourselves according to its composition.

It shall be to you holy for the Lord. Whoever makes any of it to smell it, to use it for his own purpose, to use it for anything other than dedication to God and worship of God and sanctification. Both the anointing oil and this incense are uniquely composed, unique ingredients in a unique compounding, unique proportions dedicated only to God.

And you will see that if anyone misuses the anointing oil, verse 33, whoever compounds anything like it or puts any of it on an outsider shall be cut off from his people. Verse 38, whoever makes any of this incense to smell it for himself outside the realm of worship and dedication to God, cut off from his people. Prayer is to God.

And by the way, to God, the father. Jesus gives the pattern for prayer. You will not find any prayer in the New Testament that departs from that pattern.

Prayer is addressed to the father in the name of the son and the power of the spirit. You don't address it to any of the other two members of the Trinity. You don't pray in the power of Jesus.

It is addressed to the father in the name of the son and in the power of the spirit. He takes our prayers and translates them with groanings that cannot be uttered, makes them presentable before the throne. So the sentiment at the center, at the heart, what do we worship? Are we uniquely dedicated to God or are we interested in pleasantries and self-gratification of our own? This is the why.

Is it just a sensory, mystical, religious experience? Do we want people to swing a container of smoke? Do we want pleasant music? Do we want a light show? Do we want pleasantries that give us an experience of worship or do we compound the anointing oil and the incense as uniquely dedicated to pleasing God? Our prayers ascending like incense to be pleasing and to be responded to by God in a positive way. That's at the heart. Why do we do what we do? I changed the letter Y to the interrogative why.

Why the effort? Are we trying to please ourselves? Are we trying to please God? Do you want to smell the incense? Do you want a pleasant experience? Do you want the uplift for your own benefit? Or are we dedicated to God and his pleasure? Number five, this is the L. This is the, in the military, we would call this logistics. This is our long-term provision. This is the wine, the oil, the fine flour, and the wheat mentioned.

Babylon provides these things. I will provide you what you need to live. This is your material sustenance.

Where scripture says, Matthew six, verse 25 and verse 32, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink. Your heavenly father knows you need these things. Do you want to go to Babylon for provision? Do you want to rely on what the government will offer, provide, even your local charities and so on? On what do you rely for your logistics, for your long-term provision? Paul says in 1 Timothy 6, 8, God provides our food and clothing.

And with these, we will be content. Our father knows what we need before we ask him. Man does not live by bread alone, but by the words that proceed from the mouth of God.

Every word, Luke 4, 4. When we look at our lives, run down this list. You can use another memory aid if you can find one, but are we building into eternity? Are we building internally that which will pass muster at the judgment, gold, silver, and precious stones? What is our adornment? Is it inner beauty or outward adornment? B, A. B, what are we building externally? Are we trying to find security in relationships, in material investments? Or are we relying on God for those things? Why? Why are we doing all of this? Who are we trying to please? The cinnamon, the frankincense, the perfume. Are we praying because we want to please God? We want our lives to reflect his glory.

Are we primarily interested in, what have you got that will entertain me? Make me happy at the end of the day. Give me pleasant comforts and wonderful aromas. L, logistics.

Do we rely on God? Take no thought. Solomon in all his glory wasn't arrayed as these lilies. There's not a sparrow that falls, but God knows it.

O, how do we overcome? Overcome challenges, overcome our fallen nature, overcome the pull and the sway and the temptations of the world? In what way do we overcome? What do we consider a victory? Do we look at being an overcomer in the Revelation chapter two and chapter three sense? To him who overcomes, is it meaningful to have a white stone, a new name, to be a pillar in the temple, to partake of the hidden manna, to walk with Christ in white? Do we seek to overcome in the spiritual sense because we want to be overcomers, blessed, uniquely so in and by the Lord Jesus? Or are we looking to overcome in circumstances? I solved that problem. I fixed that issue. I've made progress in this area.

I have an achievement. I have something for which I can be respected and admired. I've impressed those around me.

What kind of overcoming are we pursuing? Is it Babylon overcoming? In Babylon, this is livestock, sheep, horses, and chariots. Look at me, I'm powerful. Look at me, I'm substantial.

Look at me, I'm involved in commerce. I've got assets. I've got influence.

I buy and sell. I market. Psalm 20, verse seven, some trust in chariots, some in horses.

We will remember the name of the Lord, our God. The name of the Lord, our God. Don't take his name in vain.

No other gods before him, no graven images, no Babylon substitutes, no false religion posing and masquerading as the real thing so that Satan can manipulate and operate as he has done with the kingdoms of the world since time of human history began. Zechariah 4.6, it is not by might, it is not by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord. We don't wrestle in the realm of flesh and blood as we saw earlier.

And finally, the N in Babylon. I would call this your neighbor. How do you look at people? It has to be a choice.

You can co-opt and manipulate your neighbor. You can exploit your neighbor. You can use people for personal gratification, or you can love your neighbor.

You can draw them and enter them into that sphere of love that is one another love. You remember the four spheres of love, one another. This is our Christian fellowship, our intimate brother and sister in Christ love.

Beyond that is our neighbor. We treat our neighbor the way we would want to be treated. It's the golden rule.

Due unto others, we are in contact with them. They are a neighbor. They may not be in that innermost sphere of one another love.

Over 60 commands to one another. Forgive one another, love one another, spur one another onto love and good works. There is a wonderful passage of scripture I was thinking about and discussing recently that says, forsake not the assembling of yourselves together.

This is in Hebrews chapter 10, verse 25, right? Hebrews 10, 25. But if you look at the preceding verse, what does it say? Hebrews 10, 24. Let us consider one another.

Consider one another to provoke with a view toward, this is unto, ace, into, unto, or with a view toward. Let us consider one another to spur, to provoke, to encourage one another to love and good works. Is this our view of people, our neighbor, those in our near periphery? Are we looking at the souls and bodies of men, which is that last category, bodies and souls of men? We are not our own.

We were bought with a price. We are to glorify God in our bodies. We can encourage one another.

We can be a good example. We can consider one another. Look outward instead of inward.

Love is sacrificial to self and beneficial to others. Those in our periphery, if they are our neighbor, are we going to co-opt them? Are we going to manipulate them? Are we going to take advantage of them? Are we going to use them to accomplish our goals? I want to talk to my neighbor because he's got a shiny new lawnmower and mine's broken. I'll chat him up and then see if I can borrow it as a absurd and superficial example.

But this happens in much more subtle ways. Sometimes there is a codependent relationship where I don't want this person to leave. I will put up with things that I shouldn't compromise with in this person because I get something from this relationship.

I need them in my life. I need them in my conversations. And so I'm going to overlook and I'm going to compromise because I want to keep them near me.

What is near? What is my neighbor? What influence does it have? What investment do I make? All of these you could attach to the letter N. But ultimately, when it comes to the bodies and souls of men do we view them in terms of our own purpose or do we consider one another to provoke one another to love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another? So much the more as you see this day depicted in Revelation approaching. Bodies and souls of men, do we view them as opportunities to advance

ourselves, to gratify ourselves, or as opportunities to exercise sacrificial love in whichever sphere? One another love, the innermost, neighbor love, the next ring, those who are outside, to the extent that it is up to us, live in peace with all men. And the outside ring, enemies, enemy love.

Each has different conditions. Each has different qualities. When we look at the bodies and souls of men, do we view them as opportunities for love, hoping perhaps to move them from the outer spheres to the inner, or do we look at them as ways to satisfy and gratify ourselves? That is Babylon.

That is what false religion has used to manipulate, to cajole, to seduce people down through the ages. And we're going to see next time, this is going to be ripped apart, chewed up, and set aside in favor of something far more malicious. We'll see it next time, the destruction of Babylon and her judgment, in which we do not want to participate or partake.

Father, thank you for the clear way your word reveals to us our opportunities, our vulnerabilities. We pray that as we reflect on these things, that God, the Holy Spirit will help us to see that your grace is sufficient for every need. Our strength comes from the presence of your spirit, the illumination of your word.

And as we value and implement these truths in our lives, your Holy Spirit will give us insight, wisdom, and we can truly live in a way that pleases you and glorifies the Lord Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen.