

Our Kingdom Is Not of This World

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual hygiene and warns against the dangers of false doctrine, particularly the love of money, which can lead to a life of unrighteousness and eternal destruction.

Duration: 1:02:35

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, 2 Corinthians 6:17, Hebrews 12:14, Revelation 18:4

Topics: "Kingdom Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the story of Abraham and how God tested him. The speaker emphasizes that when God gives a surprise test, He doesn't reveal it after the test is over, but rather during the test. The speaker highlights how Abraham gave up something profitable and obediently followed God's instructions, resulting in God promising him and his descendants an abundant land. The speaker also emphasizes the importance of prioritizing love, forgiveness, and seeking peace over material possessions, as these are the things that will truly matter in eternity.

Transcript

I want to pause for a moment and be still before God, and will you pray a little prayer? Lord, speak to my heart. I really want to hear what you have to say to me. God is a rewarder to those who are diligently seeking.

There has never been a person in the history of humanity who sought God earnestly without God meeting with him. Will you also say, Lord, I'm willing to pay whatever price you want me to pay in order to receive your best? Heavenly Father, nothing good can come from man. Every good and perfect gift is from you.

We acknowledge that and glorify you. Help us, Lord, this morning to hear that which we need. We know you're more willing to give than we are to receive.

We believe, we come in faith, we're not going to limit you by unbelief this morning. We trust you, our hearts are open. Thank you, Father, in Jesus' name.

Now we believe that God will speak to us because we asked him, and because we came with faith and came with open hearts. So I want to read from 1 Timothy and chapter 6. Paul had a great burden for young Timothy because he was a second generation. And Paul saw the backsliding, the decline of Christianity all around him, and he was concerned that there must be in that second generation at least

one man whom he could train.

There may be more than one, but he was concerned there should be at least one who would stand up for the truth like he himself had stood for the truth for so many years. And that's the burden we have too. And so Paul's letters to Timothy are very important for all those who want to be a witness for the Lord, particularly young people.

And Paul spoke some strong words to Timothy. In 1 Timothy, chapter 6, he speaks about those who teach, verse 3, a different doctrine, and a doctrine that does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ, with the doctrine conforming to godliness. And the word sound is from the Greek word from which we get our English word, hygienic.

The word hygienic is originally a Greek word. It means healthy. We like our water to be hygienic, we like our homes to be hygienic, we like our toilets to be hygienic, hospitals to be hygienic.

And unhygienic is not good. So here it speaks about a hygienic doctrine, a doctrine that gets rid of all the germs of sin and bacteria, just like we want it for our body and our homes. And in every area, we like everything to be hygienic.

So Paul says, there are people who are preaching a doctrine which is not leading to hygienic spiritual living. It means it's not leading to godliness. They are ignoring the germs of sin and being taken up with so many other things, which may be good things, but doesn't deal with the main problem.

You know, in an operating theater of a hospital, however good the surgeon may be, however latest the technology may be, if the place is not kept hygienically clean, the best instruments and the best doctors will still kill the patient. You need to recognize that. And then in some third-rate hospital where they're hygienic, and they don't have the latest equipment, and the surgeon is not the top surgeon in the world, if the place is hygienic, there's more chance of your surviving there than in a first-class hospital where things are not hygienic.

So you can listen to wonderful messages in different preachers, different churches, but if it does not lead you to a hygienic life of freedom from the germs and bacteria of sin, it will only entertain your mind and send you to hell. Be careful of that. If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with hygienic words... So whenever I listen to a preacher, I want to see if his words are hygienic words.

I want to see if an operating theater is hygienic, not whether it's got the latest equipment. I'm not impressed by music in a church, by hygiene. I'm not impressed by eloquence in a preacher, but hygiene, spiritual hygiene.

Total freedom from sin, is that what he's talking about? And that is the words of the Lord Jesus Christ and the doctrine conforming to godliness. In godliness, there is no sin. And if a person doesn't preach this doctrine of hygienic godliness, there is a reason.

It's because he's conceited and understands nothing. He's just an ignorant windbag. And it says here, he infects the air with the germs of envy, controversy, bad-mouthing and suspicious rumors.

And we must avoid such people who are interested in disputes about words and controversial questions and lead to constant friction. And here is the main reason. In the last part of verse 5, they think religion is a way to make money, a fast buck.

They think Christianity and Christian preaching is a way to make money. That's the reason their doctrine is not hygienic. And that is the thing I tell you.

If there's anything you have to beware of in the world today, it's, you know, when we think about false doctrine, we think about somebody who's saying that Jesus Christ is not God or he didn't become a man or some... No. Here it's talking about people who have a false doctrine. And the false doctrine is they think Christianity is a way to make money.

Everything else, their doctrine is okay. Are you able to distinguish between a preacher who's interested in your money and who's interested in making you godly? If you are not able to distinguish that, I want to tell you in Jesus' name, you will be deceived. And don't think you're smart enough to escape deception.

The devil is smarter than all of us. But if you can distinguish between a man who's interested in leading you to godliness and a man who's interested in getting your money, you'll be safe. Or a woman, for that matter.

There's a lot of women preachers these days. John Wesley was one of the godliest men that lived in the Christian church, it's my opinion, among those whom I know. And he built a number of groups, which in those days was called the Methodist groups.

They were the most godly people on earth in those days. And he told his preachers to be very careful with money. And he said, let it never be said, listen to this, he told all his preachers, let it never be said that you became rich by preaching the gospel.

If people had listened to that word, the story may have been very different today. Today, do you know the number of people who become rich, not only by preaching the gospel, by singing the gospel, there are multitudes of people, by writing the gospel, preaching books, CDs, music, are all a means to make Christian preachers, Christian authors, Christian singers rich. Many of them have become millionaires through the offerings of simple poor people.

This is exactly the false doctrine and the non-hygienic doctrine he's talking about. But do you think many people will pay attention to that? Oh, no. They think they are smarter than Paul.

They think they are smarter than the Holy Spirit. Well, if that's what they think, they deserve to be deceived. They deserve to reap what they sow.

And they deserve to lose all their money to these swindling preachers. And they deserve to go to hell if they don't respect God's word. That's what Abraham told the rich man.

And the rich man said, will you send somebody from here down to warn my five brothers who are there that the most important thing they need to do is repent. That's what the message came from hell. Have you heard a message from hell? There it is in Luke 16.

Please go and tell my brothers on earth the most important thing they need to do is repent. I mean, you better listen to that. That's a message from hell.

A man discovered why he went there. He didn't go there because he missed going to the meetings or because his doctrine was wrong. He knew he went there because he did not repent from sin, because the doctrine he accepted was not hygienic.

And you know what Abraham told him? There's no need for anybody to go from heaven. They've got the Bible. They've got the Bible.

Why do they need anybody else? So I say if people don't respect the Bible, Abraham says they deserve to go to hell. Now if people don't have the Bible, okay, that I can understand. God will judge them according to their conscience.

But that doesn't apply to most of us. So listen to this. Godliness is a means of great gain, but not material gain.

It's spiritual gain that brings tremendous, if it is accompanied with contentment. Godliness, if it is accompanied with contentment, with whatever God has given us, brings tremendous gain. And it says we have brought nothing into the world, so we can't take anything out of it either.

And so if we have food and covering, we must be content. It's this constant discontent. That's going to lead you into unhygienic doctrine.

But those who want to get rich, this is not referring to all believers. It's not even referring to rich believers. No.

It's referring to those who want to get rich. There are many rich believers who didn't want to get rich. They just became rich.

You're not talking about such people. It's talking about poor people who want, not want to get enough to take care of their family, who want to get rich. Listen to the word of God.

Those who want to get rich will fall into many a temptation and many a snare. That means a trap. They'll fall into many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.

And the second thing, second verse speaks about those who love money, not those who have money. A lot of people who have money, who don't love it. And there's a lot of people who don't have it, who love it.

So it's not talking about those who have or don't have. Just like the first verse is not talking about those who are rich or not rich. It doesn't have anything to do with your salary.

It's those who are pursuing after wealth, which is way beyond what they need for their family. I'm not talking about those who are seeking to earn a better salary, you know, because the cost of living has gone up. No, don't misunderstand me.

I believe we need to seek employment to support ourselves. And as the cost of living goes up, we need to find better jobs with better salaries. That's okay.

You're not talking about those who are seeking to take care of their families. It's talking about those who are longing to get rich, way beyond their needs. Do you know the number of people I have met in my life who had more than enough for their needs and then were not satisfied with that and wanted to go somewhere where they could make more and they wanted to make their wives work so that they could make... Not to survive.

I mean, some wives work because they just don't have enough money to survive. God will bless such families. But these are people who have plenty, but they want to send their wives to work in order to make

more money.

And I have seen what happens to such families. I've seen what happens to their children. Children come home to a house where father and mother are not there because they're working.

And nothing happens till those children become teenagers. And they destroy themselves. I've seen it for so many years.

And then when the children become teenagers, they'll come to the elder brother, Brother, please pray for my daughter, please pray for my son. What can you do then? You brought up the children, teaching them that to live a very comfortable life and luxurious life is the most important thing, and now you want to change that. No, you can't.

I mean, God is merciful sometimes. But generally the rule is train up a child in the way he or she should go, and when they're old, they will not depart from it. It's like letting a tree grow crooked, and then after it's grown for 20 years, you say, can we straighten this now? If you wanted to straighten it, you should have straightened it when it was a little plant.

So, be content with what God has given you. If you don't have enough to take care of your needs, go to God and say, Lord, I want a better job. I want more money because I'm not able to.

I don't want to get into debt. I don't want to. And you need to have a little savings also for the future.

That's okay. But if God has given you more than enough for your needs, my brother, sister, don't love money and don't go after more wealth because you'll destroy yourself. Love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs, and they live to regret it bitterly ever after, it says in the Message Bible.

So you, Timothy, man of God, is Timothy in danger of such things? You know, many of you think you're very holy people. You say, why is Brother Zach saying all this to me? I'm okay. Are you better than Timothy? Do you get offended? Saying, why is Brother Zach saying this to me? Supposing I wrote a letter to you.

My dear brother, please run away from the love of money. How would you take it? What does Brother Zach think? That I love money? Do you think Timothy felt like that when Paul wrote to him, You, Timothy, man of God, run away from the love of money. What do you think Timothy felt? What does Paul think? Does he think I love money? Thank God, Timothy was a humble man who was willing to receive correction from a godly brother like Paul.

That's why he took it. You know why many of us fall in this trap? Because we think, Oh, I'm okay. I don't need this.

This is for some of the others sitting here. I want to surprise you. It's not for some of the others.

It's for you. Unless you're better than Timothy, then it's not for you. If you're better than Timothy, okay, you're not.

It's not for you. But I'll tell you what it means to be better than Timothy. Paul said about Timothy, I don't have any of my co-workers like him.

He doesn't seek a single thing for himself. Everything in his life, he's thinking of how it will promote the kingdom of God, the things of Christ. How many of you can say that? That all the decisions you made in your life, you were thinking of promoting the kingdom of God and the things of Christ.

I don't think there are many people better than Timothy in the whole world today in Christendom. And to such a man, who was his best co-worker. Why didn't Paul write this to Demas? He said, Well, Demas is a hopeless case.

It's pointless writing to him. He'll just throw my letter in the garbage bin. But Timothy, my hopes are not set on Demas being a witness in the second generation.

Demas is just one of those fellows who comes and sits in the meeting. Timothy, I've got a hope for him that that guy will be a witness for the Lord in the second generation. And if he's going to be that witness, he has to run away from the love of money.

Run for your life! Verse 11, From the love of money and pursue a righteous life. Run after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. He's saying, Timothy, you think you don't have enough money.

I believe Timothy had much less than all of us. But he still told him to be satisfied. Some of us may think, I don't have enough money.

I'll tell you what you don't have enough of. You don't have enough righteousness. You don't have enough godliness.

You don't have enough faith. You don't have enough love. You don't have enough perseverance.

You don't have enough gentleness. Those are the things, he says, you should run after. Aren't you concerned that you don't have these things? And you're running after something else which you already have enough of and which you get more, you'll destroy yourself.

And here are so many areas, he says, which you lack so tremendously. Why don't you run after that? Fight the good fight of faith. And if you want to really run after something, take hold of eternal life.

That's the thing. And he says, I want to charge you. What a word.

I tell you, I can't imagine Paul saying like that to Demas or his half-hearted people. He said that to few people like in Colossians 4, he says to a young man there called Archippus. Tell Archippus to take heed to the ministry God's given him to fulfill it.

Timothy, I charge you in the presence of God. You know, this is serious. Everything he says is in the presence of God, but now he's serious.

He says, I charge you in the presence of God. This is like a court document. God who gives life to all men and Jesus Christ who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate.

That's the only place in the Bible where a person is charged in the name of Jesus, not Jesus of Nazareth, which is also right, but in the name of Jesus, not Jesus son of God, which is also right, but in the name of Jesus who confessed something before Pontius Pilate. Now, whenever you read something like that, you must go to what Jesus confessed before Pontius Pilate. You know what Jesus confessed before Pontius

Pilate? You read that in John's Gospel chapter 18 and verse 36.

When Jesus was standing before Pontius Pilate, he testified to him. This is the confession. Paul is reminding Timothy of 30 years later, and I believe you and I need to be reminded of it also.

My kingdom is not of this world. John 18:36 My kingdom is not of this world. That's it.

If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would be fighting. People fight for money, position, power, pleasure, so many things. But those whose kingdom is not of this world, they don't fight.

It's something like this. I've used this example before. You know this Monopoly game where children play with a board with dice and you buy property and if somebody lands on your square, you collect rent from him.

And supposing you as an adult, mature adult, is playing with a little child. And there's an argument. Like in all games, there are arguments.

Did you cheat? Now you've got to pay me rent. You landed on this square. Are you going to spend the next half an hour fighting with that little boy? He says, give me my \$200.

You say, okay, take it. Because it's only paper. It's a game.

You know that in half an hour you fold up the board and everything is over. You haven't lost any money, really. But that little child doesn't know that.

Little children can argue and fight over these things. And when the angels look from heaven at the Monopoly game being played on this world, and they see men fighting and quarreling over this and that and the other thing, over dowry and killing people and fighting with their husbands and wives and their parents over money and so many things and brothers fighting over money, sisters fighting over money. The angels wonder, don't these people know that God is going to fold up this board one day and everything will be over? And the important thing in that day will be not how much of this paper you had in your pocket or in your bank, but how much you loved people, how much you forgave people and how much you sought for peace.

That's the thing that's going to matter in eternity. That's why I say a lot of Christians are babies. I tell you, you can find out a Christian baby by his attitude to money.

They fight over money. My kingdom is not of this world, Jesus said, because if it were of this world, my servants would fight. What do you fight for? Do you fight for money? Or do you fight the devil? That depends on whether you're spiritual or you're a baby.

I don't think in the last 30 years anybody in the world could say to me, I fought with them over money. No. Not even an auto rickshaw driver or a porter in some railway station or anybody who did any work for me or anything, anyone in the whole world.

Because my kingdom is not of this world. Okay, if some guy wants a little more, I'd give it to him. You say, well, you can't keep on living like that.

Well, that's how Jesus lived, you know. Tell Jesus, you can't keep on living like that. You can't keep on letting Judas Iscariot steal the money from your purse.

Boy, Jesus, what are you going to do about him? Jesus said, let God convict him. Did Jesus starve any day? Did he have to sleep on the pavement someday? No. He finished his life.

Do you think Timothy starved? Do you think Paul had to suffer? These people really accomplished something for God and Paul says, Timothy, I charge you. This is the thing that determines whether your doctrine is hygienic or not. Are you going to live by the principle that Jesus proclaimed before Pontius Pilate, My kingdom is not of this world and I will never fight for anything in this world.

There are people who fight to marry somebody. That's a fight. They fight with their parents.

I want to marry this person. I want to marry this person. Their kingdom is of this world.

You think that's for heaven? They're doing such things? No. Godless people, whatever their doctrine may be. There are people who fight to get a house or money or some property.

There are people who fight, nations fight. Every one of them, their kingdom is of this world. I tell you this, when husbands and wives fight, what are you fighting about? Some food is not good? Your kingdom is of this world.

Any person who fights for something earthly, I don't care what your doctrine is, I don't care which church you go to, I want to tell you in Jesus' name, your kingdom is of this world. The Bible says, Pursue peace with all men, and God will make up for you in many, many remarkable ways. And I can give you my testimony over 30 years, wherever I have given away for the sake of peace, God has rewarded me abundantly.

I'll show you an example of that in the Old Testament, in the book of Genesis, in chapter 13. The book of Genesis, chapter 13, we read of Abraham and Lot. Abraham and Lot left Ur of the Chaldees.

Now, Lot was not called. Abraham just took him along because his father said, Hey, let's take my grandson Lot along. And Abraham just said, OK.

You can't blame Abraham because he never knew the things we know today. Don't forget, don't compare yourself with Abraham. He lived without a Bible.

He lived without fellowship. He lived without the Holy Spirit. And what a life he lived.

So don't say, Well, I've got, I don't do that. Well, that's because you've got a Bible. It's because you've got the Holy Spirit.

So don't ever compare yourself with these Old Testament people. But learn some lessons. He listened to his dad, said, Let's take your nephew Abraham along.

Well, did God say to take your nephew? No, that nephew became the cause of a lot of trouble for Abraham. Anyway, Abraham took him along and then Abraham, verse 1, verse 2, was very rich and he was a godly man. But he didn't run after riches.

He was just rich. Livestock and silver and gold. He went on his journeys.

And then it says here, Lot also, you know, became very rich in verse 5. You know, you live with a godly man. God's prospering his business. And you join up with him.

God prospers you too. Look at all of you sitting here who've come to CFC and you came here. Many of you came here so abject poor.

See what, how you prospered. Give the glory to God for that. See how your children have prospered.

See how they got educated and got good jobs. That's what happened to Lot. He got along with a godly man and the godly man prospered and he also prospered.

But then, he parted company with that godly man. And I've seen that also happen. That once they prosper, then they don't want godliness anymore.

And we know numerous cases of people who left our church. They don't want godliness anymore. They're happy with their wealth.

They want more of that. That's what happened to Lot. The land was not enough to take care of all their sheep.

Because sheep need pasture. And when you have so many sheep, limited pasture, you got to find some other place. And the servants of Lot and Abraham began to fight with each other.

Verse 7. And listen to this. While this fight was going on, the Canaanites and Perizzites were watching all this. These are supposed to be the men of God fighting with each other.

While the heathen people are watching. Hey, what's happening here? These fellows claim to be believers. This guy is a believer.

This guy is a believer. And what are they fighting about? Pasture, property, land. And the unbeliever watches all this.

It happened in the Corinthian church. The Corinthian church, the two believers would have a fight. They would take that fight to some godless judge.

And the judge, some person who worshiped Diana or some godless person like that would say, Hey, what's the problem with you people? Yeah, we are Christians. Well, that guy is also Christian. We are fighting over what? We are fighting over some property or something like that.

Okay. This worshiper of Diana says, I'll tell you what you should do. And Paul says, What's wrong with you fellows? You don't have any sense.

You bring such dishonor to the name of the Lord. The Canaanites and the Perizzites were living in the land, watching all this. You think Abraham and Lot would have had a problem if they were a little poorer? The problem was Lot became rich and he didn't know.

He was not appreciative of Abraham for the way. You don't sometimes realize it's not your cleverness that made you rich, my brother. It's God's blessing.

And it's God's blessing because you listened to some teaching which was hygienic. Don't ever forget that. Don't forget that, sister.

So Abraham should have said, could have said, Lot, listen. Don't forget God called me to this land. You were not called here.

Go back. Don't cause a fight here. But he was such a gracious man.

That's something we've got to learn. Without a Bible, without the Holy Spirit, without fellowship, without anybody to guide him, he said, I'm not going to fight for all this. He said, Lot, what do you want? We are one family.

How many of you believe we are one family in Christ? Look around. What do you want? Take it. I'll take the rest.

If you go to the left, I'll go to the right. If you go to the right, I'll go to the left. Did Abraham ever regret it? Did Lot regret what he chose? Sure.

Lot looked and saw Sodom and Gomorrah, wonderful pastures. I'll go there. And you know, I believe that when a man's eyes are filled with money, he makes wrong choices.

And he realizes it sometimes twenty years later. You're a very blessed man, if you can say, at the end of your life. From the time I became a Christian, I didn't make a choice on the basis of money.

I made a choice on the basis of what God, how God would be glorified. Okay? If you can't say that about your own whole life, at least from now. Lot made a choice not on the basis of whether he'd become more godly by going there, but how much more money he could get by going there.

Lot, Sodom and Gomorrah was like, it says, like Eden. It's amazing. It's what it says there.

In verse 10, Sodom and Gomorrah looked like the garden of Eden. Boy, amazing. Such a beautiful place.

Fresh, green. That's the place to go. And he went.

But he says, the men were wicked. Verse 13, the men were wicked. Sinners against the Lord.

Oh, that's okay. I can keep myself. Maybe he did.

But he lost his wife and he lost his children. And his sons-in-law. Whenever you go after something which is not of God, I don't care what it is, money, or marriage, or property, or anything, or a position, and you're not seeking it for the glory of God, you're seeking it for yourself, I can tell you, you will reap what you have sown.

Maybe 20 years from now, you will regret that choice. Of course, you can ask God to forgive you. Sure.

God forgives everything. But take my word. You will reap what you have sown.

How can you sow potatoes and in the harvest time say, God, please give me tomatoes. I wanted tomatoes. Well, if you wanted tomatoes, you should have sowed tomatoes.

We reap what we have sown. That's why I keep on telling people here, sow to the Holy Spirit and not to your own lustful desires. Don't say, I want what I want.

Say what Jesus said in Gethsemane, not what I want, Father, but what you want. If you make that choice as a young person, in everything, I can give you a written guarantee on which I can stake my life and my health and wealth and everything, God will honor you. And He will turn around to me at the judgment seat of Christ and thank me for giving you the right advice as a young person.

Don't choose what you want. You will always suffer for that, whether you like it or not. Some people suffer sooner, some people suffer later, but they always suffer.

Does God forgive them? If they repent, God forgives them. A lot of people don't realize that God's forgiveness does not mean that you don't reap what you sow. Think of a man who's got AIDS.

I've met people who got AIDS and who are born again, and they don't get rid of their AIDS. They're reaping what they've sown. Why doesn't God get rid of their reaping? I don't know.

Maybe so that people will be careful. If God got rid of all our reaping the day we were born again, I think a lot of people will be healthier on earth. If you neglect laws of food and you're a glutton, eat, eat, eat, eat, eat, eat, and destroy your body, and then repent, you think God's going to just wipe it all out and say you're going to be healthy from today onward? It doesn't work like that.

Many, many things. If you fill your mind with pornography and keep watching that on the internet and reading books on that and fill your mind and then finally you repent of it, you think God's going to wipe out all those images from your mind in a moment? No. Those images will remain in your mind when you're 75 years old.

It'll be coming back to haunt you even though you're forgiven. You'll never get rid of it. I'll tell you that.

Don't ever think. It'll gradually, less and less you'll remember it, but it'll be there. When you're 75 years old, you'll be able to use your memory to recollect that dirty book you saw when you were 20.

I'll tell you that. Why is that? Are you forgiven? Oh yeah, you were forgiven 50 years ago. But even though you were forgiven 50 years ago, that thing you stuffed into your mind never goes.

So be careful. Because how we live today is going to determine whether you're going to suffer or live a happy life 50 years from now or 10 years from now. Say what Abraham said.

Listen, I won't fight with you. My kingdom is not of this world. Because he, it says he looked for a city that has foundations.

It says in Hebrews 11, whose builder and maker is God. That's what he looked for. And he was not going to fight for anything on this earth.

And so they parted company, we read. He chose all the plain of Jordan. Verse 11, Abraham settled in the land of Canaan, which is inferior, humanly speaking.

But somebody was watching all this, and that was God from heaven. The Lord said to Abraham, verse 14, after, that's a very important phrase, after Lot had separated from Abraham, God said, I was watching Abraham. That was a test, Abraham.

You didn't know. It's like the teacher says, surprise test today, children. But you know, when God gives a surprise test, He doesn't say surprise test.

After the test is over, He says, hey, that was a surprise test. You thought it was just today's study? No, that was a surprise test. These fellows were discussing, discussing, discussing, and back and forth, and God was watching this discussion between two so-called godly people.

And finally God said, Abraham, I watched the way you reacted to that. Now listen to Abraham, what I'm going to do for you. You gave up what appeared to be something so profitable, which men covet after.

Lift up your eyes, and look, north, south, east, west, all the land that you can see, as far as your vision goes, it's yours. And your, to your descendants forever. And I will make your descendants so many, that they won't be able to count them.

Walk through this land, verse 17, and I'll give it to you. God said that to Abraham 4,000 years ago. 4,000 years ago.

Do you know who's living in that land today? Not the descendants of Lot, but the descendants of Abraham. God keeps His word, 4,000 years later. So, it's good to follow Jesus.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. The meek are those who don't fight for their rights. Oh, I'm not going to fight.

Brother, sister, you'll inherit the earth one day. You don't fight for your rights in any area. Now, I want to turn to Revelation, in chapter 17 and 18.

Because this leads on. You know, Jesus once said, perhaps I should show you that first, in Luke chapter 16. If you don't know that verse, we've often quoted it, but some of you may be new, and you may not have seen it.

Luke chapter 16, Jesus said, verse 13, No servant can serve two masters at the same time. In those days, and you know, today people work in one home for four hours, and go and work in another home for four hours. But that didn't happen in those days.

In those days, you were a slave, and you were one person's slave, because He bought you in the market. You couldn't be another person's slave. It's completely out of the question.

So, you can't serve two bosses. You either hate one and love the other, or you hold on to one, and despise the other. Devoted to one, despise the other.

And He says, you can't serve God and wealth. Mammon means wealth, not just money. Money, property, anything you consider valuable.

Boyfriend, girlfriend, it's all wealth. Anything you consider valuable. You can't serve God and wealth.

Make a choice. A lot of people in the world are trying to do that. And they discover it just doesn't work.

You've got to say, I serve God alone. Will He make you starve? No. Will He leave you unmarried all your life? No.

He'll give you the best in everything, because you chose God first. And say, Lord, I only want You. You know the number of people who sing songs on Sunday morning, Lord, all I want is You.

It's not true. Monday onwards, it's not true. They want something else other than God.

It was only for Sunday morning, for a few minutes, they said, all I want is You. All I want is You, Jesus. Really? Imagine what your life would be like if you lived like that every day.

Every day you got up and said, Lord, today all I want is You. Whatever you give me, I accept. What you don't give me, that's okay with me.

You cannot serve God and wealth of any type. You cannot serve God and money. You cannot serve God and anything of this earth at the same time.

You've got to make the choice. And it says, you'll adore one and despise the other. You don't realize that when you adore something other than God, you actually despise God.

You say, no, I don't despise God. You do. It's what Jesus said.

If you adore somebody other than God, you despise God. You adore money. You adore a job.

You adore a house. You adore a person. Whether you know it or not, you despise God.

Really, it's true. I remember, you know, when I left the Navy, I didn't have any money in my bank account. I'd given it all away for God's work.

And then, was it in 72, very miraculously, my dad had some ancient property lying in Kerala which he thought he could never sell because he thought the communists had got it all. Somehow the government changed there one year and he could sell it. And with that he could get a little house for me here in this corner.

I thought, boy, I never thought in my life I would ever own a house. I thought I'd live in a rented house all my life. Anyway, God had some plan because he had a plan to start a church there.

But I remember when I got that house, I said, God, I'm scared now. I've become a man with landed property. Boy, I never thought that would happen to me.

And I said, Lord, I'm your servant. And I don't want anything to take away my, I don't want my adoration from you. And if you think that this house is going to take away the slightest my adoration for you, burn it up! Let there be some electrical short circuit or... Can you imagine praying like that? That there'll be an electrical short circuit in your house and it'll burn up? I actually prayed it.

And there were times when I'd come back from the market and turn the corner and expect to see my house in flames. But I thought God would take it away. And I said, God, you can take it away.

I couldn't care less. I want nothing but you. It went on for six months, I think, before I realized I had laid the Isaac on the altar.

And God said, you can have it back. But it's not yours. It's mine.

I said, sure. It's been His ever since. And not only a house.

Everything else. Everything else. You know, little things.

I remember when I got rid of my old scooter and I bought a new one. This is many, many years ago. Twenty-five or thirty, I don't remember.

And you know how it is when you get a new scooter, you make sure you clean it up, that you don't get any scratches for a few days. It's like new shoes. You even clean the bottom of the new shoes.

But you get a new pair of shoes. It's like that. It was for a few days.

Everything was... I really adored it. I think it was Bajaj, one of those... Yeah, okay. And a couple of days later, something started rattling inside.

I said, new scooter? It's already started rattling. I said, Lord, what's wrong? He said, you haven't laid it on the altar. Oh, it wasn't an ancient problem, really.

It was a heart problem. With me, not with the scooter. I said, fine, Lord.

This is yours. I don't care if some thief steals it or it's destroyed, burnt up. If somebody wants to borrow it, he can have it.

He goes and damages it. I won't question him. God bless you, brother.

It's fine. It's not mine. You know, it can be little things.

It can be big things. Of course, you adore something, you despise God. And I'm very thankful that God has always done something to me whenever He found I was adoring something other than Him.

Do you want to walk with God, my brother, sister? Tell Him to deal with you drastically when you begin to adore someone or something other than God. I have prayed that prayer and I have never, never regretted. There are only two masters, God and wealth of any sort.

Jesus said that. And when you adore one, you despise the other. Now let's turn to Revelation chapter 17 and 18.

Revelation chapter 17 and 18 speak about Babylon and Jerusalem. Now, some of you may think, what's the interest in studying about Babylon and Jerusalem? Well, I'll tell you something. If it's in the Bible, you better know about it.

And if you don't know about it, ask somebody to explain it to you. Because in the book of Revelation, do you know how the book of Revelation begins? Revelation 1, 3, Blessed is the one who reads. You want to be blessed? Read this book.

The book which most people don't want to read. Which is the book of the New Testament which you like to read the least? I'm pretty sure it's Revelation. If you take a survey all over the world, most Christians will say, the book I like to read the least is Revelation.

Now who do you think arranged that? Was it God or the devil? God says, blessed is the one who reads, blessed is the one who hears, and blessed is the one who pays attention and does everything written in it for the time is near. The time is near in the first century. Imagine how much nearer it is now.

Revelation 1, 3, blessed is the one who reads, blessed is the one who hears, blessed is the one who does whatever is written here. You know why the devil hates this book? Because it's the one book, the only book in the whole Bible which says the devil was cast into the lake of fire. I'm not surprised that he hates it.

And he says, hey, that's difficult. Don't read it. You can't understand it.

You can't understand it. Because it says how he's going to be cast into the lake of fire. I like to read that.

Because the devil harasses me and I know where he's headed. Like that sticker I saw somewhere. Whenever the devil reminds you of your past, you remind him of his future.

That's a good thing. Whenever the devil reminds you of your past, you remind him of his future. But you won't know what his future is if you don't read Revelation.

Because it's the only book which tells us where his future is. First in the bottomless pit and then in the lake of fire. I know it.

I like to read this book. And here, that's why it's important. Revelation 7. Two whole chapters are on Babylon.

A Christian church of Christians who pursued money and who pursued earthly honor and at the same time had their doctrines right. Do you fall in that category? Got all your doctrines right but you pursue after something earthly? That's Babylon. See, through the years, lot of people have said Babylon is this church or that church or the other church or the other church.

I'll tell you, it's not this church or that church or the other church. You can be part of Babylon and sit right here in this church. You know that? Don't think because you got out of some dead denomination, I've left Babylon.

No. You can sit here and be a part of Babylon because Babylon is a spirit. It's a spirit that can come into you wherever you sit.

You got to fight it. And there may be some people sitting in that church who are not part of Babylon. Who are part of Jerusalem.

The true church. The two cities mentioned in Revelation, Babylon and Jerusalem symbolizing two types of churches. And one way to find out is like this.

Babylon is called the great city. I think about 11 times in Revelation. The great city, the great city, the great city.

Babylon is a Christianity that promotes greatness in this world. Greatness in fame and greatness in honor and greatness in money and everything that's great. And Jerusalem in the same book, Revelation, is called the holy city.

The holy city. It's never called the great city. The holy city.

So, that is a type of Christianity that promotes holiness. These are two different directions that Christians are going. Promoting greatness and promoting holiness.

You know, if you are impressed when you see a Christian service or a Christian television program where everything is so grand and so great. The dress of the preacher is so grand. The arrangements are so grand.

Everything is so expensive and pleasing to the eyes and it's great. And you say, hey, that's the type of church I want to belong to. You know what spirit that is? Even if you sit in ZFC, Babylon.

But, if you look at some other preacher who is promoting, I'm not saying we should be badly dressed, that's not my point. I'm saying, it's promoting holiness. I don't think Jesus was badly dressed, but I don't think He was very godly dressed either.

He didn't go to buy the most expensive clothes, but He preached holiness. I want to say, this is the great difference. Greatness versus holiness.

It's one big difference in Babylon. Greatness versus holiness. And you know what you are pursuing in your life.

It says in Revelation chapter 17 about a woman, verse 3, sitting on a scarlet beast. The beast, in the book of Revelation, is a picture of the Antichrist. World ruler.

It speaks of a political power. You read in Daniel chapters 7 and 8 and all those chapters, 10 I think, about beasts. Each, Rome was a beast and Greece was a beast and Medo-Persia was another beast.

These were all political powers and governments and kingdoms. The beast is always a picture of a political power. And this woman sitting on the beast, the woman is a picture of this religious Christian system.

And why is this woman sitting on the beast? And the beast is carrying her around. You think the beast is stupid? No, no, no, no. The beast says, I can get a few more votes from people if I carry this religious Christian around with me.

We read in the Revelation about the Antichrist and the false prophet. That means religion plus politics mixed together. It's one of the things you'll see a lot in the last days.

People making use of Christianity to get votes for themselves in order to get into power. And whenever you see that, think of the beast and the woman sitting on the beast. The beast is not stupid because later on, once he's got what he wanted, it says the beast is going to, verse 16, hate the harlot and will eat her flesh and make her naked and burn her up with fire.

The beast is not interested in the harlot. He just wants to get his votes and get into power and once he's established himself, he says to this Christianity and this religion, I don't want you, I just want you to get into power. Don't be fooled.

In every country we see today, people using religion, whether it's Christianity or Hinduism or Islam, we've seen how people have used religion in this country. We see how they use them in the Arab countries. We see how they use them in so-called Western countries.

It's religion. It's different religions, but it's always use of religion to get political power. It's the same principle.

It's the woman and the beast. The second thing in chapter 18 is money. Money and religion.

That's another thing. Money, money, it's all business. The whole business world.

Have you seen how at Christmas time, Christmas is to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. How is it all these godless people of other religions put up pictures of Santa Claus and all in commercial street. They're not wholehearted disciples of Jesus.

They're just out to make money with Christmas cards and Christmas gifts and I tell you, Babylon is big business. Imagine if Christmas was destroyed. Boy, it says all the, all the businessmen will weep.

Like it says here, the merchants, verse 15, who became rich through all this business will stand a distance and weep. Sure, it's going to happen. Another thing in Babylon is we see here, there was a lot of trading going on in verse 11 onwards.

All types of cargos and business and religion mixed together. There's a lot of it today. CDs and T-shirts with Jesus, something or the other.

You make a lot of money, books and it's all a racket. The money changers have come. They don't sell sheep and doves today.

They sell ball pens and T-shirts and different things, CDs and no, nobody wants sheep and doves today. They want books and CDs. So that's the way to make money.

It's the money changers back into the temple. And not only that, it says here about the musicians. There's a lot of music in Babylon.

Verse 22, harpists and musicians and flute players and trumpeters. Music in Babylon. There's a lot of music in religious Babylon.

You don't read much of a music in the Gospels or in the Acts of the Apostles. There they had the power of the Holy Spirit. But when the power of the Holy Spirit is gone, you have to replace it with music and money.

That's the way to get people. When you don't have the power of the Holy Spirit, you have to replace it with music and money. So that's the thing we got to bear in mind, brothers and sisters.

We're living in those days. We're living in days when great deception. And if you're wise, you listen to this word, which says in chapter 18 and verse 4, come out of her, my people.

Get out of her, my people, as fast as you can, so you don't get mixed up in her sins and you don't get caught in her doom. Her sins stink to high heaven. God has remembered every evil she's done.

Give her back what she's given, and so on. So I want to say to you, brothers and sisters, he who has ears to hear, let him hear. We're living in those days where all this is going on all around us.

Religion and politics, religion and money. Keep Christianity free from politics and money. Keep it hygienic, pursuing godliness and holiness and freedom from sin.

You shall call his name Jesus, because he came to save his people from their sins. Not from bad political leaders, or even from poverty or sickness. Those are secondary.

From sin, first of all. If you pursue that, you'll never go astray. Why do we keep preaching that? Because there's hardly anybody else preaching it.

Everybody is preaching something else. He who has ears to hear, let him hear. Let's bow our heads before God.

Everything we have heard is very relevant to the times in which we live. Be careful. God warns us through prophets and prophecies.

But not all will hear. But some who have ears to hear will hear. And you'll be protected.

Heavenly Father, help us to live soberly and seriously. For we make decisions concerning money and many things almost every day. Help us to live by the principles of your word and the examples of godly men like Abraham, whom you honored.

You can honor us too. We praise you. In Jesus' name.

Amen.

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