

The Harlot Church

by Zac Poonen

This sermon delves into the concept of two streams that flow from Genesis to Revelation, representing the choice between offering the minimum to God like Cain or offering the very best like Abel. It emphasizes the importance of being in the right stream, whether it's in our attitude towards offerings, humility, or love for God over money and worldly pleasures. The sermon also highlights the downfall of Babylon, symbolizing political systems, love for money, and worldly music, and encourages readiness for the marriage of the Lamb by being part of the pure bride adorned for Christ.

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Description

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Transcript

As I've studied through the Bible, I find there are two streams that flow right from Genesis, from the beginning of human history outside the Garden of Eden, which is Genesis 4, all the way to the end of human history in Revelation chapter 18 and 19 and 20, 21. And it's good for us to see these, because whether we know it or not, all of us are being caught up in one of these two streams. And it's very important that we are in the right stream.

So please listen as I share. The first event recorded after man was turned out of Eden is Cain and Abel offering sacrifice to God and God accepting Abel's sacrifice, he was the younger brother, and rejecting Cain's sacrifice. And I think the way Cain saw Abel's sacrifice being accepted was the usual way in the Old Testament, fire would come down from heaven and consume that sacrifice.

And Cain saw the fire coming on Abel's sacrifice and no fire on his. And the reason, as I've often said, which if you heard me before, is that in Genesis 4, verse 3, it says Cain brought an offering. But as Abel, verse 4, brought the very best offering, the first flings of his flock and of their fat portions.

Some people who don't read scripture properly say it is because of Abel bringing a blood offering and Cain bringing a grain offering. That's not the reason, because grain offerings are accepted in the book of Leviticus. And Cain was a farmer, so he could really bring a great grain offering.

And Abel was a shepherd, so he brought the sheep, there was no great virtue in that. But it's very clear in Hebrews 11, where it says that God accepted Abel. And by faith, he accepted Abel.

And here it says here, right here, and the Lord, Genesis 4, verse 4, the Lord had regard not for Abel's offering, but for Abel. And he had no regard, not for Cain's offering, verse 5, Genesis 4, 5, but for Cain. The offering had value because of the man who brought the offering, verse 4. It was not the question of whether there was blood in the offering or not.

And Cain's offering had no value because of who Cain was. So there was something in the character of these men that God rejected, and it's God accepted in Abel. So that's where we find the difference came.

So if you think of that, that these two streams that are people who offer to God among Christians, those who bring an offering to God, and those who say God must get the very best. And you find that even in churches, in Christians, you probably look in your own heart and you can see what your attitude is. We don't have to judge anybody else, but it's good for us to judge ourselves before God and see which of these two streams we fall into.

Are we bringing an offering to God to ease our conscience and to say we have done the minimum required? Or when we come to give ourselves or anything to God that we give the very best. See, I call this the maximum type of Christian and the minimum type of Christian. Those are the two streams, essentially.

The minimum type of Christian is the one whose reasoning is, what is the minimum I have to do to be accepted by God? What's the minimum I have to do to go to heaven? What is the minimum I have to do to be accepted in NCCF as a good brother or a sister that people don't look down on me or reject me? The minimum necessary to be accepted as a committed member of the church. And there are others when they come to a church, their whole attitude is, what is the maximum I can do to build the body of Christ in this fellowship God has placed me in? What is the maximum I can do in my one life that I have? It's a very short life of maximum 100 years that I have on earth for God. What is the maximum I can do and each of us can evaluate ourselves.

And this is not something that once we choose the maximum, we remain there. A lot of people start off with a tremendous desire to the maximum for God. You see them 10 years later, they've compromised all the way down because the pleasures of the world and love of money and so many other things come in and they've moved away from the Abel stream to the Cain stream.

Now, this is something that flows right through scripture and I won't be able to go through all of them. But when you come to the time of David and you don't have to turn there, but you know there were two streams there too. One is represented by Saul and the other is by David.

These are again the two streams that flowing from Cain and Abel. Now, when Saul was selected to be king, I don't know whether you remember this, that they drew lots and they selected Saul and when they looked for him, we read that he was hiding. He didn't want to be the king.

He was such a humble modest man that even when his name was selected, we read in 1 Samuel chapter 10 that he was hiding, 1 Samuel 10 22, hiding behind a lot of suitcases. He's hiding in the baggage, it says. And they pulled him out and anointed him king and in such humility, he started off.

When there were people who despised him and certain worthless men, Genesis 10, sorry 1 Samuel 10 27 said, how can this wretched Saul deliver us? And they wanted to despise him, but it says he did not get offended. He kept silent. Amazing how he started 1 Samuel 10 27, but the same man, you read three or four chapters later, he's begun to have high thoughts about himself because he won some victories, which God helped him to.

And then he dared, he dared to do what no king was supposed to do, to do the job of a priest and offer a sacrifice to God. It was God's law in the old Testament that a king should never be a priest. A priest will never be a king because that was, they didn't know that then, but that it was reserved for Jesus Christ to be the first king priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Today, we are kings and priests, but in the old Testament, the king could never be a priest and a priest could never be a king. And it was a very serious thing when a king crossed the, crossed his boundary and decided to act like a priest. And when Saul did that, that's the time when Samuel came to him and said, God has rejected you 1 Samuel 13 14.

And God has chosen a man after his own heart. And that was David. So he had two streams.

Both started, David started humbly too. Saul started humbly too. But once God blessed him and anointed him, he began to get puffed up.

David, even after God anointed him, of course he failed, he slipped up, but we never see David as a proud, arrogant man looking down on others like Saul. Even when his son betrayed him, he longed that he would not be killed. So there's a difference there between Saul and David.

They were not, David was far from perfect. He committed adultery, but there was something in David's heart, a certain humility, which even when a prophet came and rebuked him, he accepted it. You know, many kings in the old Testament would not accept rebuke from a prophet.

They say, who's this guy? David did, even though he was a king. So you see there's a difference there between Saul and David. Saul seeking his own and rejoicing in the fact that he's got a position of authority and David humbly submitting to God's discipline.

So that's the same stream there that started with Cain and Abel, Saul and David, and you can meditate more on that, and it comes all the way down into the New Testament. And again, you see the two streams there in the Pharisees and the disciples of Jesus in the gospels. Now the Pharisees are great scholars.

They knew the Bible. Jesus himself gave a certificate to the Pharisees in Matthew 23. He told his disciples, everything that the Pharisees teach you, you can do it because their doctrine is absolutely right.

I mean, their understanding of their knowledge of scripture, rather, not understanding of it, their knowledge of scripture was excellent. I'm absolutely sure the Pharisees knew the Bible better than the disciples. And you see these two streams again, the Pharisees doing the minimum required to be accepted by God, pape, tithe, or dill, and anise, and cumin, but arrogant in their hearts.

And the disciples probably didn't know so much of scripture, but who gave up everything, gave up their jobs, and gave up everything to follow Jesus, even some of their preferences. Do you know that there were two people who are completely two different political parties who became disciples of Jesus? Matthew was a servant of the ruling Roman empire. He was a tax collector for them.

That's why the Jews despised the tax collectors like Zacchaeus. And Matthew, he was a servant of the political system, the current ruling political system. And there was another disciple in Jesus' group called Simon the Zealot.

The Zealots were a party that were determined to overthrow the Roman empire. They said, we don't want Rome to rule over Israel. We are descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

We don't want any of these people to rule over us. And they were there to, in a revolution, overthrow the Roman empire. Of course, we couldn't do anything, but they were plotting to do that, just like in many countries.

And here were two people in completely opposite political, far right and far left type of people like people talk today. And Jesus brought them together. And I want to say this, my brothers, ancestors, I'm absolutely certain that Matthew and Simon did not discuss politics when they were disciples of Jesus, like a lot of Christians do today, who promote their far right view or some other left view, whatever it is.

You've got to be a disciple of Jesus and forsake all that if you really want to be a disciple. You stick to all that, you end up like the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the Zealots and et cetera, et cetera. So there were the Pharisees who were one stream.

They had religion. They had a knowledge of the Bible, but it was all in their head. It didn't, they always thought of, as I said, what is the minimum we need to do to please God? And here were the disciples who thought of what is the maximum we can do to follow this wonderful Savior.

They gave up their jobs. They gave up everything to follow the Lord. So those are the two streams you find coming right through the Bible.

And now we are 2,000 years after them. And we need to recognize this. Those streams are flowing in the world and in Christendom today.

Those streams are flowing in every church, including NCCF. And we are not here to decide whether the other person is in this stream or that stream. All we need to decide is which of these two streams am I in? That's what you need to ask yourself.

And we shouldn't flatter ourselves even if the elders have a high opinion of you. That is fit for the trash can. I mean, I'm not saying the opinion of a godly man is not important.

If it is a really godly man and a really godly elder, I believe his opinion would be important. For example, if I was living in the time of Paul and the apostle Paul had a certain opinion about me, I would certainly think of that as very important because here's a man of God having a certain opinion about me, which convicts me. But otherwise, apart from the opinion of a godly man, the opinion of all other people are just fit for the trash can.

So we ourselves know. Just ask yourself this question and you'll find out pretty soon which these two streams you're in. Do you bring an offering like Cain or do you bring the very best like Abel? Do you do the minimum necessary in order to be accepted by God like Saul? Or you say like David said in 2 Samuel 24 verse 24, I will never offer to the Lord.

Listen to this. David said, I will never offer to the Lord that which costs me nothing. Those are David's words in 2 Samuel 24 verse 24 when he had to offer a sacrifice and the farmer there who was a subject of David said, yeah, I'll give you everything.

I'll give you the oxen. I'll give you the altar. I'll give you the wood, everything.

He said, no. If I take it free from you and give it to God, what does it cost me? I'll pay for it and then I'll give it to God because I will never give to my God that which costs me nothing. And that is a spirit that characterizes those who follow in this stream where Jesus is the leader of.

That's how Jesus came. He never offered to the father that which cost him nothing. It cost him everything to follow the father.

For the Pharisees, it was just Bible knowledge, going to the synagogue regularly in today's terms, going to church, making sure you're there present for every meeting. You're not a backslider because you're there and every Sunday you make sure you attend every meeting and you think that's okay. It's not okay.

It's a question like I often said, this people used to ask us in India. Brother Zach, what is the difference between your church and other churches? I said, well, in many ways, we're similar. We meet in church buildings and we've got hypocrites in our church, just like every other church.

And there are churches which have good doctrines. But I said, there's one big difference I find between us and many other churches. For us, but most other churches, Sunday is the important day.

The day when they go to church as they say it, and the day they hear the word of God and they sing and meet together with other believers. That's the most important day for them. I said, but for us in our church, the most important day is Monday and Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday afternoon, after you go home.

In other words, it's the way you live at home, six and a half days of the week, which is much more important for us in our church than the half a day that you come on Sunday morning to a church service. I said, that is one big difference. We emphasize in our Sunday morning service, not how well you sing or how well you can preach or how much offering you give.

These things don't mean anything to us. But we emphasize how you live the remaining six and a half days after your church service is over. I said, that's one big difference.

So that also falls in line with what I said earlier about the minimum necessary to please God and the maximum I can do in my one earthly life. It's very, very a searching question. If you are honest before God, you get tremendous light on yourself.

I keep asking myself that. I say, Lord, I have only one life to live. And I don't want at the end of my life to be able to look back over my life and say, well, I kept all the rules.

I went to church meetings regularly. I never committed any serious sins. I never molested any woman.

I never killed anybody. And I faithfully gave my offerings. And I did all the minimum necessary that evangelical Christians are supposed to do.

I do not want to end my life like that. Not at all. And that's something I shouldn't think of at the end of my life.

I remember when I began my Christian life as a young Christian, when I was 21 years old, I got baptized. One of the first verses that the Lord gave me, one of the very first verses at a time when I knew very little of scripture was from that story of David in 2 Samuel 24, verse 24, where he said, I will never offer to the Lord that which costs me nothing. And the Lord said to me there, in your life, never offer to me that which has cost you nothing.

I said, Lord, to the best of my ability, I will follow that. I will not ever insult you by offering you a cheap sacrifice, which has cost me zero or cost me very little. And, you know, there are many Christians today who sacrifice such a lot to advance in their profession.

Good. Who sacrifice such a lot to save money to build a nice house. Okay, fine.

Nothing wrong in that. Sacrifice such a lot to get a good car or fine, fine, fine, fine. Nothing against all that.

God is not against any of these things I mentioned. The question is, how does it compare with what you give to God? I don't mean money. Money is the, we don't even, I don't say the last thing.

We don't even talk about it in CFC. Jesus never talked about giving money. He wanted people to give themselves.

I beseech you brethren, by the mercies of God, Romans 12, 1, present yourselves a living sacrifice to God. That Romans 12, 1 is the equivalent. I always say that's the equivalent of the Old Testament type.

It's not 10%. It is your body and your mind. I beseech you in view of all the mercies of God in the Old Testament, it was in view of all that God has done for you, folks, all the tribes of Israel, give 10% of your flock or your brains.

Don't withhold that. Fine. When you come to the New Testament, it says in view of all the mercies of God, God doesn't want your money.

He owns the silver and gold and the cattle on a thousand hills. Why does he want your money? He's not a beggar. He's not hard up.

He says, well, there's something I do want from you. Your body, Romans 12, 1 and your mind, Romans 12, 2. If you don't give him that, if you don't give him every part of your body and allow your mind to be renewed, to think like God thinks, which is revealed in scripture, you haven't really given what God wants. That's what it means in the New Testament to give to God that which costs us something.

So, then we fall into the stream of the disciples and it involved a lot of suffering. That also begins with Cain and Abel, the folks who, the minimum Christians will kill the maximum Christians. Cain killed Abel and Saul tried his best to kill David, but God protected David.

And the Pharisees killed Jesus and the Pharisees killed the disciples and subsequently other religious people killed the disciples of Jesus in the early centuries and even today that's going on. So, those who

choose to give God the maximum won't have a very enjoyable life. They'll be persecuted, sometimes physically by death and sometimes by being called false prophets and devil and all types of names.

And, you know, I think of when people used to call me all types of names like false prophet and devil and I've been called the whole thing. I think of what Jesus said, if they have called the head of the house Beelzebub, how much more the members of his family. You know that verse in the Matthew? If they have called the head of the family Beelzebub, what worse names will they give to the members of his family? I remember reading that as a young Christian and I said, Lord, has anybody called me a bad name for being a disciple of Jesus? I thank God for the privilege I've had through the years of being called almost every bad name because I've stood up for the truth.

And then I see from that verse that proves that I am a member of his household because that's what he said. If they call the head of the household Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household. I said, Lord, I want to be in that member of your household where people have called me by worse names.

I want to ask you, my brothers and sisters, you are all, many of you are respectable Christians. I want to ask you, if you've ever been called a bad name for being a disciple of Jesus by your relatives, perhaps, or by people who think you're a fanatic for standing up for things, which they say, why stick up all these silly things? Other Christians, perhaps other believers. That is one indication that you're in that stream that's flowing towards the kingdom of God.

Now, where does this stream end? It ends in the last book of the Bible in what is called Babylon and Jerusalem. What began as Cain and Abel and flowed through the scriptures, it ends in Babylon and Jerusalem. So turn with me to Revelation and chapter 17.

17 to 21 is the closing chapters of the Bible where it speaks about Babylon and Jerusalem. And these are not systems that suddenly turned up way back in the beginning, where man, they wanted to be religious. Sure.

Cain was not a idol worshiper. You know that he offered his sacrifice to Jehovah, to the true God. He did not go and offer it to an idol.

So those who are in that minimum stream are not idol worshipers. They're not non-Christians. They are people who worship the true God, but they give the minimum necessary.

That was Cain's problem. And they are jealous of someone else who's more accepted by God. That's another mark of being in that minimum stream.

If you can look at another believer, maybe in NCCF, maybe another brother or another sister who seems to be more gifted than you are, who seems to be more accepted by others in the church than you are, and you feel a little jealousy and you want to do something to be accepted like them, you are following after Cain. Let me tell you the truth. I've often said in my home church in Bangalore, I say it's a dangerous thing to come here, I said, if you're not serious about knowing the truth.

Because you'll hear the truth here and your responsibility before God will increase. So if you don't want to hear the truth, go and sit in some other church and at least you can tell God I never heard it. But if you come here, you're going to know the truth and your responsibility will increase.

To whom more is given, more will be required, Jesus said. So it's very important to examine ourselves in the light of what God is trying to say to us. Is your attitude that of Cain, I bring an offering or that of Abel, I bring the very best in everything.

The best of my time, the best of my energy, the best of my life. We never talk about money, because Jesus never talked about money. The only thing he said, be careful that you don't love money.

But he never talked about people coming to give money because he was not interested in that. The thing which most of Christendom is interested in, we decided right from the beginning in CFC, we'll never talk about it. We are one of the only denominations in the world that do not even pass an offering bag around.

In any of our more than 100 churches, we are one of the only denominations in the world where our elders are not paid, nobody, not me and nobody else, as a group. So because Jesus never collected money, Jesus never expected money from people for preaching. No, he was free from all that.

He couldn't live in grand style, but he was happy with what he had. But he did emphasize that if you want to be my disciple, you've got to forsake everything and follow me. That means that attachment to the world's pleasures, the world's wealth, and the world's honor, particularly these three things, the world's wealth and the world's pleasures and the world's honor.

If I'm not willing to forsake these, I can't be a disciple of Jesus. So when you come to Revelation chapter 17, you read about Babylon, and this is a system. There are many denominations in Christianity that talk of some other denomination as Babylon, and they've told people we came out of those dead denominations and now our church is Jerusalem.

Wow, I hope so. I used to think like that in my early days when I did not know the scriptures and I did not know God. But I've come to see now that it's not one particular church that is Babylon or another church that is Jerusalem.

No, it's a system. The world, what the Bible calls the world, is a system. And that system can exist in the mind of somebody sitting in NCCA.

It can sit in the mind of somebody who preaches in NCCA. And everybody who sits here is not necessarily part of Jerusalem, not at all. And there could be people with the spirit of Jerusalem in some other church.

What is it that makes Babylon? We've seen some of it already. But turn with me to Revelation 17 now. Here it speaks about Babylon as a woman, a harlot.

And verse 5, she's not just a harlot. Verse Revelation 17, 5, Babylon the great. Now, Babylon is called great 11 times in Revelation.

One of its marks is greatness. Greatness in the world or greatness in the church. You want to be great in the church? You're going the direction of Babylon.

Greatness anywhere in this earth, in any system, whether you call it church, whether you call it NCCF, whether you call it CFC, whatever you call it, Babylon is the great. You want to be known as a great brother or a great preacher or a great saint? You're going the wrong direction, the wrong stream. Jerusalem is, on the other hand, in Revelation 21, verse 2, see the contrast.

Revelation chapter 21, verse 2, Jerusalem, which is the true church of God, is called the holy. So these are the two streams, the great and the holy. It's all a question of which we want for, which we long for, which do you want to be? Do you want to be known as a great sister or great brother or a great young person or not? Do you want to be known? The moment you use the word known, you're seeking honor.

If you want to be known to be holy, you're in the wrong stream. The moment you want to be known for something good, you are seeking greatness. Even if it is, you want to be known to be holy.

You want to be known as one of the holy brothers or the holy sisters or one of the holy young people in NCCF, you are in the wrong stream. That is Babylon the great. Jerusalem is called the holy and holiness is something which is lived only before the face of God.

And it's something only God knows because holiness is of the heart. Jerusalem, holy, Babylon the great. So that's the contrast we see here.

And the other thing we see here is that Babylon, Revelation 17, 5, is the mother of harlots, not just the harlot, but the mother of mother prostitutes. That's the word. We don't use the word harlot too often nowadays.

They use wars and harlots in those days. We talk about prostitutes. Babylon the prostitute, the great prostitute.

And it's a picture of one who claims to be the bride of Christ, but plays the fool with the world. That's Babylon. It's a person who claims to be married to Christ, but fools around with the world.

And it's not just the harlots, it's the mother of harlots. You know, the people who say when they look here and say, well, it looks as if it says here that this is referring to the city of Rome because it says in verse 9, the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. And it's well known that Rome was built on seven hills.

And so they're talking about Rome there and they say finally it leads to the Roman Catholic Church. Well, even if the Roman Catholic Church is the harlot, it's the mother of harlots. It's produced numerous harlots in Protestant systems and numerous harlots in Pentecostal systems.

But Babylon is the mother of harlots. So even if something came out of a particular church, it's produced so many other harlots. Harlot means ones who claims to be devoted to Christ, but inwardly is devoted to something in this world.

It's like a person's wife inwardly wishing that she were married to somebody else. Even if she doesn't go and live with that person, wishing, I wish I were married to that person. I wish I were married to that person.

That's a harlot. She's not a faithful wife. And I want to show you in Second Timothy in chapter three, three things that compete with God that lead us to harlotry.

A woman who should be loving her husband, loving something else to a greater or a lesser degree. Second Timothy and chapter three, we read here about four types of lovers. Verse two, lovers of self.

Again in verse two, lovers of money. And verse four, lovers of pleasure. And the fourth is lovers of God.

The lovers of God are in one stream and the other three lovers are in the other stream. So the harlot is one who claims to love God. But if you look at her inner desires and actions in private, and what's mostly going on in her thoughts is money, pleasure, and self means honor.

Pleasing oneself with money, pleasure, and honor. Entertainment, not for the sake of relaxation, but entertainment for the sake of pleasure that is defiling. Movies that defile our mind.

Pleasure, the pursuit, the inward longing for money beyond our needs. To be wise, to save up for our children and make sure we have enough to educate them like we ourselves are educated. That's a righteous thing to desire.

We must desire for our children what our parents did for us, sure. But the pursuit of something that is way beyond what we need is a love of money, a love of pleasure, and a love of honor. And that loving honor need not be in the world.

It can be in the church. If I love honor, I'm in Babylon, whichever church you're sitting. Because Babylon is one who loves honor.

So, that is harlotry. The opposite of all that is one who loves God supremely. That's why Jesus said, you know, the first commandment is to love God with all your heart and soul and strength and mind.

That is the salvation is from the opposite of that. Sin is to not love God with all your heart, soul, and mind. And when it says Jesus came to save us from our sins, what do you mean? It's not just he came to save us from pornography and telling lies and hating people.

He came to save us from this not loving God with all our heart, soul, and strength and mind. Anything contrary to that is sin. That's the first commandment.

And if Jesus said that very clearly, the first commandment is you've got to love God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind. And when you don't keep the first commandment, you're sinning. What better definition of sin can there be than that? Here is God's commandment.

We repeat, love God with all your heart, your mind, your strength, and all your energy and everything. Disobedience to that is sin. And when he said Jesus came to save us from sin, this is what he came to save us from.

He came to save us from not loving God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind. That is sin. And polytary is to love something else with our heart and soul and strength and mind to some extent.

You know, even if your wife loves some other man, just a little bit. I mean, she loves you 75%, but she's got a little love for this other man and a little love for this other man and a little love for this other man. That's polytary.

I'm sure all of you husbands will agree there. You don't want your wife to give you 75% of her love or 70% of her love and 10% each to three other people. Well, neither does God.

God doesn't want you to love him 70% and 10% love money and love pleasure and love honor. No. You should love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your strength and all your mind.

It's pretty total God's demand of us, but that's not unreasonable because all of you husbands demand that type of love from your wives. So it's nothing unreasonable that the Lord is demanding from us. Absolutely right.

That is the bride. Anything other than that is harlotry, prostitute. A wife who loves some other man 10% is a prostitute, I would say without any hesitation.

And that's what's pictured here in Babylon. One who loves God, maybe 70%, but he's got other things, other loves in his life, which are contrary to the love of God. And that's harlotry.

And you see another thing here in Revelation 17, this woman is pictured like a, Babylon is pictured as a woman. Revelation 17 foreclosed in purple and scarlet and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls. This is all decorated with all that is of the world.

Quite a contrast to the bride. You see the contrast is what we see always. The bride is, we read in Revelation 19 and verse 8, the bride is clothed in fine linen, bright and clean.

That's it. It's not with all this grand gold and precious stones and pearls and purple and scarlet. That's the mark of the harlot.

And here's the contrast in the bride. When a woman wants to decorate herself, what is it for? To attract other men, even though she's a married woman. It's not enough that her husband is happy with her.

She wants to appear attractive to other men. That's a prostitute. To be decently dressed and all that is a good thing.

But if you want to make yourself attractive to other men, that's prostitution. Without a doubt. And when a Christian wants not only to please God, but also to please the spirit of the world, it's prostitution.

So we see here also this woman is sitting on a beast. And I want you to see here that this beast is a political system. In those days it was Rome.

And the Bible speaks here about a Christianity, the woman sitting on a beast. Christianity joining with the political system in the world. It did not start in America with the conservative party.

No. It started with Rome, when Constantine became emperor of Rome. Until then, 300 years, Christians were persecuted.

And then Constantine became the emperor of Rome and he came to be a Christian. And all of a sudden the temples became converted to church buildings. And the heathen priests suddenly became Christian priests.

And the top priests became Christian bishops. And there started the Roman Catholic church and other churches, where you have a hierarchy of bishops, archbishops, pope, and all types of people who are now in big buildings and everything else. Everything that was of that heathen system in 300 years now became Christian.

And the political system supported it. If you read the history of the Christian church, the popes were always getting the support of the emperors in France and Germany and all. That's how they supported themselves.

Where Christianity and politics went together. Where Christians seek to be friends with the political rulers. You see that in the United States.

And you know which party, there are two big parties in the United States, you see which party is seeking more for that. To use Christianity to get votes for yourself. You ask yourself, be honest and see which party is doing that.

I'm not for either party. I'm a follower of Jesus Christ. And I don't ask anybody to vote for this party or that, because I'm a disciple of Jesus.

And I say, you decide whom you, maybe voting is essential, but you decide that and I'll decide for myself. But I recognize there is a system here where politicians want to use Christianity to get votes for themselves. And you see that it's happened in this country for years.

I've watched American elections for the last 20, 30 years in the news. And I see what happens. Politicians trying to woo Christian leaders to get votes.

Even going to churches and speaking, to get votes for themselves. Holding up a Bible to show I'm a Christian. It's Babylon through and through.

If you have eyes to see it, you'll see it. And you have to steer clear of that. Christianity is the Babylon riding the beast.

All I say is, don't get caught up in that system. Be a disciple of Jesus. And what does the political system do finally? It says here, finally, when it's all, when they've got what they wanted, it says the beast will then, verse 16, Revelation 16, eat the harlot and make her desolate and naked and eat her flesh and burn her up with fire.

That's what the Roman Catholic church finally did to the true disciples of Jesus. They killed them. Christians were killing Christians in the middle ages.

Exactly what happened? They joined hands with Babylon and finally the beast tore Babylon to pieces. And we'll see that happening. Mark my words, it'll happen.

In Revelation chapter 18, we see Babylon described here in 17, it was described as a political system trying to use Christianity for its own benefit. In Revelation 18, it is money. Money is the other, the economic system of the world is another Babylon.

You've got to be very careful. We have to live here. We need to use money to live.

We need to save money. Jesus used money. He earned money as a carpenter.

And I'm sure he was very wise in using money. And I'm sure he saved money because he had six siblings to look after, four brothers and two sisters. And he had a widowed mother.

So I'm sure he saved money. He didn't spend every cent he earned the same day. And even when he was a full-time worker, he had a little bank with Judas.

His bag was a bank where people gave Jesus money and they put it in the bank. So the banker was a crooked person, but Jesus saved for the future. The Bible says that go to the end and see how it saves up

for the winter season.

And we need to save up. That's okay. But when a person gets taken up with money, money, money, money, where your mind is always on that, that's the danger.

The way to know whether our mind is on God or on money is to ask yourself, and there's only none of us, even your wife cannot answer for you and your husband cannot answer for you, but you can answer for yourself. How much of the time is your mind on making far more money than you need? There's nothing wrong in that. If you can use it to bless others, that's good.

Say, Lord, I'd like to earn a little more money so that I can help other needy people. Great. That's a very good way to think.

But I'm thinking of people who are only thinking, how can I make more? Just the very greed to have the feeling of being rich. I have so much. And I tell you, you don't have to be a millionaire to think like that.

I often say, do you think the poor beggars who sit in the streets in India don't think about money? They're thinking about money 24 hours. It's not only rich people who think about it. You go to the poorest person.

Do you think there's a beggar in the world who doesn't love money? You think there's a homeless man who stands on the streets or sleeps on the sidewalks here who doesn't love money? The poorest and the richest all love money. It's there. It's part of our system.

And if I pace up to it and say, Lord, I'm a lover of money, I can be delivered from Babylon. Otherwise, I will not be delivered. I remember years ago, reading this came home strongly to my heart in Luke chapter 19.

There's a great lover of money there called Zacchaeus. He was also part of the political system, the Roman system, because he was working for them and getting benefits from them as a tax collector. A picture of Babylon there, Zacchaeus, working for the political system, getting benefits from the political system by being a tax collector for them and cheating people and making a lot of money and built a big house, etc.

But he found in his heart an emptiness and he heard about Jesus and he wanted to secretly go and see him. And you know, the Lord who knows people's hearts saw that Zacchaeus had a desire for God. And the Holy Spirit said, when Jesus was walking down the road, I'm always challenged by the way Jesus lived in the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

I said, Lord, I want to live like this. Jesus was walking down a road one day and the Holy Spirit said, stop, just look up in the tree. There's somebody sitting there.

Jesus stopped. He was so sensitive to the voice of the Spirit. When we seek to listen to the Holy Spirit in the matters of sin, he will also hear him telling you in the matters of leading you to serve him in some supernatural way.

If you don't listen to his voice when he tells you to turn away from sin, you will not have these supernatural experiences. Jesus was so free from sin that he heard that voice saying, look up, there's somebody on the tree. You've never met him before.

And the Holy Spirit said, I'll tell you his name also. His name is Zacchaeus. Jesus never met him before.

And Jesus went up there and he called him Zacchaeus. And Zacchaeus wondering, how in the world does he know my name? Hurry up and come down. I must stay at your house, not just visiting.

I'm going to stay tonight in your house. And all the people laughed at Jesus, grumbled, saying he's going to be, verse seven, the guest of a man who's a sinner, Luke 19, 7. But Jesus knew the hunger in this rich man's heart. He was fed up of his wealth and his pursuit of money.

And Zacchaeus knew that if he wanted to follow the Lord, he had to set all his financial matters right. He did not need a sermon on that. No.

Today, so many believers need sermons on how to make restitution and how to give back money that you've taken and how to repay your debts and all that. Zacchaeus needed nothing like that, without any sermon. He listened to the prompting of God in his spirit, and he knew that he should not be in debt.

He knew that he must return all the money that he cheated. And immediately, you know, it's an amazing word here, in Revelation 19, 8. Jesus and Zacchaeus are walking towards his house. And as he came to the gate of his house, he stopped.

You never see that anywhere else in the Gospels. Zacchaeus stopped. Why? I think he was telling Jesus, Lord, this house that you see, it was built with unrighteous money.

I can't expect you to come in there and live here tonight. It is built with unrighteous money. I earned it with unrighteousness.

But I give you my word right here, before you enter the gate, I will give back four times, that is including interest for all the years, I took this money to all the people. I'll find out where they are, get their address, and return four times the money I took from them. And then he said, there are a whole lot of other people.

I don't know where they are, but I cheated them, but I cannot keep that money. So, the only way I can give it to God is I'll give it to the poor. In those days, that's how they gave to God, give to the poor.

Today, you can put it in the offering box. So, I'll give it to the poor. And Jesus said, this is the only time in all the Gospels that Jesus ever said these words, salvation has come to this house today.

Now, Zacchaeus had not paid back all the money. It probably taken a few years to repay all that money. He's got to find out where everybody is.

But Jesus knew this man would keep his word. God doesn't wait till we finish paying back our debts. When he sees you're sincere, you're blessed from that very moment.

Today, salvation has come. Even before you paid everything back, Zacchaeus, because I know you paid all back. And then this is the word that blessed me when I first read it more than 55 years ago.

The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. When you read a verse like that, read it in its context. I always say, study the Bible in its context.

Lost, the Son of Man has come to seek and to save those who are lost in sin. In this passage, the meaning is the Son of Man has come to seek and to save those who are lost in the love of money like Zacchaeus. And I read that.

I raised my hand to the Lord many years ago. And I said, Lord, please seek and save me. Because I must be honest, I'm also lost in the love of money.

I was an able officer. But I don't want to be lost in it, Lord. I can't save myself.

Like I cannot save myself from any sin. I cannot save myself from the love of money. It is impossible.

I cannot save myself from sexual lust. I cannot save myself from anger. I cannot save myself from murmuring, complaining.

I cannot save myself from any money, from the love of money. But I thank God that the Son of Man came to seek first and to save those who are lost. And I raised my hand and I said, Lord, I'm lost.

Please seek me and save me. And it did not happen in a moment. But over a period of time, he delivered me.

The love of money is like an onion. Layer after layer after layer after layer has been peeled off. I have not come to the end of the onion.

I have to be honest and say my attitude to money is still today not the same as the attitude of Jesus. But I want to get there. And every time I see a layer of the onion, I peel it off.

Because Jesus is saving me from the love of money. But boy, the onion has become a lot thinner than it was once. I'm determined to go to the center of the onion.

When Christ comes back, I'll be completely free. But I don't want to sit back and say, oh, when he comes, I'll be free. No, I want to work.

I've got to purify myself as he is pure. So that is Babylon, free politics and Babylon with money. And the other thing we see in Babylon is also we want you to see in Revelation chapter 18.

There's something else I'd like you to see. It says here a lot of description of wealth in Revelation 18 verse 12 and 13. Gold and silver and stones, precious stones and pearls and purple and silver and scarlet, fancy clothes and all that type of stuff.

And instead of horses and chariots, you could say cars and airplanes and everything else. And then it says here, there's another thing here mentioned, which I want you to see here. The Lord says about when Babylon is destroyed, verse 22, Revelation 18, 22, the sound of artists and musicians and flute players and trumpeters, musical instruments.

There's a lot of music in Babylon. Did you know that? You know, who were the first people who invented musical instruments? The very first. You read about them in Genesis four, they were the descendants of Cain.

The descendants of Cain were the ones, Genesis 4, 21, who invented the lyre and the pipe and all that. Musical instruments were first invented by the descendants of Cain, not the descendants of Abel. Music has to be sanctified if you want to offer it up in worship to God.

Otherwise, we can be so taken up with the ability to play music more than to worship God. And we have so much of that in Christian music today. We see that in all the people who make money as musicians and

become millionaires.

Can you imagine becoming a millionaire, singing songs to glorify Jesus Christ? What is that? It's Babylon through and through. How in the world can a person sing a song to glorify God and the result become a millionaire? It's amazing that Christians don't see that, because they're not free from the spirit of Babylon themselves. Babylon has entrenched itself so much in Christendom that if anyone speaks against it, he's considered a fanatic.

Well, I'm willing to be considered a fanatic. They call my savior a Beelzebub, so it's okay. But it says all this will not be found in you any longer.

I remember somebody asked me about rock music. I said, you look at the pictures of the rock musicians on the covers of their CDs. You can look at them and see they are worshipers of the devil.

And now they call it Christian rock, this thing called Christian rock. I said, that's like Christian adultery, Christian murder, Christian rock. It's amazing that people don't see it.

I said, are you really worshiping God here? Are you trying to get people to appreciate how well you can strum that guitar and how well you can play this instrument? I'll tell you this, the day is coming when the sound of harpists and musicians and flute players and all those musical instruments that were invented from the time of Cain's children will not be heard anymore. I'm not against musical instruments in the Psalms. It says there, use the trumpet and the harp and everything else to glorify God, but make sure it's to glorify God and not to glorify yourself and not just to produce a nice sound.

It must be for the glory of God. Even if you eat and drink, it says in 1 Corinthians 10, do it for the glory of God. How much more when you play an instrument, it must be for the glory of God.

Otherwise it is Babylon. The truth of God is not proclaimed much in these days, unfortunately. But having seen that, I want to say one more thing before I close.

Hallelujah is a word that is very commonly used, particularly in Pentecostal service. Let me give you a Bible study on the New Testament use of the word hallelujah. I never see Jesus using it, at least in the Gospels.

I never see the apostles using it in any of the Epistles. People ask me sometimes, hey Brother Zach, why don't you say hallelujah now and then? I'm not against it. Like other preachers say, it's fine.

But I say, I'll tell you where I say hallelujah. In the New Testament, the first time, the word hallelujah is used only four times in the New Testament. And all four times are here in Revelation 19 verses 1-6.

Very good Bible study. Where is the word hallelujah used in the New Testament? We say there are new covenant Christian fellowships. Where is hallelujah used in the New Testament? Revelation 19, 1-6.

And three times it is used because they are celebrating the destruction of Babylon. Is that why you say hallelujah? Hallelujah. Revelation 19, 1-2.

Why? Because Babylon is being destroyed. Again, a second time, hallelujah. Because of smoke, verse 3, the smoke of Babylon rises up forever.

And a third time, they fell down and say, hallelujah, Babylon is destroyed. Babylon is destroyed. Babylon is destroyed.

Hallelujah. I'm ready to say hallelujah for that. And then finally, the last hallelujah is verse 6. Hallelujah.

Finally, the Lord, our God, the Almighty reigns because Babylon has been destroyed. Let us rejoice because now, verse 7, it's time for the bride, the opposite of Babylon, to make herself ready for the marriage of the Lamb. We are preparing the church for this wedding.

And the bride is clothed, has made herself ready, verse 7. Have you noticed that? We are clothed with the righteousness of Christ, but there's something we have to do ourselves. The clothes that the bride has, verse 7, she made herself ready. Didn't say the Lord made her ready.

She made herself ready. Are you making yourself ready? By freeing yourself from the spirit of Babylon, that's the only way to be a part of the bride of Christ. And when you have that dress, even though you stitch it yourself, it is given to her, verse 8. This is the balance.

It's still a gift of God. You make yourself ready, but even that is a gift of God, verse 8. And that is how we are ready for the marriage of the Lamb. That's what we look forward to.

And we pray that we will be prepared for that day when it says here in Revelation 21-2, I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God as a bride adorned for her husband. And the voice said the tabernacle of God is among men. We look forward to the coming of Christ.

I want to be ready. I want to be in the right stream. And that's the way I think, the way I live in secret, the sacrifices of God in secret, which nobody knows about.

Live before God, my brother, sister, in secret and be ready. Let your mind be renewed to think as God thinks. Let the scriptures renew your mind to understand God's ways.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, in a day of tremendous mixture in Christendom, help us to separate the good from the evil, to choose not just the good, but the very best. We might keep ourselves pure for you inwardly, for man looks in the outward appearance, but you look at the heart.

Help us, each one. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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