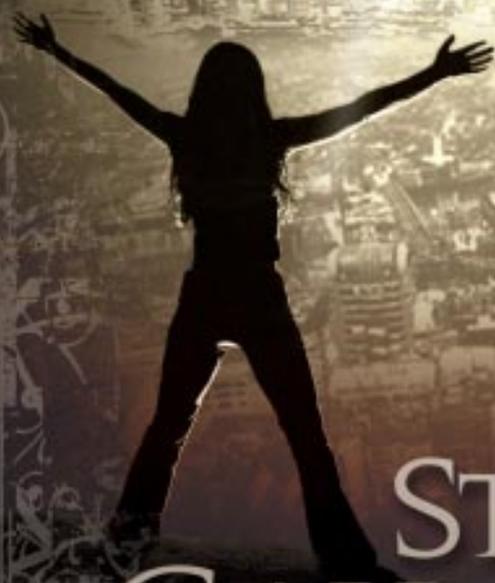


FOREWORD BY DAVID RAVENHILL

INTOXICATED WITH BABYLON

*The Seduction of God's People
in the Last Days*



STEVE
GALLAGHER

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Intoxicated with Babylon

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I DEDICATE THIS BOOK TO THE SAINTS OF GOD

The following quotes express my heart:

“I want to be a more serious-minded Christian man, more detached from this world, more ready for heaven than I have ever been in my whole life. I want an ear that is sharp to know the voice of the enemy, whether it comes from religion, politics, or philosophy. I want to know when I’m hearing the soft, soothing voice of Antichrist preparing me psychologically for a takeover. I would rather stand and have everybody my enemy than to go along with the crowd to destruction. Do you feel that way?”

A.W. Tozer

“I do not set up myself to be better than other people, and if anyone asks, ‘What are you, that you write this way?’ I answer, ‘I am a very poor creature indeed.’

“But I say that I cannot read the Bible without desiring to see many believers more spiritual, more holy, more single-eyed, more heavenly-minded, more whole-hearted than they (presently) are.

“I want to see among believers more of a pilgrim spirit, a more decided separation from the world, a conversation more evidently in heaven, a closer walk with God, and therefore I have written as I have.”

J.C. Ryle

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FOREWORD

Maintaining a 'love affair with the world' is akin to having a mistress. In many of today's cultures, keeping a mistress is an acceptable practice, providing some excitement to an otherwise boring life and marriage.

The modern-day Church, especially in the West, has its own mistress, having fallen head-over-heels in love with the world. The average believer can talk for hours about 'the things of the world' but then try asking about their relationship with the Lord and they quickly run out of words. The Bible says 'out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.'

When a person is in love, they will enthusiastically tell you all about their lover. Paul warned us that in the last days, men would be lovers of money, lovers of pleasure, lovers of self more than lovers of God. These are some of the 'lovers' that creep into our lives and gradually erode our relationship with God. Jesus said in the last days the 'love of many would wax cold'. How well this describes the condition of the present-day Church. Over time, the Church's passion for Christ has cooled from its former fervency and fire to what is now only a smoldering ember.

James refers to those who love the world as adulterers. Tragically, the vast majority of Christians are even now pursu-

ing an ongoing love affair with *the world*. Every Sunday they convey a false image to others that their marriage to Christ is impeccable, yet in reality they derive far more *excitement* from their interaction with the world. The spirit of this world is a powerful and cunning seductress that few seem able to discern and from whom even fewer seem able to disengage themselves. She craftily flatters with her lips, deceiving people into a false sense of security while they partake of her enticements. But as the book of Proverbs says ‘many are the victims she has cast down and numerous are all her slain. Her house is the way to Sheol.’ (Prov. 7:25-27)

Imagine what it would be like on your wedding day to hear your spouse say these words: “I _____ take you _____ to be my lawfully wedded_____. I promise to remain faithful to you on Sundays only. I refuse to forsake all former lovers, choosing rather to cling to them and meet with them throughout the week.” No one in their right mind would agree to such an arrangement! And yet, that is exactly how many Christians treat the Lord – our Heavenly Bridegroom.

Steve Gallagher spares no punches in this book as he seeks to expose and destroy this ‘worldly’ mistress. You will appreciate the masterful and insightful way that he deals with this subject. Gallagher’s desire is to see the Church restored to her first love—Christ Himself.

If the passion is missing from your relationship with Jesus Christ, then this book is for you. Read it honestly, prayerfully and frequently, asking the Holy Spirit to remove the blindness and calloused indifference from your life. Then ask Him to grant you that gracious gift of repentance that results in restored fellowship and intimacy with the Lover of your soul.

David Ravenhill

INTRODUCTION

Babylon is the power of Satan at work in the hearts of mankind. This is not a new phenomena but rather something very ancient. Its insidious efforts began in the Garden of Eden, when the serpent—with monstrous subtlety—convinced Eve that the *mixed* knowledge of good and evil would put her on a par with God. The moment her lips touched that forbidden fruit, her soul was polluted, her mind darkened and she came under the dreadful power of sin and death. The primeval couple discovered that they had crossed a terrible boundary and left an existence they could never reclaim. “Man’s mind,” Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote, “once stretched by a new idea never regains its original dimension.”

Over the next two or three thousand years, the corruption of mankind deepened until “every intent of the thoughts of (man’s) heart was only evil continually.” (Genesis 6:5) Then, after repeated warnings from Noah, the massive Flood overwhelmed and buried man in a vast, worldwide ocean of judgment.

The Lord started over again with one family. But the germinating seed of corruption remained within man’s breast. The ember of lust continued to smolder in men’s hearts, waiting for just the right evil wind to fan new life into it. Within four

generations, it came, when an insurrection against Jehovah broke out in the fertile plains of Mesopotamia. The tower and city of Babel were created as a new alternative to what they considered to be the dreary worship of the Lord.

It was there, in Babylon, that the forces of darkness gained new momentum in their war on God. In ancient Babylon, Lucifer's rebellion now became *systematized*. No longer would the enemy's efforts be confined to the enticement of individuals towards sin. Satan had established a "national" mindset, unifying men in their rebellion against God's law. Its value system was based on a person's temporal, rather than eternal, good. Since man was created with a conscience and an inherent need to feel that he is doing "right," the enemy quietly formed its own unspoken set of guidelines which determined the acceptability of man's behavior. All of this was done as an alternative to the standards, values and perspectives of God's Kingdom.

This universal mindset can be traced down through the ages to modern times, and is still alive and thriving amongst us today.

The "world" is Satan's unified system which lies outside the Kingdom of God. This would not be so dangerous to God's people if it were openly presented as an *obvious alternative* to what the Lord has established amongst believers—those people who are adherents to His Kingdom. The peril lies in the subtlety of the powers at work within the Church and within our individual lives. Like a cancer, the spirit of the world quietly, steadily, and methodically attacks one cell at a time, infiltrating our churches, our families and our lives and largely supplanting God's value system with a new hybrid.

Paul worried that, "as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ." (I Corinthians 10:21) It is the simple (not mixed) and the pure (not polluted) devotion to Christ that believers are called to live.

Scripture is very straight-forward about the need for consecrated living. However, the majority of people can't face the thought of living without all of their worldly attractions, convincing themselves that living with *mixture* is acceptable to the Lord.

People are only vulnerable to being deceived when they want what is being offered to them.

As man's day draws to a close and we approach the great Day of the Lord, this unseen war rages like never before. Satan's wrath is being poured out against believers. (Revelation 12:12) The spirit of Antichrist is wearing down the holy resolve of the saints. (Daniel 7:25)

Now, at this crucial hour, God's people have corporately approved of a powerless form of religion that tolerates an impotent blend of Christianity and heathenism. "They worshipped the Lord," the Bible says of idolatrous Israel, "but they also served their own gods in accordance with the customs of the nations..." (II Kings 17:33 NIV) No wonder the Lord exclaimed, "I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly." (Isaiah 1:13)

In my own life, I too have had to face worldliness. The greatest source of spiritual contamination for me came from television. Every night for years, I would plop down in front of the TV and watch old reruns. Then, in early 1985, God began dealing with me about it until I finally repented and got rid of our television.

Within a year, the Lord led me to begin Pure Life Ministries. By this time, having been away from television for some time, I could better see the effect it had had on my life and was having on the lives of those to whom I was now ministering. From the very beginning of my work with sexual addicts, the evils of TV were a prominent theme in my teachings.

Then, in 1993, God put a passion in me to study the Book

of Revelation. No Bible study I have ever done compares to what I undertook with this apocalyptic book. I was unprepared for how intensely this study gripped me. All total, I spent over twelve hundred hours scrutinizing every chapter and verse of Revelation. I listened to sermons on tape, read books, and studied commentaries. I prayed over the verses, one by one. I studied the Book of Revelation inductively, and listened to a dramatization of the book on cassette so many times I wore out the tape.

Studying this tremendous book literally became a full-time job—I usually spent forty hours a week in this study. God used the riches I found in the *Pulpit Commentary* and commentaries written by old-time saints such as Adam Clarke, Matthew Henry, John Wesley and others to instill a driving hunger for truth in my heart.

At times, the realities of the spiritual realm—where the mighty conflict exists between the Kingdom of Light and the Kingdom of Darkness—actually became more real to me than the world around me. The message I uncovered in that Bible study affected me very deeply, altering the entire course of my life. God imparted a great call to my soul that still affects me today: “Come out of her, my people, that you may not participate in her sins and that you may not receive of her plagues; for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.” (Revelation 18:4-5)

Dear reader, I testify to you that I do not regret leaving the empty charms of this world for the glorious riches of knowing my Savior. I struggle at times but continue to respond to His call: a call that sounds to all Christendom. I invite you to join me in my quest for a rich life in God. For you and I will never know the treasures of heaven as long as we are *Intoxicated with Babylon*.



READY FOR THE LORD

“An unwatchful church will soon become an unholy church... The main cure of a church comes by strengthening its inner life. When we live near to Jesus, when we drink from the fountain-head of eternal truth and purity, when we become personally true and pure, then our watchfulness is, under God, our safeguard, and heresy, false doctrine, and unclean profession are kept far away. Sleeping guards invite the enemy. He who leaves his door unlocked asks the thief to enter. Watchfulness is always profitable, and slothfulness is always dangerous.”¹

C. H. Spurgeon

The second coming of Jesus Christ will be the most momentous event on planet earth since Calvary. Holy saints have patiently awaited His return for nearly 2,000 years. Can you imagine what His presence will mean to this earth?

At various periods of world history, the signs of the times seemed to point to His return, but one question was always difficult to answer: namely, How would the Antichrist gain

control over the economies of the world so completely that no one could buy or sell without his name, number, or mark? Today's generation knows the answer, of course — the modern high-speed computer makes it possible. There are main-frame computer systems that can make 1.2 trillion “decisions” per second. Given a world population of 6 billion, that's 1,200 computer movements per person, per minute! In addition, computer technology makes it possible to monitor the activities of every living soul in the entire world, through the use of microchips implanted under the skin. Many people already monitor their pets this way.

In these perilous times, is the Church standing ready, spiritually alert and sober? Are saints redeeming their time in anticipation of standing before God? Are they living to please God alone — their commitment reinforced by the signs of the times? Tragically, the answer seems negative. A majority of those who claim to be followers of Christ are actually far more concerned about who will win the next Super Bowl or be the next president. Many think that watching for the Second Coming equates with reading action-packed novels about the Tribulation and watching movies about those who remain on earth after the “rapture.” They don't realize that the spirit of *kosmos* has successfully turned “watching” into Christian entertainment. The very thing that should prepare their hearts for Christ's return is intoxicating them out of spiritual sobriety! Others presume they are prepared because they study end-time charts and graphs, when the truth is that a superficial knowledge of prophecy does nothing to prepare one for it.

THE HOUR OF TEMPTATION

Two major themes appear in Jesus' last days discourse found in Matthew 24 and 25 (and reinforced in Luke 21). The first theme—found in Matthew 24:1-41—is an overview of physical

and spiritual signs that will mark the end of the age with a recurrent warning against deception. The second theme, which is what concerns us in this chapter, begins with verse 42 and runs to the end of chapter 25. It is an urgent warning to be *ready*, and is supported by several parables, which describe not only how important readiness will be, but also *how* to be ready.

Jesus saw the terrible battle ahead for His followers when all the principalities and powers of evil would be set against them before His return. He saw a time when Satan and his angels would do everything possible to distract, seduce, and wear out God's people in order to keep them from a true desire for His return. "Therefore be on the alert," He taught, "for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.. For this reason you be ready too; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will." (Matthew 24:42, 44) This warning was followed by two supporting parables: The Wise and Foolish Servants (Matthew 24:45-51) and The Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13). This last parable concludes with the words, "Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour."

Jesus was very concerned about the spiritual attentiveness of His people at the end of the Age.

To get a sense of this urgent warning, we can go back to the warnings Jesus gave His disciples at a time when the devil's power was unleashed against Him nearly two thousand years ago in the Garden of Gethsemane. In a way, the events of that night foreshadow what believers can expect at the end of this age.

Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. Then He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me." And He went a little

beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt.”

And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “So, you men could not keep watch with Me for one hour? Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, “My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Thy will be done.”

And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. And He left them again, and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more. Then He came to the disciples, and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners.” (Matthew 26:36-45)

From this sobering account, we can draw some meaningful inferences for our own situation.

First, we see that *Jesus gave His disciples very clear instructions*. His sense of urgency was unmistakable: “My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me.” In the three and a half years they had followed Jesus, they had never seen Him in such a state of agony. He had told them more than once that He would be arrested and crucified, but now He was “grieved to the point of death.” This was a pivotal moment in the history of the world because the conflict that was going on over Jesus Christ was a life and death battle for the human race. His words were *urgent*. Now was not the time to fall asleep!

The Master, who was typically calm, was so agitated that He asked for help in prayer, especially from Peter, James and John. What an opportunity for them to support Him! He sought

their prayers in His darkest hours on earth. This was holy ground. From a stone's throw away they could see Him anguishing in prayer. Probably they could hear Him crying out to the Father. Yet, at such a critical time, they were overwhelmed by the powers of darkness and fell asleep. How could it be?

It is interesting that when He approached the three sleeping disciples, His words were directed to Peter. This was the same man who a couple of hours earlier had boldly exclaimed, "Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!" (Luke 22:33) "I will lay down my life for You," he had confidently asserted. (John 13:37) Peter had an extremely exaggerated idea of his readiness to face what was coming. *Unfortunately, most believers today have this same cocky attitude!*

The disciples were confident, but there was something they did not understand. "Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation," Jesus had told them, because "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Did they take it in? Did they really know that their flesh was weak? Their lofty intentions withered under the spiritual attack they encountered that night.*

Many Christians today are making the same mistake the disciples made. They firmly believe that they are ready. They sing about it. They teach about it. They even boast about it. Instead of the sobriety one would expect concerning such matters, there is a flippancy that is almost astounding. Solomon said, "The prudent sees the evil and hides himself, but the naive go on, and are punished for it." (Proverbs 22:3) Brimming with confidence, churchgoers are striding toward the coming of the Lord almost without a care in the world. However, many of them are so *Intoxicated with Babylon* that they cannot comprehend the spiritual realities happening around them. *They are out of it!*

*It should be understood that the disciples *couldn't* stay awake. They did not have access to the power of God to resist the enemy at that point. However, at Calvary, a tremendous spiritual power was released for believers that enables us to stand in the face of temptation. It should also be noted that the disciples did wake up after Calvary and, in turn, woke up the entire world!

SLEEPING

Repeatedly, Jesus uses the same word in regard to His Coming that He used with His disciples that fateful night in Gethsemane. What word is that? “WATCH!” Nevertheless, as a collective body of disciples, we are drowsy and lethargic and our spiritual eyelids are heavy with sleep. Jesus is calling to us, “Watch! Stay alert! Wake up!”

How can we be so spiritually drowsy when we are heading into mankind’s most urgent hour? Where is our zeal for God? Why is it that we can work ourselves to the point of exhaustion on our jobs but are so sluggish when it comes to helping the hungry, the homeless, or those in prison? Why is it that we can watch television by the hour but are too tired to read the Word of God? Why are saints so acutely aware of every little “hurt” from others, but unmoved by the reality that our neighbors are slipping into hell? Why aren’t we Christians trembling in fear of the Christ who gave His life to save us? Is it because we are sound asleep? Could it be that we are being “worn down” by the spirit of Antichrist? (Daniel 7:25) Is it possible that our supposed peace with God is simply the dulled senses of someone under the spell of satanic enchantment?

The fact is, nothing dulls one’s spiritual sensitivity like *kosmos*. Even believers with the best of intentions find that their passion for God wanes in the polluted atmosphere of Babylon. Nothing deadens a love for the Father like “the things in the world.” It is interesting how wide awake we are when it comes to our life in Babylon. When it comes to Mammon, we rise early and stay up late. Our undivided attention is given to sports scores, blockbuster movies, late-night sitcoms, political trivia, and the latest Hollywood gossip.

Right now the Church is like Samson, sleeping peacefully in the lap of Delilah, not hearing the snip of the scissors, not knowing that the God-given strength in its body is draining

away by the minute. The voice of *kosmos* sings pleasing lullabies, and her caresses have completed the seduction. I can assure you that Satan and his “Philistine” henchmen are wide awake, standing just outside the door as we slumber, cradled in the arms of the seducer.

It’s no wonder that Jesus asked, “When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8b) Jesus looked for those who would watch for Him in Gethsemane, and He is looking for those who will be faithful watchers now. This time they **MUST** stay awake. There must be proof that the devil’s incessant taunts to Jesus are false, when he says, “You can’t get anyone to care about Your return. Look at them! They live for what I give them, not for what You offer. They’ll **ALL BE ASLEEP** when You return!”

READY FOR THE COMING OF THE LORD

As we draw closer to the return of Jesus, the battle between good and evil (light and darkness) will intensify. The temptation to feast at the devil’s banquet table will increase, and many will succumb to spiritual sluggishness as they gorge themselves on the devil’s delicacies.

Christians must learn **NOW** how to say “**NO!**” to this world’s system if they intend to withstand the great shaking that is fast approaching. Jesus told the disciples, “Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (Matthew 26:41)

It is vital that we as believers acknowledge that our flesh is weak and that, most likely, we are not nearly as prepared for the coming conflict as we think. Unless we humble ourselves and agree with Jesus about the seriousness of our present condition, we will never seek the help we need. Jesus said, “It is not those who (think they) are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means,

‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,’ for I did not come to call the (self) righteous, but sinners to repentance.” (Matthew 9:12-13) *The Pharisee never sees how sick he is.* His pride throws up walls to block out Jesus’ diagnosis of his condition. Do *you* really know how weak *your* flesh is?

It is also vital that we “watch and pray.” Jesus used the word “watch” many times in His discourse on the last days in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. Paul and Peter issued the same command in their epistles, calling for spiritual sober-mindedness and alertness. There are two aspects to “watching” that need to be considered. The first aspect doesn’t need much explanation; it is the natural meaning we ascribe to the words alert and sober. Paul wrote, “Let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober.” (I Thessalonians 5:6) He also said, “Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.” (I Corinthians 16:13) Peter said, “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” (I Peter 5:8)

Perhaps the most accurate picture of this concept would be the military sentry. In Vietnam, soldiers on guard duty knew that they were facing a relentless enemy who would take any opportunity to overrun the camp. The safety of their fellow soldiers depended entirely upon their ability to remain wide awake throughout the night and especially right before dawn, when the enemy was most likely to attack.

Jesus’ parable of the householder waiting for his lord’s return (Matthew 24:42-45) underscores this meaning of wakefulness; so does the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins. The application is so clear — we have to remain alert, sober, and watchful even into the darkest hours of the night.

However, there is more involved in the meaning of the word “watch” besides being alert and sober. A deeper meaning of the word is expressed in the other end-time parables

found in Matthew 24 and 25. It has to do with *the quality of a person's spiritual life*.

THE WISE AND FOOLISH SERVANTS

The parable of the two servants gives us this fuller understanding of what it means to watch:

“Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you, that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

“But if that evil slave says in his heart, ‘My master is not coming for a long time,’ and shall begin to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, and shall cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; weeping shall be there and the gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 24:45-51)

Jesus paints a sharp contrast between these two slaves of His. The first servant is labeled “*blessed*” because he is feeding his master’s other servants when the master returns. If the master appears suddenly in the dead of night, this servant has nothing to fear. He is simply busy doing what he has been instructed to do. When the Master appears, this servant will “have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.” (I John 2:28) Like the Thessalonians, he knows the seriousness of being ready. “For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, ‘Peace and safety!’ then

destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.” (I Thessalonians 5:2-3)

The second servant’s label is “*evil*,” because he had no concern for the needs of those in his charge, nor was he concerned that the master might return at any hour. Peter describes that kind of attitude that doesn’t care—“Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, *following after their own lusts*, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.’” (II Peter 3:3-4) What “*lusts*?” “The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life.” (I John 2:16) The deeply buried attitude is, “All is well; there is nothing to be concerned about.”

The “evil” servant is also beating his fellow slaves, not physically, of course, but *inwardly*. Jesus is referring to the attitude of his heart. This person is hard on others, critical and judgmental. Perhaps he is bitter toward those who have crossed his will or resents those of who have offended him. If he ever had any true love for people it has long since grown cold.

Jesus also said that this “evil” servant is “eating” when his Master returns. This represents living in selfish indulgence. Like those in the days of Noah, he is eating, drinking, buying, selling, and building. (Luke 17:26-28) In short, this person is living for SELF and for temporal satisfaction. He has very little time for and devotion to other people.

Last, he is found “drinking” with drunkards. Drunkenness characterizes those who are out of touch with reality. He is so inebriated with the spirit of the world that he does not have a clue as to what is going on around him or what is his purpose in life. *He is out of touch with reality.*

What lies ahead for the “evil” servant, who refuses to prepare himself for his lord’s return? Jesus said that he is sent

to a *special place* reserved in hell for those who live the outward facade of Christianity without an inward life with God. His lord “shall cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; weeping shall be there and the gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 24:51)

The two-fold truth expressed in this parable is then reinforced in the three parables of Matthew 25. The story of the “Wise and Foolish Virgins” repeats the warning: “Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.” (Matthew 25:13) The parables of the “Talents” and the “Sheep and Goats” both emphasize the fact that living out God’s love to others is one of the most important factors to being in a state of readiness to meet God. Dear one, what is the Spirit saying to you?

CLAMMERING TO AND FRO

One more important element of remaining spiritually alert that I must touch upon is referred to in Luke’s rendition of the Lord’s discourse about the last days. Jesus said, “Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap.” (Luke 21:34) In secular literature, this word “dissipation” describes the lingering aftereffects of a night out on the town. The man has a hangover; he is sickly, worn out and depleted. In the context of a person’s spiritual life, dissipation refers to the dullness of heart and spiritual barrenness that results from a life full of worldly activities.

Certainly, our post-modern world can accurately be described with the word motion. We are living in a time of unprecedented activity. People are rushing, people are moving, people are “on the go,” living their lives in ceaseless locomotion. Stand on any bustling street corner and witness the

stress that is etched into people's faces. Lean over a freeway overpass and watch the endless rush of speeding cars, often driven by frustrated and even angry drivers. Park near an airport and observe the crowded planes bound for multiple worldwide destinations. Truly, the whole world is in a full-court press. Of course, this was foretold in Scripture as one of the overriding characteristics of the end times: "many shall run (Heb. *shut*: rushing around) to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." (Daniel 12:4 KJV)

Americans have become, dare I say it, addicted to this fast-paced lifestyle. Indeed, television programming experts now say that in order to hold a viewer's attention, the scene must change on the screen *every three seconds*, or they will become bored and change the channel! How much more will this be the case as entranced young video-gamers become the driving force behind modern society?

One of the unfortunate effects of such frenetic living has been a high level of impatience in people's lives. Our daily decisions are affected, much more than most of us realize, by how quickly we can accomplish a given task. Ray Kroc was the first to capitalize on this new phenomenon when he opened a chain of "fast food" restaurants named McDonald's™. The enormous success he enjoyed certainly did not come from the quality of the food he offered but from the fact that he could provide it instantly—*without waiting*. In our frenzied tempo of life, we want what we want NOW!

It should go without saying that the flesh thrives in such an environment. Interestingly, the third and fourth "fruits of the Spirit" cited in Galatians 5 are peace and patience (listed ahead of such qualities as kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, etc.). The writer of Hebrews could not possibly have been more straightforward when he wrote: "Ye have need of patience..." (Hebrews 10:36 KJV) Truer words have never been written for today's churchgoer.

Ministers are not exempt from this carnal characteristic either. With over-booked schedules, ringing telephones, piles of mail to sort through, emails to answer, rushing from one appointment to the next, pastors today more closely resemble business entrepreneurs than shepherds of the flock. Imagine the devastating effect this has on their spiritual capacity to lead people into the presence of the Almighty. We would all do well to heed the warning of Corrie Ten Boom: “Beware of the barrenness of a busy life.”

Truth be told, we have lost the ability (even the desire) to quiet ourselves before God and to truly hear His voice. It was the solitude found in the vast wastelands of the wilderness (a place of excruciating boredom to modern believers) that produced God-filled men like Moses, David and Paul. Even as recently as a hundred years ago, pastors understood what it meant to *sit still* and wait upon God. They learned how to receive divine inspiration for their people through the discipline of tarrying before the Lord.

Unfortunately, most of today’s pastors have effectively tuned God out in favor of the roar of *kosmos* through the media. They no longer have the spiritual sensitivity to hear the Father’s still small voice. Rather than subduing their flesh through a daily time of prolonged soaking in God’s presence, they hurry through their prayer times, throwing themselves headlong into the day’s busy schedule. Instead of receiving a fresh impartation from God that has the power to touch people’s hearts, they prepare their sermons by gleaning information from books and presenting it in nicely packaged, three-point messages.

No wonder the Church—with all its programs, building projects, and endless round of activities—produces such meager and superficial fruit. In fact, it seems that the more ministries strive to accomplish, the less they produce anything of eternal value. Rather than waiting to hear the Lord’s direction

and calmly *getting in the flow of what He is doing*, too often ministry leaders attempt to accomplish their own agendas through their own hard work. To such an attitude the prophet exclaimed, “You have sown much, but harvest little... You look for much, but behold, it comes to little.” (Haggai 1:6, 9) The Psalmist wrote, “Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it...” (Psalm 127:1) Jesus said, “...he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

I once heard it said that God moves in a great calm. He is the great I AM who dwells outside of the realm of motion and time. Surely one of the keys to being prepared for the return of Christ must be to dwell in His Spirit. Reading endtime novels, watching “tribulation” movies, or even studying eschatology do not prepare a person for the Lord’s coming. One is prepared by walking in the Spirit, keeping oneself unstained by this world and living out the love of God. “Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes.” (Matthew 24:46)

SCRIPTURE MEDITATION AND PRAYER

Stay alert, be in prayer, so you don’t enter the danger zone without even knowing it. Don’t be naive. Part of you is eager, ready for anything in God; but another part is as lazy as an old dog sleeping by the fire.

(Mark 14:38 MES)

Don’t burn out; keep yourselves fueled and aflame. Be alert servants of the Master, cheerfully expectant. Don’t quit in hard times; pray all the harder.

(Romans 12:11-12 MES)

Lord, I acknowledge that I have been wide awake regarding the things of this world: news, sports, entertainment, etc. And yet how sleepy I have been regarding spiritual matters. Wake me up, oh Lord! Help me to be sober-minded and alert. Put a holy expectancy within my heart. Make me to long for holiness. Let me not slumber in this present age of darkness but be ever watchful for the coming Christ.