

## **Msg #140 of Scripture Beneath The Surface**

### *“Buying And Selling”*

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Hello! Thanks for being with us. Today I'd like to take a look at buying and selling. You know, throughout the Bible we read references about buying and selling and about merchandise and merchants. In the book of Ezekiel God talks about the city of Tyre and refers to it as a city of merchants and merchandising. Merchants, and their merchandise, are for the adornment of human beings. This world is a physical covering, or adornment, for its flesh and blood inhabitants, and this is what we see outwardly. The city of Tyre, in scripture, is used as the symbolic description of earth's merchant center. Let me give you some background.

In the Old Testament, the city of Tyre was the central coastal city for all the ships which brought merchandise from other foreign nations. Ships would come by sea to the port city of Tyre and deposit all kinds of merchandise, whether gold, or silver, fine linen, precious wood, ivory, purple and scarlet cloth, slaves, exotic animals, and other things. The sea was the mode of transport for the merchants, and they would bring the merchandise of the nations to the port city of Tyre and from there other land merchants would distribute the wares to the nation of Israel and to other countries in that vicinity. But the city of Tyre was the main portal city for the ships to land and bring all sorts of treasures from around the world.

Now, there are several things that we can look at here concerning merchandise, merchants, the city of Tyre, the ships of the sea, and the sea itself. Of course, the Bible gives us a historical view of the Old Testament time of Israel as a nation, and of the surrounding nations. But, it also gives us much more information than just the physical historical knowledge.

If you listen to our program on a regular basis, you will remember how Israel is the physical equivalent of our own spiritual existence. Israel was the nation which God used to live out a physical history in the Old Testament scriptures in order to demonstrate what the Christian church would go through in our New Testament spiritual journey. We are living the same history in a spiritual sense as Israel lived previously in the physical sense. The historical records of Israel's persecutions, temptations, times of righteousness, times of wickedness, invasions by enemy forces, their times of repentance and also their times of deliverance, is a physical history that parallels our own history. However, our own history is in the spiritual sense. Just as Israel suffered physical persecutions, physical temptations from other nations, physical invasions, which resulted in times of righteousness and times of wickedness, so has the Christian church also experienced these same things. Yet, we have experienced them in the spiritual sense from evil spiritual forces, which have also resulted in times of righteousness and times of wickedness in the Christian church.

Our persecutions are not generally as physical as were the persecutions of Israel, and when we are invaded by the enemy, it is not by a foreign country, but by evil forces which invade the church. The kingdom that Israel inhabited was the Kingdom of Israel under the reign of various kings. But Christians now inhabit the Kingdom of God, which is a spiritual kingdom. Also, instead of Christians serving an earthly king such as David or Solomon, we now serve Jesus Christ as our King and as our Lord. However, sad to say, Christians still go after the forbidden treasures of the other nations just as Israel did, but the other nations are the people outside of the church instead of outside of our country. Christians live in the spiritual kingdom of God, in the spiritual city of Jerusalem, therefore the foreign nations are now those people who live outside of the kingdom of God and who are not subjects of Jesus Christ as King.

But just as Israel became subject to the temptations from surrounding nations, Christians also find themselves succumbing to the temptations of gold and silver, jewelry, fine linen, all kinds of ornaments, precious wood, and costly garments. They are bombarded with continual temptations through the advertising media of television and magazines. However, the merchants are not based in the city of Tyre, as were those which tempted Israel. Today our merchants still come with ships from all over the world, but the port cities are as numerous as the stars in number. In the Old Testament, the merchants came by ship, and the ships were the symbolic form which helped us to recognize the concept of the precious things of this earth coming from Satan's sea. In scripture, the sea is symbolic of Satan's lies. The devil spreads his lies out through the world, and tempts all humans to succumb to the desires of the flesh. Gold and silver, and all other precious things, are the tools by which Satan causes mankind to take his eyes off of heavenly things and begin to focus on the things of earth.

The things of this earth appeal to our fleshly bodies. However, as a people who belong to God, and who worship Jesus Christ as Lord, it is not our fleshly bodies which should be stimulated to the extent that most people do. God never intended us to wallow in the delights of this world, but continuously encourages us to shun the things of this world and to set our eyes on the things above. It is not the things of this world which we should be stimulated with, but it is heavenly

things which God has ordained for us to receive who love him. Sure, we do need to have food, clothing, and shelter, but as the Bible tells us in Galatians 5:23, we should be temperate concerning what we allow in our lives. Philippians 4:5 tells us that we should let our moderation be known to all men.

You know, as Christians, we no longer own ourselves. We don't belong to ourselves. We belong to Jesus Christ who has purchased us for himself. It tells us in Galatians 5:24 that as Christians, we have crucified our flesh along with its affections and lusts. The desires of our flesh and blood bodies are a thing of the past for Christians who have made Jesus Christ Lord of their lives. Let me read 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. It says, "What? Know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which you have of God, and you are not your own? 20 For you are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

You see? We don't even own ourselves anymore if we truly are in Christ. We belong to Jesus. He owns us. Jesus bought us with his blood in order that he could dwell within our hearts. In the Old Testament, Israel was the physical equivalent of Christianity. They were the chosen people of God, and were set in a physical environment, a physical nation surrounded by other physical nations. In the New Testament covenant, Christians are a spiritual nation, surrounded by people in other spiritual nations, but not from the perspective of a physical location. Christians are scattered all over the world, just as other people who reject Jesus Christ as Lord are scattered all over the world. But all Christians, no matter what their physical location is on the surface of the earth, live in the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God cannot be seen with physical eyes, but is easily recognized by Christians who have spiritual eyes and see spiritual things. For this reason, God still dwells among his people, but not in a physical location as he did in the nation of Israel in their temple. In this New Testament age, God still dwells among his people, but the temple he dwells in is not a temple made with human hands. Today, God, in the form of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, dwells in the hearts of his people. And, wherever we dwell, in whatever physical nation we live in on earth, God dwells within us, and our hearts are the temple of God.

We have been purchased to be the people of God, and to be his dwelling place. Both the Son, Jesus Christ, and God the Father, dwell within us through the indwelling Spirit of God. We are his temple. We are owned by Jesus Christ who has purchased us to be his people. We now live in the spiritual city of Jerusalem, just as Israel worshiped him in the physical city of Jerusalem. God still inhabits the temple of our heart, just as he inhabited the physical temple in the days of Israel. We are the chosen people of God, for he has chosen us and purchased us, just as he also chose the nations of Israel and purchased them.

But although Christians live in the spiritual city of Jerusalem, we are still plagued with the temptations of the wicked nations around us. However, we don't have to go to the port city of Tyre in order to see all the merchandise of the world. All we have to do is to go down to our neighborhood mall and walk the concourse past all the various stores. In today's environment, the temptations are greater than in the days of Israel's sojourn. We not only have gold and silver

and precious wood, fine linen and ointments, but we now have a choice of things which stimulate our flesh and blood bodies like never before. Whenever you open a magazine, or if you watch television, you will be bombarded with the tantalizing technological inventions of this world. The choices are endless, and no matter what your financial income is, there is opportunity to saturate your lives with enough of the earthly delights to easily drown you in Satan's sea of destruction. Moderation, as suggested in Philippians 4:5, has been replaced by the merchants of this world with gluttony, drunkenness, and licentiousness. To be licentious is to lack in moral discipline, either in a sexual fashion or by disregarding accepted standards of behavior.

It's interesting that today's Christian church is so easily swayed by preachers who teach a false doctrine which says that God wants Christians to have nice things, and that to be rich is a sign that God is blessing us. But the world is just a physical place which has been created by God to be the testing ground for his people. Out of this world God will take a people for his own in the eternal sense. No, not just a physical nation such as Israel, neither will it be a spiritual nation such as Christians, but in the end, it will be all those who accept Jesus Christ as Lord, and give him not only honor, but give him their whole heart. God will live in us through his Holy Spirit, but only if we give him our whole heart. God doesn't live in half a temple, and he doesn't share the temple with Satan. It is not this world that is the important thing, for we will not be here forever. It is heaven that is the important thing, because heaven will be our eternal home. As it says in Colossians 3:2, we should set our affections on things above, not on things of the earth, for we are now dead, as a born-again Christians in Christ, and our lives are now hidden in with Christ in God.

We are no longer our own. We are purchased, just as a human being can be purchased as a slave. Slavery to another man is a most horrible thing, but slavery to God, through his Son Jesus Christ, is a most wonderful thing. Yet, most Christians, it seems, have very little comprehension that we belong to Jesus Christ, and therefore we should no longer be concerned with making our own decisions. Can you imagine a slave deciding where he will live? Can you imagine what an earthly slave owner would say if the slave told him he was going to move somewhere else, or that he was going to change jobs? When you are owned by someone else, you don't make your own choices. That's why Christians are described in Revelation 20, verse 4, as those who have been beheaded for the witness of Jesus Christ. As Christians, we have made Jesus Christ our head. He makes the decisions. We don't. At least, as Christians, we're not supposed to.

Yet, in today's church there is a lack of understanding concerning what our behavior should be. We Christians have such a hard time realizing that our hearts are the temple of God, and that we should be living in the spiritual city of Jerusalem. We seem to think that gold and silver is important, and we seem to think that as slaves of the master Jesus Christ, that we can still do whatever we want to do. There is so much time wasted on frivolous things, and on the dainty things of this world, but the life we now live is not supposed to be concerned with those things. And, the doctrine of the church should not be concerned with money and luxuries, but should be concerned with how we can best serve our Lord. If Jesus Christ truly is Lord of your life, then the most important thing in your life should be what Jesus would have you do for him today.

Christians are largely caught up with the affairs of this life. And although they should be residents of the kingdom of God, and therefore should be residents of spiritual Jerusalem, many times Christians are found living in Great Babylon, the spiritual city which is designated as the abode of the wicked. In Revelation 17, verse 15, the apostle John writes concerning the Great Harlot, Mystery Babylon. She is called Mystery Babylon because this spiritual depiction of Babylon is just like the original city of Babylon, except that the original city was the physical city which displayed the physical history of Israel's day, and Great Babylon is the spiritual city which displays the spiritual history which Christians are living now.

Now, in verse 15 it says that this current spiritual city of Babylon sits upon many waters. She is called, the great whore, or, the mother of harlots. The waters she sits on are described as people, nations, multitudes and tongues. This just means that as Christians who live in spiritual Jerusalem, which is the kingdom of God all over the earth wherever Christians live, so is the city of Great Babylon a spiritual city located all over the earth. Spiritual Jerusalem is the reigning city of Christians, who are the chosen people of God. Therefore, Great Babylon is the symbolic reference to Satan's city, the place where Satan reigns over his people. It is the spiritual residence of all those people of earth who do not live in spiritual Jerusalem. There are only two places, in a spiritual symbolic sense, where earth's people live. Either they are professing Christians, and therefore are the people of God who live in the kingdom of God, which has Jerusalem as its reigning capitol, or they are non-Christians who reject Jesus Christ as Lord, and therefore have made Satan their lord and king, and they live in the kingdom of Satan, which has Babylon as their reigning city.

Now, all this might seem to be confusing, but as Christians, we have learned to look at things with our spiritual eyes. As Christians, we have become born again spirit beings, and because the Holy Spirit is our guide into all truth, we begin to see these things from the spiritual perspective instead of looking at everything from just a physical point of view. The world still looks at everything in the Bible from a physical point of view because they are not born again in spirit. They have not been given eyes to see and ears to hear the deep things of God. But Christians have been given spiritual eyes and spiritual ears, and we can see many things from the spiritual perspective that the wicked people of earth will never be able to see. At least, they won't see these things until it's too late.

But, because Christians have eyes to see and ears to hear, they can receive the warning messages of these symbolic spiritual scriptures. It is because Christians understand spiritual things that they will be able to see through the deception that Satan has planned for the whole world. Yes, there is still a mystery, as far as Christians are concerned, because we still do not understand all things that the Bible tells us. Many things are hard to understand. However, Great Babylon is one of the most important symbolic warning messages in all of scripture, because it helps to show Christians how the dainty and sumptuous things of this earth are destroying the spiritual relationship with Jesus Christ through the buying and selling of earthly baubles and trinkets, not to mention gold, silver, and precious jewels, and of course, the chariots of men.

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Buying and selling is an important weapon in Satan's end time arsenal. No, not just purchasing food, clothing, and shelter, for these are important things for all humans. But when the buying and selling reach a level of interest where the buying and selling cease to be in moderation, then Satan is exalted in his purpose to destroy the spiritual relationship that earth's people should have with God and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

When Jesus referred to the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, he said that the sin of Sodom was, fulness of bread. It isn't bread that is sinful. It is the fulness that is sinful. Moderation in all things means that you have enough of what you need. But, when you exceed the requirements for your needs, then you pass over into the excess that Satan wants you to have. It is the excess that causes human beings to be so stimulated with fleshly things that they lose sight of the heavenly things of God. The excess of earthly things causes our relationship with Jesus to erode. However, Satan's ultimate aim is, of course, to destroy our relationship with Jesus Christ, and therefore he knows that the only thing that can come between our spiritual relationship with Jesus is our development of a stronger physical relationship with the things of this current world. It is the love of earthly things which draws our attention away from Christ. Satan knows this, and his world system is built on the principle of offering opportunity for developing our fleshly appetites excessively.

The buying and selling which takes place in these end times has passed the point of restraint. Just as 2 Thessalonians, chapter 2 tells us, God has removed the hindrance to Satan, and Satan has been allowed to develop world systems which make it possible for all people of the earth to revel in the dainty and sumptuous delights of earth like never before. Earth's people are bombarded with suggestive advertisements, and the temptation is so great that many Christians are deceived into thinking that it is alright to concentrate on the fulness of bread, on the excessive use of earthly things instead of concentrating on the relationship with Jesus Christ. For many Christians, the delights of everyday living have replaced the delights of living in God's word.

And one last thing. I want you to realize that the Bible calls to God's people with a very interesting warning message. Jeremiah 51 calls God's children to come out of Babylon. But this is not just an Old Testament warning. This is also found in Revelation 18:4 where it specifically refers to God's people and says, "Come out of her, my people, and be not partakers of her sins, so that you will not be partakers of her plagues." This truly is a warning message for Christians, IF they will hear it.