

CHAPTER 16

The Babylonian System

Like St. Augustine's *City of God* and *City of Man*, the Bible is the tale of two cities engaged in a battle for control of the world. At the beginning of time, neither city exists, but the forces and philosophies behind them are seen in full array from almost the very dawn of life on Earth. In the course of history, though both cities appear on the world's stage, only one of them remains, yet the power and influence of that unseen city is so strong up to the moment of its demise that its name rings fear in the hearts of men. Before time comes to an end, good reigns over evil, but the manner in which it is achieved is most intriguing and captivating. This is the story of the Bible. The players are the peoples and nations of the world—including you and me. The cities are Babylon and Jerusalem.

The story climaxes at the end of the Bible as Jerusalem embodies the glory and the presence of God depicted in the book of Revelation 20 and 21; whereas Babylon, representing a depraved center of world commerce and oppression, is described as “The mother of harlots and of the abominations in the earth” (Rev. 17:5). From the days of old, battle lines have been clearly drawn. God calls Jerusalem, “The city which I have chosen me to put My name there” (1 Kings 11:36, ASV), and Babylon—always ruled by pagan kings—hates God and His people.

Babylon's origins are found in the Tower of Babel, when the post-Flood world population committed themselves to an ungodly fourfold goal, as revealed in Genesis 11:4:

- Build a city *for themselves*
- Reach heaven from an earthly platform
- Make their name an object of honor and fear
- Avoid being scattered all over the earth

These four objectives represent the exact opposite of what God has consistently purposed for His people throughout the ages. For example:

- We are never instructed to build our own city, but rather, from the days of Abraham, to look for that city “whose architect and builder is God” (Heb. 11:10). We do not have to strive to get to heaven; we are going there someday.
- The purpose of our lives is to bring heaven to Earth, not the other way around. That is why Jesus instructed us to pray, “Thy [God’s] will [not ours] be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10, *KJV*) and to expect that it will happen.
- As far as name is concerned, it is not our name that should be recognized, for there is only one name, one that is above every name: “Jesus”—to which every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord (see Phil. 2:9-11).
- When it comes to our mission, God has designed from the time of Abraham that in his descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed. And as the Church, we have been sent to go to the ends of the earth to set people and nations free (see Matt. 28:18-20).

No two city-states could have had a more different set of values and operational philosophies than Jerusalem and Babylon. That is why they can never coexist. With that as the background, we now turn our attention to a deep and contrasting look at Babylon.

At the very heart of the thrust that gave birth to Babel is an anti-God scheme to establish a command and control center from which to subjugate the earth. The men described in Genesis 11 were not just constructing a city; they were building a city *of their own*. As such, it was a city with an attitude of arrogance, as far as heaven was concerned, since their objective was to be able to go there any time they chose by making its tower a platform from which to oppose God’s command to fill the Earth (see Gen. 1:28) and to spiritually influence the earth.¹ In fact, in the Genesis 11:4 statement, “a tower whose top will reach into heaven,” the Hebrew word for “heaven,” *shamayim*, literally means “the heavenlies” and corresponds to the New Testament Greek word *epouraniois*, which Paul used to describe the heavenlies, a place where demonic activity is based for the purpose of controlling affairs on Earth (see Eph. 6:12).

Their determination to make *a name for themselves* reveals how absolutely self-centered and humanistic they were, since such a choice was made as an overt act of rebellion against God; and their accompanying goal of *not* going to the ends of the earth was, in addition to being a direct challenge against the divine command to that effect (see Gen. 1:28; 9:1,7), is also an indication of their intent to make nature subservient to them, and not the other way around.

Keep in mind that the Hebrew word *avad*, meaning “to work” or “to cultivate” (and was first used to describe Adam’s assignment in the Garden according to Genesis 2:15), also has the meaning “to serve” (*eved*, the Hebrew word for “servant,” also comes from the same root). Man was called to serve, to care for and to tend nature, since in doing so there is alignment with God’s plans and designs for himself and for the earth. This is so because the command to “subdue the earth” was given in the context of fruitfulness and multiplication for the purpose of replenishing (not depleting) its resources (see Gen. 1:28).

What erupted in Babel is the very essence of Satan’s character, who was cast out of heaven because he perverted himself and others through a self-serving scheme of control. At Babel, the devil tried to “jump the gun” on God by taking control of the world population and inciting them to build a city that, by reflecting his ill-acquired expertise in trade, would give him *complete* domination of the human race to preempt the option of the Messiah’s advent, since every nation on Earth would be under his *direct* control, thus blocking the way for Israel to come into the picture.

It is interesting that right after God thwarted this attempt by scattering the people over the face of the earth (see Gen. 11:9), Abram (as he was called then) comes into the picture (see Gen. 11:26-32), and shortly afterward, God calls him to be the founder of a nation that would be a blessing to all other nations on the planet: “Now the LORD said to Abram, ‘Go forth from your country . . . and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing . . . and *in you all the families of the earth will be blessed*’” (Gen. 12:1-3, emphasis added).

The Unbeatable Formula

That the tower of Babel was indeed a potentially catastrophic move for humanity and that much was at stake is certified by the fact that God came in the form of the Trinity (the “us” in Gen. 11:7) to put an end to it.

Every day, people on Earth come up with and implement plans that are ungodly—even anti-God—yet we do not see God personally intervening to foil them, as was the case here. Two factors made this case very different.

First was the potential for out-of-control evil (in *Prayer Evangelism*, I explain this in detail). What were they doing? They were not building nuclear bombs or developing weapons of chemical warfare. They were baking bricks and gluing them with tar. So what causes the Trinity to intervene, lest they become unstoppable? The answer is in God's assessment of the unlimited potential for evil in the people: "Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, *and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them*" (Gen. 11:6, emphasis added).

In this passage, God lists three factors that, once combined, have the potential to render these men unstoppable:

1. They had a compelling, unifying *common goal*: "this is what *they* began to do." They were not building walls in their spare time but a city. To accomplish this, they had settled down and agreed to dwell together.
2. They had *unity*: "they are one people."
3. They had *communication*: "they all have the same language."

God was saying that when a group of people has a compelling purpose, unity and communication, *nothing is impossible for them*. This is not the hype of an overly enthusiastic evangelist but God's own assessment! This is a very serious and important matter that deserves close scrutiny. It wasn't *what* they were doing but *how* they were doing it—the combination of purpose, unity and communication—that produced unlimited potential.

The second factor that caused God to intervene was that their actions and their fourfold objective unmistakably reflected the DNA of the Babylonian system that later on would take control of the world. At Babel, a triple alignment—involving the totality of the world population, Satan, and a self-contained system—would have preempted the emergence of Israel as God's people and as the vehicle for the Messiah to rescue the world.

Through the ages, the DNA first exhibited at Babel has expressed itself in different forms, but the four-headed monster of *control, disregard for moral absolutes, self-centeredness* and the *exploitation of nature and people* has always been a constant, regardless of how or through whom it had been expressed.

From the dawn of history, domination of one group over another was exercised by raw violence in the form of war. The spoils always belonged to the victor, and what they could not take they destroyed, including human lives, livestock, crops and cities. Wars were waged not to expand civilization but to destroy competing ones and strengthen the victor with the loot.

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The system became progressively more sophisticated but definitely not less cruel. Control was exercised by political domination backed by military might (or vice versa) to extract tributes from subjugated nations. Beaten nations were made vassals instead of being destroyed as in the past, to create a flow of resources from the ends of the empire toward its capital, affirming the premise of a centralized vortex of power. One empire followed the next, leaving a path littered with human debris that remorselessly spanned from one century to the next.

Following the two World Wars in the twentieth century, the issue became ownership of the land, as the oligarchs, challenged by emerging populist movements, unsuccessfully tried to hang on to idle lands needed to abate the hunger of multitudes. Land reform finally took hold, giving more people access to land ownership. However, today the new tool for worldwide domination is the use of trade to control and limit access to markets. Trade, as practiced at the macro level in the world today, can easily be used to subjugate and oppress because trade is basically an exchange—though not necessarily a fair one, since the one with the liquidity usually decides how much is paid for what is being offered. Trade has become the velvet hood over the four-headed Babylonian system, which is still in effect today.

Trade is not evil. Like sex, as part of the human reproductive system, it is divinely designed to energize and multiply what is already present *and latent* in the lives of the participants, in addition to giving birth to

new things. In describing the dynamics of the kingdom of God, Jesus Himself told two parables involving trade: the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25:14-30, and the Parable of the Minas in Luke 19:11-26.²

After the Fall

Enron—the now disgraced and defunct energy conglomerate—made it painfully evident that trade can be easily perverted, because the trader’s objective is not to give things away but to use them to acquire more in an advantageous manner. When the greed resident in human nature kicks in, it can easily lead to excesses that undermine the welfare of others. In that state, trade becomes the opposite of the system of grace that was prevalent in the Garden, where everything was made available for the *common good*.

I believe this is why in one of the first snapshots of the Early Church we see believers considering their possessions as common property so that everyone would have what they needed, in a beautiful throwback to the way things used to be in the Garden: “And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them” (Acts 4:32).

The way world trade is often used (more precisely, *abused*) now and in the past is not a positive exercise because it has neglected and ejected the grace that was such an integral part of its core and purpose in the Garden. In today’s world economy, bankers and venture capitalists determine the bottom line (*their* bottom line) by skillfully and shrewdly controlling the cash and writing the rules for the market. Governments provide further momentum by unilaterally establishing tariffs and domestic subsidies with the interests of their own nation in mind, and not those of the rest of the world. The result is a growing gap between the have and the have-not nations and between rich and poor peoples. This is due to a trade system designed to concentrate power in one place instead of using it for the common good. It favors a win-lose rather than a win-win outcome.

The Tragic Scramble for Africa

To see the application of this self-serving expression of trade, it is most alarming to revisit the Berlin Conference of 1884 to learn how the par-

tition of Africa came about. It is a disturbing tutorial on the use of trade to subjugate nations, and in this case an entire continent.

The conference was convened by Otto von Bismarck, the German Chancellor at the time, and was attended by the European powers with colonial interests in Africa plus the representatives of the Ottoman Empire. The USA was also a participant, though mostly as an observer.³ This gathering formalized the division of Africa among the European powers, which included making Congo the *personal* property of Leopold II of Belgium, an infamous act that led to the death of as many as ten million natives.⁴ A review of the map of Africa eight years later (1902) reveals that 90 percent of all the land that made up Africa was under European control.⁵

Colonial powers proceeded to unashamedly structure African economies to complement their own. These individual European nations strictly specialized in accordance with the needs and desires of their own individual countries, and subjugated the African economies to engage in exporting their commodities to the cities of Europe.⁶ To make the extraction of those commodities possible, the empires made substantial investments in infrastructure, such as railroads, roads, ports, and so forth, *but did not invest in the specialized education and development of people the local population* since it was economically advantageous to the empires that Africa remain a non-industrialized society. This was justified by two premises, one false and one true. The first one, abominably racist, was that Africans were primitive people and unsuitable to live in “developed” societies. The second one was that any manufacturing and processing infrastructure in Africa would hurt the economies in Europe.⁷

As a result of these policies, when African nations finally became independent they found themselves with two fundamental handicaps: a lack of educated nationals, and no industrial infrastructure. Local leaders replaced the colonial rulers but not much changed since the economies continued to be agrarian, with the complication that in the post-colonial era, access to international markets was stacked against them through subsidies and tariffs crafted by some of their former masters.

Subsidy Nonsense

Developed countries spend one billion dollars *a day* to subsidize their agricultural industries.⁸ These figures and their impact on Least Developed

Nations (LDN), most of whom are located in Africa, is a matter of active and heated debate; but what is being argued is the magnitude of its impact, *not* its existence.

However, in a press conference given by Mari Robinson, former president of Ireland and the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Robinson said that the policies put in place by the United States of America, the European Union and Japan concerning subsidies, tariffs and other barriers are costing the developing countries 320 billion dollars per year. Comparing this number with the world budget for AIDS (which is estimated at 57 billion dollars), Ms. Robinson concluded that what the world is losing in productivity is more than what it is paying to address AIDS.⁹

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Few acts would improve the agricultural income in Third World nations more than the elimination of government subsidies to farmers in the USA and the European Union, even if done gradually. This program, created in the USA at a time when America was a nation with a large farming population dependent on incentives and protection, is driving farmers in other parts of the world into bankruptcy and pushing non-industrial nations deeper into insolvency because it gives an unfair advantage to the gigantic conglomerates that have taken over most farming interests in America. Additionally, in some cases it gives incentive for farmers of certain crops to plow those crops under, rather than bring them to market, since they're effectively receiving payment for those crops via government subsidy anyway.

The issue transcends the economic dimension when we see that 18 million people per year (50,000 *every day*) die of poverty-related causes such as unsanitary water, inadequate food and lack of basic health services.¹⁰ These conditions cannot be abated at the local level

because their economies are in shambles. When the Western world is presented with the staggering cost in lives caused by systemic poverty, many well-meaning people and agencies rise up with a most sincere desire to provide more aid; but in others a deep-seated skepticism (even hopelessness) takes hold, because of how inefficient aid has been until now. That skepticism soon turns to cynicism in the face of the rampant corruption prevalent at practically all levels in the recipient countries.

However, the solution to this horrendous issue is not that difficult. The need is not for more aid but for fair trade, something that can be achieved by opening Western markets to Third World producers. The more precise choice is between massive aid, with its resulting lowering of self-esteem and increased dependency on the part of the recipients, and the opening of markets in the West accompanied by both Western capital investment in least developed nations and a redirection of aid to empower producers in the Third World to upgrade their infrastructure.

People in poor nations are not lazy. They are not loafing under trees, waiting for UN convoys to drop them some food. They labor harder and longer and under much more demanding circumstances than most of us in the West, but at the end of the day they are also left to worry about finding markets for the crops they expect from the seeds they just planted. They are hard-working folks, but the deck is stacked against them. For instance, according to Oxfam, U.S. *domestic* cotton subsidies reached almost five billion dollars—for a crop that was worth only four billion dollars.¹¹ These subsidies to just 25,000 cotton farmers depressed world cotton prices, hurting developing countries, including more than 10 million people in West and Central Africa who rely on cotton *for their livelihood*. To put this in perspective, cotton production in Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali accounts for 5 to 10 percent of the Gross Domestic Product and represents an average of 30 to 40 percent of overall export earnings.¹²

The same source contends that the US has paid over 25 billion dollars to corn farmers over the past five years for a crop that would otherwise have *lost* 20 billion dollars over the same period. These subsidies have depressed world prices and caused losses of up to 4 billion dollars in other corn growing countries. Rice farmers in the US receive over 1 billion dollars a year in subsidies, *which equals the total value of the entire US crop!*¹³

Tariffs: The Second Blow

Also, by imposing tariffs on foreign grown commodities, Western nations make it prohibitively impossible for Third World growers to enter their markets. And by selling their subsidized commodities in the international market at artificially lowered prices, due to domestic subsidies, they drive Third World producers out of business, which has disastrous consequences on entire local economies and hundreds of thousands of families.

For instance, the European Union pays its sugar farmers almost three billion Euros in subsidies to produce a crop that exceeds the internal demand and costs more than the international price while *blocking non-EU countries from selling in the continent*.¹⁴ The surplus is sold in the international market and/or given as foreign aid to non-EU countries, some of which are sugar-producing nations themselves! The donated sugar depresses the local economy further, driving local producers into despair.

Many of these figures and the resulting conclusions are the subject of an ongoing debate, but no one denies that better access to world markets will improve the economy of the least developed nations. As an example, consider the plight of this non-Western farmer:

Njay Coulibaly is an average farmer of Korin, a village in Mali, West Africa. He is the head of a family of 13 able-bodied men, women and children, all who work in the cotton fields. They worked hard for six months this year carefully tending their cotton crop. Yet Njay's total harvest of nearly 2500 kilos sold for only \$815, and after paying back the bank and hired labor, he and his family were left with a mere \$110 to live off of.¹⁵

Why? Because wealthy countries are giving huge subsidies to their large producers and then dumping the overproduction on the world market, according to a World Trade Organization (WTO) report published by the Harvard Center for International Development (CID). This type of subsidization has caused the world supply to soar while driving prices to all-time lows. A further report states, "Sub-Saharan countries are struggling not due to a lack of aid from wealthy countries, but because their economies are blocked on the world market. For example, according to Oxfam, the country of Mali received 37.7 million dollars from USAID in 2001, yet the country's producers lost 43 mil-

lion dollars due solely to American subsidies. The obvious solution is to end subsidies.”¹⁶

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have as their mission to provide aid to nations with troubled economies by providing loans and expertise; but those loans are often contingent on those countries’ adhering to their recommendations. For instance, today the IMF wears an ideological hat different from the one it wore when it was created. Its first article states that it aims “to contribute . . . to the promotion and maintenance of high levels of employment and real income and to the development of the productive resources of all members.” Interestingly, the IMF today has become a guardian of the type of deflationary measures that the Bretton Woods conference in New Hampshire in 1945 sought to consign to history.¹⁷

Sometimes the good intentions and well-meaning advice of the IMF and the World Bank collide with local reality with catastrophic consequences for the weaker party, which is always a Third World nation. In 2003, for example, Ghana decided to protect its rice industry from imports (often subsidized) by putting tariffs in place. Almost immediately the IMF demanded that Ghana rescind that decision, and since then “the US now provides 40 percent of Ghana’s rice imports. Ghana’s own production has collapsed—local rice farmers can no longer make a living. And in countries like Ghana, most people are farmers.”¹⁸

Fair Trade Must Replace Aid

These unfortunate and unnecessary victims of a system of poverty could be spared by eliminating self-serving trade practices on the part of the Western nations. If trade were to be governed by the win-win axiom that is an integral part of grace, instead of by the Darwinian predatory win-lose imposed by the Babylonian system, entire nations would flourish.

I realize that the suggestion to eliminate tariff and domestic subsidies to allow for the development of true free trade is radical and unwelcome in the West, mainly because of the potential losses in standard of living. However, we cannot have the cake and eat it too. If we promote free trade and globalization of world economies, we need to subscribe and submit to the rules of the game. The reason why every meeting of the World Trade Organization faces such virulent protest is because of this inconsistency.

To put this in perspective, let us remind ourselves that when industries in the West that have had a historic advantage came under competition—such as automobile, home appliances, and so forth—the first response was highly reactionary: strict protectionism. But when the West saw the folly of it and engaged in a fair contest with the emerging competition, *everybody won* through improvement in the quality of the products and more affordable prices, in addition to the development and strengthening of the economy in the non-Western nations.

Aid that Does Not Help

In chapter 12, I touched on how empires took advantage of the colonies through a trade system designed to develop them as simple providers of raw materials while actively keeping them from becoming strong enough to be competitors. Though the empires are no longer around, this unfair form of trade has become institutionalized in the domestic economies of the wealthiest nations.

Even laudable things such as aid to poor countries can be perverted. When close to half of the national budget comes from foreign aid, as is the case in several nations in Africa, the resulting dependence compromises their sovereignty. The mere suggestion on the part of the donor nation of a cutback in aid or a delay in its delivery compromises the freedom of local governments—or when aid is given on condition that the recipient country must endorse the donor's foreign policy.

The “Babel-onian” objective lives on: to build *our city* (self-interests) *with a tower* (anti-God systems and procedures) in order to make *our* name (products, activities) so powerful that others will have to come to us *on our terms*.

What can be done to change this situation? A lot!

A Better Way

In Nelson Mandela's last chapter of his autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom*, he describes how he discovered the all-encompassing nature of apartheid when he understood how it enslaved whites as much as it did blacks. Blacks were shackled but so were the white oppressors, by giving up the most pristine expressions of humanity in order to be able to carry the deprivation of apartheid. The white man's conscience went into a coma that eventually extended to every meaningful aspect of life.

Mandela eloquently narrates how he came to understand that he would never be free until he had set the white people free, since both were victims of a cruel system. Like master and slave sharing the same shackles, it did not matter if one was educated and had expensive clothes while the other was ignorant and naked, since their destiny was tied to each other through apartheid. By keeping the black man down, the white man prevented himself from rising to the height of his own destiny.

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The same dynamic is at work today with regard to wealth and poverty and the gap between the rich and the poor (whether it be people or nations), because poverty and misery are “in the air.” Like a bad odor, it cannot be restricted to a certain group of people. Because everybody smells it, everybody suffers. It does not matter where the odor originates.

Rich people may live in secluded, gated communities but every day when they exit those gates they come in touch with the stark reality of slums and shantytowns around them. Wealthy nations dwell on a planet where the poor, the destitute, and the dying cannot be ignored anymore. No matter how beautiful a nation is, if the world is getting poorer, and as a result uglier, so too eventually will that nation.

Furthermore, poverty affects everybody, even the rich. In chapter 11, I described poverty as being four dimensional: spiritual, relational, motivational and material. I explained that the poor score well on the first two and the rich on the latter two. But to truly eliminate poverty, everybody needs to score well on all four.

To have material and motivational wealth but to lack deep relationships and an active *practical* faith in God creates a debit that sooner or later will cancel out the “credit” of that partial wealth. Newspapers constantly report stories of wealthy people who have died lonely and/or resented by those close to them. Howard Hughes was an extreme version

of the many social fugitives that abound in the world of the wealthy. One can have plenty of possessions and still be poor inside.

In the scale discussed in chapter 12, I showed how the progression of the person described by Paul in Ephesians 4:28 can be tracked from -1 to +6.¹⁹ People of wealth can easily reach +2 but they will remain stuck there unless they focus on doing what is good, with the ultimate objective of sharing with those in need. This is the picture we find in Acts 2:46, of rich and poor dwelling joyfully together with gladness and sincerity of heart. *Everybody* there scored +6. Like Nelson Mandela said about the iniquity of apartheid, the rich will never be truly rich until the poor are set free from systemic poverty.

Most Christians, at a personal level, practice Kingdom economics. They are honest, hard-working people. They care for the needy in their own sphere of influence. They donate time and expertise to help the disadvantaged. The world would be a terrible place without such life-giving involvement. However, the question is, What can be done to alter the *systems* of poverty? In other words, can we change the world systems to get rid of systemic poverty?

The answer is absolutely and emphatically *yes!*

What's more, what seems massive and impenetrable from the outside might already be crumbling on the inside. During the Bolshevik Revolution that dethroned the Russian Czar and paved the way for Communism, the turning point was the storming of the Winter Palace. By exposing the fragility of the system, it set in motion a domino effect that in an unexpectedly short time brought down the old system. Reflecting on that event afterward, Lenin mused, "I did not realize how easy it was until it was done." It looked formidable until it was challenged, first in the minds of the people and then at its very gates. Key to this was the discontent not just in the minds and hearts of the peasants but also of key people in power in the old regime.

The same is true regarding systemic poverty. Within the establishment, strong voices are beginning to be raised, crying out for the elimination of poverty *in our generation*. They see the devastation produced by capitalism devoid of Judeo-Christian values, but because they are not aware of the need for those values, they limit themselves to proposals that seldom go beyond providing more aid or forcibly redistributing resources.

Those who don't know the Lord or who lack an eternal perspective see those approaches as the ultimate objective. But we Christians

should perceive in this groundswell an *extraordinary* opportunity to use the elimination of *all forms* of poverty as a masterful act of kindness to open the eyes of *billions* of people to the reality of Jesus Christ and His gospel of good news to the poor.

It has happened before (albeit on a small scale) and it should happen now. The principle at work in Acts 4:32-34 linking the elimination of poverty and credibility of our message is powerful. In that passage we read that the apostles' witness of Jesus' resurrection was credible because of two major social breakthroughs: (1) The congregation, which comprised rich and poor, was of one heart and soul; and (2) there was no needy person among them because they had joyfully and selflessly shared with each other.

Governments can bring about the redistribution of wealth to make the plight of the needy less painful at the expense of the rich, but only the power of the gospel can change the hearts of people at opposite ends of the social spectrum to constitute a new order that is held together not by the enforcement of policies and regulations but by hearts and souls bonded around the resurrected Jesus Christ who dwells in their midst.

You can see it as you read these words again: "And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own; but all things were common property to them. And with great power the apostles were giving witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales, and lay them at the apostles' feet; and they would be distributed to each, as any had need."

However, we will tragically shortchange ourselves and the world if we limit ourselves to the social arena. The context for this passage is rich in the supernatural. In fact *it is dependent on the supernatural*. It begins with corporate prayer triggered by threats and persecution, to ask for boldness, confidence, healing miracles and signs and wonders, all around the word of God: "And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence, while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus" (Acts 4:29-30). And it concludes with a two-punch, first a resounding divine AMEN in

the form of an earthquake: “And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken;” which is followed by everybody being filled with the Holy Spirit: “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit,” with the end result that they “began to speak the word of God with boldness” (v. 31).

It is this connection between heaven and Earth, expressed in a constant flow in both directions that makes Christianity absolutely uniquely qualified to eliminate all expressions of systemic poverty. Anybody can tackle social issues, but only Spirit-filled Christians can do it by accessing the Tree of Life, filled with the Holy Spirit demonstrating the power of God through signs and wonders *performed through their hands* (see Acts 5:12). Please notice in this passage how the action begins on Earth with the congregation praying a prayer that is heard in heaven, which in turn replies with a sort of “earthquake amen” (see Acts 4:31) that results in the believers speaking boldly on Earth the word first spoken by God in heaven. Awesome!

The Third Axiom of Poverty: Corruption

There are three foundational axioms about poverty issues that we must keep clearly in our minds as we seek to resolve it. We have mentioned two: first, that systemic poverty does not exist by itself but through a system of poverty; and second, that poor people are not the problem; they’re a significant part of the solution, because they constitute the largest untapped source of capital.

The third foundational axiom is this: *Corruption* (the glue that holds the systems of poverty together) and *corrupt people* fall into two different categories, which we must keep separated in our minds. Corruption is beyond redemption, but corrupt people are the very object of it. Corrupt people do not love corruption. Like drug addicts (who do not love drugs, but are enslaved by them), the corrupt hate corruption and wish to be liberated, but they don’t know how. Jesus clearly demonstrated this reality with Zacchaeus, the discredited tax collector who was desperate for change, and when salvation came *to his house*, he embraced it wholeheartedly. He enthusiastically let it rescue everything that had been lost to corruption, including his businesses and his ill-gotten profits.

Likewise, today multitudes of people in positions of influence and authority are hoping for deliverance. They are crying for an alternative, but because they don’t see it, they sink deeper into hopelessness and sell out to the Mother of Harlots—Babylon. This is why it is most

imperative that we Christians change paradigms and get into the marketplace to *do business* with Kingdom principles. Babylon has enlisted the most talented leaders in nation after nation to run its corrupt system. We must present these “indentured workers” with an alternative. Case in point is Russia. The country is doing much better economically after capitalism was introduced. But because capitalism arrived devoid of its Judeo-Christian values, sinister forces, particularly the mafia, run Russia today.

What would have happened if, when the Iron Curtain fell, the preachers that flocked by the thousands into Russia would have emulated Paul and taken with them top-notch business people and established their base of operations in the marketplace to bring salvation not just to people but to corporations, political parties, and universities?

Every time a major social shift takes place, like the fall of Communism in the Soviet Union, a vacuum of gargantuan proportions is created. Because we did not have the right paradigms, we missed the opportunity to fill it with transformation principles—but *Babylon did*. This is tragic in extreme because we are the ones who have the anointing, the authority and the power. But because we did not have the right paradigm, we did not show up for the game and lost by default.

Learning from that debacle, a growing number of pulpit and marketplace ministers have been setting up Kingdom businesses in China to avoid a repeat of the Russian fiasco. Flying under the radar, they are investing in and training Christian Chinese entrepreneurs to provide better services and products. In addition they are securing clients and financing to enable them to move up in the emerging economy. This is being done as a ministry, even though the word “ministry” is never used, and since it is focused in the marketplace it is impossible to identify it as such, especially by the political commissars. The intention is to infiltrate the Chinese marketplace with Kingdom companies so that when Communism expires—and it will because it cannot sustain itself in an atmosphere of increasing freedom—those Christian entrepreneurs—who by then will have obtained the greatest return on the “mina” entrusted to them (see Luke 19:12-27) will get the greatest authority in the nation.

This approach is already yielding fruits that are a precursor to the expected breakthrough; it is the emergence, *in the open*, of churches in the marketplace pastored by CEOs and company owners, many of them expatriate Chinese who have returned as business people. This new

phenomenon is called “the Third Church,” to differentiate it from the other two, the underground church and the official government Three-Self Church.

The Third Church is finding favor not only with Zacchaeus-type influential Chinese—who are becoming believers—but also with government officials who choose to look the other way at this flagrant violation of official Communist religious policy, because of the influence that these Kingdom companies have on the local economy. Given the sensitivity of the subject, it would be unwise to provide specifics, but mass conversions are sweeping some factories as well as the housing complexes where workers live. In one case almost all 4,000 employees have come to the Lord and the owner, very wisely, rather than trying to send them to an underground church, has turned the lunch hour into “informal” services in which miracles take place regularly. In another case, one third of the 12,000 people living in the compound have also come to the Lord.

It is our sacred duty and privilege to demonstrate—not only in China but also all over the world—that there is an alternative to corruption, greed and oppression, that the marketplace can be a pleasant place.

The system of bondage to which they have been subjugated will fall. And when it does, they will no longer be obligated to be its mistress. Rather, once cleansed and purified by the blood of Jesus, they will become part of the glorious solution, when the will of God in heaven will be done on Earth.

CHAPTER 17

The Demise of Babylon

*The secret to win the war does not consist in dying for your country
but rather have our enemies die for theirs.*

General George S. Patton

The bad news is that the Babylonian system is entrenched in the world today. The good news is that it will be destroyed and replaced with God's order. We can be certain of its demise because it has not only been foretold but it has also been described with revealing detail. Its widespread and far-reaching influence will utterly be cut off from the very root it is part of. It will come as a result of a divinely comprehensive strategy involving three successive blows designed to:

1. Terminate its spiritual legitimacy
2. Vacate its position in the heavenlies
3. Destroy its operational capability on Earth

The battlegrounds for these blows are the universe, the heavens, and the earth, in that order.

This epic drama in real life moves from heaven to Earth—and even under the earth. It involves angels and demons, the devil and the archangel Michael, prophets and saints, God the Father, the Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus, the Antichrist, the Beast and the False Prophet. In fact, the entire universe, including the sun, the earth, the moon and the stars, are all actors in the climax of all climaxes when Babylon is defeated and Jerusalem becomes the permanent center of the universe. All of this makes Revelation 11–20, 10 of the most astounding chapters in all the Scriptures.

As it is the case with so many narratives in the Bible, the script does not always play out linearly. There are clusters of images here and there that reflect back what was just reported or something that is about to take place. Or they provide a glimpse of something that is going on in

a parallel track. It is a multiple-screen production. That is why it can be confusing to try to make everything fit into our typical time sequence as so often modern eschatologists try to do.

What the Devil Lost

One of those key clusters of images appears in a short section in chapters 11 and 12. It synthesizes what unfolds and plays out in the rest of chapters 12 through 20 like a two-paragraph synopsis in the program of a three-hour theatrical production. This begins with the Lord's victory over Satan and moves on to a similar outcome at the hands of God's angels to conclude with the saints defeating him one last time—giving us a general outline of what is later on covered in minute detail.

Loss of Legitimacy

The first defeat is the one inflicted by Jesus and has to do with stripping the devil of any legitimacy to world control. An angelic choir proclaims in Revelation 11:15, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever." The 24 elders who sit on thrones before God echo that with, "We give You thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who are and who were, because You have taken Your great power and have *begun* to reign" (Rev. 11:17, emphasis added).

This passage seems to describe the precise moment when the atoning death of Jesus gave Him legal title to the kingdoms of the world, for it points to the beginning of His domain as indicated by the 24 elders' statement that He had *begun* to reign. That reign began when Jesus victoriously confronted evil powers (see 1 Pet. 3:19-22) and carried captivity captive (see Eph. 4:8). This sudden change of authority creates a negative but confirming reaction in the earth among the nations that He had just been made Lord over. Rather than rejoicing, they become enraged (see Rev. 11:18).

Why would the nations become enraged if Jesus became their Lord? Because the enemy, knowing that he has received a fatal blow, used every ounce of control over them to make them instruments to attack and squelch the Church, which is the entity commissioned by Jesus to reclaim what was redeemed. This may well account for the fierce, brutal and bloody persecutions that marked the first centuries of the Christian era.

A description of God's temple and the Ark of the Covenant (that suddenly becomes visible in heaven) announcing the beginning of an age of grace, followed by phenomena on Earth that may well be a reference to the beginning Church age, follows the rage of the nations: "And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple, and there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hail-storm" (Rev. 11:19).

In this first blow, Satan lost his legitimacy as lord over the world, because Jesus bought it back with His blood. Satan had gotten the world through sin and Jesus now recovered it by atoning for its sins. The battleground for this was the universe.

Loss of Strategic Position

The biblical narrative now moves on to the role of Israel (represented by a woman), as the channel for Jesus' birth and her struggle with the devil and his demons, symbolized by a dragon and a third of the stars under his control. The evil one's attempt at killing the child fails, the child is born to reign and ascends to heaven to sit on a throne from where to rule the nations while the woman is given a place of refuge in the wilderness to protect her from the dragon: "And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne. Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days" (Rev. 12:5-6).

In the ensuing interlude, a second cosmic clash takes place: "And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven" (Rev. 12:7-8). The result was a loss of position for the devil and his angels (demons): "And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him" (Rev. 12:9).

Satan and his minions will continue to fight until Judgment Day, but no longer from a position of operational strength. He has already lost the legitimacy at the hands of Jesus in the previous defeat and now loses the strategic advantage of a higher ground at the hands of

Michael and his angels. The battleground here is the heavens, but the next battle for the loss of control is on the ground. These two blows are the modern equivalent of a declaration of war by an international tribunal and the preemptive elimination of the enemy's air force, in that order, confining him to fighting on the ground.

Destruction of Operational Capability

His next fight is with the saints and is again one that he is bound to lose. Written in the past tense from a future viewpoint (as the book of Revelation does), it describes a battle that we the Church are engaged in at this very moment: “and they overcame him [the devil] because of the the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their [our] testimony, and they [we] did not love their [our] life even when faced with death” (Rev. 12:11).

■ ■ ■

Victory belongs to us Christians; the Gates of
Hades shall not prevail against the Lord's people.

■ ■ ■

I have always used this verse as a superb means to obtain personal victory over the devil. In fact, in my book *That None Should Perish*, I included a chapter on spiritual strongholds and employ this passage to teach how to tear down personal strongholds by claiming and accessing what the blood of Jesus did for us, by declaring with our mouth what we believe in our heart and by not being afraid to engage in a fight for fear of losing our lives. All of that is valid as an application of what this passage teaches, but *the victory it describes here is not just personal; it is specifically for reclaiming the kingdoms of the world, since the battleground is the earth.*¹

All this is to say that victory belongs to us Christians, that indeed the Gates of Hades shall not prevail against the Lord's people.

The question is, How does that victory come about?

With the battlefronts at the cosmic and heavenly levels under control, Revelation 12:11 explains in specific detail the three arenas in which the earthly struggle takes place. The first one has to do with *the act of redemption*. The saints who do the overcoming have understood what it was that “the blood of the Lamb” purchased, and we now know very clearly from

the Scriptures that it was much more than souls. It was indeed the whole of creation (including the nations of the world), which is now waiting with bated breath for the manifestation of the sons of God (see Rom. 8:19).

The second arena involves *the act of reclamation*. The phrase “the word of their testimony” is much more than a testimony about “how I came to know the Lord” or about “what Jesus did for me.” It certainly should include that, but what is depicted here is not a word about something that has happened in the past. Rather, it is a public declaration about the present and the future by which Christians make it known that they understand that they are empowered to reclaim what the blood of the Lamb has already redeemed.

For instance, in Luke 10:2, Jesus said to the 70, “The harvest is plentiful . . .” How many of us have heard it said, or have been ourselves guilty of saying, “My city is hard to reach.” That statement does not reflect what God’s perspective is; rather it plays into the devil’s schemes. We need to know that what we speak is not only heard by humans but also by the forces of darkness, and when we declare the redemptive purposes that God has already declared, our declaration is paramount to serving an eviction notice on those usurpers to move off the premises that have been purchased by Christ’s blood, because the property has been turned over to His deputies, the Church.

The third arena is *the total denial of self*: “They did not love their lives to the death” (Rev. 12:11, *NKJV*). When we are able to say with the apostle Paul, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Gal. 2:20), then we have trumped Satan’s best hand when it comes to spiritual power. It is the equivalent of renouncing our citizenship in the Babylonian system, placing us outside of its jurisdiction. We no longer live by its standards. Having no life but Christ’s, we are fearless, we are operating completely by faith, and we have the backing of the King of the nations upon us for victory.

How does this play out in our struggle with the Babylonian system?

The four values of the Babylonian system are *control* (*our* city), brazen *immorality* (a self-initiated tower to reach heaven), *pride* (a name for ourselves) and *making the earth subservient to man* (as opposed to tending it).

Of the four, control is the key because it establishes a foundation for the others to develop. The devil garnishes control through hopelessness. For hopelessness to work, it must be absolute, which is what the devil tries to make life look like at every turn, with thoughts like, “It will *never* be any different,” “I can *never* change,” “It’s *always* been this way,” “There is *nothing* you can do about it.” But the truth is that if that hopelessness can be penetrated with hope—even at the most minuscule level—then, like darkness that has been pierced by the light from a small candle, it will soon succumb.

One First Step

When our Harvest Evangelism team facilitated the first modern-day city transformation thrust in Resistencia, Argentina, in 1988 to 1990, the immediate results were not very impressive. In fact, most observers were not enthusiastic, and some were even critical of it. But the fact that an entire city heard the gospel, that old systemic strongholds were permanently dismantled and that the Church did it in unity, represented a definite first.

A tiny but penetrating hole was punched in the darkness over Resistencia. People were no longer able to say that a city cannot be reached. Now they needed to modify it to the less grievous, “*just one city* has been reached.” As more and more people became inspired by the Resistencia story, a string of cities began to experience transformation. Today, people everywhere attest to cities being reached for Christ. It has become part of the Church’s lore. The stronghold of hopelessness with which the devil kept people from even thinking about city transformation had been shattered. Today, the same principle applies to discipling nations, and within that, to the elimination of systemic poverty as the premier social indicator of such discipleship.

What we need to do is to demonstrate somewhere on the earth that a nation, or a strategic portion of it, has been transformed. The prophetic message that will emanate out of that victory will soon impregnate other nations in the same fashion that Resistencia made credible city transformation. Demonstrating this message in tangible ways will shatter hopelessness. And when it does, what was thought impossible due to the prevailing hopelessness becomes gradually possible.

Please allow me to use a negative example to illustrate this principle. In the late 1950s Fidel Castro and Ché Guevara, along with others,

sailed from the Yucatán Peninsula of Mexico to Cuba to bring down the dictator Fulgencio Batista and start a revolution to liberate Cuba. Just for the record, so you will know where I stand on this matter, the first two feats they accomplished, but the third one they failed miserably. When their boat reached Cuba it capsized, some of the occupants almost drowned, a great deal of the equipment was lost, and Batista (who had gotten wind of their mission) had troops waiting for them.

The aspiring revolutionaries barely escaped capture by running to the hills. They found refuge in the impenetrable vegetation of a place called Sierra Maestra, where they established a small but secure perimeter. At that point in time, they did not pose any danger to Batista since they and their ideas were confined to a very small and inaccessible region of the country. Batista tried to chase them out but couldn't, and things developed into a stalemate—*that is until the rebels smuggled a radio transmitter into Sierra Maestra!*

It was not a very big transmitter, but it was big enough to broadcast to a vast region of the island nation. They named their radio broadcast, *Radio Cuba Libre* (Radio Free Cuba). Every night they bombarded the countryside with revolutionary exhortations. They did not pose a physical threat to Batista, but the fact that they were able to proclaim that a part—no matter how tiny—of Cuba was no longer under Batista's control, as evidenced through their daily broadcasts, shattered the long-established notion that Batista's regime was in control of all of Cuba. From that moment on, Batista sympathizers and even Batista himself were forced to admit that his control extended to everything *but Sierra Maestra*. It became a matter of time before the regime collapsed and Cuba entered its most tragic period. As sad as the outcome turned out to be, the principle stands: Once a perceived absolute had been dented, it is no longer absolute.

It is similar to the running of the mile in less than four minutes. Until May 6, 1954, the four-minute barrier had stood for centuries, but it has since been breached many times over.² Invincibility once shattered makes it possible to accept that it is breakable.

This very principle is dramatically at work today with respect to one of the world's most vile plagues. While most of Africa seems to be fighting a losing battle with AIDS and HIV, Uganda has been able to bring the figures down from 36 percent to an astounding 6 percent. It has done it primarily through the massive education of younger

people; teaching Bible-based family values, including abstinence; and prayer. It is one of the most extraordinary, hope-filled and hope-giving breakthroughs in recent times: to be able to reduce the rate of infection from 1 in 3 Ugandans to less than 1 in 16. It is irrefutable evidence that what no one expects to see improved can be improved.

However, on the “*not yet* so bright” side is the fact that the world does not know about this victory—among other factors because the Babylonian systems intentionally prefer to push a futile non-God approach that benefits no one but the manufacturers of condoms, as a Ugandan leader confided to me.

But I believe, like the first crack in the ice of a lake at the onset of spring, that soon the whole mass will begin to crumble, and the threshold that leads to such victories—the fine line that separates hope and hopelessness—will be breached, and the effects will ripple throughout societies around the globe.

Once we have punched a hole in the darkness,
the inserted light will do the rest.

Christians must actively seek a point of inception in the world arena for the discipling of at least one nation (a still unattained objective in modern times) and dismantle the Babylonian system by debunking its four core values of control (control, immorality, pride, and exploitation of nature) *somewhere on Earth*. The procession of redeemed nations featured in Revelation 21 has to begin somewhere, sometime. Why not with us; why not right now, *today*?

We need to take hold of this principle and demonstrate that it is possible to disciple a nation, including breaking the Babylonian systems of poverty. Since none of us is in control of a nation yet, we must begin with our own sphere of influence. Once we have punched a hole in the darkness, the inserted light will do the rest. And we must use whatever victories we have achieved already and turn them into beachheads from which to expand to bigger ground by going from what we have to what we plan to have.

What happened in Resistencia conclusively proved that cities can be reached. And not just one city, but any city, as attested by the myriad citywide transformation models emerging all over the world. These city models establish that the principles are both transferable and—because those cities are in different nations—trans-cultural. Now we must adapt and apply them at the nation level.

From the Known to the Unknown

As in the past, the only way we know to tackle this assignment is to go from the known to the unknown. To see how this strategic transition might happen, we need to take an in-depth look at what we know—how the first city-reaching prototype was developed.

In Resistencia, God downloaded to us the principle of filling a whole city with prayer by praying for the felt needs of the population as a precursor to opening their eyes (and the eyes of the city) to the love of God and to the reality that Jesus Christ is the only way to God. This methodology later came to be known as *prayer evangelism*, which we have described already.

At the very heart of prayer evangelism is an intentional thrust to make peace with the lost as dictated by Jesus' command that we lambs must go to the wolves (the lost) and speak peace over them (see Luke 10:3-5). This is followed by meaningful fellowship, particularly of the kind that they are comfortable with, as outlined by the instructions in Luke 10:7 to eat and drink in *their* homes everything *they* put before us. Next we must take care of their needs by praying for them. Then as God hears those prayers and the ones prayed for become aware of His presence, we are to declare to them, "The Kingdom of God has come near you" (Luke 10:9).

Once a highly cohesive group of pastors in Resistencia embraced by faith the notion that their city should be reached, they equipped and mobilized their members to practice prayer evangelism on the people in their sphere of influence. Six hundred thirty-five lighthouses of prayer were established in as many homes and distributed all over the city to cover the entire population of 400,000 people in prayer 24/7. In the measure that the city filled up with prayer, a dramatic improvement took place in the spiritual climate across the city, and unusual numbers of people began to come to Christ. But this thrust would not have progressed past the point of being a good outreach if it were not for an unusual and challenging opportunity.

Back in the 1980s it was rare that pastors would fellowship with public officials who were not believers—and even less so that they would invest “church money” to take care of city needs. But the improvement in the spiritual climate brought not only hope to the city but also more conscious awareness about the wealth of the anointing resident within the Church. A local businessman had a good relationship with the mayor of Resistencia, who had been a Colonel in the Army and a military governor of the province in years past. This “layman” invited me to meet with the mayor, and I felt that God wanted me to go.

Since my dad had been a politician, I knew the lingo and was able to use it to “talk shop.” The more I chatted with the mayor, the more educated I became on how sincere and dedicated he was to his city. A warm camaraderie developed between us and “out of the blue” (God’s blue, as I came to realize later on!), I asked him if there were any needs the city had that we should look into meeting. Without any hesitation, he brought up the fact that several neighborhoods were not connected to the city’s water supply, lacked running water, and he did not have the budget to fix it.

One thing led to another and I felt led to commit on behalf of the Church to build 16 water tanks as a temporary but real solution. I felt somewhat “ambushed” but I knew that the “Ambusher” was God, and that gave me courage to move forward.

Before parting company, I asked if I could pray for him. Until then I had never prayed *with* a political leader who was not a Christian (remember, this was the late 1980s, and the gap between church and politics was wide and deep). He assented, and as I laid hands on him and prayed, tears welled up in his eyes. It took me by surprise, to put it mildly, since he was a macho kind of a guy, a Colonel in the Army, the city’s leading public official and a Catholic, and was being prayed for by an evangelical! Obviously, God was orchestrating this.

The next day at a pastors meeting, I felt the way Peter must have felt when he was trying to explain to the Jerusalem leaders what took place in Cornelius’s house. But again, God was in the ambush business and this time His target was the pastors. Just as the meeting was getting under way, the mayor suddenly showed up unannounced.

So much for our meeting agenda, for as the saying goes, where does an 800-pound gorilla sit? Obviously, anywhere he wants! The pastors were momentarily riveted to their chairs by this sudden apparition, then

everybody scrambled to welcome him, more like the way we welcome a tax inspector into our shop. But he surprised us by saying to me, “I enjoyed so much what happened to me yesterday when you prayed, *that I came for more,*” while stretching his cupped hands, like a child coming for more candies. This time I asked the pastors to join in, and when we prayed, the Spirit overwhelmed the mayor, who fell onto a chair.

By the time of the public outreach, we were able to present to the city 16 tanks that made water available to the poorest neighborhoods, in addition to the donation of an ample supply of medical equipment to the regional hospital. The mayor, who by then had come into the Kingdom, welcomed us and Jesus into the city. Multitudes received the Lord. The number of born-again Christians quadrupled. And best of all, God used all of this to demonstrate that a city can and must be disciplined.

Felt Needs Are Key

Meeting the felt needs of the target area is *key*. Years later in Hawaii, that need was embodied in the school systems. Hawaii ranked as one of the worst in the nation. When students and pastors joined hands and resources to reclaim it, public officials and people of influence saw the value of that action and their eyes were open to the reality that the gospel is indeed good news.

Now we are going for entire nations—in fact, for all the nations of the world. And the principle is the same: We must meet their felt needs first, in order to open their eyes to the reality of Jesus Christ.

What is the world’s greatest need? Of course it is Jesus, but the world cannot see that, because the evil one has blinded its eyes to the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ: “Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Cor. 4:3-4). To remove that veil we need to meet its most pressing need, and by this I mean what the world *feels* is its most pressing need. Without much debate, I believe we can all conclude that it is the elimination of systemic poverty.

Whoever is able to do this will have the attention and the heart of the world. It will be a repeat of the phenomenal growth described in the book of Acts (see Acts 2:43-47; 4:32-35) *but on a global scale*. With the

globalization of communications and economics, once it happens in one place, it will spread like an out-of-control fire to the far corners of the world.

And that process is already in motion!

CHAPTER 18

It's Beginning to Happen

In December 2001, Argentina defaulted on its external debt, sending its 40 million people into turmoil and rocking the international markets. To commandeer financial control, the government appropriated all bank deposits, allowing only one maximum monthly withdrawal of 200 dollars. Deprivation of one sort or another hit everybody. Riots ensued. Supermarkets were sacked. Services broke down. Social order evaporated and the resulting popular uprising forced President De La Rúa to resign in disgrace. Four presidents succeeded him in as many weeks. The country was in chaos. No one had the stature to quell the crisis, and the people had neither patience nor hope left to weather the storm.

I was deeply grieved, perplexed and confused over these developments. Argentina had been experiencing the longest running revival in modern times. People from all over the world had been coming to our conferences, as well as other forums, to be blessed. As recently as a month before the onset of the crisis I had visited the presidential palace and ministered to the leaders and authorities, including the president himself.

When I asked the Lord why such chaos was happening in a revival context, especially right after we had brought Jesus into the palace, He instructed me to read Acts 19. Being the optimist that I am, I only read the first part, where everybody in Ephesus and in Asia hears the word of the Lord in a context of extraordinary miracles performed by God through the hands of Paul, resulting in astonishing numbers of conversions.

"I don't get it," I said to God. He reminded me that He had directed me to read the *entire* chapter, not just the first half. When I did, I realized that the extraordinary outpouring of God's grace in the first half of Acts 19 was followed by riots instigated by one of the most powerful unions in Asia, with violence directed against Paul and the Church. With that as the background, God proceeded to explain to me the reasons for the upheaval like the one we were experiencing in Argentina.

No Status Quo

First, we should not expect business as usual once we take Jesus into the seat of government. When ungodly and/or demonic forces drive the economy (such as in Ephesus), God will judge it and it will collapse. Argentina's economy was no exception. However, God reassured me not to worry. He was dealing with the nation. Then He curiously instructed me to pray, not for healing, but for a *funeral* for Argentina! "*The old nation has to die before I will raise a new one from the dead,*" the Lord told me.

The second reason for the collapse, God said, was that the celebrated Argentine revival had been restricted largely to church members, and that even our own transformation thrusts were focused on cities, not on nations. We had not yet seen the transformation of cities as a means to the higher end of discipling the nation.

God then began to open my understanding to the need to disciple nations. The more we read the Scriptures, the clearer it became that we had aimed too low.

In November 2002, as Ruth and I drove from Buenos Aires to our international conference in Mar del Plata with Cindy Jacobs and Omar and Graciela Olier, we received divine download after download. By the time our car pulled into our hotel, we had been given precise instructions concerning launching a movement to disciple nations, beginning with Argentina.

At about that time I experienced a flashback to my childhood, when I used to spend summers with my grandpa in the pampas. On this particular recollection we had been hauling sacks of wheat in the fields since sunup. Grandpa let me drive the wagon and operate the winch while he did the heavy lifting. It was hard work but I enjoyed hanging out with him. However, at the end of the long day I was glad we were heading back to the house.

When we got home, Grandpa sat in the shade, enjoying the breeze. He asked me to get him a glass of water from the well. There was a windmill a few yards away that bored so deeply in the ground that the water was unusually pure and always cool.

I took the water to Grandpa and he drank it with satisfaction, complete with the noisy chuckles that Italians reserve for good food and drink. As pleasure radiated from him, he exclaimed, "I have been thinking about this water all day long. Please, get me another glass."

Suddenly, in the flashback, God replaced my grandpa, and a nation substituted for the glass of water, and I saw myself coming to Him with a nation in my hands. God received it with pleasure similar to my grandpa's and exclaimed, "*I have been waiting so long for someone to bring me a nation! Please, go bring me more nations.*"

It was a profound *kairos* moment, a fixed and special occasion in which God impressed on me how important nations are to Him and how much His heart longs for them. I was deeply moved and eager to do whatever was necessary to quench His thirst.

In the past, God, in His infinite mercy, had allowed us to pioneer city reaching, but now He was inviting us to do the same with nations. With a perfect mixture of unworthiness and excitement, we decided to accept the challenge.

This led to the formation of the International Transformation Network (ITN), a network devoted to nation transformation. This network is leading the way in pioneering a hands-on strategic alliance of pulpit and marketplace ministers to build prototypes for nation transformation. Its members have embraced the five pivotal paradigms that are the subject of this book, and are actively involved in developing transformation models within their spheres of influence.

One of the pacesetting features of this unique network is the emergence of what the members are calling the "51 percent circle." This is a group comprised of individuals, corporations and congregations that are actively engaged in a process to continually invest into the community 51 percent of its resources to meet felt needs, with a special focus on the elimination of systemic poverty. The catalytic example that launched this model was that of Myles Kawakami, the Maui businessman who decided to give 50 percent of his business to God. Since then, he and his wife, Joyce, have been using its profit to eliminate systemic poverty in their region. Francis Oda, the architect who led the president of Tahiti to the Lord, was inspired by Myles's example and shared with me his desire to raise the mark to 51 percent as a practical demonstration that God was indeed the majority shareholder.

In April 2006, our annual ITN meeting took place in New York City, the marketplace capital of the world. When we presented this challenge to ITN members, the response was overwhelming as testimony after testimony from marketplace leaders endorsing this idea was made public. But a much greater breakthrough came when it was embraced by churches.

Greg Pagh, a pastor from Elk River, Minnesota, shared his heart and precipitated a chain reaction. “I am a pastor and I have enjoyed pastoring for the past 25 years,” Greg said. “I also have a doctorate in Church Growth and I teach on the subject. I intend to be a pastor for the rest of my life. But I would like to be the pastor of a 51 percent church. I want my church, and other churches, to give out more than we keep.”

There was such an anointing in the room and God was so powerfully behind Greg’s words that everybody was overwhelmed by a sense of awe. It was like walking in the river described by Ezekiel, with water up to our waist and all of a sudden being swept downstream by a current beyond our control.

Since then, numerous other churches have joined in, and the number of 51 percent churches keeps increasing. This is extremely significant because many local congregations, though never selfish, easily drift into self-centeredness. Most of their income is spent on church-related matters, and their ministry focus, attention, resources and time are invested primarily on their own members, rather than on their city and nation.

A Matter of the Heart

I believe that the Babylonian system is so common around us that people often fail to discern how much it has permeated Christians and the *local expression* of Church. We have become conditioned to accept it.

I remember making a call to the pastor of one of the leading churches in central California to ask that an announcement be made to invite his members to be part of a canopy of prayer being raised over the San Francisco Bay area. He is a friend, one to whom I have ministered in times of deep personal crisis, and he and his family had expressed great appreciation for my help. If someone would have gladly obliged my request for an announcement to promote prayer, I thought it would surely have been him. But his reply left me emotionally numb. He said, “Sorry, Ed, I am halfway to my goal of raising three million dollars for my building program and I do not want my people distracted.”

This self-centeredness in church leadership easily mutates to selfishness among members. Sadly, I also witnessed the same spiritual complacency in another church elder who is the director for development for the leading religious non-profit NGO (non-governmental organization). His job is to present the needs of the poor to potential

donors, and he raises large amounts of money for this organization. However, when it came to selling a house he had been using as a rental, his actions reflected the Babylonian spirit, and not Christ's.

As people move in obedience and intentionally challenge the prevailing Babylonian culture, God will give the necessary increase.

The house was leased to a couple with young children. They were in financial difficulty due to the fact that the husband was between jobs. When the church elder informed the couple of his plans to sell the house, they inquired if he could extend the deadline in order to allow them to move into a rental that would be available one month later. Oddly, this “man of God” denied the request. When the couple then asked him if he would be willing to inspect the premises right away, to determine if they could count on a refund of their rental deposit to help them pay for transitional lodging at a hotel, he again declined! When he was asked to do the inspection right after the tenants left, he took his time doing so, and then wrote an offensive letter denying the refund—even though there was no proper justification for withholding the couple's funds. All this while going about his job telling potential donors about the plight of the needy and why they should be compassionate and help his NGO! Exactly *whose* side was this church elder on? The Babylonian side—without even knowing it.

ITN is a response to the reality that we the Church have not done enough, that we need to do more, and that we can do it better. As people move in obedience and intentionally challenge the prevailing Babylonian culture, God will give the necessary increase.

Living Examples of Transformation in Action

The Scriptures indicate that Judgment must begin first within the house of the Lord. In the midst of “fiery ordeals” that will be common to all, the flock is to be shepherded “with eagerness” by those who are providing “examples to the flock” (1 Pet. 4:17–5:4).

As a case in point, a businessman I know, soon after leading his partner's son to the Lord, discovered that his partner had falsified his signature in corporate documents that brought him to the brink of insolvency. Rather than protecting his financial position by reporting the fraud, he chose to absorb the loss. When I asked him what motivated him to do that, he replied, "I did not want to give the devil an opportunity to squash the faith of my partner's son." Even though in the natural it had taken him years to work himself out of the financial hole in which his unfaithful partner put him, a soul has been saved and the Babylonian system took a major hit.

The church pastored by Cal Chinen of Honolulu gives 50 percent of its income to ministries and projects outside of its walls and joyfully reports that its members are leading more people to Christ that join other churches than their own church, thus increasing the kingdom of God. Truly, Cal Chinen heads a Kingdom church!

Omar Olier, who has been pastoring the largest and most influential congregation in Mar del Plata, is another example. He could have coasted to retirement on the back of his ministerial success. But he broke free from the influence of the Babylonian spirit when he met with his colleagues to ask for forgiveness for his indifference, something that immediately triggered a reciprocal response. As a result, Omar pledged himself to the other pastors, and they elected him president of the Ministerial Association of Mar del Plata. He proceeded to organize the pastors in twosomes, in which a more successful one was paired with someone who was less successful, and the former pledged not to grow their congregations further until the other had experienced growth.

This meant that if a pastor's salary was inadequate, the other would make up the difference. If one congregation did not have a building, the other would come alongside to secure one, and so on. This arrangement included Omar and his own ministry. He poured himself into the other pastors, spending more time with them than with his own leaders, since they have come to understand that there is only one Church in the city with only one Chief shepherd, a realization that made everybody else an associate of Jesus.

A year later the congregations involved had grown an average of 400 percent. Omar's was the one that grew the least, "just" 130 percent. But the progress has gone beyond mere church growth. The mayor has come in the Kingdom. Similar breakthroughs have taken place among lawyers,

judges, business people, doctors and policemen. In fact, Mar del Plata has become known as “God’s City.” It is no coincidence that it has been the host city for our international conference for the past 12 years.

ITN is a response to the reality that we need to do more and intentionally challenge the prevailing Babylonian culture. And we need to do it diligently and persistently because the Babylonian spirit can deceive even those who do mighty works for God, people of tremendous spiritual stature such as Joseph and Solomon. Joseph, after executing God’s plan to protect the Mediterranean world from the effects of a horrendous famine, foolishly forced the entire population of Egypt to sell themselves to Pharaoh in exchange for the food that God had provided through Joseph’s management! Solomon, after building the Temple and providing a place for God’s presence to reside in, abused his God-given wisdom and built an empire for himself instead of using it to take God’s knowledge to the nations of the world. It is key to finish strong. This is why associations like ITN are a definite must for mutual accountability, not just for strategic joint ventures.

When Francis Oda (current ITN chairman) won the architecture competition in Tahiti over other participants, he had every right to “take all the marbles” for his own company—and the profits, too. Instead, he chose to take advantage of the immensity of the project and give participation to those who had “lost” so that the kingdom of God would win and God would be glorified even further.

Lawyer David Monroy brings his faith to bear on every portfolio and legal brief he handles. Instead of pursuing victory at all costs, his objective is to bring peace to all the parties involved, in order to serve the long-term best interests of the clients. His attitude definitely bucks the prevailing cutthroat culture in the legal system.

Graham Power, founder and CEO of the Power Group of Companies in South Africa, saw his business prosper and his influence increase when his business “got saved.” He is leading many efforts to meet the felt needs of towns and villages around Cape Town and beyond. In a grass-roots effort to combat systems of poverty threatening his nation and others, he is using his influence to challenge his peers and followers (who include some of Africa’s most influential marketplace leaders) to a commitment to be “Ethically Unashamed.” Those signing the “Ethically Unashamed” pledge (a standard requirement for ITN members worldwide) commit to the following:

- Be ethical, operating in the highest integrity to produce and deliver quality products and services.
- Refuse to accept or pay bribes.
- Pay taxes honestly.
- Pay reasonable salaries and wages.
- Intentionally invest in the betterment of the workforce and their families.
- Invest generously and sacrificially in the broader community, with the focus on eradicating systemic poverty.
- Purposefully connect with other companies, professions and individuals to impact the world.

Alex Contreras, an Argentine businessman and entrepreneur, has captured the essence of the vision for transformation and is setting out on a goal to establish a 51 percent transformation company in every one of Argentina's 23 provinces and the nation's capital, as a model and an inspiration for others to follow suit.

And the list goes on and on.

ITN members have embraced prayer evangelism and the five pivotal paradigms as central components of their lifestyle, turning them into spiritual Marines, always ready to storm the beaches. During our international conference in Argentina in 2006, God availed ITN with a tremendous opportunity to comprehensively implement the principles we have been teaching.

Attending the conference as an honored delegate, the First Lady of Uganda shared with our network how her heart, and the hearts of many African leaders, is so broken during times of famine. She portrayed in vivid detail the scenes of huge sacks of food supplies—dropped from helicopters—bursting upon impact, forcing the people to forage like animals for comestibles now contaminated with dirt and mud. She explained how rich Africa is in people and in raw materials, yet how undeveloped it is regarding infrastructure. She closed her speech with a plea: “My people do not need fish. They need to learn *how to fish*.”

The delegates, deeply moved, started making sincere commitments to aid. Capturing what was in their hearts, I sensed something more from the Lord bearing on the equation. I respectfully stated, “Madam, teaching your people to fish is key, but even more important is for

them to own the pond, or else somebody will be making a lot of money selling you fishing permits!”

Subsequent conversations seeking an integral solution in such context led to the conclusion that the best point of inception for a transformation prototype in Uganda would be the district that the First Lady represents in Parliament. It has a population of approximately 250,000 people and is rich in produce but poor in basic infrastructure. Pledges were taken that came to three-quarters of a million dollars, including the donation of construction equipment, as an act that sealed the network's commitment to Uganda.

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Subsequent visits to the district to assess needs and to envision the best strategy resulted in a plan to build roads and to provide the machinery and training for locals to maintain them. Portable drying units were donated to dry and package fruit for export (fruit is abundant but rots on the field due to lack of processing capability). Commitments were made to expand an existing medical clinic to improve the quality of healthcare. The establishment of a faith bank for micro-loans was included. The cost for all this came to one million dollars, all of which was subscribed by ITN members *with no strings attached*.

On a parallel track, ITN members are working with the Transformation Network of Uganda (TNU) on an even more comprehensive plan that will eventually impact every district in the nation. Alex Mitala (the pineapple farmer mentioned in chapter 1 and also the chairman of the 15,000-member Fellowship of Churches) and Andrew Rugasira (the coffee grower described in chapter 12) co-chair the group, which also includes Uganda Tax Commissioner Allen Kagina and many other pulpit and marketplace leaders. Transformation groups are emerging all over Kampala, the capital of Uganda—in banks, shopping malls, schools, and even at the First Lady's office.

It is too early to say for certain, but just as Resistencia opened the eyes of our understanding to reach entire cities, Uganda stands a very good chance to be the nation that provides the point of inception for Christians to demonstrate that a nation can be disciplined. Meeting a nation's felt needs is proving to be a great door opener.

Other ITN members are actively pursuing similar initiatives in other nations. (Because of the sensitivity of the projects I am withholding names and locations.) Here are just a few examples:

- One member has become the international purchasing agent for a Third World nation to handle contracts worth millions of dollars, with the bulk of the profit being donated to rebuilding the country. Since making that decision, God has entrusted this person with additional deals worth hundreds of millions of dollars, which will be used in an identical manner.
- Another has landed long-term projects worth billions of dollars and has stipulated that 51 percent of his profits be reinvested in the development and upgrading of infrastructures to better the lot of the needy.
- A third colleague owns patents for technological developments worth millions of dollars, all of which will be used for Kingdom purposes.
- The owner of a cutting-edge highly successful corporation and his CEO have set up a mentoring program for promising young people to teach them everything they know and to offer to set them up with their own company once they graduate from the program. This is a radical departure from what is normative in the industry, since mentoring programs usually require that the graduates work for the company. Even more extreme is setting them up as potential competitors!
- Similar engagements are taking place outside of ITN also. On a recent ministry trip to a Muslim nation, a very wealthy Christian businessman shared with me that he has purchased several hundred hectares of land, on which he plans

to build the infrastructure necessary to adopt and nurture with excellence 10,000 orphans. But in addition to food and shelter, he plans to provide the absolute best kindergarten-to-university education in a state-of-the-art campus so that these orphans can become leaders in key fields and bring transformation to the world at large.

- An international broker is planning to recruit and train hundreds of Christians, who graduate from business schools, as brokers who will pledge to practice Kingdom principles and donate 51 percent of their profits for nation transformation.
- Recently, Ruth and I had dinner with people who hold patents to energy-generating breakthroughs that have the potential to revolutionize the transportation industry. Both of them are pledged to nation transformation.

I received the following narrative from my friend Dave Seeba that reflects how much is going on in other sectors of the marketplace:

In an upscale resort hotel, 120 bright, successful businessmen are gathering to discuss strategy not on how to beat the competition, or on how to get a new product to market, but on how to focus on things that make life *significant*, rather than just making people successful. Many of these businesspeople have realized that they have given up too much in exchange for the success they've achieved. Others are seeking to integrate success with significance so that their lives can be an influence to establish God's kingdom on Earth.

A Glorious Vision

These marketplace Christians are trying to live their lives in a manner that recognizes that God gifted and positioned them in a particular way for a specific reason. To a person, these people are entrepreneurial problem-solvers. They see opportunities and encourage each other to take risks.

A roundtable sharing of what they're involved in is both inspiring and challenging. Here are a few highlights from the conference:

- One leads a group of businesspeople to underdeveloped parts of the world to share their business knowledge with local entrepreneurs in developing economies. They also share what motivates them to care for these countries: their love of fellow man, as Jesus taught.
- Another CEO travels worldwide, encouraging businesspeople to use their businesses to express the message of Christ, but also to be a *blessing* to those in their community.
- A high-powered attorney talks about how God pulled him from being a workaholic and gave him compassion for AIDS orphans in Africa. This has reenergized his relationship with his wife and two daughters, who have joined him in this outreach.
- Over dinner, the son of a strict missionary couple describes how observing the profound effect that music and film were having on his peers lead him to a career in Hollywood, producing music for films.
- After dinner, a singer, also working in Hollywood as well as on Broadway, performs his own unique creations. These songs are written to bring biblical situations to life for secular audiences. Between songs he shares about godly men and women working in Hollywood on positive projects and also about their key role in keeping to a minimum the more destructive interpretations that find their way into films.
- The next day, this high-powered group piles onto busses to go to an advance screening of the film *Amazing Grace*. This movie tells the life of William Wilberforce, who led the successful fight to outlaw the slave trade in England and who is generally recognized as sacrificing his political career in the English Parliament in order to catalyze a movement that brought an end to slavery throughout the British Empire. This particular film strikes a deep cord with the group because a fellow Christian who shares many of the group's aspirations is the one who commissioned it.

- The next day, during morning and evening sessions, a well-known pastor speaks about the marriage and parenting problems that most driven, type-A personalities experience. It's unusual for leaders of religious organizations to see these successful people as anything more than a means to fund their own programs. But the speaker's genuine concern for their unique personal struggles is greatly appreciated and his advice is soaked up like water on parched ground.
- During lunch on the last day, the scion of one of America's best-known families describes how God led him away from a career in the family business to run a significant company. At the same time, pursuing his wife's desire to adopt children has resulted in a doubling of their immediate family into an international ministry serving people in Africa.
- Punctuating the dinner break, a top-level executive in a Silicon Valley high-tech company, shares about his prayer life—not what many might expect from someone in his position, but this group knows that such a connection to God is vital in what they seek to do.
- The final evening of the conference is shared between a world-famous pastor speaking about renewal and a former high-tech CEO sharing about how God can effectively use business. The group doesn't see any dichotomy here. They listen intently to the personal change required of them and the life-changing message that their businesses can bring and demonstrate.

Is God able to work through businesses done right, businesses that create jobs, reinvest in communities, and exhibit biblical values within the workplace? These entrepreneurs think so. And this type of gathering is also happening in other places.

For example, I recently conducted a seminar in a rich nation that is also rated among the top five most corrupt in the world. At the close of the teaching, representatives of 47 marketplace groups enthusiastically came forward to sign a public pledge that included working in unity for the transformation of the nation, beginning with the corrupt

marketplace culture. To that effect they also pledged *to pay taxes and not to take or accept bribes.*

Recently, 137 Christian captains of industry with businesses in China met for three days to compare notes and lay the foundation for “spiritual joint ventures.” They too climaxed their meeting by signing a pledge to pay taxes, provide decent salaries, care for their employees *and stay away from bribes!*

Because corruption is the lifeline that sustains systemic poverty, I have chosen examples that include a valiant public stance against it. Since systemic poverty is *the* felt need of the world that we are called to reach with the gospel, we need to ask the question, *How long would it take to bring down such deeply entrenched mammoth evil?*

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In such a context, it is encouraging to be reminded of a similar world-wide deeply entrenched systemic evil—slavery—that *in a relatively short time* was eradicated: “By the end of the eighteenth century, well over three quarters of the world population was in bondage, subject to various forms of slavery and serfdom. Yet even more astonishing than the extent of slavery was the speed with which it died. By the end of the following century, keeping slaves was officially outlawed almost everywhere. The anti-slavery movement had achieved its goal in little more than one lifetime.”¹

In my estimation, five factors made this swift elimination of wholesale slavery possible:

First, people who did not own slaves but saw the evil of it spoke out against it.

Second, those who could have owned slaves refused to do so.

Third, those who owned them opted to set them free.

Fourth, these three groups joined hands to actively pursue the freedom of slaves among the holdouts, either by moral pressure or by outright purchase of them.

And fifth, the system collapsed when the antislavery movement's momentum—captured the higher moral ground and exposed unashamedly and relentlessly the evil nature of slavery.

In those five steps, there are applicable parallels to how systemic poverty can, and I dare say *will*, be eliminated. ITN members and similar groups have already taken the first three steps. The other two will soon follow, and the current globalization works in our favor. It is just a matter of time if we persevere.

The Final Breakthrough

Now that a significant number of marketplace ministers have embraced or are aware of the pivotal paradigms, we are fast approaching the tipping point in terms of generating and/or accessing substantial resources for the kingdom of God—not just financial resources, but also new ideas, concepts and inventions that can provide a cure for the societal illnesses that feed systemic poverty. No one loves systemic poverty. Everybody wants to see it eliminated, but so far no one has come up with the solution. This is our greatest opportunity as Christians.

In Resistencia, as well as in subsequent models like Elk River and Hawaii, the transformational impetus from God came in three successive waves. The first wave convinced His people that transformation was doable. The second showed them that the world was anxiously awaiting their manifestation as peacemakers and problem solvers. This made them aware of the need to earn the right to be heard by serving the lost first. The third wave turned the enemy's stronghold into the foundation for God's transformational model through the meeting of felt needs. For instance, the lack of water in Resistencia and the crisis in the schools in Hawaii became opportunities for the Church to display in the most tangible way the love of God in action.

I foresee that the breakthrough that will make possible the discipling of nations, and in the process bring down the Babylonian system, will have five components:

1. Christians who have embraced a transformational lifestyle along the paradigms discussed in this book will be led by God to coalesce in different parts of the world in order to develop models of *biblically based social entrepreneurship*.

In the same fashion that we have grown comfortable asking a mayor what we can do to help with city problems, we will soon do the same with world leaders. The principle is the same, except that the answer will have more zeroes. And these Christians will deliver in the name and in the Spirit of Christ, *with no strings attached!*

2. Christians who have learned how to access the leaves of the Tree of Life will come up with discoveries, inventions and new formulas to solve major world problems in at least four key areas: energy, commerce, food and medicine. And when they are offered the financial rewards that such breakthroughs customarily bring, these Christians will astound the world by emulating Christ on a worldwide platform as givers and not takers by redirecting that revenue toward entrepreneurial charity to deal with systemic evils. They will be true disciples of the One who said, "It is better to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). By doing what amounts to a slap in the face to the Babylonian system, they will debunk its greed and control.
3. Christians who have been called to serve in government with a transformational anointing, either as elected officials or career civil servants, will be entrusted by God with supernatural insights to solve perennial social problems that have baffled world leaders. And they will do it with the same generous spirit that Daniel did. As you may recall, when the king ordered the execution of the pagan magicians, who were heavily immersed in occultist practices, Daniel interceded with the king for himself *and for the diviners*. Later on, Daniel was made head of them all (the equivalent to being appointed chairman of the witches and warlocks union of Babylon). Daniel not only accepted, but he also ruled the union efficiently since he was 10 times more knowledgeable than all the magicians and conjurers in all the arts and sciences of the Caldeans (see Dan. 1:20).

What money is to business, influence is to politics. These modern-day Daniels will not use the influence result-

ing from their extraordinary insights to lord over others, but to *serve* them instead. Thus, they will debunk two other manifestations of the Babylonian system: immorality and pride.

4. All of the above will take place in the context of extraordinary miracles, signs and wonders performed by God through the hands of true apostles who will be recognized on account of the anointing for miracles entrusted to them and on account of their devotion to and dependence on prayer. These astonishing divine interventions through human vessels will have exponential influence because they will take place in the context of threats, persecution and even martyrdom (see Matt. 5:12; John 15:20). The purpose for these extraordinary miracles is threefold: to embolden the Church, to open the eyes of the lost, and to trump the Babylonian system. These were then, and will be now, transformation miracles indeed!
5. God will also provide “human accelerators” through the dramatic conversions of highly influential and catalytic leaders, as was the case with Crispus in Corinth (see Acts 18:8) and Saul of Tarsus. None of them were on the Church radar. In fact, in the case of Saul, he was the most dangerous enemy of Christianity, but God saw him as “a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15, ASV).

What these five streams have in common are players who are precise and pure channels for God to touch the world (not just the Church) and the lost (not just believers) through the miraculous meeting of deeply felt needs that will tangibly reveal the majesty, the power and especially the universality of the good news of the gospel—the Gospel of the Kingdom, the only thing that can make the world believe.

Jesus said, “The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since that time the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it” (Luke 16:16). Transformational Christians, without denying or neglecting the Law and the prophets, will actively focus on, and convey boldly, the gospel of the kingdom of God

in every place where the Gates of Hades are still standing (*the Babylonian system*). And when they do, those gates will crumble and *everyone* will force their way into the Kingdom.

Yes, victory is beginning to rise over the horizon. Let us press on!