

Babylon - the bible background

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[0:00] Relating us to the waters, and did you find the definition of the waters? What were the waters?! Yes, that's right. So it's quite complicated, isn't it? There's a sort of web of relationships, and as we go through, we'll try and unpick that a little bit.

Do you notice the beast? What did you notice, a three-fold description of the beast? Scarlet beast, yes, it's scarlet, and there's something that went in a three-ness.

Yeah, it's got blasphemous names, yes. Who once was, now is not, and yet will come, which reminds us of another description.

The Lord, who was, and is, and is to come. So the beast is like that, except there's a sort of gap in this beast's, a sort of void, that the beast actually is not.

And that's repeated, isn't it? It's in verse 11. The beast who once was, now is not, is an eighth king, and is going to his destruction. So there's something called hollow about the beast.

[1:39] There's just some things that sort of spring off the surface of it. And in verse 9, the sort of action point, this calls for a mind with wisdom. And that is what this chapter should be alerting us to.

We're going to need wisdom to live according to this chapter. We need to think it through, not just sort of with intellect, but we do need to think it through, but with a spiritual application.

How are we to live? So that's my sort of starting point. How do I function in a society with a very different outlook and morality and worldview to my own?

So when Maria and I were in the car coming back from our little holiday, we were listening to Tim Keller, who was addressing some people in the advertising industry.

And they were saying, how do I live as a Christian in the world of commerce as an advertising marketing person? Or the thing that Jerome and others will be working through was how to function in a big organization like social services or NHS, where there are non-Christian ethics being pushed.

[3:03] How do I survive in that? And the other thing that we were listening to Tim Keller talking about was the world of law and being a lawyer. And we had a very interesting example of the lawyer this morning, didn't we?

Was it Tertullus? Says, your most excellent majesty, how we love living in your country. You're such a good ruler. And you think, is this honesty or what is this?

And so how do I survive in this world? So capitulation would be, I just go along with everything.

Separation. Well, it does say come out and be separate.

But going into a monastery or going and living in the desert is not the solution that the New Testament or the Old Testament actually gives us.

So we need wisdom. And let's see if we can acquire some of that wisdom this evening. So this is my standard introduction to the book.

[4:07] If you're here for the first time, please accept it for what it is. We've been going through the book. We've been looking, we've been seeing it's for our edification.

It's for our survival and our progress as Christians. Apocalypse means an unveiling. So the seeing, the spiritual reality behind the obvious appearance.

And interestingly, in this chapter, we're told that there's a mystery. Verse 5, a hiddenness which is going to be revealed. And we also notice that there's a marvel.

In verse 7, the angel said, no, in verse 6, when I saw her, I marveled with a great marvel. I was very astonished. There's something rather makes you draw your breath back.

Wow, that's astonishing. And the angel said to me, why are you astonished? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and the beast. And a little bit later than that, it says, the inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast because it once was, now is not, and yet will come.

[5:21] So there's something astonishing. And it fits in with the book of Revelation, isn't it, to unveil to us what is behind the appearance, the truth behind the appearance.

It is in the form of a letter as well. It's to the seven churches. So it has a relevance to them where they were in their context.

The letters are relevant to hearers. We're also told it is a prophecy. It tells them what is shortly going to happen. That's what it says. Prophecies give the big picture and the behavioral implications of the big picture.

And the horizon of this prophecy, at least, from the time of writing to the end of the world. So it spans that whole range. I don't think it makes much sense to say the book only applies to the last few years of the church's existence because then it wouldn't be relevant to the first people who heard it, would it?

It is relevant from the time of writing to the end of the world. And there's the letter. And as we've been going through, we've been listening to the way he says things.

[6:36] He doesn't always say things the way other writers do. His accent, if you like. We've noticed he uses signs which point away from themselves to something else.

He uses images and symbols. Most of them, but not all of them, are from Scripture. In the last chapter, we looked at to do with the Euphrates.

That, I am told, would have been an idea from their current context where they were fearing an attack from the Parthians, maybe it was, across the Euphrates in the same way that we would be fearing an attack from beyond the Iron Curtain as it was.

It uses symbolic names and numbers. You're with me so far, aren't you? Because you're thinking seven's a symbolic number. Times.

Can you think of a symbolic time that we've come across? Sorry? So many days. Yeah, so many days. Can you remember how many days it was? We get three and a half years, which is, is it 1,260 days or something like that?

[7:54] So you get three and a half years in days. So we've got symbolic times and symbolic places. Any symbolic places come to mind? Well, Babylon, exactly.

It's a symbolic place. At the time of writing, I don't see any evidence that Babylon was a going concern. He's using a reference to biblical history.

And themes. Can you think of something that we've seen that is neither a name nor a number nor a time nor a place, but it's something from the Bible that he uses?

The Bible that he uses a book. And I was thinking of the lion and the lamb. Yes. Yeah. Good thought. Yep.

Anybody got anything else to... I was thinking of the last seven, which was the seven... what was the last seven? The bowls of wrath, which actually had a lot of similarity with...

[8:57] Egyptian plagues. Egyptian plagues. The Egyptian plagues, yeah. The trumpets and the Egyptian plagues. So, the plague motif, which is not quite a name or a number or a time or a place, but it's a theme.

The idea of the plagues on Egypt. He uses that or used that. So, perhaps we should say the symbols are theological. And I don't think this crops up this time, but we did see in the past that he sees things and he hears things.

And sometimes the seeing contradicts the hearing. Or that you get two sides of the same thing. And an example of that would be... Well, I think he heard...

Now, which way round was it? I think he heard that the Lion of Judah had prevailed and he turned and looked and he saw a lamb as if it had been slain. So, obviously, to our mind, a lion and a lamb are two different things, but...

contradictory. But he says, no, both these things are true. I heard a lion. That's the lion of the tribe of Judah. And I looked and saw a lamb. And so far we've seen the seven churches, the lamb upon the throne, the seven seals of world history, the seven trumpets for repentance.

[10:15] The war between the dragon and her woman and his agents, the beast and the false prophet and the image of the beast. We've seen the final judgment of harvest. We've seen the seven bowls of wrath.

And now we're going to see the prostitute Babylon. Right. Yeah. So, we've read the chapter. It does, as I say, it goes on into chapter 18 and 19, but we haven't got it that far so far. So, I think I've put down here some of the features that we will have noticed so far.

So, she's a woman. And this woman is... What's her profession? She's a prostitute. And she is the opposite of another woman who is the bride.

So, you've got the prostitute versus the bride. So, there's the prostitute and there's the bride. And we're told in 17 verse 1 that what we're actually going to see is the punishment of the great prostitute.

[11:19] Is that right? I mean, we see a lot about the prostitute. We see where she's sitting. We see who she's related to. But the angel says what this is actually about is the punishment of the great prostitute.

And we didn't actually get to that until we get into chapter 18 and 19. So, we haven't actually hit the main point as yet.

The prostitute is linked with the kings of the earth, verse 2. And the kings of the earth are characters like Daniel was saying this morning about the characters in the narrative that we had this morning. So, the kings of the earth crop up several times. I'm not sure whether I can find you another example straight away. But they're there.

I mean, for example, last verse, chapter 17, verse 18. The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth. So, there's sort of character in this.

[12:29] We've seen that it's a mystery. Mystery in the Bible, as I understand it, means something that was once hidden but is now revealed. So, the Babylon thing has been going on a long time.

But only now do we see the full reality of it or the full outworking of it. We've already mentioned that she's involved with the beast.

She sits on the beast. And we notice that they are involved in a war against the lamb, verse 14. They will wage war against the lamb, but the lamb will triumph over them because he is lord of lords and king of kings.

And with him will be his called, chosen, and faithful followers. So, this fact of war is ongoing. It isn't just reserved to the final end, but there's a sense in which there's a culmination to the war. Yeah, to make war or to war against the lamb.

[13:37] It's an unsuccessful war. And we also find, this is in verse 18, that the woman is a city. The woman is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.

And, of course, the bride is also a city. Which city is she? Jerusalem, Zion. Yeah. So, there's the Babylon city with the waters that Babylon is situated on.

See a map in a minute. And so, we've got the two women in opposition. Babylon, the prostitute, and the bride. But we have their cities.

Babylon is a city and the bride is Zion. And if you remember in Galatians, there's a link between two women and two cities.

I'm just saying this off the top of my head. There's the Jerusalem which is in bondage and the Jerusalem above. And if you read through Galatians, you find it helpful just to notice that the Bible does link women and cities in that sense.

[14:51] So, there's beautiful, beautiful Zion. And the upshot of it all is it calls for a mind with wisdom. So, what I'm going to do this evening is to take us back and give us the background on Babylon by going through the Bible and just seeing what Babylon is all about.

Because he's clearly drawing on that, isn't he? He's using Babylon as a shorthand, not for a particular geographical location, but for a theological theme.

Or what you might call the Babylon principle. Although Babylon, the city, was ruined. The Babylon principle is alive and well. So, let's go to Genesis chapter, I think it's chapter 11.

Genesis chapter 11. So, we're going back to the time after the flood.

And we need to just read some verses here. So, let's see whether Valerie would be prepared to read them for us. So, we've got 10 verses 6 to 12.

[16:13] And then we've got chapter 10 verse 20. And then chapter 11 verses 1 to 9. Thank you. Thank you.

That is why it is said, The first centers of his kingdom were Babylon, Uruk, Akkad, and Kalna in Shinnur.

From the land he went to Assyria, where he built Nineveh, Rehoboth, Ur, Kala, and Rezan, which is between Nineveh and Kala.

which is the great city. And then verse 20. These are the sons of Ham by their clans and languages in their territories and nations.

And then Genesis 11 verses 1 to 9. Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. As people moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there.

[17:49] They said to each other, Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly. They used brick instead of stone and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, Come, let us build ourselves a city with a tower that reaches to the heavens so that we may make a name for ourselves.

Otherwise, we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth. But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. The Lord said, If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them.

Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other. So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth and they stopped building the city. That is why it is called Babel.

Because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth. Thank you very much. So in chapter 10, we are looking at the Bible's account of how the nations started, the sort of genie, how the families spread out.

And we notice that in 10 verse 6, the sons of Ham. So these are the beginnings of very significant nations, Cush, Egypt, Canaan. And we notice some of these places that are going to become very significant.

[19:14] Indeed, verse 10, Babylon and Nineveh, which goes on to become, both of those become very important. And, excuse me, we also notice in verse 20 that there is a reference to different languages.

The sons of Ham by their clans, languages, territories and nations. So I'm presuming that chapter 11 zooms in on that and says, well, this is how those languages came up.

That's what I'm presuming. And then chapter 11 focuses on Babel or Babylon. So verse 1, the whole world had one language and a common speech.

And the people moved eastward and found a plain in Shinar and settled there. What do they say to each other?

Yeah, come let us make bricks. And yeah, and what else? Yeah, let's build ourselves a tower and make a name for ourselves.

[20:42] Otherwise, we'll be scattered over the face of the whole earth. So they've got a... I'm sorry? Yeah, they want to reach... Does it say to reach to the heavens? So they almost want to promote themselves to the level of divinity.

This is an interesting mindset, isn't it? I think it's significant that we look at this. They are using technology. I take it that this is an improvement on technology in advance.

So we'll make bricks instead of stone and bitumen for mortar. I'm presuming that he's saying, you know, we've now got the technology and we can move ahead in wonderful new ways.

You know, if Elon Musk was there, he would have been investing in this. So, you know, we've now got... We can now reach Mars. Yes, exactly. And...

Let us make bricks is in Hebrew N-L-e-b-e-n-a-h and you'll see in a minute there's a little play on words.

[21:52] So let us make bricks is that apparently in Hebrew. And they're going to make a tall building. Yes? And I believe that there is archaeological evidence of ziggurats.

These are tall buildings that were built in that area. I remember at school learning about the hanging gardens of Babylon. Anybody remember? Was it just me? And I remember seeing a program investigating how you would get water up a certain height.

Because if you want a garden, you get to get water up there, which involves either taking it up in buckets or on a hose or something like that. Anyway. One of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

Yeah, thank you very much. So they have an aspiration towards heaven. It's probably stronger than an aspiration. It's almost like a claim, isn't it? Like an agenda. Let's get ourselves to the point of divinity.

And they make a name for themselves. We're going to go down in history. We're going to be the big guys. People are going to look up to us. Twelve verse two.

[23:04] Would anybody like to read us twelve verse two? Just shout it out. Thank you.

And who is this spoken to and who is it spoken by? To Abraham, or Abraham as he then was. By whom? By the Lord. Yeah. So there's an interesting contrast, which I think I'm going to mention later.

They want to avoid scattering. So they want to keep the strength of unity. Here's the map. So there's the, that's Nineveh.

The rivers, one's the Tigris and the other's the Euphrates. And I've forgotten which one's which. Anybody know which of those is the Tigris and which is the Euphrates?

One goes that way. One goes that way. And, yeah, so the two great rivers. Mesopotamia means between the rivers.

[24:13] So this is, this is the area between the rivers. Potamia. It's like potamus.

Hippo potamus is a horse of the river. So the Mesopotamia is between the rivers. So there's a Mesopotamia here.

And that was a shore, Nineveh, which becomes very important later on, doesn't it? And this is Babel, Babylon on the river down there.

there's the river. So there's a mindset going on here, isn't there? To make a name for ourselves, to reach heaven.

Use our technology. Work together. And the Lord, it says, I think rather humorously, it says, verse 5, the Lord came down to see the city and the tower the people were building.

[25:17] It's not that he didn't know it was there. But it's emphasized, they thought they were nearly in heaven. But God says, oh, that's so tiny and puny. I'm going to have to take a microscope to look at your little efforts.

So the Lord has to look down to see it. And what's the Lord's response to this proud, human-powered arrogance?

What's his response? What's his response? Yes.

He changes the language and that scatters them or the Lord scatters them all over the earth and they stop building the city. There's a confusion of language and to confuse language is N-A-B-little-E-L-A-H.

So they said, if I go back, let us make bricks and the Lord said, I will confuse their language and he uses almost exactly the same letters.

[26:31] There's a sort of pun there on what's going on. So he confuses their language. The building stops. The building project stops.

I don't know whether we imagine it comically or, you know, I'd like you to build that terrace three and a half metres to the east.

What on earth are you talking about? I don't know. Was it a sort of instantaneous thing or did they gradually just not communicate?

I don't know. But the truth behind it is that the Lord confused their languages and the building project stopped. We have an antidote to linguistic confusion in the New Testament in a very

singular event or a special event.

Anybody tell us what that event is? Pentecost. Yes, it's the reintegrating of humanity, isn't it, in that symbolic way. I mean, not to say that we still, you know, Christian missionaries do still have to learn other languages, but I think in the symbolism of that event, the Lord brings all the different races together and he makes it possible for the gospel to go across cultural barriers.

[27:53] I think it's unlike Islam where I believe it is said that you can't translate the Quran because it loses its power if you translate it, whereas the gospel retains its power across different cultures.

You put it into different languages, it still is powerful. And there's another word thing going on here. So in, now I'm just trying to think, is it Akkadian?

Babelou means gate of the gods and that's probably why they named it Babel because they said we're up in God's territory, we're just next door to the divine, the gate of the gods.

But the writer of scripture says well actually that's not the best way to understand Babel. Babel is confusion and that's what this place is.

It's something that's confused under God's judgment. judgment. So if we're thinking about, you with me? So we're thinking about the symbolism or the theology of Babylon and this is where we start of a city that tries to rival God, a city that aspires to dwell with God, a city that seems to make a name for itself, an identity, a significance without God and what a contrast with Abram and God says I will make a name for you and that name is not made by technology or achievement or human power, it's made by grace, isn't it?

[29:33] But God just says, Abram, I'm going to make your name great and it's a wonderful piece of God's election, isn't it? Where he just says I'm going to bless you, I'm going to bless your offspring, I'm going to make your name great, you're going to be a blessing through many nations and that's the way God works, through grace.

Yeah? Yeah, yeah, thank you very much, yes, it's not a scattering, is it?

It's a, I'll make you into a great nation and I will bless you, yeah, thank you. Well, there were other cities, because they're mentioned there and they were founded.

I think it looks as though God zooms in on Babel, perhaps to give us a particular iconic example. I'm sure that there's other examples of human sin in these early chapters.

Yeah, I don't know that.

[31:07] It does say in chapter 10 verse 20, it recognizes that there are other languages as well, other territories and languages. So, I don't know, I don't want to, I don't know the answer to that.

I mean, isn't it a point you just made, it's an iconic story, it's a real place, but the significance is not just that city, the significance is what it says about human endeavor together, that they try and make themselves into gods.

Yeah, that's right, yeah, it's a particular example of that, isn't it, and the fact that the New Testament picks up on that, says, well, that principle is alive and well. Yeah, thank you.

Same as the internet. Same as the internet. The internet tries to make the divine and actually stops you communicating. That's an interesting thought, isn't it? Yes, yeah, yeah. And we've also already mentioned Acts 2, or the day of Pentecost, where the nations are unified in Christ.

So, okay, so that's the Genesis foundation of our understanding of Babylon. Let's go further on in history and look at Babylon as the enemy.

[32:23] So, we will go into Genesis 18. and I hope this isn't controversial. It could be presently controversial.

Genesis 18. This is the promise of land to Abraham. And could somebody read us Genesis 18, verses 18 19.

So, we've got anybody want to volunteer? Let's go.

Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all the nations on earth will be blessed through him.

For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.

[33:46] Thank you very much. I want to draw our attention to this. It's sometimes said that the promise of land to Abraham is completely unconditional.

That's not the case. The promise of land is made as a sovereign promise that it will be in a certain state, or the people in it will be in a certain state.

And it says, I have chosen him so that he will direct his children in his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just.

There are two key words there, mishpat and tzedakah, doing justice and righteousness. And the vision is for a people who are doing justice and righteousness.

They're a holy people. And if they're not a holy people, then the promise isn't being fulfilled. And I think that's just important in the current political situation.

[34:54] The children of Abraham are meant to do things justly and rightly. That's the only claim that they had on the land.

And if they're not doing things justly and rightly, then we're in a very different situation. So, mishpat and tzedakah, it crops up loads of times in Isaiah, where the Lord is looking for justice and righteousness, and he finds violence and exploitation.

And he says that's why they get exiled from the land. Anyway, let me not go down to that road too far. Let's look at Deuteronomy 28. Deuteronomy 28. And this is, so the Deuteronomy expands on the promise to Abraham, and this is now into the covenant of Moses.

And the possession of land is amplified and strengthened, if you like.

And could somebody read us Deuteronomy 28, verse 36? And this is if you're not obedient, if you're not doing justice and righteousness.

[36:18] Yep. Yep. The Lord. Thank you.

So, the idea that if they're not doing justice and righteousness, they will be expelled from the land. And we see, I'm just trying to do this reasonably quickly.

This is the whole problem with the Mosaic passage, the Moses package. The laws are right, but the people are not capable of following them and keeping them.

It gave the right framework, but it didn't change the heart. So, this vision of God to have his people in his place and the people being people of righteousness and justice has to be revamped in the New Testament.

That's why we need a new covenant. And Christianity is a new covenant because the old covenant had points of failure, which the new covenant... What's the word?

[37:52] Improves on is putting it too weakly. Yeah.

There's a perfection in the new covenant. There's a radicalness because it gives a new heart, which is why Jesus says to Nicodemus, don't you know, you must be born again.

You have to have a spiritual change. And that's the way God fulfills the Abrahamic vision of people, having a people in his place who are people of justice and righteousness.

Now, the reason I'm saying this is because, of course, this didn't happen. There's God's sovereign promise of salvation to have a holy people in God's holy place. And God will definitely make that happen.

He will definitely make that happen. So, now what happened when the people were not obedient? Assyria, the capital Nineveh, attacked the two kingdoms at a certain point.

[39:03] God sent Assyria to do his work of expulsion of the people from the land. The southern kingdom escaped the Assyrian invasion.

But later on, Jerusalem was invaded and destroyed in the invasion by Babylon.

Now, this is another crucial thing about Babylon. Let's look at one or two things that Isaiah says about Babylon. So, I'll read you Isaiah chapter 1, which is full of indignation about how God has given so many privileges to his ancient people, but they refused them.

In verse 1, verse 5, he says, This is what's going to happen.

Your country is desolate. Your city's burned with fire. Your fields are being stripped by foreigners right before you, laid waste as when overthrown by strangers.

[40:28] Door to Zion is left like a shelter in a vineyard, like a hut in a cucumber field, like a city under siege. Unless the Lord Almighty had left us some survivors, we would have been wiped out like Sodom and like Gomorrah.

So, the promise of the Lord Almighty, like a shelter in a manger, like a shelter in a manger. If you don't repent and live by faith, then surely, surely you will be invaded and taken away.

And in Isaiah 39, verses 5 to 7, we have the last historical, there's a little historical incident of Hezekiah, who had escaped the Assyrian invasion.

But visitors came from the king of Babylon, chapter 39, verse 1, which I don't think was on Hezekiah's radar as a problem.

But in verse 5, Isaiah says to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the Lord Almighty. The time will surely come when everything in your palace and all your predecessors have stored up till this day will be carried off to Babylon.

[41:47] Nothing will be left, says the Lord. Some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood who will be born to you, will be taken away. They will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.

And Hezekiah says, The word of the Lord, you have spoken, is good. For he thought there will be peace and security in my time. So he wasn't thinking long term, was he? But it happened.

The people were taken into exile. So there they are. And it's probably worth stopping and thinking, What a huge and terrible event this is in Israel's spiritual history.

Just look at what happens. God has promised a place, but the people are taken into exile. God has promised, in some sense, to protect His people.

The temple of the Lord. The temple of the Lord, they said in Jeremiah. But it seems as if His promises have failed. It seems like the Babylonian gods are stronger than the Lord.

[43:00] The Lord's promises and protection seem to be in vain. Just imagine having to deal with that sort of theologically and spiritually. What has happened?

Now, we know it's actually God was doing it. And He promised He'd do it if the people were unfaithful. We know that's the truth. But if you imagine trying to live through that. You know, we thought the Lord had promised us that we would never be invaded.

You know, the walls of Jerusalem are surely impregnable. But here it is, the temple in ruins. People carted off. And there's quite lots of the Bible sort of struggling through this, working through this. We sang this morning, what a faithful God have I. And how difficult it would have been for those people to sing that. By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and we wept when we remembered Zion.

Our captives say to us, sing us the songs of Zion. How can we sing the songs of Zion in a strange land? Just the chilling reality of that.

[44:14] And yet, the Lord's promises stand sure. He will bring His people across the desert back from Babylon home.

He will bring them from the exile of Babylon via His servant. He will release the captives from exile and bring them home again.

And the promises won't fall to the ground when it says, what a faithful God have I. It's true. And this 70-year-long span of history where they went into exile but God brought them back is testimony to God's faithfulness.

But notice it takes 70 years. And in Isaiah 35, the prophet can look forward and say, you're going to go into exile.

And actually, the way to salvation is through that horrible process of exile. But through that, through the falling of punishment on the people, then there will be a return.

[45:34] And the redeemed of the Lord will enter Zion with singing.

Everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them. Sorrow and sighing will flee away. Then will the eyes of the blind be opened. The ears of the deaf unstopped.

The lame will leap like a deer. The mute tongue shout for joy. So there will be a return. And of course, the thing about the beginning of the New Testament is they're back in the land.

But is that actually the fulfillment of God's vision? Is that actually what God had in mind all the time? And of course, when Jesus does his miracles, he quotes this, doesn't he?

He says, look, this is the fulfillment of those promises. You're seeing the eyes of the blind open, the ears of the deaf unstopped. You're seeing lame people leap like a deer.

[46:34] This is the real return. This is the real servant. This is the real salvation. And Jesus brings it. Okay, how can we bring the Lord's

song in a strange land?

That's Babylon the enemy. Let's go to Jeremiah 29. And think, just think of where the people were left when they were in exile.

Jeremiah 29. Jeremiah 29. So let me read you verses 10 to 14.

This is what the Lord says. When 70 years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord.

Plans to prosper you and not to harm you. Plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

[47:42] I will be found by you, declares the Lord. I will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you, declares the Lord. I will bring you back to the place from which I have carried you in exile.

So the Lord promises to bring the people back, to put his plan of salvation, as it were, back on track. And set about having his people in his place.

But where are they at the moment? Well, at the moment they're in Babylon. How should they react in Babylon? You know, should they go around planting bombs under all the Babylonian establishments because the Babylonians are the enemy?

Well, this is significant. In verse 4, the Lord says, Say to those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon, build houses, settle down, plant gardens, eat what they produce, marry and have sons and daughters.

Find wives for your sons. Give your daughters in parish that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there. Do not decrease. Also seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you in exile.

[48:58] Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper. Yeah, I'll stop there. It's very interesting. So this is Babylon also, isn't it?

It's the place where they've been carried in exile. Babylon is the enemy. And yet the Lord says, well, I was behind all that. But, and your right response to being in this enemy territory is not to be terrorists, but to seek the peace of the city, to build your lives there.

And there's a but. But when I give the word to go home, you're to leave it immediately because it's not your real home.

And theologically, this is a picture that's used of us. We are exiles in a strange land. And that theology attaches to us. We're not to be people who are putting bombs under Parliament and seeking to assassinate the MPs who voted for the abortion, etc.

What we're to be doing is seeking the peace of the city as best we can. And seeking to build up the city as best we can. But the moment the Lord says, it's time to go home, we should be ready to go.

[50:18] That's the wisdom that we need, isn't it? To be, I think I've put, settle down, seek the peace of the city. But this is not home. Zion is our home.

And given the opportunity, would you drop everything and leave tomorrow? That's why it says, come out of her, come out of her, my people. Do not touch the unclean thing. But not to linger in Babylon.

I mean, we've got to put down roots, if you like. We've got to be here. But this is not our home. And that's part of the wisdom that is called for. Those verses are the verses that says, come out of her, my people.

We need wisdom for that, don't we? That's why this chapter says, this is a call for wisdom. Jesus said, we're in the world, but we're not of it.

That's the wisdom that we need. How can I be in this world, but not of it? Now, this is one final thing we'll round off. So, Babylon was the impenitent enemy of the purposes and people of God.

[51:29] And she's iconic, standing for that whole idea of the exact enemy of God's people. God will bring the nations to serve Messiah, but there's no mercy for Babylon.

Pardon? No. I'd just like to go from three to five, just to keep people guessing.

Sure. I was awake. So, there's no mercy for Babylon.

Let's just look at a couple of texts that describe the end result for Babylon. Isaiah 14.

3 to 8. This is a taunt over Babylon. Yeah, it says it in chapter 13, a prophecy against Babylon.

[52:51] Isaiah 14. Verse 3. Verse 3.

And then, what have I got? Verse 3. Now that you have been laid low. Now that you have been laid low, no one comes to cut us down. And then, what have I got? And then, what have I got? Verses 12 to 14.

An interesting quote here, isn't it? This is originally directed at Babylon. How you have been laid low. You have fallen from heaven. You have fallen from heaven, morning star, sun of the dawn. You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations.

You who said in your heart, I will ascend to the heavens. I will raise my throne above the stars of God. I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zion.

I will ascend above the tops of the clouds. I will make myself like the most high. But you are brought down to the realm of the dead, to the depths of the pit. See that Babylon mentality and the end result of it.

[54:13] You wanted to go up so high, but you'll be brought down so low. And verses... Yeah.

It's the original where the quote comes from, which is applied to the devil, isn't it? That there's a devilish attitude here of arrogance and then being flung down.

And verses 22 to 24. I will rise up against them, declares the Lord Almighty. I will wipe out Babylon's name and survivors, her offspring and descendants, declares the Lord.

I will turn her into a place for owls and into swampland. I will sweep her with the broom of destruction, declares the Lord Almighty. To say it's a place for owls doesn't mean it's a nature sanctuary.

It's a way of saying that nobody lives there. It's empty. The only things that there are sort of unclean, weird, unpleasant animals.

[55:16] I think that's the way owls are thought of there. And that's a way of expressing the destruction of Babylon and the completeness of the destruction of Babylon.

She wanted to raise herself so high. But everybody who takes that view will be brought down low and destroyed. But there's just one verse.

Please look at Psalm 87. Psalm 87.

Psalm 87. Describes the inhabitants of God's holy city. And says this.

He has founded his city on the holy mountain. The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the other dwellings of Jacob. Excuse me. Glorious things are said of you, city of God.

[56:25] Who's there? I will recall Rahab and Babylon amongst those who acknowledge me, Philistia, the Philistines too, and Tyre along with Cush and will say, this one was born in Zion. Indeed of Zion it will be said, this one and that one were born in her and the Most High himself will establish her and the Lord will write in the register of peoples, this one was born in Zion. As they make music they will sing, all my springs and fountains are in you. There's the most remarkable thing, by grace, it's not saying in a wholesale way every Babylonian will be in heaven, but it's saying that there are some people who will be there who were the most extreme opponents of God. There'll be some from Egypt, some Philistines, some from even from Babylon and I think that is just remarkable grace because we could say, actually that's the only reason I'm in the kingdom, that the Lord showed grace to me and that's where we will stop.

Thank you.