

Babylon

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Preacher: Philip Wells

[0:00] In the Bible, there are two cities to belong to, and that's what we're going to think about this morning. Steve kindly read to us Isaiah chapter 13.

We are just going to do the pieces of the jigsaw around the edge of it rather than diving into that chapter. We can hopefully do a bit more of that next week. But let me ask you, where is your home? And you might be thinking, Pacham. Where do you belong? If I might quote Maria, my wife's father, who lived in Woodgreen all his life, but had come from Cyprus, and although he lived in Woodgreen, his home was always Paphos Cyprus.

And all the time he lived in Woodgreen, he was away from home for all those 40, 50 years. He was looking forward to going back home to Paphos.

And my fellow elder in years gone by, Rod Thomas, I put his proper name, Rodry, because he was Welsh.

[1:10] He did live in Pacham, but his heart was always in Wales. And when the opportunity came, he moved in Wales, because that's where he always wanted to be.

And the Welsh have a word for this, which I think is pronounced hiraeeth. And it means, well, the Welsh people would say you can't translate it, but we'll have a go.

It means a deep longing for home. A deep longing that I want to be home. It's so deep you can't, you can almost not put it into words.

And where is your home? Where is the deep longing that you have? The place that you will never forget. The place that you will always be true to.

Just as Maria's dad never forgot his Cypriot Greek, he spoke the language of home. So too. What is the language that you speak that is your home language that you will never forget?

[2:16] In the Bible, there are only two homes. There are two cities. One city is the city Zion, meaning Jerusalem, the place where God reigns and Jesus is king.

And there isn't. That's one place. There is another place. And that's Babylon. That's what we're going to think about this morning. I'll do the Isaiah context.

If you have Isaiah open, you will see chapter 13 is a prophecy against Babylon. And chapter 14 continues that. And there are different nations mentioned in the next several chapters.

And then when it gets to about chapter 21, having gone around the local nations, he goes back to the beginning again in another cycle and starts again talking about Babylon.

But as you go around the second time, it's less geographically and historically specific and more about God's work and God's ways and things like that.

[3:27] So here in the book of Isaiah is about the nations, as it would be said. The nations, meaning all the nations apart from Israel. God is focused upon Israel, but he has in mind the surrounding nations.

Babylon, the Philistines, Moab, Syria, Egypt, Cush, Tyre, and always coming back to the focal point of Zion, otherwise known as Jerusalem.

And why does the prophet tell us about these other nations? Why does God address these other nations? Because bear in mind, there was no email or internet.

So what Isaiah wrote down and said about the nations, in all likelihood, they never ever heard it. It wasn't sent as an email to Nebuchadnezzar or to the king of Babylon.

It was for Israel to hear. What sort of thing are they to learn? They're to learn that the Lord, the God of Israel, is the God of all the nations.

[4:35] That he's not just a tiny little God for a tiny little country. He's the God who has taken this tiny little nation in all their weakness and sort of adopted them as his special care.

But he's the God of all the nations. He's the God of all the nations. And all the nations, although they have their own gods, like Bel and Ishtar and Molech, which are gods of silver and gold, which can't walk, can't touch, can't hear, can't see.

And they think these are the gods that will see them through. In fact, all the nations are accountable to Israel's God. So the Israelites learn that.

And as Israel, back in that historical situation, forms her policy, her political policy and her military policy, there is a temptation for Israel to say, well, the way out of our problem is to sign a deal with Egypt or to sign a deal with Assyria or to get on the right side of Babylon and then we'll be secure. Because they're very insecure. They're in the middle of a sort of storm of different political and military possibilities. And these prophecies say, actually, you're never more secure than when you trust in God.

[6:18] Don't trust in these nations. They look very impressive. But God is more impressive. And as God sees it, these nations are just a little bit of dust that you might wipe off your windowsill.

That's how big they are to God. It's an interesting lesson for us, isn't it? Who do we trust day by day? What do we trust in? Those who rely on the Lord are unshakable.

And also, we learn, as we will go through these chapters, as if we didn't know it already, that the Lord has a secret plan. Because he's the God of the whole world, he has a secret plan to spread out his good news and his salvation to the whole world.

What a day that would be when the care of God sort of explodes out into all the nations. And that day has actually happened.

It's come through Jesus Christ. But at the point of Isaiah writing, he's saying, Egypt, Philistines, I have a plan for you.

[7:30] For your good, you'll be amazed. Babylon, I don't. Let's just do the geography.

Some of you will be tiring of seeing this map, but let's just do it very quickly. There's Mediterranean, there's Cyprus, Egypt, and the map goes like this.

There's Jerusalem, God's headquarters. There's Egypt, where they were rescued from slavery, and one of the nations that says, we'll help you out, we'll be an ally.

Here's Assyria, a rising, aggressive superpower. One of the emperors, Tiglath-Pileser III, comes into play in the story of Isaiah.

And they're expanding. And Israel, the northern kingdom, you remember that the kingdoms had split. We've got Aram and Assyria, not to be confused with Assyria, up there.

[8:30] And then that's Babylon. Babylon, in due course, expands and just conquers the whole lot. In the end, history comes down to actually those two cities, Zion versus Babylon.

That's the story of everything. So what I'd like to do this morning is to give you a brief history of Babylon, starting at the beginning, going through to the end.

It's what the Reverend Dick Lucas, the former minister of St. Helens' Bishopsgate, would call a paper chase. And he would say, Philip, don't do a paper chase, but that's what I'm going to do.

And so, let me just first give you a thought that you might like to conjure with. The importance of patterns, sometimes called types, which just means pattern, themes of God's word.

So here's a thought on this. So a bit later, there's the King of Tyre. Shall we explain Scripture by saying, the King of Tyre is a bit like Donald Trump?

[9:45] So if I were to do that, and preachers do that sort of thing, but what are they doing? They're saying, Donald Trump is the real original person, and by him, we understand Scripture.

See what's happening? The King of Tyre is a bit like Donald Trump. We're using Donald Trump to help us explain Scripture, understand Scripture.

Or is it actually the other way around? Should we explain the world by saying, Donald Trump is a bit like the King of Tyre? In other words, the thing in Scripture, the thing that God says, is the real standard thing, and our world fits in with Scripture, is a bit like Scripture.

You might need to go home and lie down and think about that very hard. So, thus, as we look at Babylon, the Babylon in the Bible is the real, powerful, original thing, and as we look at that, we see, into our world, our world carries the characteristics of biblical Babylon, and it helps us to understand, the Bible helps us to understand our world rather than using our world to understand the Bible, if you see what I mean.

You don't have to, just go to sleep for the next couple of seconds and then we'll get back on track. I think the Bible shows us a Babylon principle, which is in our world, in different times, in different civilizations, in different ways, but this principle opens our eyes to what's going on around us.

[11:38] That's what I think is happening. Let's do the survey. So, if you have your Bible, please go back to Genesis chapter 11. Genesis means beginnings.

This is the beginning of lots of things. Genesis chapter 11 is after the flood. Humanity is just getting going again. And it says in Genesis chapter 11, now the whole world had one language and a common speech and as men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar, which is Babylonia, and settled there.

And they said to each other, come let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly. They used brick instead of stone, bitumen for mortar. Then they said, come let us build ourselves a city with a tower that reaches to the heavens so that we might make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the earth.

So, I put there a little picture of somebody building Babylon. Babylon, from my childhood history lessons, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. Did you get taught that?

Is it just me at my school, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon? This is the sort of iconic Babylon. This, in Genesis, is right back at the beginning of this. Humankind was looking for expansion and direction and a name.

[13:03] Did you notice that in verse 4? So that we may make a name for ourselves, so that we may be remembered, so that people say, oh, I've heard of them making a name for themselves.

And they use technology for this. So, brick instead of stone, bitumen for mortar. It's not digital technology, but it is human technology. And they aim to go up to heaven, to make a name for themselves reaching up to heaven with a tower that reaches to their heavens, verse 4.

So this is humanity, if you like, trying to take over heaven via technology and to make themselves great. Does that sound familiar?

It's not just in those days, is it, that they did that? This is an abiding principle. And they were looking for the power of unity, that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the earth.

Okay, this is the beginnings of Babylon. Let's not do it too slowly. It's a human quest for dominion without God. God. And the interesting thing is that this huge tower, which as you can see, goes right up into the clouds, is, I don't anything is so big to the Lord, is so tiny, that he has to actually stoop down even to see it.

[14:28] Oh, it's just down there. He stoops down to see this mighty tower, and he says, verse 6, the Lord says, if as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible.

Come, let us go down and confuse their language so that 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 was 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. So he, the Lord, came down to see it, he disintegrated humankind, he scattered humankind, and here we have the beginnings of the Babylon principle, Babel, Babylon, Shinar.

It's the principle of humanity using its human power to get human glory to rival or take over or make God obsolete.

And God here confounds and confuses this proud effort by humankind.

[15:43] So I put there he confuses human hubris. I've never used the word hubris before. I think it means pride, doesn't it? Okay, Steve knows what it means, but no one else does.

So why did I bother using it? I've no idea. fear. It's a word, it's a real conceit, arrogance, a total misunderstanding of your own smallness, thinking that you're great.

The very opposite of Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, made himself a servant. That's the mind of Jesus Christ, who really was high, and he made himself humble.

And this is the opposite, it's humans building themselves up to make a name for themselves. If you flip over to chapter 12, verse 1, you'll see God's antidote to Babylon, which is Abraham, just one person.

And God says to Abraham, or Abram as he was then known, chapter 12, the Lord had said to Abram, leave your country, your people, and your father's household, and go to the land I will show you, and I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you, I will make your name great.

[17:15] See, in Babylon they try to make their own name, here God makes the name, I will make your name great, you will be a blessing, I will bless those who bless you, whoever curses you I will curse, and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

It's a sort of antidote to Babylon, isn't it, that God says, this is my plan, I will bless all the peoples on the earth, but I won't do it through their technology and building towers, I'm going to do it through your family, your believing family, and the prime person in that family is Jesus.

All the gospels point out he's the son of Abraham, he's the one through whom all these promises focus. There's Abraham, very good likeness as you can see, the Lord says I will make you a great nation, I will make your name great, all the peoples on the earth will be blessed through you, and that promise leads us to Jesus.

So that's the beginning of Babylon, let's go onward in time to Isaiah 39 1, that was the beginning of Babylon, let's see the threat of Babylon, which is in Isaiah 39.

So I'm so sorry, I'm jumping around, that's sort of a little bit inevitable with doing it this way. We've jumped on in history to the time when the king of Jerusalem has successfully seen off the Assyrian threat, this is Hezekiah, and he most admirably prayed and trusted the Lord and the Lord stepped in and remarkably blessed him and helped him and you'd think absolutely full marks to Hezekiah, he must be the perfect king.

[19:10] Well, alas, he isn't the perfect king, only Jesus is the perfect king and this is what happened towards the end of Hezekiah's life. Isaiah 39, at that time, Merodach Baladan, son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent Hezekiah letters and a gift because he had heard of his illness and recovery.

Hezekiah received the envoys gladly and showed them what was in his storehouses, the silver, the gold, the spices, the fine oil, his entire armory and everything found among his treasures.

There was nothing in his palace or in all his kingdom that Hezekiah did not show them. Then Isaiah the prophet went to Hezekiah and asked, what did these men say and where did they come from? From a distant land, Hezekiah replied. They came to me from Babylon. And the prophet asked, what did they see in your palace?

They saw everything in my palace, Hezekiah said. There is nothing among my treasures I did not show them. Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, hear the word of the Lord Almighty.

[20:21] The time will surely come when everything in your palace, all that your fathers have stored up until this day, will be carried off to Babylon. 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 and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.

Horrible. Rather strangely, Hezekiah says, the word of the Lord you have spoken is good, Hezekiah replied, for he thought there will be peace and security in my lifetime.

Well, here's the threat of Babylon. These are the people, this is the city which Hezekiah foolishly and rather proudly tried to impress.

He came along and he so naively says, oh, Babylon, yeah, we're going to be chums, we're going to be mates. Allow me to show you how impressive I am.

Look at all this treasure. He had trusted the Lord but in doing this he is wrong. He's stepping out of line.

[21:39] He underestimated the threat of Babylon. Let's not make the same mistake.

He was comfortable with forging a deep alliance with this anti-God power, like this representative of the anti-God world.

He forgot to care about his people. He thinks it will be fine for the next five or ten years but after that who cares? He forgot to care about his people.

He forgot to think about the future after him and as he was older he forgot to live by faith. Different ages, different chronological ages have different temptations.

temptations. There are temptations of youth, there are temptations of family life, there are temptations of what we call middle age, there's the temptations of getting older and Hezekiah fell into that.

[22:53] He forgot to live by faith. That's right, isn't it, Ray? We still have to live by faith. No matter how many years we've got on our CV, we still have to live by faith today.

That's the threat of Babylon and it's a threat for us to take notice of. We're to beware of being sucked in by the values and promises of our culture.

Our culture has got bits of Babylon in it. And whatever culture most appeals to you, whether it's the hippiness of Brighton's bohemian side or the yuppiness of being a young urban professional and earning more money than you used to earn or whatever a millennial is.

I think that's what my kids are millennials, aren't they? Millennials can't afford houses like their parents could. Is that right? Yeah, thank you. Or whether your culture is the promised land culture of immigration, that you've moved from one country to another because somebody told you this was the promised land.

Before too long you realised that was not true. But whatever culture you're in, I think there's almost certainly a bit of Babylon in it. Don't do what Hezekiah did.

[24:12] Don't get sucked in by the promises to think, oh, yeah, we're on the same page on this absolutely because we're not. 2 Chronicles 36 verse 15 to 21 tells us exactly what did happen.

You have to go back in the Bible to get to that bit. This is one of the history books and just for the sake of completeness we can see what Babylon did to that kingdom in future years.

2 Chronicles 36 verse 15, the Lord, the God of their fathers, sent word to them through his messengers again and again because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place but they mocked God's messengers, despised his words, scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the Lord was aroused against his people and there was no remedy.

He brought up against them the king of the Babylonians who killed their young men with the sword in the sanctuary, spared neither young man nor young woman, old or aged.

God handed all of them over to Nebuchadnezzar. He carried to Babylon all the articles from the temple of the Lord both large and small and the treasures of the Lord's temple and the treasures of the king and his officials.

[25:36] They set fire to God's temple and broke down the wall of Jerusalem. They burned all the palaces and destroyed everything of value there. He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant to escape from the sword and they became servants to him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power.

Yeah, terrible destruction and those valuables that Hezekiah had showed off all got taken away to Babylon. God did it.

Let's now think of the time when people were carried away to Babylon and we'll look at how the people of God managed at that time.

first quotation is Psalm 137. I pondered whether we could risk singing this but the only tune I could think of was Boney M.

By the waters of Babylon there we sat down don't get too carried away. I thought you probably wouldn't want to sing it to that tune.

[26:46] but that and it's a rather rather catchy happy tune compared with the agony of the psalm. Psalm 137 this is what the exile sang.

By the rivers of Babylon we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion. There on the poplars we hung our harps for there our captors asked us for songs our tormentors our tormentors demanded the songs of joy.

They said sing us one of the songs of Zion. How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a strange land? If I forget you O Jerusalem may my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy.

It's sort of wrung from the heart isn't it? Come on cheer up sing us one of the songs of Zion. I can't possibly do that.

I will never forget my home. I will never forget what it's like to be home. I will never forget I'm not home. It comes in the emotional clothing of agony really.

[28:05] But you see what's there? They're never going to forget where they really belong. It's a place of lament Christians have one or two songs like that.

I think there's a country and western song which says this world is not my home I'm just a passing through. I can't remember what it goes. Anybody know that one? Okay.

Yes. Yeah. not quite so agony but the same thought this is not my home. My home is Zion.

I will never forget that. May my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if I stop singing about Zion. Well you know I've changed the parameters of it a little bit.

I can't be fully happy here. Brothers and sisters if we get to the point where we think we're going to be fully happy here we've forgotten Zion.

[29:10] One of my favourite programmes is Grand Designs but let's not get taken in if we think the thing that will make our life happy is Icelandic windows and a granite work top and a £20,000 mixer tap we have lost the plot seriously seriously I mean that's what the programme is designed to do in a way it's to say if you just had what these people have you'd be happy mind you the one I watched the other day Kevin said I've never seen such an ugly building I think yes I'm probably right there's a little bit more to it than that if you flip 29 this is not just catching the intensity of agony at that moment but is looking for a longer term strategy for the exiles and so it slightly nuances what

Psalms 137 says but this is Jeremiah 29 this is addressed from the prophet to the exiles in this foreign land now we know it's not their home but this is what said to them Jeremiah 29 7 seek no let's go back to verse 4 shall we this is what the Lord almighty says the God of Israel says to those I have carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon build houses settle down plant gardens eat what they produce marry have sons and daughters find wives for your sons give your daughters in marriage so 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 pray to the Lord for it because if it prospers you too will prosper that's a very interesting thing to say isn't it notice it's a place of temporary involvement they're not meant to be there forever but while they're there during that 70 years they are not just to sort of go pout and say

I'm not going to join in anything they are to pray for the city where God's put them they are to carry on life in that city they are to seek the good of the city even though that city has dealt with them so badly they're going to leave to God the judgment of the city they pray for the peace of it peace pray for the peace of the city but be ready to move out verse 10 this is what the Lord says when 70 years are completed for Babylon I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place for I know the plans I have for you he says there's a future for you it isn't

Babylon you you have a way of relating to this city that is not your own you you you build you carry on life you pray for the good of the city but when the time comes to leave we go get that it's very like the advice that Christians have in this world this world is not our home but we are to pray for the peace of our city our culture to pray for the good of it we are not just to sit and do nothing until the Lord comes but we are to get on with normal life but when he does come we're ready to go very important that we get both sides of that we're here trying to do good praying but when the Lord says time's up we say yeah good home going home let's think of that journey home let's so I'm so sorry to be flipping around you see Dick Lucas is saying I told you so brother you shouldn't have done this pay a chase!

[33:54] but here we are doing it Isaiah 49 verse 8 is thinking about the journey home because they won't always be in Babylon God will bring them back and that is a matter of considerable thought so Isaiah 49 verse 8 this is what the Lord says in the time of my favour I will answer you in

the day of salvation I will help you I will keep you and make you to be a covenant for the people to restore the land to reassign its desolate inheritances to say to the captives come out to those in darkness be free and here they are coming back across the desert back home they will feed beside the roads they will find pasture on every barren hill they will neither hunger nor thirst nor will the desert heat or the sun beat upon them Pete's noticing this aren't you they're walking along he who has compassion on them will guide them and lead them beside springs of water

I will turn all my mountains into roads my highways will be raised up see they will come from afar from the north the west the region of Aswan they're all coming home and he says this is great and there's always a little bit of a song when he mentions that and you get that in verse 13 shout for joy oh heavens rejoice oh earth burst into song oh mountains for the lord comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones it's a matter of great excitement that the lord will bring his people home the captives will be free the refugees come home and it's a scene of enormous joy that's what God's doing now I know there's a way of reading this that will say ah this is simply about the geography of the establishment of the state of Israel in whatever year it was established I think that is a very superficial reading of this prophecy it's not really about geography it's about the lord gathering his people from all the nations which is gospel it's not tourism it's gospel and we are on our way home through this world it's one of the ways of thinking of what it is to be a Christian we are marching to Zion we are pilgrims it is not our home we're on our way to a better place so one of the hymns said we're marching to Zion beautiful beautiful Zion we're marching to Zion the beautiful city of God let those to sing refuse to sing who never knew our God the children of the heavenly king will speak their joys abroad the hill of Zion yields a thousand sacred sweets before we reach the heavenly fields or march walk the golden streets it's all quite visionary isn't it but the point of it is we're on our way home we have a sense of being home even before we get there rather like Maria's dad would get Greek bread even in wood green and Greek olives even in wood green we have some of Zion before we get there and what we do here is part of that isn't it we get a sense of home when we're here together when we sing the songs and think about these things together and one day the universe will sing songs of redemption shout oh heavens rejoice oh earth burst into song oh mountains why because the people of

God are on their way home this thought is put in various ways round Isaiah 52 verse 8 when God abandoned Jerusalem he left as well as his people leaving and he will come back so it's put that way round in Isaiah 52 verse 8 listen your watchmen lift up their voices together they shout for joy for the Lord returns to Zion they will see it with their own eyes burst into songs of joy together you ruins of Jerusalem for the Lord has comforted his people he has redeemed Jerusalem the Lord will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God get out of Babylon depart depart go out from there touch no unclean thing come out from it and be pure you who carry the vessels of the Lord you will not leave in haste or go in flight for the

Lord will go before you the God of Israel will be your rear guard on our way home leaving Babylon on our way home the captives leave Babylon back to the holy city and interestingly that gets picked up in the New Testament I'm not talking about geography I'm talking about the gospel the way to belong to this city is through Jesus Christ that's the wonderful key fact that the New Testament brings it all happens through Jesus it's all to do with him what he did on the cross what is achieved in his resurrection and how we come to him in faith I'm going off track here but when we went to Venice we went as tourists to the Jewish Museum is it a Jewish museum?

[39:41] yeah I'll try not to get carried off with all the history of it which I found fascinating but there was a tapestry which showed how much the synagogue was interested in the vision of the heavenly city and there was a tapestry illustrating this and between the synagogue and the heavenly city was the root and the root was the law and they had a picture of the scrolls of the law and they said we're so pleased we can get to the heavenly city because we've got the law and the new testament says by the works of the law you'll never get to the heavenly city we take out the law put it to one side don't scrap it but we put it in its proper place and the person the thing that brings us the heavenly city is

Jesus wouldn't it be wonderful to vandalize that tapestry cut out and put Jesus in the middle there because that would be so helpful probably highly illegal let's look at 2

Corinthians chapter 6 it is quite a fascinating thing how the apostle Paul takes Isaiah different parts of Isaiah and says well guys this is just gospel isn't it this is what we are living and he does that here in 2 Corinthians 6 verse 17 where he quotes the bit I quoted about the refugees going home touch no unclean thing come out from among them but let's pick it up from verse 14 do not be yoked together with unbelievers for what do righteousness and wickedness have in common or what fellowship can light have with darkness what harmony is there between Christ and Belial what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever what agreement is there between the temple of God and idols for we are the temple of the living God as God has said I will live with them and walk among them and be their

God and they will be my people therefore come out from them and be separate says the Lord touch no unclean thing and I will receive you I will be a father to you you will be my sons and daughters says the Lord almighty since we have these promises dear friends let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit perfecting holiness out of reverence for God now let's just take that to pieces just for a moment or two verse 17 is the Isaiah quote isn't it come out from Babylon bring the holy vessels the holy jars and stuff because we're on our way back to Jerusalem and Paul says well that's you as Christians that's us as Christians we live the words over the departing exiles are the words over us we're on our way out of

Babylon to Jerusalem and therefore he says well the application of that is in verse 14 you belong to Jerusalem you belong to God you don't belong to the idols not to them they can't touch they can't see that's a Babylon thing we're on our way to the temple of God if you like and he says well therefore now as you live some of you seem to think it's okay to go to the pagan temple and join in there as if yeah that's fine he says you can't do that that's what Hezekiah tried to do you can't do that don't be yoked together with unbelievers what do righteousness and wickedness have in common what fellowship can light have with darkness what harmony is there between Christ and the evil one you know the God of Babylon what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever what agreement is there between the temple of

God and idols we are the temple of the living God he says you can't join in you can't have it both ways you can't have your home in Zion and say I'm quite at home here in this don't join in at the pagan temple do not think that your deep allegiance to the living God can be at home with a deep allegiance to the world you can't have it both ways that text verse 14 is sometimes applied to marriage to marrying somebody who is not a believer a Christian marrying somebody who is not a believer it doesn't primarily refer to that I think it certainly casts light on the foolishness and the problems that come if a Christian tries to marry a non

[45:00] Christian at a deep level you can't be together is that a wise thing to deliberately aim for I think not but it is actually much wider isn't it he says there's thought patterns that belong to Babylon and idolatry that are not holy and that we should be leaving because we're leaving Babylon see what he says chapter 7 verse 1 since we have these promises dear friends let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit perfecting holiness out of reverence for God he says there's all sorts of thought patterns that we should be leaving because we don't belong in Babylon all sorts of value systems all sorts of ways of operating we should be the holy people on our way to the holy city let's go on to the last part of the story which is in

Revelation chapter 18 which is the end result of Babylon and it's very much akin to the chapter that Steve read in its solemnity and if you like its awfulness really this is so we've gone to the book of Revelation we're now at the end of the world and we see the end result of Babylon and 18 verse 1 after this I saw another angel coming down from heaven he had great authority and the earth was illuminated by his splendor and in a mighty voice he shouted!

these are quotes from Isaiah she has become a haunt for demons and a haunt for every evil spirit a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries the kings of the earth committed adultery with her the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive!

it but this in Revelation says isn't it great that this city is fallen this city that started off building itself up shaking its fist at God trying to build its way up to heaven and make a name that is so wrong that is so much of an affront to God down she goes fallen is Babylon the great and there's lots of details about why she's fallen what her fall involves in verse three it talks about her excessive luxury in verse four it says come out of her my people in verse seven it says give her as much torture and grief as the glory and luxury she gave herself quite likely the in the original context he's thinking of the way that the empire of Rome was like Babylon!

it's cruelty in its excessive luxury in the in human way some of the slaves were treated I think not all the slaves but some of them in the mindset of that and I think that's where John is getting those thoughts from!

[48:42] but it stands for the Babylon principle throughout the world woe to that city verse 10 woe oh great city oh Babylon city of power in one hour your doom has come this is the city whose ultimate destiny is not salvation but destruction that's what we've looked at it from beginning to end that's where it ends up and the message is get out of that city make sure that your heart does not belong to Babylon there's only two cities when it comes down to it and the city to belong to is the city of God where Jesus rules where God reigns where God's glory is and the key to that is

Jesus one of the promises in the book of Revelation is to him who overcomes I will write on him the name of the city of my God it's so long since I ever went near a night club but I think if you go in don't they stamp you with them so you get back in again Who am I going to look to confirmation for this I don't know let's imagine that this is the case isn't it that if you go to a night club and they put a little stamp on you to say I've been in and then you can go out and come back in again this is the stamp of Jerusalem and Jesus says if you follow me if you put your trust in me if you keep walking with me I will stamp you I think on the forehead Jerusalem when you get to the gates you get in what an honorable thing to have there's no better thing that this world offers really than for Jesus to stamp you with the name of his city so that on that last day come in let's close the Babylon principle is alive and well in the west in Brighton in the Bible there are only two cities Zion the city where God reigns and Jesus is king and the other place no one gets to Zion except through Jesus so I ask you just as I said at the beginning where is your home where is the place that you will never forget where is the place of which you say may my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if I forget that's where I belong where is your!

the deep longing to be home and on the way will you stay true to where you really belong now we'll sing too Thank you.