

# Babylon is fallen

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[0:00] They're not about me, are you? So you might come to church and say, I want to hear something! that is directly for me. And they're not really about me. I mean, the Lord is my shepherd is about me because you can put your name in instead of me, can't you? The Lord is Philip's shepherd, the Lord is Julia's shepherd. So it doesn't do that, unfortunately. I say unfortunately, I presume God knows what he's doing when he writes scripture, but I think you might think that. They're not about immediate comfort. So I put this text when I was writing it, but Daniel mentioned it this morning, the text, never will I leave you, never will I forsake you, which is a wonderfully comforting text, isn't it? And you think, oh, well, I could go home and that would do me enough good this week to last me the week. But it doesn't do anything like that either.

And perhaps a little bit more, a little bit more something, it doesn't seem to be about Jesus. It doesn't seem to be Jesus-centered. It's actually mostly about Babylon, isn't it?

Although, you need to put it in context. So somebody is saying in verse 4, come out of her, my people. And I guess that might be the Lord Jesus. It's either the second person of the Trinity or the Trinity. And then it's worth thinking that Jesus is a Trinitarian Jesus. He is the son of the Father. He is the son who holds the Spirit and gives the Spirit. And the Trinitarian God is very active in this, isn't it? And very much the subject of things like the praise in verse 19.1.

Salvation and glory and power belong to our God for true and just to his judgments. Jesus isn't excluded from that because Jesus is the one through whom judgment comes. He is exalted in his office as judge. And if we did read along as far as 19 verse 7, it does reference the wedding of the Lamb. So as though Jesus isn't sort of center stage in some ways, but he's there in various ways in the chapter. Pardon?

Jesus was mentioned by name at the end. Correct. Yes. The spirit of prophecy who bears testimony to Jesus. That's what the translation says. So thank you. Yes. It does depend how far you read, doesn't it? Good point. Very good point. I appreciate that. Yes, it does. It is about joy, isn't it? In some sense, maybe in some ultimate sense, rather than, yeah, that's a very good point.

[3:17] But I... It refers to the people of God. Yes. In 1820. It does address the people of God in 1820. Thank you.

And 1905, all you his servants. Thank you. Thank you very much. So we are addressed, all you his servants. Yes. Beginning to rebuke me for my lack of confidence in the chapters.

It's not. It's not. It's not. Yes. Yes, you. When it's coming for, so 1820, where it says rejoice over her, you heaven, you people of God, would it be referring to us right now, or maybe in the greater sense? Because we're saying here, rejoice, you people of God, rejoice, apostles and prophets, for God has judged her with the judgment she imposed on you. Wouldn't it be specifically the people... I'm sorry. Wouldn't it be specifically the people that were goaded by Babylon? Okay. So just for the sake of the recording, the question was in verse 20. I think it's saying, who are the people that this is addressing?

And I think that's a very good question. Is this something that is, in a sense, only possible in the last day? Can I hold that question? And it's something I've asked on the slides a little bit further on. However, I've put here, they're about living in the real world in the light of God's future. And it's... Let me just finish this thought. The world of these texts is a world of judgment and of God's triumph. And we look out on our world and we see that that is... That doesn't seem to be the case. And then we say, of these worlds, which is actually the real world. And actually we would say that the world

as in scripture is the real world. And what we see around us is the sort of the unreal version of things. That's what an apocalypse does. It reveals to us the truth. So I'm just saying it's about living in the real world. And it does address God's people. It says, come out of her, my people. And the chapters are centered on God. They say... To the glory of God. Steve, you're going to say something. Maybe you're going here anyway.

[6:03] Do you want to... I was going to say, maybe you're going here anyway, but this is full of references to Jeremiah 51, isn't it? Yeah, I'm going to go to various passages. Yeah. Thank you. Yeah. Okay. So this is to just remind us if we haven't... This is the introduction I usually do. The Book of Revelation is a book in the Bible. It's for our edification. It's for our survival and progress as Christians. And apocalypse means unveiling and showing the truth behind something. And I think it's fairly helpful to see, as it's written to its original readers, this is an unveiling of what the Roman Empire is like. Because living in the Roman Empire might have thought, this is a great place to be. Look at all the things that the Romans have done for us. But it's an unveiling of what the Roman Empire is really like, the truth behind the appearance.

The Book of Revelation is in a letter. So it does have relevance to its original recipients. And it's written to... Seven churches. Seven churches. That's right. And it's relevant to their current situation. And I think it's easier to see that if you look at it through that point of view. It's in the form of a prophecy. It tells them what's shortly going to happen. It gives a big picture and the behavioral implications of that. And the behavioral implications are, come out of her, my people. And the horizon of it is from the time of writing to the end of the world and including the middle. And I think this is particularly relevant to the middle. There's the letter. What we've been doing is listening, trying to listen to the way he says things. He says things in his own unique style. And he sort of pick up the way he's doing things. He uses symbols and images, most but not all, from Old Testament scripture. And we'll see quite a lot of that all being well. He uses symbolic names and numbers and times and places and themes. So the symbolic place in this one is? Babylon. Babylon. That's a symbolic place, isn't it? The symbols are theological. They tell us something, if you like, spiritual or theological. And in this chapter, he's using prophecies of ancient places as pointers which are fulfilled in these last days. And I want to emphasize the filling.

[8:37] The things that are intimated in Old Testament scriptures are filled with meaning and significance in the New Testament times. That's the times from the ascension of Jesus, his final coming.

And one of the theologians, Richard Borkham, wrote a book called Revelation as the climax of prophecy. And I'd like to suggest that prophecies all point to the fulfillment here, which is, thank you for Steve for prompting us on that. So just putting it into context, we've seen the seven churches, the lamb upon the throne, the seven seals of world history, the seven trumpets for repentance, the war between the dragon and the woman and her seed, and the agents being the beast and the false prophet, the image of the beast. We've seen final judgment in terms of harvest. We've seen in the previous chapter that the depiction of the beast, which I think simply put is the military forces against Christians, and in their case, the military force of Rome, and the prostitute, Babylon, which represents, putting it simply, the seductive power of culture, and in that case, in their case, the seductive power of Rome. And Rome was a goddess of the Romans called Roma, and maybe that's what

John is sort of alluding to when he calls Rome a prostitute, and he calls Rome by the name of Babylon. So I'll try not to say too much, which is just repetition. But in 17.1, he introduced, or the angel introduced this by saying, I'll show you the punishment of the great prostitute who sits by many waters with her. The kings of the earth committed adultery, and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries. And it said that was a call for wisdom. So there's the beast, that red animal, the prostitute who sits on many waters, meaning different trading connections, the Roman system of commerce, international trade, culture, idolatry, sexual immorality, wealth. And this, the method of this for Christians is to intoxicate them, to seduce them and entrap them. And we're told not to get caught up in that, come out of her, my people. So as I was getting ahead of myself, people might in

Rome are saying, you know, make Rome great again, because we're great. Yes. But John sees it very differently. This is not great. I mean, in some ways, Babylon is great. But in other words, this is horrible. And you need to be very, very wary. And I think he would say that that Rome was, as it were, an incarnation of the dragon, because the dragon has 10 horns and seven heads, and this beast has 10 horns and seven heads. And of course, as we think about it, we are encouraged to think, okay, what about our society? You know, what about the society that we live in, in the West, in the UK? To what extent do we recognise the beast? Is the beast still prowling? Is the prostitute around? What do we face? And how do we face it? So that's a call for wisdom. And perhaps that's the practicality of what we're thinking this evening. So looking, just noting the way that the text operates. So there's fallen is Babylon the great. And look at the sounds. 18.2, with a mighty voice, he shouted. 18.4, I heard another voice from heaven. 18.10, the kings of the earth cry out, woe to you. 18.14, the merchants of the earth will say, the fruit you longed for is gone.

18.18, the sea captains, what do they do? They exclaim in the NIV. I don't know if there's a Greek word for exclaim. They might just say, or they might just cry something. Verse 19, they cry out. [13:14] And 18.21, the mighty angel says something, who is also picking up a huge rock, throwing it into the sea, but he does say something. 19.1, I heard the roar of a great multitude shouting.

And verse 3, again they shouted. And verse 6, and I heard what sounded like a great multitude shouting. So it was very noisy. And in 19.4, the 24 elders and four living creatures, and they cry out, Amen, Hallelujah. And in 19.5, there's a voice from the throne. 19.6, I think we've already said that, the great multitude. And then when we get to verse 9, if we go as far as that, then the angel speaks to John, and John has a conversation, a brief conversation with the angel. So it's all about speaking.

There's not so much visions as things being said. Right, let's go back to some more features of the text. So repetitions. Let me just think, what have I got? Yeah, so we did this, fallen, fallen, fallen is repeated.

Did we say that? No, well it's there, isn't it? Verse 2, fallen, fallen. Is that the only place it's there? I thought it was more than that. But anyway, there's twice there, fallen, fallen.

And woe, we got that one, didn't we? Woe, woe, in verse 9, and in verse 19, and somewhere else? 16, 16, yeah. 18, 19, yeah. So fallen, woe, hallelujah is repeated.

[14:59] Repeat it, isn't it? Hallelujah, 19, 1, 19, 4, 19, 6. Although we would sing, hallelujah for the Lord our God, the Almighty reigns.

Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory unto him. That would be a song that would come, if we know that one, sort of trips off the tongue.

This hallelujah is a bit different. Hallelujah, he has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. I think we'd find that a bit difficult to put into a chorus, wouldn't we?

The rejoicing here is a little bit at one end of a spectrum, isn't it? Verse 3, hallelujah, the smoke from her goes up forever and ever.

I don't know any poruses or songs that say, hallelujah, the smoke from her goes up forever and ever. But this is what they are rejoicing about in this chapter. Poetic lists, we got, let's see, what lists have we got?

[16:05] Oh, 18, 4. There was a list there, 18, 2. I put 4, I mean 2, I think.

18, 2, what's the repetition there? A haunt for, yeah, that's a little list. A haunt for every impure spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean detestable animal.

So there's a haunt for, whoops, and this repetition of all these luxurious commodities, which was in 11 down to 13.

What was the surprising bit, the jarring bit in that list? Sorry? It's gone and balanced.

That wasn't, it probably is surprising, there wasn't the bit that surprised me. Humans. Humans, yeah, human beings sold as slaves. I think in the original it says the souls of men.

[17:12] That is very striking, isn't it? That people have been objectified and bought and sold along with wine and olive oil and flour and wheat.

I don't know, I'll have some, can I have some turmeric and some allspice and a couple of slaves, please. Have them delivered tomorrow. It's, it does say something, doesn't it?

That people are reduced to items on the shopping list here. And what else have we got? Finery. Finery. There's a list of finery.

So we've got that in verse 16. Woe to you great city dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet. And those colours are significant, aren't they?

The colour for royalty would be purple. And the scarlet is not far off that. So she's, that's the colours that the prostitute was depicted as being dressed in earlier.

[18:16] Finery. Finery. And a list in verses 22 to 23. How would you describe that? 18, 22 to 23.

How would you describe that list? Arts and feasting. Yeah, arts, feasting. Yeah.

Would you say these things were sinful? They're all the activities of everyday life. They're all the activities of everyday life. And they, the joyful activities of everyday life.

The sort of things that you would enjoy. You know, music of harpists and musicians. Pipers and trumpeters. Interestingly, Maria and I went to a concert last night by the home office.

And they were very good musicians. And one of the songs they sang towards the end was, Fallen is Babylon the Great. Which I found very surprising. But, yeah.

[19:24] But music. People getting married. People doing all this trade. People cooking. And all these things that are the good things of life.

Yeah, so there's a list there. The normal joys of life. And repetition of phrases. Weep and mourn. And a far off is mentioned as well. So, okay. So, that really just gets us in tune with the text.

Now then. Steve mentioned prophecies. And there are prophecies that are referenced densely here.

And I suggest that what he's doing is using ancient prophecy to portray the fall of Babylon. Babylon. I wondered how to deal with this.

Maybe I haven't got it quite the right way. But let's have a go at it this way. There's Fallen Babylon. And also, he's also just mentioned the beast, hasn't he?

[20:30] I think he took the prophecies of Daniel. Can you read that up there? Which Daniel is in the sort of intertestamental period.

Or the period up to the coming of Christ. And he takes that and says, this is fulfilled in these last days.

And it's fulfilled in the beast. I think he takes texts to do with the fall of ancient Babylon. Because you remember that Babylon was the nation that took the Israelites into exile.

And God said, I will bring you back from exile. Babylon will let you go. And Babylon will get its comeuppance. Babylon will be ruined. And taking those chapters and also, there's other chapters in the Old Testament like the fall of Tyre.

Tyre was a commercial center in those ancient days. And there's the fall of Tyre. It's a little bit like prophesying the fall of Elon Musk.

[21:43] Or the fall of Jeff Bezos and the Amazon Empire. Tyre was a bit like that. And we'll read something about that. And Edom was a nation near Israel.

And there's prophecies about her in Isaiah. And all of these are sort of funneled into Babylon. And the fall of Babylon.

The fall of Rome. And Rome-like structures. Oh, I meant that a bit quick. So that's my thesis. That all these prophecies sort of are funneled through the Christ.

And he says, this is the time you're now living in is the fulfillment of all this. Let me try and take us through that step by step. So let's go look at some prophets.

Isaiah 21. Isaiah 21 verse 9.

[22:56] And could Valerie read this when she's found the place? This is an ancient prophecy.

Bearing in mind that Babylon will be the enemy of God's people. And take them into exile. And prophesying that they won't last forever. But they'll get their comeuppance. And the verse says. Look, here comes a man in a chariot.

With a team of horses. And he gives back the answer. Babylon has fallen. Has fallen. All the images of its gods lie shattered on the ground. Thank you very much.

Would that be a quote? Is he quoting that in Revelation? Fallen, fallen is Babylon. Isaiah 34. Verses 1 to 15.

I might have got quite a... I'll tell you what. Could we pass this round for reading?

[23:57] Could Ray read? Let's do Isaiah 34. Verses 8. Verses 8 to 15.

How about that? Isaiah 34. 8 to 13. Yes, please. Yeah. For the Lord has a day of vengeance. A year of retribution to uphold Zion's cause.

Edom's streams will be turned into pitch. Her dust into burning sulfur. Her land will become blazing pitch. It will not be quenched night and day. Its smoke will rise forever.

From generations to generations it will lie desolate. No one will ever pass through it again. The desert owl and screech owl will possess it. The great owl and the raven will nest there.

God will stretch out over Edom the measuring line of chaos and the plumb line of desolation. Her nobles will have nothing there to be called a kingdom.

[24:59] All her princes will vanish away. Thorns will overrun her citadels. Nettles and brambles her strongholds. She will become a haunt for jackals.

A home for owls. Desert creatures will meet with hyenas. And wild oats will bleat to each other.

There the night creatures will also repose and find for themselves places of rest.

The owl will nest there and lay eggs. She will hatch them and care for her young under the shadow of her wings. There also the falcons will gather, each with its mate.

Thank you very much. So this is a description of the desolation of enemy Edom. And I would say it's painted in cosmic terms of which Edom is a small version.

Anybody spot, anybody like to volunteer text that John used or was referencing in Isaiah 34?

[26:04] Yes, these unclean animals inhabiting the ruins. So it's just saying that nobody lives there. It's just empty. And the only inhabitants that it is suitable for are these unclean animals.

A haunt for jackals. It is like, oh, I don't know, like a rubbish tip where the only creatures that find any good there are scavenging animals.

Okay, so is that anything else that he quoted? Yes, verse 10.

It will not be quenched night or day. Its smoke will rise forever. So I was puzzled over this. It's originally addressed to Eden.

And I asked whether when Edom was destroyed, which it was, did the smoke go up forever? I mean, if you go there now, would you find the smoke still going up?

[27:09] I think the answer's no. But I think he can say the smoke goes up forever because he's referring to a sort of ideal of God's judgment, which is a perpetual judgment, of which Edom was a sort of small version.

You know, the smoke went up for a long time, but it didn't go up forever. But it is a sort of example of God's eternal judgment. Does that make sense? It's, I think that's what he's doing.

And there's actually quite a lot in that chapter which one could come back to. For example, in verse 6, the sword of the Lord is bathed in blood.

It is covered with fat, the blood of lambs and goats, the kidneys of rams. The Lord has a sacrifice in Baltimore. The idea of judgment as being like a sacrifice. And in verse 4, the stars in the sky will be dissolved and the heavens rolled up like a scroll.

That's something that we would... Sky be rolled back like a scroll. The trumpet will sound and the Lord shall descend.

[28:24] Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Oh, my soul. That's the one with the sky being rolled back like a scroll, isn't it? Desolation is sacrifice.

An abiding spiritual truth given a transient historical instantiation. I thought, dare I even write that? I risked it.

Let's go and look at Ezekiel 26 to 28. So here is another prophecy or a strand of prophecy which I think John is saying is the fulfillment of all this.

So just when you've found the place, just follow through with me. We're in Ezekiel 26. And from the heading, as soon as you've got a heading in your Bible, it's a prophecy against...

Tyre. Tyre, yeah. It's a little bit up the coast. Tyre and Sidon in those days would have been a very substantial trading post because it's on the coast and they can trade things to and fro.

[29:38] And 26.17, Tyre will fall, says Ezekiel.

And in 26.17, it will say... Well, what about... If I take it from verse 16.

Then all the princes of the coast will step down from their thrones and lay aside their robes and take off their embroidered garments. Clothed with terror, they will sit on the ground, trembling every moment, appalled at you.

Then they will take up a lament concerning you and say to you, how you were destroyed, city of renown, peopled by men of the sea. You were a power on the seas, you and your citizens. You put your terror on all who lived there, et cetera.

This is Tyre falling and the princes watching it and commenting on it. And what have I got next?

[30:38] That's 26.17. 27 is the sort of song of the good ship Tyre. Verse 3. Say to Tyre, situated at the gateway to the sea, merchant of peoples on many coasts.

This is what the sovereign Lord said. You say, Tyre, I am perfect in beauty. Your domain was on the high seas. Your builders brought your beauty to perfection, et cetera. So it's like a ship.

And then 28. Let's take 28. I think we could read 1 to 10. Would Steve like to read this?

Ezekiel 28, 1 to 10. The word of the Lord came to me.

Son of man, say to the ruler of Tyre, this is what the sovereign Lord says. In the pride of your heart, you say, I am a God. I sit on the throne of a God in the heart of the seas.

[31:43] But you are a mere mortal and not a God, though you think you are as wise as a God. Are you wiser than Daniel? Is no secret hidden from you?

By your wisdom and understanding, you have gained wealth for yourself and amassed gold and silver in your treasuries. By your great skill in trading, you have increased your wealth.

And because of your wealth, your heart has grown proud. Therefore, this is what the sovereign Lord says. Because you think you are wise, as wise as a God, I am going to bring foreigners against you, the most ruthless of nations.

They will draw their swords against your beauty and wisdom and pierce your shining splendor. They will bring you down to the pit and you will die a violent death in the heart of the seas.

Will you then say, I am a God in the presence of those who kill you? You will be but a mortal, not a God, in the hands of those who slay you. You will die the death of the uncircumcised at the hand of foreigners.

[32:50] I have spoken, declares the sovereign Lord. Thank you very much. So there's Tyre, a trading centre, and Tyre says, I am a God.

I dwell in the heart of the sea. Look at all my power. Look at all the things I can buy and sell. I mean, look at me, how great I am. It's almost like a satanic thought, isn't it?

You say you are a God, I'm going to bring you down. Now, is that quoted in Revelation at all?

Sorry?

Am I right in thinking that Tyre was destroyed by Alexander the Great? Could be. I don't know. I don't know. I don't know. Thank you.

Isn't there not a quote from that here somewhere? What about verse 7? In her heart she boasts, I sit enthroned as a queen.

[34:06] I am not a widow. I will never mourn. It's certainly an illusion, isn't it? I sit here enthroned. I think there's a definite reference there.

Glorifying herself. Yes. Yes, that's right. Yeah. My footprint refers to Isaiah 47. And that, because there is one, I am a queen, I sit in the heart of the seas.

Maybe that's that one. Isaiah? 47. 47. 47. 47. Yeah.

Isaiah 47 says, I am forever the eternal queen, but you did not consider these things or reflect on what might happen. There might be a better reference, which I have not caught.

But anyway, the downfall of trading and financial pride. And now I'm referencing Isaiah 24, 7. Shall we look at that?

[35:20] Is that what you, that's not right, is it? 24, 7 and following. Yeah. Okay.

So this is Isaiah 24, 7. Isaiah is referring, in this case, to a sort of, almost like the cosmic city. And he says in verse 7, the new wine dries up and the wine withers.

All the merrymakers groan. The joyful tambourines are stilled. The noise of revelers has stopped.

The joyful harp is silent. No longer do they drink wine with a song.

The beer is bitter to its drinkers. The ruined city lies desolate. Yeah, the same, that's on the same sort of, you okay?

That's the same sort of theme. Let's see what else we've got. Jeremiah 25. Jeremiah 25. Jeremiah 25.

[36:36] This is about Babylon. Babylon. And in verse 10, would you agree that this is something that he's quoting? I will banish from them the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, the sound of millstones and the light of the lamp.

The whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and those nations will serve the king of Babylon for 70 years. So, that's, that's, that's, that's, that's, that's, that's a quote, doesn't it?

As he's picking that up from there. It was judgment on disobedient Judah, I think. So, where have we got to this? So, what I was trying to show was that he's, he's picking up various prophecies of judgment in various sort of places and ways, and he's saying, this is all fulfilled in what I will do to Babylon.

Does that make sense? I think I've covered most of them. There's, there's actually lots of them. I hope I chose the best examples. Jeremiah 51 verse 45 is the come out of her, Jeremiah people. Jeremiah 51, 45. Yep. So, this is looking forward to the captivity in Babylon, and how people are supposed to respond to it when Babylon gets judged.

[38:17] So, Jeremiah 51, 45, come out of her, my people, run for your lives, run from the fierce anger of the Lord. Do not lose heart or be afraid when rumors are heard in the land.

Verse 47, for the time will surely come when I will punish the idols of Babylon. Her whole land will be disgraced. Her slain will all lie fallen within her, et cetera. So, it's, this is going to be judged.

You need to get out of her, and I'll come back to that in a moment. Let's go into, back into chapter 18, and ask, ask you some questions about the, the responses that are in the text.

So, 18 verse 1, fallen is Babylon the great. The angels say this, and there's a voice from heaven in verse 4.

How would you, could you summarize what the angel says? 18, 1 to 4.

[39:37] Too difficult. Think. Sorry? She's become a girl. Yes, yes, she'll, she'll be ruined.

It's a statement, isn't it? With a fallen, with a mighty voice, he shouted, fallen, fallen is Babylon the great. So, and, the, the reasonableness of this, is one of the things.

The kings of the earth, committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the earth, grew, which from her excessive luxuries. He's saying, it's, it's fair. This is, she's getting what she deserved.

That's the sort of thing that says, and there is this call for God's people to come out of her. And in verse 6, there's that idea of fairness, isn't it?

Give back to her as she is given. When it says, pay back double for what she has done, it probably means the matching amount, rather than twice as much. Whatever this culture has done to God's people, pay her back exactly what she deserves, the, the matching amount.

[40:39] Let's look at the kings of the earth. What do they say about the, the fall of Babylon? Would you summarize that? What's their reaction? There's the kings of the earth.

Terrified? Yep. Woe. Woe. Yes, they're, are they happy about it? No, they're, they're, they're put out, aren't they?

They, well, they say woe, and they, what do they do, verse 11? Weep and mourn. Yeah, they're not, not happy about this. What, why do you think they weep and mourn?

Yeah, no one buys their cargo. Do they offer to help? No. What do they do instead? Say, stand at a distance.

Yeah, they're not going to help her, are they? They stand afar off. The merchants of the earth, they're in verse 11, what's their reaction? They weep and mourn as well.

[41:41] So, are they pleased? There's the merchants of the earth with dollar signs on their, on their cloaks. They're not pleased. They weep and mourn. Any suggestions why they weep and mourn?

Because no one buys their cargoes, you know, so they're out of pocket. Do they offer to help? Say again.

The great world has been brought to ruin. Has been brought to ruin. Which verse is that? 17. 17.

They cry out. Verse 15, they think the merchants stand not far off.

Yeah, they stand afar off. They're not, they're not going to help, are they? They just observe from a distance. The sea captains, in verse 17. What do they do? What's their reaction?

They stand far off. Are they happy about it? No. They're going to lose their livelihood. Yeah, they're going to lose their livelihood. It's all tied up with this Babylon culture, isn't it?

[42:45] So they don't offer to help. And if you could, just thinking of what it was like in those days, look at this. At one of Nero's feasts, the Egyptian roses alone cost nearly \$100,000.

Vitellius had a penchant for delicacies like peacock's brains and nightingale tongues. In a reign of less than one year, he spent \$20 million, mostly on food.

One Roman, after squandering an immense fortune, committed suicide because he could not survive on the pittance that remained, about \$300,000.

In the Jewish Talmud, it is written, ten measures of wealth came into the world. Rome received nine, and all the world won.

Small wonder that the suppliers of such gross extravagance mourned the passing of their market. It was just sort of, you would say, obscene, the luxury, and that word is used, isn't it?

[44:00] You've got these lists of luxurious goods at the expense of slaves because amongst this list, you have the souls of men.

And verse 14, the fruit you longed for is gone for you. All your luxury and splendor have vanished, never to be recovered. It's a real indictment of Roman society, isn't it?

It's a real critique of this culture that used force and power to, I suppose, to produce inequality, huge luxury.

I mean, some people are profiting from this. They're making good money out of it. But it's, but God is against it. And along with this is a spiritual antagonism towards God's people.

And that was what Rome was. And I suppose we have to say, to what extent is our society like that? And you can see bits of our society that are like that, can't you?

[45:15] luxury, billionaires. Sorry? Jeff Bezos. Yeah, I wasn't invited, actually.

But it's, so, you know, we say, this is what that was like. And to what extent is Babylon still alive and well today?

What about the apostles and prophets? What were they supposed to do? In verse 20. To rejoice. Yeah, to rejoice. To rejoice over her.

Do they offer to help? No, they don't. God has judged her with the judgment she imposed on you. I think that's a difficult verse, isn't it?

Are we supposed, I mean, suppose something horrible happened to Jeff Bezos. Are we supposed to rejoice about that? I don't know.

[46:13] But it's saying that, I suppose it's saying that we should not be, it's saying at least we shouldn't be taken up with saying how wonderful it all is.

Yeah? You know. Is this the avenging of the cry of the martyrs? Yes. Yes, the martyrs say how long, oh Lord?

Because it's very definite that Rome is tied up or is going to be tied up with persecuting Christians.

So, I'm not going to say that the Amazon Empire persecutes Christians. There are some similarities, but that's what definitely happened here.

Yeah, thank you. Is it the case that they're called to rejoice because God has judged rather than, because God has judged rather than, oh well, they've got their comeuppance haven't they type, you know, feeling.

[47:25] Yeah. Yeah, I think it's possible to make that distinction that God as judge is to be exalted rather than rejoicing over the misfortune of some individual person.

The mighty angel in verse 19, no, verse 21. This mighty angel is again more or less announcing the fate of Babylon, isn't it, with such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down and then saying that even the good things of human life will no longer be part of Babylon.

It's interesting, isn't it, because Babylon did have good things going on within her but that will be filtered out if you like. And the great multitude multitude in chapter 19, what's their response? There's the great multitude, are they pleased? Yeah, they are, aren't they? It's interesting, it is to God's glory when he judges.

Yeah, true and just are his judgments. It's quite sobering, isn't it? we are much more accustomed to rejoicing in his grace, which we are personally recipients of, but it's also to God's glory when he judges on godliness and sin and rebellion and in particular here judging the Babylon thing, the Babylon system.

[49:05] And that in verse three, hallelujah, the smoke from her goes up forever and ever, which was a quote about Eden, wasn't it? But here it's applied to Babylon. And I guess the ever and ever is probably filled with meaning rather than in Eden.

It was a sort of indication, but here there is forever and ever. And yeah, I think that's as far as I can take us this evening.

Here's a quote from Ian Paul who wrote a commentary on Revelation. The call in Jeremiah 51 verse 45 to come out of her in a literal sense by fleeing the city under judgment becomes here a call for ethical distinctiveness, not least in the light of the issues that were identified in the seven messages to the assemblies.

Coming out of her is not a geographical movement, but it's more to do with the way we live, isn't it? We don't want to be taken up with Babylon unquestioningly thinking how great it is.

There's a sense in which we've got to distance ourselves. And I think sometimes it's very difficult to do that. I mean, if Amazon were a bit like Babylon and if you worked for Amazon as a delivery driver, where would that leave you?

[50:37] Do you buy things from Amazon? We do. So I put here, should Christian people working in technology, trade, finance and politics give up their jobs?

And if not, what is the relevance for us? What have we been listening to? I think it just poses questions, doesn't it? And earlier it said this is a call for wisdom. nation. So I mean, the guys who are looking for jobs now, they probably need to think, what is a wise job to take?

Are there some jobs I would actually refuse because I'd be getting tied up with Babylon? And I mean, our culture, no, we've got to have our eyes open.

There's a lot of Babylonishness about what goes on around us, which we need to have our eyes open and come out of. That's not always easy, is it?

I've put this question, should we be glad when non-Christians meet failure? And I think Brenda sort of answered that. And what do we learn about God's control of history? So it's President Modi, isn't it, in India?

[51:47] It's President Trump in America, it's President Putin. And I'm actually thinking about the British Empire. Was the British Empire Babylonish? Because we're never taught that, because the British are good, they did everything right.

So it's thought-provoking, isn't it? It's really all societies, isn't it? Yeah. It's in China, you could go on, African nations, they're all sort of pulled up in sort of serving their own designs, money.

Yeah. Yeah. I suppose it's all human beings that do. Yeah, I suppose what the unique contribution of this is, it's not just human beings as individuals, it's human beings as a system, how they get together to earn money, or to get together to oppress, or to get together to indulge luxury, and get supported sort of by the system, by groups.

Steve? Yeah. Jesus said about seek first the kingdom of heaven and his righteousness, and these things will be added to you.

I mean, all this revelation is all hyperbole, isn't it? Yeah. It's painted in very extreme terms. Yes.

[53:19] Jeremiah himself had said pray for the peace of the city, and then he said when Babylon was destroyed, come out of her. Yeah. I don't think we should, it's a call to go and shut ourselves away in a monastery, or something like that.

It's saying just beware of the seductions of Babylon. Yeah. Thank you. Don't you use the microphone, they get recorded.

About, I can't remember, it was that quite, but you know, in your gut, was it like basically being part of the society before you're out of it, so in your gut makes you grow the gardens, am I totally, I'll find that it's about being in Jeremiah, I'm sure, before he said, when Babylon will be overthrown, but you need to be in it, and part of it, and it talks about growing.

Yeah, giving your daughters in marriage, and planting gardens, probably. Yeah, planting gardens, and so that idea of like, like you're just saying, like not to be, yeah, shut away, but I suppose it's that whole thing, isn't it, so hard of being in it, but not of the world, you know, in the world, but not of it, and how that looks.

Yes, that's right. There are good things in Babylon, but, and there's a but, yeah, yeah, I think, I'm just looking at the first question, the reflections, and the last two contributions about that, and I think from scripture we can see the example of Daniel and the Hebrew boys that, or men, that served within the Babylonian system, but then they showed a difference in terms of how they dealt with things.

[55:07] There was a backlash, what God, you know, came through for them, so it's a matter of working with conviction, and Jesus' instruction to go into the world, to make disciples of all nations, there's a physical world, there's the vocational world, and all of us have one skill or the other, or trainings that God has, you know, that we've gotten from, you know, our talents and different trainings that we have, and God wants us to go into different worlds, there's the finance world, there's politics, there's trade, there's technology, that God wants us to, you know, influence the system for him, so the system of Babylon is like a typology of a type of system that shuts God out, and exalts, you know, activities of the flesh, but God calls us to, you know, as we infiltrate those kinds of systems, we perpetrate the values of the kingdom, like Steve said, so I think that's the way I look at it.

Yeah, thank you very much, you summarized that very well, yeah, yeah. Being salt and light, yes, yeah. Yeah. just a thought, the Lord said you're in the world, but you're not of the world, yeah, so we can't just step out, but be in the world and be the salt and light there where you are, whatever job you're in, yeah, whatever position you're in, show the light of the Lord wherever you are.

Yeah, thank you, yes, yeah, yeah, the come out is not a geographical, is it? It's not being monks in the monastery or nuns in the nunnery, but it is something, isn't it?

It is being different and not being sucked in. Yeah, you can say something, I think. Could we have the microphone over here? Okay. I wanted to engage with the third question about God's control of history, just because we spoke a bit about that this afternoon with Ashwin and Chikundi, about the impact of British imperialism having come from, all come from countries that were colonies of, we did give you cricket, there you go, and the love for tea, but it was interesting, speaking about how often when, at least from our own countries, so I'm from Zimbabwe, Ashwin is from India, when people speak about colonialism and the impact of the British in those countries, it's spoken as though the British coming to whatever places, that was the genesis of evil, as though there was no evil before that point after, and even when you then reflect on it in hindsight, that's not to say that what didn't happen weren't great atrocities, but even now at the point of which it's like, okay, the British have left, but you're still having the caste system, you're still having oppression, you're still having all these things, and so I suppose to answer that question, what do we learn about God's control of history, terrible things happened during those times, people were treated awfully, because I suppose the change of technology at that point was people had access to go to different colonies, and so with whatever proclivities they have, whether it was going to people's countries and pillaging and abusing the people from there, you also had the gospel and the good news reaching people, reaching people groups that hadn't otherwise had it, and so often even in the teaching of history, it's never spoken about in that way, or even when you have this dialogue of like, okay, when the white people came, they gave us their God and took our riches, and now they've gone with our riches and left us with their God, but we're, listen to those things as a believer, where you're like, no, actually, you've left with a greater good, it doesn't justify the stealing or the pillaging and all those things, but we're recognizing that you often see the Lord still working and doing incredible things on the backdrop of such great evils, and I think even as we've gone through

Revelation and as we look at what's going on in and around the world, it's such a helpful thing to remember that like, you know, evil is perpetually happening because the world has fallen, but even in that people are hearing the gospel and that's the greatest good, and that's what I thought of when you spoke about particularly the British Empire, but like all those other guys.

[59:36] Thank you very much, very helpful. Yeah, sorry? Oh, screen. Yeah.

Yeah. Makes you think, doesn't it? So can I suggest, it would be nice to sing something before we go home. Can we sing, I think it's 888, and then could Jack close in prayer for us when we've sung this?

He'll need the microphone, please. I'm looking for... Our God sounds like a fortress.

888. Because I think one of the things we learn is that no empire lasts forever, and that must have been a great comfort for those people in those days, to know that whatever they were suffering, it wasn't going to go on forever.

In that book, 1984, I don't know if you've read it, he paints a picture of the future, of a boot stamping on a human face forever, which is a horrible, horrible picture to leave you with.

[60:48] But this leaves us with the idea that whatever evil it is, it won't last forever. The city of God lasts forever. So we'll sing 888, and then Jack could close in prayer when we've finished.

Whoops. Four times a night ending. Four times a night Four times a night Four times a night ending.

Four times a night Four times a night Four times a night ending. Thank you.