

Rev 26-04-29b

We are ready now to resume our study in the book of Revelation. We are looking at the mystery which is Babylon. It's not mystery Babylon, it is Babylon previously unrevealed as a representation of some truths that span human history.

In keeping with this, what I would like to do is look at the representation. Why Babylon? Why not pick Nineveh or Tyre or Moab or Ammon or another country or city? You could use Gath or another Philistine city. Why Babylon? As you remember, it was founded by Nimrod, who is one of the first individuals that the Bible describes as having set himself in direct opposition to God.

He is a mighty hunter against the Lord in Genesis 10, eight through 10. The Hebrew word there, if you ever want to look it up, is Lifne, L-I-P-H-N-E, Lifne Yahweh. He opposes the Lord in opposition to, in defiance of the Lord.

And the beginning of his kingdom is Babel in the land of Shinar. This is the founding of Babylon. You can go to the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, the old or the new edition, and get a detailed history of the city of Babylon, starting from the days of Nimrod and coming forward, much of it from historical, non-biblical records.

They will mention where they align and where rulers and such are mentioned, Ashurbanipal and that kind of thing, Nebuchadrezzar or Nebuchadnezzar. They will insert the biblical references, but much of it is based on the ancient historians and what they have recorded, tablets that they have found and translated, giving the history of this city and this region. And if you do so, I encourage you to skim a lot of that.

It's got names. It's got this guy did this and that guy did that. But every time someone conquers Babylon, they deal with the gods.

It's unlike any other city history I've ever seen. When someone comes in and takes the city, they immediately go to the temple and either install their own god or take the gods that exist there away. In some cases, they only take the hands.

They break the hands off of the idol that represents the god, and they take the hands away. And this is a clue. This is an attribute that Babylon has always represented.

Sensitivity toward a larger spiritual force at work concept that the gods are determining what happens. And it was a really big deal to seize the temple, to get control of the idols, to deport or import the idols, to break them or break them up in some way. There in Babylon, almost uniquely among cities, it has spanned history for so long into the mists of the post-flood days, all the way down to its continued existence almost to the Middle Ages before it is finally abandoned and buried by the sand and so on.

At its height, it existed on both sides of the Euphrates River. A lot of fascinating detail. You can see a map where Nebuchadnezzar's palace is north of the city.

Fascinating history. We're not going to review that because it doesn't help us with application, except that it reinforces the biblical references to Babylon as a spiritual symbol. And the tower of Babel, we will be unified.

God said, spread out and fill the earth. They said, we don't want to be scattered. And so the tower was a physical symbol of opposing God's will and God's word.

That's in Genesis 11, 1-4. And in verses 6-9, God identifies this attempt to have one world government and worldwide unity among humans as a place where rebellion against Him will preside and prevent people of faith from being able to exercise that faith. The majority of people like Babel and Babylon as their governing force.

The minority who want to worship God will be oppressed if you don't split up. And there can be enclaves, and there can be reserves. There can be places where God will hide us in the cleft of the rock.

We are under the governmental radar. We are not under the inescapable pressure that the unified people who are on Satan's side will exert. So it goes back that far, all the way back to Genesis 9, 1, where God said, be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth.

And the people in the plain of Shinar say, no, we're going to build a tower. We're all going to stay here. So God confuses the languages.

Notice also that in the confusion of languages at the tower of Babel, what is the power that unifies these people in opposition to God? It is rhetoric. It is doctrines of demons. It is policy and persuasion of a verbal nature.

Remember we just saw in the last chapter with the bold judgments and Satan and the beast and the false prophet each have a frog demon that comes out of their mouth. This is doctrines of demons. And under this remaining King that will come, the last incarnation of Babylon, if you will, seeking to dominate all the nations of the world, it is going to be done with this disinformation campaign, with propaganda, with shallow arguments that fool people who are easily deceived and are not seeking the truth.

The deception fits their predilections and they like what they hear. They have itching ears and this kind of thing scratches them. But God used Babylon to judge Judah in 2 Kings 24-25.

And you can think of New Testament passages that talk about if you have once been enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift and the power of the age to come and fall away. I'm quoting Hebrews. It is impossible to be renewed again to repentance because you are trampling the son

of God underfoot and putting him to an open shame.

And you're like the dog that returns to its vomit. And scripture says it would be better for someone to have never moved forward into the light and then to fall back into the darkness. But that's what happens.

And so the judgment from Babylon is not unlike the judgment that God places on people from Egypt. When they become apathetic and indifferent, they become slaves in Egypt. In the monarch and kingdom years, when they become apathetic and indifferent and have evil kings that they tolerate and serve, they are judged by Assyria and Babylon, each of these being heads of this beast.

And the beast itself being controlled by pagan religion, by idolatrous, heinous religions, Molech, burning children, Ashtoreth, and others. You don't even want to visit the details of some of these ancient religions. But if you don't commit to God, if you don't serve, love, and endeavor to be a good and faithful servant, you fall back unto perdition, unto loss.

That's what this represents. So, you can think of the king of Babylon in Isaiah chapter 14, I will ascend into heaven, I will be like the Most High. Daniel chapter 4 verse 30, Nebuchadnezzar says, is not this great Babylon that I have built? Habakkuk 1st chapter, verses 5-11, Babylon's strength becomes its obsession, the object of its worship.

It's all about its own strength. So, Babylon, as a spiritual principle, as a mystery that we can now see revealed across history, is first of all an embodiment of human pride, the opposite of humility, the opposite of faith, and elevating man and man's efforts to God-like status. Science is our God.

People do science. There's no other animal on the planet that does science except human beings. And so, it has its doctrines and it has its principles and it has its promises.

It has its potency, and like the magicians in Egypt, it can demonstrate, look what we have done. We can emulate what God does. We can imitate it.

We can reproduce it up to a certain point. And then it begins to fail. So, the first principle, write it down, because this is what we have to watch out for.

If we're going to flee Babylon, if we're going to go from Babylon, if we're not going to be held captive in Babylon, we have to know what Babylon represents. First of all, it is human arrogance and self-sufficiency. I have no need.

You can see the woman here in Revelation 19, I sit as queen and am no widow. We'll see this coming up. I sit as queen.

I'm not a widow. I'm not by myself because my man died. I don't need a man.

I don't need a husband. I can do better being a harlot and the mother of harlots. So, number one, what do we need to watch out for? This has gone across history.

It has been embodied in various forms. It has taken various shapes. It has worn different masks across time, but it is founded on, Babylon is defined by human arrogance and self-sufficiency.

I have no need. I sit as queen. I am no widow.

Number two, Babylon has been a persecutor, an oppressor, and a conqueror of God's people. In Psalm 137, you see this expressed. Jeremiah, and this was our reading assignment for tonight, Jeremiah, and I teased you a little bit by saying, read Jeremiah 51.

If you got to Jeremiah 51 and you remember our oft-repeated mantra that to understand scripture, we need the context, and it seems to be picking up in the middle of something in Jeremiah 51, and you really have to go back to chapter 50. So, Jeremiah chapter 50, I'm just going to skim a few pertinent salient points from this. We don't have time to read both chapters here, but Jeremiah chapter 50, the word that the Lord spoke against Babylon and against the land of the Chaldeans by Jeremiah the prophet.

Declare among the nations. Proclaim it. Set up a standard.

Proclaim and do not conceal it. Say, Babylon is taken. Bel is shamed.

Merodach is broken in pieces. Her idols are humiliated. Her images are broken in pieces.

For out of the north a nation comes up against her, which shall make her land desolate. Verse 6, My people have been lost sheep. Their shepherds have led them astray.

They have turned them away on the mountains. They have gone from mountain to hill. They have forgotten their resting place.

All who found them have devoured them. Their adversaries said, We have not offended, because they have sinned against the Lord, the habitation of justice, the Lord, the hope of their fathers. This is why Babylon ever prevailed against the people of God to begin with is they forgot their God.

They have sinned against the Lord. Verse 8, Move from the midst of Babylon. Go out of the land of the Chaldeans.

Be like the rams before the flocks. For behold, I will raise and cause to come up against Babylon an assembly of great nations from the north country. They shall array themselves against her.

From there she shall be captured, and so on. As you read this, you see the Old Testament prophecy of what we are about to see in Revelation 17-19, the destruction of Babylon. But this

represents in Revelation God's attitude toward every expression of these kinds of evil across history, and God is going to judge them all.

At the great white throne judgment, they will be judged. The individuals that made up these nations, you think about the sheep and goats judgment that the Lord Jesus described. He says the nations will be gathered before the Son of Man when he sits on the throne of his glory, the throne of his kingdom.

All the nations will be gathered, and he will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left, and then they will be judged. And the selfishness, the insensitivity, the treatment of people who were in need is described by the Lord Jesus. So to not be a blessing, but to actually be a hindrance, to be a stumbling block, to be someone who causes problems for God's people, that's Babylon.

If we end up causing fellow believers to stumble, if we end up inflicting harm on them by our insensitivity, we're Babylon. We have to pay close attention. We have to curate our interactions with fellow believers.

We are sensitive to the sphere of love in which they dwell, and we act accordingly. We are tolerant of a weaker brother. If we realize that we're the weaker brother, we look for guidance to those who are further along than we are.

The principle of the stronger and weaker. And we don't allow mental attitude sins, much less sins of the tongue, to corrupt and to create filthiness that winds up being a part of what is in the golden cup held in the hand of Babylon. We work hard to avoid that.

Flee youthful desires. Do not judge and bite and devour one another. Do not be insensitive, as the Corinthians were, when there is a gathering of believers, large or small.

The references to the table of the Lord and the self-sacrifice that Jesus emblematically presented to his disciples, and to be completely oblivious to that when around other believers. Paul really chews on the Corinthians for that. So, harmful, detrimental to God's people.

That's the second point. Third, this ends up confederating. You wind up flying with birds of a feather and gathering with them, flocking together with them, and associations change.

And instead of cultivating relationship and closeness and fellowship with believers who love the Lord and are doing their best to travel the narrow road and head for the straight gate that leads to life, who love the Word of God, who are obviously interested and invested in their spiritual journey, instead we are pulled away to other things, to things that dazzle or attract or stimulate or soothe that which God has inflicted on us by way of chastisement. Whom the Lord loves, he chastens. He scourges.

It's been translated, skins alive with a whip. I think that's a bit extreme. People don't do that to

their kids.

But to scourge, to give a painful reminder that the things are wrong and need to be fixed, God does this. Well, if you go to the salve and the painkillers of the world, instead of the balm of Gilead, instead of that which God provides to genuinely heal and to accomplish the purpose of the chastisement, so many people wind up suffering divine discipline and instead of responding to it, acknowledging and confessing wrong and getting back on the right road, they move to the world and confederate with it. So that Babylon becomes a system.

It becomes a city. It becomes a plain full of people who are all interested in building the tower. And you find others.

This, I think, describes the deconstruct, reconstruct movement, where I had a bad experience in church. Oh, look, here's some other people and we're all going to get together and say bad things about our former fellow believers. So you think about Zechariah 5, verse 11, that wickedness that is personified by a woman who gets shut up in a basket with a lead lid and two other women with stork wings fly the basket to the Shinar and set it down.

That evil is just waiting to be released, and it looks like a beautiful woman. It's alluring. It's persuasive.

It appeals. And we have to watch out. This is what happens when we are guided by emotion and feelings, instead of by truth, rationality, understanding, and wisdom.

So by the time you get to Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and the abominations of the earth, in our chapter 17 description, you see in verse 6, she is drunk with the blood of the sanctified ones. Drunk with the blood. You think, this must be some kind of metaphor.

It can't really mean that she wants the lives of those who have been redeemed, who have laid hold of atoning grace from the Lord Jesus and God the Father. But it does. And anywhere from murder in your heart to actual murder is covered under this.

I want to show you something interesting in James chapter 4. If you have your Bible, you can turn to James chapter 4. This is what we need to flee the influence that causes us to actively want to set others back, to actively cause them injury or worse. Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and you do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain.

You fight and war, yet you do not have because you do not ask. Not just looking for love in all the wrong places, but looking for all forms of satisfaction, gratification, fulfillment in life. We don't look to the Lord.

And these are believers. This is James chapter 4. He has written this to church. He isn't standing

on the street in the square talking to the people shopping in the Agora.

Believers have to watch out for this. I do want to correct one thing here. It says, you lust and do not have.

You murder and covet and cannot obtain. If you just look at this in context, you think, wow, murder? He puts that on the same level with coveting and desiring things. Seems like murder would be a little bit worse.

It's just thrown in here. I will tell you my opinion on this. Take you, take me about 35 seconds.

The word here that is translated murder is phoneuo, P-H-O-N-E-U-O. It's like phone, P-H-O-N, then E-U-O, phoneuo. There is a almost identical sounding word that is spelled differently.

And it is P-H-T-H-O-N-E-O. It doesn't have the U in the last set of syllables. This is P-H-T-H.

So if you try to say that, P-H-T-H-O-N-E-U-O, P-H-T-H-O-N-E-U-O. And so people typically would just say phoneuo. So phoneuo, phoneuo.

They sound almost the same. I think in a very early copying process, that word got missed. And phoneuo, which means to kill, got put there.

Phoneuo means to envy, to be jealous. Try that out in the context. You lust and do not have.

You are jealous and covet and cannot obtain. Makes more sense, doesn't it? I don't think, if they were guilty of murder, I think it would be a much stronger letter from James. You are jealous and covet and cannot obtain.

You fight and war, yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. This is Babylon, and it's Babylon in the church.

People are leaving the Jerusalem which is above and heading for Babylon. We are told over and over again that destruction is the fate of Babylon. Jerusalem is going to exist eternally.

There will be a new Jerusalem that comes down out of heaven. And Paul says in Galatians 4.26 that Jerusalem above is free. There is freedom there.

When we discipline ourselves, you don't need a bunch of regulations and law enforcement. There are wise things that were said by our founders that our form of government will only work with people that have moral fabric. And if the morality and the biblical foundation for ethics and treatment of one another erodes, our government will fail.

And you see that happening now. There is all of this redistricting and trying to derail and in some cases end the lives of various political figures. The moral fabric of our country has declined to the

point that there isn't a set of rules good enough.

Anytime something happens, they say, well, we need to change procedures and laws and requirements. None of those are going to fix human nature. Human nature will always find a way to express its evil, and there's no human system that can contain it.

It's like the basket in Shinar. The lid's going to come off even though it's got lead in it. The evil is going to come out.

Change the heart. And this is for us. We need to change our hearts so that we are not under law but under grace.

God doesn't have to give us a bunch of regulations. This is why there are chapters and chapters and chapters that regulate worship in Israel. There are no rules.

There are no strict guidelines for how a church is to function. A fellowship of believers is to be ruled by the Holy Spirit in grace and enjoy the presence of the Lord Jesus. Where two or three are gathered in my name, I'm in the midst.

And you don't need a bunch of rules and regulations. We must cultivate this in ourselves so that we can dwell in Jerusalem. Again, Galatians 4.26, the Jerusalem above is free.

This is what Paul says after talking about Sarah versus Hagar. Bondage or freedom. And the Jerusalem that represents bondage is the earthly Jerusalem.

That's what the Pharisees turned it into. The Jerusalem above, the New Jerusalem, there's freedom. Hebrews 12.22 makes reference to Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem.

You have not come to Mount Sinai, quaking and thundering, where rules and regulations come to try to define sin versus righteousness and to show the complete inability we have to produce righteousness. That was Sinai. Mount Zion is a whole different thing.

You have come to the heavenly Jerusalem. And we'll see this in chapter 21 of Revelation, verse 2, the holy city, New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven from God. We want to be qualified to dwell there.

You can't be born and raised and choose to live in Babylon. We might be born in Babylon, but as soon as we figure out what's going on, we need to go from Babylon. And the command is to leave.

You find it in Isaiah. You find it in Jeremiah. Go from Babylon.

We do this in spiritual terms. We can't just have a form of godliness and deny its power. Godliness, religion is a feature of Babylon and the other cities that have personified it.

You can find this if you want to look at historical adumbrations or earlier fulfillments of this pattern that Rome represents. You can see it in cities that are described as harlots in the Old Testament. So you find that Tyre is described as a harlot.

Jerusalem itself is described as a harlot. Read Nahum and you'll find that Nineveh and Tyre and these other cities are described as harlots. Judah and her sister in the northern kingdom are depicted and described in terms of harlotry by God in anticipation of judgments that fall on them.

So in Hosea chapter one through chapter three, Israel's idolatry is compared to marital unfaithfulness. In Ezekiel chapter 16 and Ezekiel 23, Jerusalem and Samaria, as I said, are described as prostitutes. It's summed up for us in James 4.4. We were just looking at James here.

Adulterers and adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? If you countenance Babylon, if you dwell in Babylon, if you perpetrate the ideas and the attitudes of Babylon, that's friendship with the world. You're enjoying the fruits of Satan's capital city. When we look at the nature of the destruction, we're going to see this in the next chapter.

It's been foretold twice now, Babylon is fallen, is fallen. The hour has come. Babylon is going to be no more.

And we're going to see a detailed description of what those say when they stand afar off in ships and look at the smoking ruin and say, oh, this is what we used to get from Babylon, which is no more. It is the final judgment of Babylon. And in ultimate terms, this is what the great white throne judgment does.

It is going to forever destroy the alternative because all the people who desire that alternative, who choose that alternative, who fiercely perpetrate, defend, and enjoy that alternative are going to be destroyed, are going to be sent to the lake of fire. Babylon will never exist in the eternal future. So why would we want to be there now? We are encouraged to flee.

The kings of the earth commit fornication with her. We don't want to do that. But we have to identify its elements.

And we've seen some of those tonight. If we can identify those things in our lives, we can exit stage left from Babylon and set our path on that narrow road through that straight gate that leads to life. And future life involves the heavenly Jerusalem, the heavenly city, the river of life, the tree of life.

So as we look at this destruction and come Sunday, we're going to be seeing in great detail the judgment that is poured out on Babylon. This is God's condemnation of these things across history. Everyone that has ever been involved in them, past, present, and future, is going to receive this judgment.

Not just whatever is the latest incarnation of Babylon in the 70th week. Everyone is going to experience that judgment. All the nations of the earth that have committed fornication with her.

Not just the ones that currently exist in that day. Every nation that has ever committed fornication, everyone that has ever become a part of Babylon, is going to receive that equal, fierce, grapes of wrath judgment from God. I don't want to be anywhere near it.

We don't want to be anywhere near it. Go from Babylon. Flee Babylon.

Jeremiah chapter 50 verse 8 and several other times in Jeremiah and in Isaiah you will find these. People of God, pay attention. Leave now.

Jesus says the equivalent in Matthew chapter 24. When you see the abomination of desolation set up, you can imagine it might take the shape of the beast with the woman riding it. Don't even go inside to get your coat.

Be as un-materialist as you can be. Flee. Get away.

Let God hide you in the cleft of the rock. This is our hope and our goal. This is what Babylon means.

That's why the Revelation spends over two chapters just talking about Babylon specifically. So important for us to understand. We'll close here in a word of prayer.

We'll pick up on Sunday and see in detail why God is judging, what God is judging, how we can identify those things and separate from them. Let's close in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for your clear communication to us.

We are not in the dark. We have no doubt where the path of righteousness lies. Your word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.

We pray that as we reflect on these truths that the Holy Spirit will help us identify places where Babylon is sinking her long fingernails into our flesh, trying to drag us away from the blessing and the opportunity that the Lord Jesus died to give us. We pray that in all things, our Savior will be glorified both now and in the ages to come. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.