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Called to Speak for the Lord – the Book of Jeremiah

The End of Babylon

July 18, 2021

Sermon Text: Jeremiah 45-51

Scripture Reading: Genesis 11:1-9

Last time we saw that chapters 45-51 of Jeremiah are pronouncements of the Lord's judgments against the enemies of His people. And that in particular, two very long chapters – 50-51 – are devoted to the judgment of Babylon. And we read all 110 verses and noted the following very interesting statements and themes:

1. A day would come when Israel and Judah would genuinely repent and seek the Lord.
2. There will be an “everlasting covenant” established between them and the Lord.
3. A restoration of Israel in such a

way that: *In those days and in that time, declares the LORD, iniquity shall be sought in Israel, and there shall be none, and sin in Judah, and none shall be found, for I will pardon those whom I leave as a remnant.*

4. Repeated command to “come out of” Babylon. Do not be a part of her and do not linger there because her judgment is imminent. “*Get out of the midst of her, my people!*” Reminds us of Lot fleeing Sodom.

We know by now that statements like these in the Old Testament are not and cannot be speaking of the physical, earthly nation of Israel. We saw that when we compared Jeremiah 31 (“house of Israel and house of Judah”) with Hebrews 8-10 and realized that Israel is an OT picture of the true Israel of God – the church.

Likewise, there is more to Babylon than just the historic city and nation of that name. So when Jeremiah is speaking of God's judgment on Babylon, he is not simply talking about the downfall of the

historic, literal Babylon. No, there is something much larger there. So let's talk about Babylon.

Babel

If you look at these verses in Daniel, you will see that Shinar is Babylon –

Dan 1:1-2 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. (2) And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the vessels of the house of God. And he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his god.

Shinar is where the tower of Babel was built. This tower was an attempt by man to make himself God. You see this same spirit down through the history of the world as men have kept on building religious towers or ziggurats as they are known, and I suppose even in our own day the efforts to build the tallest skyscraper may well share in the same ungodly, pride of man spirit.

Babylon then, as a city and then as a kingdom, was set against God's

kingdom from the start. And this wickedness brings God's judgment, just as we see at Babel. *In this fallen world, it is never God's will for the nations of the world to unite into one.* Greater and greater evil will be the only result. God has divided us by language for a reason. *And yet man continues and strives today...never learning his lesson...to be king of the world.* Just think of the ambitions of history's world conquerors.

Behind all of this Babylon spirit is the spirit of Satan. Of Antichrist. Babylon is Satan's kingdom. It is, to use another biblical term, *the world*.

2Co 4:3-4 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. (4) In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Now, Babylon is going down. It is "passing away" as John puts it and it is going up in smoke as Peter describes it. Listen now to even more conclusive proof that Babylon is far more than the historic nation of Jeremiah's day-

Rev 14:6-8 Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. (7) And he said with a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water." (8) Another angel, a second, followed, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality."

was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns. (4) The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality. (5) And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: "Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations." (6) And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. When I saw her, I marveled greatly.

Rev 16:19 The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and God remembered Babylon the great, to make her drain the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath.

Rev 18:1-24 After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was made bright with his glory. (2) And he called out with a mighty voice, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast.

Rev 17:1-6 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who is seated on many waters, (2) with whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk." (3) And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that

(3) For all nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living."

(4) Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, **“Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues;** (5) for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.

(6) Pay her back as she herself has paid back others, and repay her double for her deeds; mix a double portion for her in the cup she mixed. (7) As she glorified herself and lived in luxury, so give her a like measure of torment and mourning, since in her heart she says, ‘I sit as a queen, I am no widow, and mourning I shall never see.’ (8) For this reason her plagues will come in a single day, death and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for mighty is the Lord God who has judged her.”

(9) And **the kings of the earth**, who committed sexual immorality and lived in luxury with her, will weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning. (10) They will stand far off, in fear of her torment, and say, “Alas! Alas! You great city, you mighty city, Babylon! For in a single hour your judgment has come.” (11) **And the merchants of the earth** weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo anymore, (12) cargo of gold,

silver, jewels, pearls, fine linen, purple cloth, silk, scarlet cloth, all kinds of scented wood, all kinds of articles of ivory, all kinds of articles of costly wood, bronze, iron and marble, (13) cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves, that is, human souls. (14) “The fruit for which your soul longed has gone from you, and all your delicacies and your splendors are lost to you, never to be found again!”

(15) The merchants of these wares, who gained wealth from her, will stand far off, in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning aloud, (16) “Alas, alas, for the great city that was clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold, with jewels, and with pearls! (17) For in a single hour all this wealth has been laid waste.” And all shipmasters and seafaring men, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea, stood far off (18) and cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning, “What city was like the great city?” (19) And they threw dust on their heads as they wept and mourned, crying out, “Alas, alas, for the great city where all who had ships at sea grew rich by her wealth! For in a single hour she has been laid waste.

(20) Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her!”

(21) Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, “So will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence, and will be found no more;

(22) and the sound of harpists and musicians, of flute players and trumpeters, will be heard in you no more, and a craftsman of any craft will be found in you no more, and the sound of the mill will be heard in you no more,

(23) and the light of a lamp will shine in you no more, and the voice of bridegroom and bride will be heard in you no more, for your merchants were the great ones of the earth, and all nations were deceived by your sorcery.

(24) And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on earth.”

What is Babylon then? Babylon, Satan’s kingdom, this world, *is a political (ie, kings of the earth), economic (merchants), and religious system (persecutes the saints) that is set against and hostile toward the kingdom of God.* It has values, economics, philosophies, religions and worldview

which are each and every one set in absolute opposition to Christ. Babylon is the enemy kingdom which has waged war against God ever since Eden.

And this is what Paul has in mind when he instructs us:

Eph 6:10-12 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. (11) Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. (12) For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

That is what this world is. We may enjoy certain blessings in this life which the Lord in His grace and kindness gives us, *but never, ever forget!* This world is enemy territory. It is Babylon and its spirit and mind is absolutely set against Christ. Its literature, its art, its cultures, its science – are all perverted and twisted and used toward efforts to destroy the kingdom of God. Those who stand for Christ against Babylon are going to be persecuted and hated and even killed.

It is then the ultimate destruction of Babylon that Jeremiah is speaking of in chs 50-51. And I want us all to notice one theme in particular that Jeremiah states and which is then picked up by the New Testament writers:

Jer 51:6 **“Flee from the midst of Babylon; let every one save his life! Be not cut off in her punishment, for this is the time of the LORD's vengeance, the repayment he is rendering her.**

You see the same theme elsewhere:

Isa 52:10-12 The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. (11) **Depart, depart, go out from there; touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of her; purify yourselves, you who bear the vessels of the LORD.** (12) For you shall not go out in haste, and you shall not go in flight, for the LORD will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard.

You even see it as far back as the days of Korah's rebellion:

Fallen, Fallen is Babylon - 6

Num 16:26-27 And he spoke to the congregation, saying, **“Depart, please, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest you be swept away with all their sins.”** (27) So they got away from the dwelling of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. And Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the door of their tents, together with their wives, their sons, and their little ones.

Act 2:40 And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, **“Save yourselves from this crooked generation.”**

And of course most clearly –

2Co 6:14-18 Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? (15) What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? (16) What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (17) **Therefore go out from**

their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, (18) and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.”

It is very intentional that Paul is quoting this theme from the Old Testament. Just as the OT told God’s people to come out from Babylon and not to be defiled by participating in her ungodly philosophies, religions, politics, and economics, so Christ issues the same commands to us in the New Covenant.

Why? Here it is: *Because even though we have been born again and made new creations in Christ, even though we have been taken out of the kingdom of darkness and placed into Christ’s kingdom, we still live, for now, in Babylon. That is to say, we are still in exile.*

Listen to G.K. Beale explain it:

“The church lives in exile in this world dominated by this universal Babylon. This global Babylonian system exercises control of the nations by seducing the to live according its sinful ways: ‘For all the nations have drunk of

the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality.’ (Rev 18:3).

Here, the abhorrent behavior of the nations and kings refers figuratively to their acceptance of Babylon’s religion and idolatrous demands.

Wherever the church exists on earth, it still is living in a region that is under the influence of Babylon. Believing Israelites such as Daniel and his three friends had to live ‘in Babylon’ but they were not to be ‘of Babylon,’ and they were faithful in this respect. Through the Apostle John, an angel commands first-century churches in like manner not to allow themselves to be conformed to the worldly standards of Babylon.

God’s people are to separate from and cease to cooperate with the Babylonian system lest they too suffer its judgment. Wavering believers are commanded not to participate in the compromising idolatrous system and uncompromising believers are encouraged to maintain their faithful course. The revelation of Babylon’s sin and punishment should

cause true believers to continue not to be seduced by her and not to cooperate with her sinful ways.” [G.K. Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*]

As a new creation in Christ, indwelt and led by the Holy Spirit, the Christian, as long as he or she is living in this world, is going to be “coming out from among” Babylon. Just as Lot came out of Sodom, so we are to come out of Babylon and this continually coming out of the world system ruled by Satan is what we call sanctification. Those who claim to be Christians, but in fact are like Lot’s wife who yearned for Sodom and looked back, will perish in Babylon’s final destruction.

Let’s consider one aspect of Babylon as we end today – *Babylon as a religious system*.

In the time of the Protestant Reformation, and even long before that time, Rome was considered to be Babylon. The Reformers (understandably) concluded that the Pope and the Roman Catholic church was this Babylon the Great which God promised to destroy. But the Book of Revelation has a much wider scope than this, as do the prophecies of Jeremiah,

Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and others. *Babylon is a universal, worldwide kingdom, Rome being just one aspect of it.* Babylon as a religion, in fact, creeps in among us in many other forms than just that of Rome. The religion of the Pharisees was antichrist. So is Islam, Hinduism, and every other false religion in the world and in history.

But specifically, the Babylon religion we must be most concerned about, which is the most dangerous and deceiving, *is that religion which parades itself as Christian.* When people who claim to be Christians today are seen embracing the world’s values and philosophies and doctrines, you can be sure that they are conforming themselves to Babylon. And except they repent and turn from it, they will perish with this world when Christ comes.

Rev 3:14-19 “And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: ‘The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s creation. (15) “I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! (16) So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. (17) For you say, I am rich, I

have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. (18) I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. (19) Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.

In contrast –

Rev 2:8-11 “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: ‘The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life. (9) “I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. (10) Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. (11) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.’

The majority of visible churches today are Laodicea. The real body of Christ is Smyrna. Let’s each one of us consider very, very seriously which of the two we are.

Isa 13:1-22 The oracle concerning Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw. (2) On a bare hill raise a signal; cry aloud to them; wave the hand for them to enter the gates of the nobles. (3) I myself have commanded my consecrated ones, and have summoned my mighty men to execute my anger, my proudly exulting ones. (4) The sound of a tumult is on the mountains as of a great multitude! The sound of an uproar of kingdoms, of nations gathering together! The LORD of hosts is mustering a host for battle.

(5) They come from a distant land, from the end of the heavens, the LORD and the weapons of his indignation, to destroy the whole land. (6) Wail, for the day of the LORD is near; as destruction from the Almighty it will come! (7) Therefore all hands will be feeble, and every human heart will melt. (8) They will be dismayed: pangs and agony will seize them; they will be in anguish like a woman in labor. They will look aghast at one another; their faces will be aflame.

(9) Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it. (10) **For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light.**

(11) **I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity;** I will put an end to the pomp of the arrogant, and lay low the pompous pride of the ruthless. (12) I will make people more rare than fine gold, and mankind than the gold of Ophir.

(13) **Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its place, at the wrath of the LORD of hosts in the day of his fierce anger.** (14) And like a hunted gazelle, or like sheep with none to gather them, each will turn to his own people, and each will flee to his own land. (15) Whoever is found will be thrust through, and whoever is caught will fall by the sword. (16) Their infants will be dashed in pieces before their eyes; their houses will be plundered and their wives ravished. (17) Behold, I am stirring up the Medes against them, who have no regard for

silver and do not delight in gold. (18) Their bows will slaughter the young men; they will have no mercy on the fruit of the womb; their eyes will not pity children.

(19) And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the splendor and pomp of the Chaldeans, will be like Sodom and Gomorrah when God overthrew them. (20) It will never be inhabited or lived in for all generations; no Arab will pitch his tent there; no shepherds will make their flocks lie down there. (21) But wild animals will lie down there, and their houses will be full of howling creatures; there ostriches will dwell, and there wild goats will dance. (22) Hyenas will cry in its towers, and jackals in the pleasant palaces; its time is close at hand and its days will not be prolonged.

And chapter 14 as well. Watch again for language here that indicates this is far more than just the judgment and destruction of historic Babylon-

Isa 14:1-23 For the LORD will have compassion on Jacob and will again choose Israel, and will set them in their own land, and sojourners will join them and will attach themselves to the house

of Jacob. (2) And the peoples will take them and bring them to their place, and the house of Israel will possess them in the LORD's land as male and female slaves. They will take captive those who were their captors, and rule over those who oppressed them.

(3) When the LORD has given you rest from your pain and turmoil and the hard service with which you were made to serve, (4) you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon: "How the oppressor has ceased, the insolent fury ceased! (5) The LORD has broken the staff of the wicked, the scepter of rulers, (6) that struck the peoples in wrath with unceasing blows, that ruled the nations in anger with unrelenting persecution.

(7) The whole earth is at rest and quiet; they break forth into singing.

(8) The cypresses rejoice at you, the cedars of Lebanon, saying, "Since you were laid low, no woodcutter comes up against us." (9) Sheol beneath is stirred up to meet you when you come; it rouses the shades to greet you, all who were leaders of the earth; it raises from their thrones all who were kings of the nations. (10) All of them will answer and say to you: "You too have become as weak as we! You have become like us!" (11) Your pomp is brought down

to Sheol, the sound of your harps; maggots are laid as a bed beneath you, and worms are your covers. (12) **"How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! (13) You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; (14) I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'**

(15) But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit. (16) Those who see you will stare at you and ponder over you: **'Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms,** (17) who made the world like a desert and overthrew its cities, who did not let his prisoners go home?' (18) All the kings of the nations lie in glory, each in his own tomb; (19) but you are cast out, away from your grave, like a loathed branch, clothed with the slain, those pierced by the sword, who go down to the stones of the pit, like a dead body trampled underfoot. (20) You will not be joined with them in burial, because you have destroyed your land, you have slain your people. "May the offspring of evildoers

nevermore be named! (21) Prepare slaughter for his sons because of the guilt of their fathers, lest they rise and possess the earth, and fill the face of the world with cities.” (22) “I will rise up against them,” declares the LORD of hosts, “and will cut off from Babylon name and remnant, descendants and posterity,” declares the LORD. (23) “And I will make it a possession of the hedgehog, and pools of water, and I will sweep it with the broom of destruction,” declares the LORD of hosts.