

WHEN BABYLON COMES HOME

Disordered Loves, Digital Witness, and the Lordship of Jesus

[Title Slide - 1]

Primary Texts: Daniel 1:1-21; Matthew 12:33-37; James 3:9-12; 1 Corinthians 10:23-24; 1 Peter 2:9-12

Main Idea: Technology may be “lawful” and useful, but it is not neutral, especially if it forms our hearts away from Jesus. Babylon comes home when the church keeps Christian language but lets rival loves rule its words. Our words reveal what rules our hearts, and disciples of Jesus must resist every form of formation that trains them away from truthful, loving, holy witness. What we say in private and in public may reveal what is already present in our hearts more than it even forms it!

[SLIDE 2]: The True Issue

Slide Anchor line: The mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart .. and so the keyboard speaks from the same place of origin.

I. The Post Is the Fruit. The Heart Is the Root.

A. This Isn't Behavior Modification

This is not a sermon about making better posts. This is a sermon about the heart that produces our words.

Many of us have seen someone confess Jesus with one breath and then use the next post, comment, caption, or share to wound, mock, distort, or divide. *Sometimes the words even come wrapped in Christian vocabulary.*

B. Jesus Reveals Where Our Speech Comes From

[SLIDE 3]: Matthew 12:33-34

[SLIDE 4]: Matthew 12:35-37

Matthew 12:33-37

33 “Either make the tree good and its fruit will be good, or make the tree bad and its fruit will be bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. 34 Brood of vipers! How can you speak good things when you are evil? For the mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart. 35 A good person produces good things from his storeroom of good, and an evil

person produces evil things from his storeroom of evil. 36 I tell you that on the day of judgment people will have to account for every careless word they speak. 37 For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”

Jesus says, “The mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart.” A social media comment, a caption, and a repost is a form of witness. We aren’t talking about our salvation here, but a representation of what is really in the heart.

So the issue is not only what went public. **The issue is what has been forming privately.**

[SLIDE 5]: Post is Fruit. Heart is Root

C. The Post is the Fruit of what is Forming in the Root

- **A cruel post isn’t just a tone problem.**
- **A false post isn’t just an information problem.**
- **A slanderous post isn’t a communication problem.**

Those are fruit issues. **Jesus presses us to look at the root**, at the heart, and ask **WHY are we speaking the way that we speak.**

Transition: Daniel 1 helps us see how the heart gets formed before it is openly tested.

II. Babylon Forms Before It Demands Denial.

A. The Story Before the Test

When we think of Daniel, we often jump to the fiery furnace or the lions’ den, but this story begins way before their faith was ultimately tested.

Daniel and his friends are carried from Jerusalem into Babylon. The vessels from the house of God are carried into the house of a false god.

Babylon isn’t just making a statement of conquest, it’s making a **theological statement: your God is not at the center anymore.**

[SLIDE 6]: Babylon Forms First

Slide Anchor line: Babylon does not begin with the furnace or the lions. Babylon begins with formation.

B. The First Plan Is Formation

Babylon does not begin by demanding open denial. It begins by surrounding these young men with another story, another education, another table, another name, and another imagination.

C. The Goal Was More than Relocation

[SLIDE 7]: Anatomy of Assimilation

Another Story, New Education, New Names, A new Table

Slide Anchor line: Babylon wants more than relocation. Babylon wants formation. It wants to make them new people.

Transition: One of the main images Daniel gives us is the king's table.

[SLIDE 8]: Daniel 1:5-8

Daniel 1:5,8

5 The king assigned them daily provisions from the royal food and from the wine that he drank. They were to be trained for three years, and at the end of that time they were to attend the king.

8 Daniel determined that he would not defile himself with the king's food or with the wine he drank. So he asked permission from the chief eunuch not to defile himself.

[SLIDE 9]: Every Table Forms Us

Slide Anchor line: The king's table was not just about food. It was about formation.

III. Every Table Forms Us

A. Why The King's Table Matters

The king's food and wine weren't just sustenance. The table represented participation, dependence, status, and allegiance. To eat continually from the king's table was tantamount to being formed by Babylon's provision, Babylon's symbols, and Babylon's story. In short, it symbolized assimilation.

B. The Problem Isn't Technology By Itself

This is not an anti-technology sermon. Technology can be used faithfully. The church can **teach, encourage, disciple, pray, invite, organize, and bear witness** through digital tools.

C. The Issue is one of Formation

Almost anything can become a **formative "table"**. We are all being **disciplined**, or **formed**, by something. The News we watch, the sites we visit, the conversations we have, the church we attend, the Scriptures we do or don't read, the friends we keep ...

[SLIDE 10]: Venues of Formation

Slide Anchor line: The question is not only, "Can I use it?" The question is, "What is it training me to love?"

Ancient Babylon	Modern Platforms
Rewards: Status & Proximity to Power	Rewards: Outrage, Speed, Vanity, & Tribal Certainty
Goal: Assimilation	Goal: Engagement & Control
Requires: Dependence on the Empire	Requires: Performance & "Being Right"

*The question is not only, “Can I use it?”
The question is, “What is it training me to love?”*

Transition: One of the clearest places our loves show up is in our words.

[SLIDE 11]: James 3:9-10

[SLIDE 12]: James 3:11-12

James 3:9-12

9 With the tongue we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in God’s likeness. 10 Blessing and cursing come out of the same mouth. My brothers and sisters, these things should not be this way. 11 Does a spring pour out sweet and bitter water from the same opening? 12 Can a fig tree produce olives, my brothers and sisters, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a saltwater spring yield fresh water.

[SLIDE 13]: A Divided Mouth Shouldn’t Be Normal

Slide Anchor line: Blessing God and cursing image-bearers cannot become normal Christian speech.

IV. A Divided Mouth Shouldn’t Be Normal

A. Let James expose the contradiction.

Blessing God and cursing image-bearers cannot become normal Christian speech.

James says that with the tongue we **bless** our Lord and Father, and with it we **curse** people made in God’s likeness. Then he says, “**These things should not be this way.**”

B. Electronic Speech is No Different

- *Digital speech is still speech.*
- *Online people are still image-bearers.*

The person you disagree with is not less human because you encounter them through a screen.

C. Sanctuary Meets the Digital Screen

In the sanctuary, we sing **grace**. We **worship** the crucified King who prayed for His enemies. Then we can walk out, open a **screen**, and speak with **cruelty, share unverified outrage, or use words to crucify and slander image-bearers**.

That contradiction *should trouble us*, not because Christians must never speak the hard truth, but because *the way we speak should match the King we worship*.

Transition: Paul gives us a category bigger than “Am I allowed?”

[SLIDE 14]: 1 Corinthians 10:23-24

1 Corinthians 10:23-24

*23 “Everything is permissible,” but not everything is beneficial.
“Everything is permissible,” but not everything builds up. 24 No one is to seek his own good, but the good of the other person.*

[SLIDE 15]: Lawful Does Not Always Mean Wise

*Slide Anchor line: Christian freedom isn't self-expression without restraint.
Christian freedom is love-shaped wisdom and discernment.*

V. Lawful Does Not Always Mean Wise

*Slide Anchor line: Christian freedom isn't self-expression without restraint.
Christian freedom is love-shaped wisdom and discernment.*

A. The Law Versus Wisdom

1 Corinthians 10:23-24

*23 “Everything is permissible,” but not everything is beneficial.
“Everything is permissible,” but not everything builds up. 24 No one is to seek his own good, but the good of the other person.*

That is a deeply needed category for digital life.

B. Just Because We Can Doesn't Mean We Should

Just because something is accessible or available, doesn't mean it is wise or beneficial. Popular does not always mean faithful or that it builds up.

This is not legalism. Legalism says, "Make a rule so you can feel righteous." Wisdom says, "Bring your loves under the rule of Christ so you can walk faithfully."

[SLIDE 16]: The Wisdom Filter

Slide Anchor line: Am I using the tool, or is the tool training me

C. How Do We Know?

Ask:

- Is this beneficial?
- Does this build up?
- Does this seek the good of others?
- Is this making me more like Jesus?
- Am I using the tool, or is the tool training me?

Transition: The deepest problem is not the tool. It is the love ruling the heart.

[SLIDE 17]: Our Biggest Threat

Slide Anchor line: The deepest danger is not being carried into Babylon. It is carrying Babylon home.

VI. Our Biggest Threat is Carrying Babylon Home

The deepest danger is not being carried into Babylon. It is carrying Babylon home.

A. Similar But Different Dangers

Daniel was carried *into* Babylon by force and against his will. He didn't choose the empire's curriculum, table, names, or pressure. Yet Daniel resolved that Babylon could place him in its city, but it could not own his heart.

Our danger is different. We carry Babylon home voluntarily.

[SLIDE 18]: Diagnosing Disordered Loves

Slide Anchor line: The deepest danger is not being carried into Babylon. It is carrying Babylon home.

B. Rival Loves Beneath the Behavior

The Root Love	The Christian Wrapper
Lust for Being Right	“Love for Truth”
Addiction to Outrage	“Concern for Righteousness”
Tribal Loyalty	“Importance of Community”
Untethered Anger, Cruelty, Mockery	“Bold Courage”
Unfounded Suspicion	“Spiritual Discernment”

Good Words Make Lousy Smoke Screens for Disordered and Sinful Passions

C. The Root Versus the Fruit

We may see the fruit in what is said online, but it’s the root underneath it that exposes what we are really worshipping.

All of these “Wrappers” are actually GOOD things! But when we change the meaning of the label, the words begin to mean nothing

Transition: One of the most dangerous things we can do is baptize those rival loves and passions with false Christian language.

[SLIDE 19]: Jesus Is Not Fooled by Christian Labels

Slide Anchor line: Christian words can’t hide rival loves from Jesus.

VII. Jesus Is Not Fooled by Christian Labels

A. Jesus Sees Through the Smoke

We can use Christian words while being governed by something other than the way of Jesus. He isn't fooled by our Christian-eze language and *He's not impressed by our spiritual vocabulary that conceals a heart actually ruled by contempt.*

B. Mercy Not Condemnation

Instead of finding this as condemning, we should see this for what it is: Mercy

It is sobering because we know we are unable to hide behind words. He looks on the thoughts and intents of our hearts.

Jesus calls out the real problems and doesn't let us off the hook with platitudes and name drops.

He isn't interested in only the outward symptoms and fruit we can see, *He goes after the deep places of our hearts that need to be reordered and brought under submission to His will and His ways.*

Transition: How do we live faithfully in Babylon? We decide before the pressure arrives.

[SLIDE 20]: Settled Ahead of Time

Slide Anchor line: The heart must be settled before temptation arrives.

VIII. Our Hearts Must Be Settled Ahead of Time

The heart must be settled before temptation arrives.

A. Daniel was determined before the temptation

Daniel 1:8

Daniel determined that he would not defile himself with the king's food or with the wine he drank. So he asked permission from the chief eunuch not to defile himself.

He had already determined he wouldn't defile himself. That resolve didn't happen in the middle of a rage cycle. It happened before the pressure to conform ever arrived.

Faithfulness online (and truly offline and in every situation) doesn't usually show up when we are already **angry**, already **scrolling**, already **reacting**, already **typing**, and already **certain** someone needs to be corrected right now.

As Exiles ourselves, **our mission isn't ...**

... to withdraw in fear

... conquer with contempt

But to bear witness as a people who belong to another King and an entirely different Kingdom than any of those found on this earth. **Look at 1 Peter 2**

....

[SLIDE 21]: 1 Peter 2:9-10

[SLIDE 22]: 1 Peter 2:11-12

B. We, Too, Are Exiles Like Daniel

1 Peter 2:9-12

9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

*11 Dear friends, I urge you as **strangers and exiles** to abstain from sinful desires that wage war against the soul. 12 Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles,[h] so that when they slander you as evildoers, they will observe your good works and will glorify God on the day he visits.*

Peter says we are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a people for God's possession. Then he calls us ***strangers and exiles who live honorably before the world.***

*Transition: We need **more than a filter**. We need a Savior and commitment to live our lives according to His ways, no matter what.*

[SLIDE 23]: Jesus Sets the Example

*Slide Anchor line: **Daniel had a settled heart in Babylon, but Jesus has the perfectly undivided heart.***

IX. Jesus Sets the Example

A. Daniel Wasn't Jesus, but ...

Daniel had a settled heart in Babylon, but Jesus has the perfectly undivided heart.

He didn't leave us without an example of what this looks like. Jesus is the faithful Son with the **perfectly undivided heart**.

B. Jesus' Examples

When the enemy **offered** Him the **kingdoms** of the world on the enemy's terms, **Jesus refused**.

When He was **reviled**, He **refused to revile in return**.

When He spoke **truth**, He never spoke from **disordered** love, but from **compassioned righteousness**.

When He confronted **sin**, He was **never driven by ego, fear, status, tribal approval, or the need to win**. He was motivated by the **Truth and what glorifies the Father**.

C. More Than an Example

Jesus is more than an example of better and more controlled speech. **He is our King, our substitute, and our source of new life. It's time we treated Him as such!**

Transition: The invitation is not “try harder to sound better.” The invitation is to bring the root to Jesus.

[SLIDE 24]: Forgiveness & Reordering

Slide Anchor line: Jesus does more than forgive our careless words, He reorders our disordered loves.

X. Jesus Forgives and Reorders Our Disordered Loves

Jesus does more than forgive our careless words, He reorders our disordered loves.

A. There's good news for disordered hearts

Thankfully, there's good news for those of us who have spoken carelessly, posted wrongly, shared poorly, loved wrong things, and defended sinful ways and people: **Jesus died for all of us with disordered hearts.**

At the cross, Jesus bore the sin of our words and the sinful roots of our heart beneath our words.

He was mocked, falsely accused, reviled, and crucified, **yet He did not answer with sinful contempt.** *He rose as King, not just to forgive us, but to remake us.*

[SLIDE 25]: A Moment for Specific Surrender

Slide Anchor line: Bring Him the part of your heart that has learned to enjoy what grieves Him.

B. We Need Specific Repentance

This is not the time for vague non-descript guilt. This is a moment for **specific surrender and repentance.**

- Bring Him your divided loves
- Bring Him your hunger to be right
- Bring Him your need for approval

- Bring Him your outrage, fear, suspicion, contempt, carelessness, and desire to win

Have the courage to ask ...

- Where have I loved being right more than being truthful?
- Where have I loved winning more than loving my neighbor?
- Where have I loved my tribe more than His kingdom?
- Where have I loved attention more than holiness?
- Where have I used words to harm people made in God's image?

Bring Him the part of your heart that has learned to enjoy what grieves Him.

Let Him reorder what Babylon has trained. Let Him form a heart that produces words that are holy, truthful, gentle, courageous, and visibly His.

[SLIDE 26]: Visibly His

Slide Anchor line: We should strive to Belong so fully to Jesus that even our casual words reveal another kingdom. His Kingdom..

The call is not simply "post less badly." The call is, "come home to Jesus." Let Him form a heart that produces words that are holy, truthful, gentle, and courageous.

We should strive to Belong so fully to Jesus that even our casual words reveal another kingdom. His Kingdom.