



**St Peter's Cathedral, North Adelaide  
The Most Reverend Jeffrey Driver  
Archbishop of Adelaide**

**Synod Eucharist Sermon  
Friday 25 May 2007**

## **TWO CITIES**

There's an urban ecology in Scripture, from beginning to end.

There's a tale of two cities that stretches from Genesis to Revelation.

Its a tale that explores the vocation and beauty of human live lived together, and also its distortion and darkness.

One of our two cities is the first mentioned in Scripture, established, it says at beginning of the Kingdom of Nimrod:

*And they said to one another,  
"Come let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly"  
And they had brick for stone and bitumen for mortar.  
Then they said, "Come let us build for ourselves a city...." (Gen. 1.3)*

And they called the city Babel,  
*"because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth" (Gen.11.9)*

Babel, or Babylon was the city of arrogant exploitation.  
It was the city that lived to make a name for itself,  
where individualism was exalted to the highest good:

*You said in your own heart,  
I will ascend to heaven.  
I will raise my throne  
above the stars of God (Isaiah 14.13)*

Babylon of course was an actual city and what marked out a city in the ancient world were its walls ... walls that excluded and made those outside "others". But among the walled cities of the ancient world, it was Babylon which was greatly feared for its harsh repression of those it captured and used as slaves.

It was also a city that collapsed, due in part to its wanton abuse of the forests in surrounding mountains which it stripped for its war machine, with the inevitable soil erosion leading to silting of the Euphrates and the collapse of the irrigation system on which it depended.

But if Babylon was a real city, in Scripture it was more than that. It was a symbolic city; the city of division and domination.

As part of the Bible's primeval history, this story is our story...this can be any...every human city, every human community.

Whenever the towers of domination rise and human arrogance exalts itself so that community is lost in confusion and division, then we are living in Babylon.

And Babylon is also the city of exile, not just in Judah's history, but symbolically, when empire marches and power is used to conquer and divide and impose and to take people into the place of exile:

*By the rivers of Babylon,  
where we sat down and wept..." (Ps 137.1)*

By the rivers of Babylon...

Tanks against stones in Gaza.

In Iraq the very powerful seeking to impose peace, but as invaders and by their own definitions;

In Africa, economic captivity packaged as aid;

In Australia the tragic story of our relationship with our indigenous people, a growing gap between rich and poor through a time of economic boom, and an election already showing signs of being contested through the politics of division.

And lest at this moment we are feeling too comforted and righteous in our cathedral pews – an Anglican Church of Australia still too preoccupied with its own place and survival, and far too absorbed with its internal tribal warfare!

*by the rivers of Babylon,  
where we sat down and wept...*

From Genesis to Revelation and the great vision of another city: Zion – the symbolic Jerusalem.

Jerusalem of course was a real city, with the turbulent history that all cities have.

Yet it was a city with a sense of destiny and vocation;  
the city that knew itself as the place where peace and justice were to prevail; the city of God, the place of gathering for the nations.

The tears of Jesus, wept over this city,  
were recognition of this vision and grief at its failure,  
that its day of visitation had not been received.

But John the divine gives us a vision of Jerusalem made new, of human life together restored:

*"And I saw the holy city" (Rev.21.2)*  
he wrote of his revelation vision

A city for the healing of the nations

A city where the gates are never shut on those who would come to it.

A city with trees for every season,  
and water sparkling like crystal

A city where every tear will be wiped away.

The Arab soccer player in the Israeli team;

The Australian soldiers repairing an Islamic village school in Afghanistan;  
Young people from Adelaide standing at a genocide grave in Rwanda, with tears quietly running:

*"And I saw the holy city",*  
wrote St John the Divine.

The faith and grief of a small community closing a parish Church because they knew it was time and they had the courage;  
The corned beef and mashed potatoes served with lashings of care at St Mary's picket fence:

*"And I saw the holy city",*  
wrote St John the Divine.

And I saw it ...In moments of our life together.  
Small, wonderful.  
Sparkles of the New Jerusalem  
among the mundane, the petty,  
the too often tribal. There to see; there to call us.

And there we live.  
Always we live between them, choosing between them,  
or not choosing -  
between the two cities of human living:  
Babylon and Jerusalem.

We gather for Synod on the eve of Pentecost,  
and the words of Jesus ring in our ears:  
*"Thus it is written that the Messiah is to suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed from in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised, so stay here in the city until you are clothed with power from on high (Lk 24.46-49)*

"Wait in Jerusalem", Jesus said.  
Wait together.  
Be in the one place together.  
Wait in the place of peace and unity.  
Wait in the place of expectation and vision.  
Wait for the endowment that will make you witnesses.  
Could there be a better injunction for Synod?

Wait together.  
Be in the one place together.  
Wait in the place of peace and unity.  
Wait in the place of expectation and vision.  
Wait for the endowment that will make you witnesses

Go to Jerusalem and wait for the Spirit's coming!

+ Jeffrey