

# The Captivity of the Church

## Lesson 4: Captives of Babylon

### The Error of Our Ways

I was reading a new survey released recently from The Barna Group that was analyzing the “unchurched population” in the U.S., which, according to Barna is close to 100 million. “Unchurched was defined as those who “have not attended a religious service of any type during the past six months”. By this definition 33% of Americans are “unchurched”, up from 20% in the early nineties.

I have said all of this to show how the word “church” is used erroneously in our society. Look at this direct quote from the Barna Group survey analysis:

“Within the various faith communities residing in the U.S., Christians are the most consistent church goers. . . . people aligned with a faith other than Christianity are two-and-a-half times as likely as self-designated Christians to be unchurched (61% versus 24%, respectively).”

See, even Barna is using “church” to mean something that Jesus did not mean when He said Ekklesia. Only Christians are “churched”. How could people aligned with another religion be “churched” or “unchurched”? Our society now uses “church” as a generic term to mean attend religious services, regardless of whether or not those services are Christian. No wonder we have trouble understanding the scriptural functioning of “church” or how this functioning is manifested as the Body of Christ.

### The Spirit of Babylon

When God created man, he built into us the desire and ability to worship Him. When Adam sinned, we were cut off, separated, from God by our sin. In our fallen condition we substituted other things to be worshiped as God and we developed our own way of how to worship God. We see the seed of this in the actions of Cain and Abel when they offered sacrifice to God.<sup>1</sup> Abel understood God's requirements (probably Adam had told both of his sons about the Garden experience and the details of their expulsion) and offered a blood sacrifice; whereas, Cain offered produce, the fruit of the ground. This was an affront to God since God had cursed the ground so that we would receive from it only by the “sweat of our brow”<sup>2</sup>. So, Cain proceeded to offer God what he thought was good and right. (Remember, the tree was the knowledge of good and evil—that is, the ability to decide ourselves, like God, what was right or wrong, good or evil.)

Cain was mad when God did not accept his offering. However, God asked him why he was mad and told him to do what was right and everything would be all right. This makes Cain madder and he goes

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1 Genesis 4:3-5

2 Genesis 3:17-19

and kills Abel because he is mad at God and jealous of his brother.<sup>3</sup>

After the flood, the seed of establishing our own methods of worship came to full bloom in the descendants of Ham, the son of Noah. Nimrod was his descendant that established his kingdom that became known as Babel.<sup>4</sup> It was there that men were united in purpose that was apart from and contrary to the purpose of God as discussed in previous lessons. It is at Babel that we see the seeds that grow into Babylon and end in Revelation with Mystery Babylon.

The seeds are revealed in the scriptures in Genesis.

#### Genesis 11:4 NASB

- (4) They said, "Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top *will reach* into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."

### Come Let Us Build

The natural man, the soulish man, wants to build monuments to ourselves. When confronted with spiritual reality that we don't understand, our first impulse is to build. This was true of Peter when Moses and Elijah appeared to Jesus and spoke with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration. Until God told him to shut up, Peter was saying this is good, let's build three tabernacles, one for each of you.<sup>5</sup>

This same thing happens as we touch the spiritual reality of the Ekklesia. We immediately want to build something; however, we can't build the Church, only Jesus can build His Ekklesia. The moment that we move from "gathering together as an assembly" to meeting as an organization or a corporation, we have moved from the true to the false. Our "let us build" mentality causes us to create and sustain a "religious organization" rather than living in the family of God. Our natural understanding and methodology replaces the Holy Spirit and we give place to selfish ambitions and "dead" works.

### A Tower Top

We want to pass on to our descendants all the knowledge that our ancestors have accumulated. In the scripture above, the literal Hebrew says "a tower with a top like unto the heavens". The people of Babel had received forbidden knowledge, secret knowledge, opened to them by fallen angels and demons that had to do with astrology, the Zodiac. They wanted to preserve this knowledge for the future and put it on top of a pyramid style of tower so that, if God brought another flood, it would still be standing afterwards.

We do the same thing. We hand down traditions from our fathers, regardless whether these are right or wrong. After all, it is the way that we do things.

Most of these traditions are actually a hindrance to our proper walk with the Lord. Jesus even said that

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3 Genesis 4:5-8

4 Genesis 10:10

5 Mark 9:3-7

our traditions invalidate the commandments of God making them ineffectual or useless.<sup>6</sup>

We also preserve our methodologies, our “how to’s” on making spiritual things work—reducing the work of the Holy Spirit to formulas and legalistic rituals—gathering people into our frenetic activities “to take our city for Jesus” or “open the windows of heaven” or “repent for the sins of our ancestors”. We forget that the spirit of Babylon is the spirit of religion and religious activity. We are always reaching for one more activity that will create a spiritual break through. Where is the simple unity and oneness with Christ and the following of the Holy Spirit that turned Jerusalem upside down in the book of Acts? Actually, we have no need of any religious activity whatsoever. We only need to believe and be obedient.

### Build a Reputation

We want to “make a name for ourselves”. This is the real motivation behind much ministry. We have adopted the world’s standards for success valuing size, numbers, wealth, power, and recognition. We want our church, our ministry, ourselves, to be famous. We shamelessly promote these things to the world to build a reputation. We let ambition drive us and we manipulate everything around us to insure our successful reputation.

### Results of Spirit of Babylon

Besides the typical issues of pride and ambition, the primary result of the spirit of Babylon is idolatry. When the children of Israel were carried away into Babylonian captivity, the king required that they bow down to his golden idol image. Some refused and as a result God delivered the three Hebrew youths from the fiery furnace and protected Daniel in the lions den.

When the captivity was over and the Hebrews could return to their land, many chose to stay in Babylon because they liked the culture and activities. Many of the ones who returned brought with them the idolatrous nature that they had learned in Babylon. They had set up idols in their hearts.

#### Ezekiel 14:3-5 NASB

- (3) "Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts and have put right before their faces the stumbling block of their iniquity. Should I be consulted by them at all?
- (4) "Therefore speak to them and tell them, "Thus says the Lord GOD, "Any man of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his heart, puts right before his face the stumbling block of his iniquity, and *then* comes to the prophet, I the LORD will be brought to give him an answer in the matter in view of the multitude of his idols,
- (5) in order to lay hold of the hearts of the house of Israel who are estranged from Me through all their idols."

Babylon is the religious system that rides on the world kingdoms. The Church has been taken captive to this religious system and the results are the idols that we have set up in our hearts. We have bowed down to the golden image of man yet we want to inquire of the Lord and act as if we have been piously faithful to God while our iniquity is right before our face. The Lord says that He will answer according

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<sup>6</sup> Mark 7:13

to the idols in the heart. This is the result of the Lord's answer.

#### Ezekiel 14:8 NASB

(8) "I will set My face against that man and make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from among My people. So you will know that I am the LORD.

We must repent and cast down the idols of our heart. WE must do this, not the Lord. If we don't, how can we fully follow the Holy Spirit?

### Consequences of Idolatry

1. **Spiritual attacks and oppression.** When we have idols in our hearts, we cannot resist the assaults of the Enemy. Satan takes advantage of this to further solidify his position. The results are spiritual attacks and oppression that can't be stopped with spiritual warfare. This is why there is so much spiritual turmoil and depression in the church today.
2. **Character issues in ministry.** Idols in the heart that relate to ministry result in all sorts of character issues, such as pride, ambition, manipulation, strife and divisions. Depression, discouragement and hopelessness abound as fallout to spiritual collapse.
3. **Carnal, occultic practices.** Serving idols causes witchcraft and divination to abound. Prayers and intercession become soulish, powered by witchcraft as we pray what we want instead of the will of God. We want the people and circumstances to conform to our will.
4. **Confusion and division.** When God brought judgment at the tower of Babel, the result was confusion and division. Babel means confusion. Babylon is still under God's judgment. Whenever we operate in the spirit of Babylon, we automatically move under God's judgment resulting in confusion, division and scattering. This is the Lord restraining the fulfillment of man's purposes apart from Him.

From the days of Constantine forward the Church married the world system and was taken captive by Babylon, the religious system. We see the idolatrous outcome of this in the Catholic Church, which, in my opinion, is still living in Babylon. The Protestant Reformation was an attempt for the people of God to come out of Babylon; however, those that left still carried idols in their hearts and have continued to profane the living temple of the Lord with the idols of Babylon. Much, if not all, of the religious trappings of the Protestant Church are idols carried in the heart from the Babylonish Catholic Church.

The word of the Lord to His people is the same word He spoke to the house of Israel:

#### Ezekiel 14:6 NASB

(6) "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Repent and turn away from your idols and turn your faces away from all your abominations.

This is where the Protestant Church is today. It is time for us to turn away from the abominations of our idols. These include buildings, pulpits, steeples, clergy and laity, false authority structure, and many other aspects of religious service without the power of the Spirit of God. As the Lord confronts us, our response should be to repent and pick up our weapons.

## 2 Corinthians 10:4-6 NASB

- (4) for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.
- (5) *We are* destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and *we are* taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.
- (6) and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.

## Revelation 18:4 NASB

- (4) I heard another voice from heaven, saying, "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues;

We need to pay attention to what the Spirit is saying to the Church.