

Coming Out of Babylon

Introduction

In our previous lessons we saw that the Enemy is trying to create a false thing, a false “church” that is patterned after the real thing. The false is a deception that is designed to keep the people of God from fulfilling their purpose and prevent them from coming into a full relationship with Him. We saw that man's attempt to come into unity of purpose apart from God resulted in the tower of Babel resulting in God's judgment by division and confusion. Man has continually tried to build a religion that unifies man outside of the purposes of God. Babylon is a scriptural picture of this attempt. Babylon is a mindset, a culture, a lifestyle, a society, a religious substitute for the real “church” and the Kingdom of God. Babylon appears good to our old nature—it is appealing to the flesh. Since the tower of Babel, Babylon has been under judgment and that continues today—its end result is destruction.

The Example of Israel

After Sinai and eventually after coming into the land promised by God, Israel was established as a nation—a special people unto God. The Scriptures record cycles of apostasy and idolatry within the nation where they tested the longsuffering of the Lord. When David found favor with the Lord, the promise is made to David that he would always have a descendant on the throne.

However, David's son, Solomon, had a good beginning as the king but had a sorry end. Solomon departed from the commandments of the Lord and had his heart turned after other gods because of the influence of many of his wives.

1 Kings 11:1-6 NKJV But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, *and* Hittites— (2) from the nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of Israel, "You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love. (3) And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. (4) For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as *was* the heart of his father David. (5) For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. (6) Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not fully follow the LORD, as *did* his father David.

The Lord became angry with Solomon and His longsuffering came to an end after the Lord appeared to him twice and warned him about the idolatry.

1 Kings 11:9-13 NKJV So the LORD became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the LORD God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, (10) and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not keep what the LORD had commanded. (11) Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, "Because

you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant. (12) Nevertheless I will not do it in your days, for the sake of your father David; I will tear it out of the hand of your son. (13) However I will not tear away the whole kingdom; I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of my servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen."

When Solomon died, the kingdom was split between Solomon's son, Rehoboam, and Solomon's servant, Jeroboam. This was done by the hand of the Lord according to His word to Solomon.

False Worship Established

God gave Jeroboam ten tribes and he became king over Israel. God gave Rehoboam the tribe of Judah and he became king over Judah. This was done "*that My servant David may always have a lamp before Me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen for Myself, to put My name there.*"

The result of all of this is a divided people—the kingdom is split between the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom. However, in doing this, God did not change nor make allowance for any change in worship procedures. Neither did He change the place, method, ritual, or order of worship.

Even though the people were divided, His requirements for worship were not divided nor modified. Jerusalem was the place that the Lord had put His Name and He had left Judah, which included Jerusalem, with the son of Solomon for the sake of His promise to David and for the sake of Jerusalem.

The required feasts were to be eaten before the Lord in Jerusalem. The priests served in the Temple, which was in Jerusalem and they served according to the ordinances established by Moses, which he had received from God. Jerusalem was still the spiritual center of the Lord's work and service. This presented a problem to Jeroboam.

1 Kings 12:26-30 NKJV And Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom may return to the house of David: (27) If these people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn back to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and go back to Rehoboam king of Judah." (28) Therefore the king asked advice, made two calves of gold, and said to the people, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!" (29) And he set up one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. (30) Now this thing became a sin, for the people went *to worship* before the one as far as Dan.

Jeroboam's solution to his problem was to create two new places to worship, Bethel and Dan. He made two golden calf idols and put them with his new altars and told the people of Israel that these were the gods who had brought them out of Egypt. In other words, he called the golden calves Jehovah. But, he didn't stop there. He made a complete system of worship for Israel.

1 Kings 12:31-33 NKJV He made shrines on the high places, and made priests from every class of people, who were not of the sons of Levi. (32) Jeroboam ordained a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, like the feast that *was* in

Judah, and offered sacrifices on the altar. So he did at Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made. And at Bethel he installed the priests of the high places which he had made. (33) So he made offerings on the altar which he had made at Bethel on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, in the month which he had devised in his own heart. And he ordained a feast for the children of Israel, and offered sacrifices on the altar and burned incense.

All that Jeroboam did was patterned after the real thing in Jerusalem. He didn't re-invent the wheel but duplicated what he knew of the worship of Jehovah and, probably, what he knew of the idols that Solomon worshiped with his many wives.

Jeroboam created and established:

1. a false god that he called Jehovah;
2. a false altar of worship;
3. false places of worship;
4. false priests;
5. false feasts; and
6. false rituals and methods of worship.

He did all of this for the *convenience* of the people and *to maintain his own power and position*.

The Northern Kingdom was taken captive by the nation of Assyria and, later, the Southern Kingdom by Babylon.

2 Kings 17:5-6 NKJV Now the king of Assyria went throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria and besieged it for three years. (6) In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away to Assyria, and placed them in Halah and by the Habor, the River of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

2 Kings 17:20-23 NKJV And the LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel, afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of plunderers, until He had cast them from His sight. (21) For He tore Israel from the house of David, and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. Then Jeroboam drove Israel from following the LORD, and made them commit a great sin. (22) For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not depart from them, (23) until the LORD removed Israel out of His sight, as He had said by all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away from their own land to Assyria, *as it is* to this day.

[Keep in mind that Jesus, by His natural lineage, came through the house of David, that He was from the tribe of Judah. He is the fulfillment of the promise to David that his descendant would be established on the throne of the Kingdom forever. This scripture says that God tore Israel from the house of David. What does that mean in terms of God's promises? To Israel? To us?]

2 Kings 17:24-34 NKJV Then the king of Assyria brought *people* from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed *them* in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel; and they took possession of Samaria and dwelt in its cities. (25) And it was so, at the beginning of their dwelling there, *that* they did not fear the LORD; therefore the

LORD sent lions among them, which killed *some* of them. (26) So they spoke to the king of Assyria, saying, "The nations whom you have removed and placed in the cities of Samaria do not know the rituals of the God of the land; therefore He has sent lions among them, and indeed, they are killing them because they do not know the rituals of the God of the land." (27) Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, "Send there one of the priests whom you brought from there; let him go and dwell there, and let him teach them the rituals of the God of the land." (28) Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the LORD. (29) However every nation continued to make gods of its own, and put *them* in the shrines on the high places which the Samaritans had made, *every* nation in the cities where they dwelt. (30) The men of Babylon made Succoth Benoth, the men of Cuth made Nergal, the men of Hamath made Ashima, (31) and the Avites made Nibhaz and Tartak; and the Sepharvites burned their children in fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim. (32) So they feared the LORD, and from every class they appointed for themselves priests of the high places, who sacrificed for them in the shrines of the high places. (33) They feared the LORD, yet served their own gods—according to the rituals of the nations from among whom they were carried away. (34) To this day they continue practicing the former rituals; they do not fear the LORD, nor do they follow their statutes or their ordinances, or the law and commandment which the LORD had commanded the children of Jacob, whom He named Israel,

The king of Assyria imported people from Babylon and other places to occupy the land of Samaria. The Lord sent lions that killed many of the pagan immigrants because they had no fear of the Lord God. However, the imported people decided that they didn't know the "rituals of the God of the land", because they thought of the Lord God as a territorial god like those of the other lands (I Kings 20:28). They requested from the king of Assyria a priest that could teach them the "rituals of the God of the land". So, the king sent them a priest to dwell in Bethel. This was one of those that had been taken from the area.

Now, consider for a moment, what kind of priest was this? The false priests established by Jeroboam had perpetuated themselves along with the false worship system that they served. These were concentrated in Bethel and Dan. So, the priests taken from the area by the king of Assyria were the false priests created by Jeroboam. Therefore, when the king of Assyria sent the imported people of Samaria a priest, he sent them back one of the false priests. The purpose of this false priest was to teach the immigrants to the land "how they should fear the Lord". Can a false priest teach anyone the real fear of the Lord? I don't think so.

They feared the Lord with a *false fear* taught to them by a *false priest*, which did not cause them to leave their idols. The result is given in verse 34. In reality, they do not fear the Lord. They merely perform "the rituals of the God of the land". Their fear of the Lord is taught by the commandments of men as Isaiah said

Isaiah 29:13 NKJV Therefore the Lord said: "Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths And honor Me with their lips, But have removed their hearts far from Me, And their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men.

False priests can only teach the fear of the Lord by the teaching, doctrine, and commandments of men. This is why the Samaritans did not know what they worshiped. Their worship was empty, false, vain even though it was similar to Jewish worship, because it had been patterned after the real thing by Jeroboam.

Applied to Us

This has tremendous application to us. Constantine was our Jeroboam. When he made Christianity an official religion of Rome, he created the same type of false worship system that Jeroboam had created. Constantine established false altars serving false gods, false holy places, false priests, false feasts, and false rituals and methods of worship just like Jeroboam. The pagans came into the false system bringing their gods and rituals until real believers became a minority, which became more and more diluted by the false system with succeeding generations.

But what about the Protestant Reformation, didn't that restore the real thing? If you have a fully false system and you remove part of it, what is left is still false. Martin Luther curbed some of the excesses of the Roman Catholic Church by proclaiming the truth of salvation by grace and not by works, but the other aspects of the false system created by Constantine remained and have continued to this day.

One of the principles of the Lord is that when man begins to unite in a common purpose apart from the purpose of God, He will divinely divide the false unity. This is what happened with the Protestant Reformation and is still what is happening with our various denominational splits.

The false is continually divided by the Lord until the season when He will allow the false to come forth as Mystery Babylon. However, God has always maintained His Remnant—He has not forsaken the house of David. The Lion of the Tribe of Judah has always had a people. We are the hidden servants who have given ourselves as a living sacrifice to the Lord Jesus. This remnant is being purified and prepared for the last days work of proclaiming the Kingdom of the Lord.

Our Babylonian Captivity

Following the Old Testament example of Israel, the New Testament people of God have been taken captive in a similar manner to a “spiritual Babylon”. This eventually developed into the Denominational structure that we have today. This is the Institutional Church and it is a form of Babylon following the various false practices with false altars, false priests, false feasts, false doctrines, and a multitude of idols.

Just as with Israel there was a time when Babylon was God's will. They were to pray for their city, build houses, plant fields, etc., that is, settle down for the long haul because, by God's word, they would be in captivity for 70 years. Then, there came a time when God turned their captivity. They were to forsake Babylon and return to the Israel. I believe that this is also true of us.

For a period of time, the Institutional Church has been within God's permissive will for His people and we were to make the best of it. However, I believe that God is turning our captivity. That we are now to forsake Babylon and return to the True Israel of God, Mount Zion, the Heavenly Jerusalem, the Body of Christ, the Temple of the Holy Spirit, the Kingdom of God.

This would mean “coming out” of the Institutional Church and forsaking its idols and its false accoutrements. There are two parts to this. We “come out” in order to “go in”. We come out of the false to enter into the true. Therefore, we have to be able to discern the difference. Moving from a building to a home is not “coming out of Babylon”. There is much more that is involved.

Come Out of Her My People

The question is, “How do I come out and what do I do after coming out?” First, you don't know that you need to come out until the Holy Spirit begins to open your eyes and bring you some understanding. So, there comes a dissatisfaction with the “status quo”; the sense that there must be something more. As we begin to seek the Lord and search His Word, we will begin to see the Truth and we will begin to recognize the Scriptural problems in the false church.

Some things that you will begin to see:

1. the Institutional Church of which you are a part is NOT the Body of Christ;
2. the “Pastor” is NOT the head of the Church;
3. the Sunday morning meeting is NOT the worship that the Lord desires;
4. the building is NOT the house of the Lord and has little or no meaning to Him;
5. the programs of the Institutional Church are NOT the work of the ministry.

There are many lesser things that you will begin to see but these are the major ones. As this happens, you will begin to seek the real things that correspond to the things that you begin to see as incorrect. As the Holy Spirit begins to show you the Truth, you will become very dissatisfied and frustrated with your Institutional Church. The problem then becomes “what is the alternative?”

The Alternative

In our Old Testament example, when the captivity of the children of Israel was turned and they were to leave Babylon and return to Jerusalem and their land, most stayed in Babylon and did not return. They liked Babylon and had settled in with enjoyable lives and saw no reason to leave. It was comfortable for them. The Rabbis had even implemented and enhanced the Synagogue system as a substitute for Jerusalem and the Temple. They continued with the substitute as if it were the real thing.

The remnant that did return had difficulties. Cities had to be rebuilt; walls rebuilt; even the Temple had to be restored. They had to do this while resisting those who didn't want it done. They had to re-learn the commands and requirements of the Lord.

It is the same with us. The alternative must be built. We must come together as the living Temple of the Holy Spirit. We must re-learn the commands and requirements of the Lord. He alone is building His Church. We must do this while resisting those who ridicule us or condemn us or shun us. Our alternative is a new wineskin that is supple and flexible. It is provided by the Holy Spirit. If we can be led by Him, we will find our place in it.

We must remember that God said to come out of Babylon not change it. It is impossible for us to change the Institutional Church. It is what it is. We can't revive it because it was never alive to begin with. We can't restore it because it is not what God is building. We can't dress it up and make it acceptable because it is a product of judgment—the divinely divided false thing. We can only come out of it.

So, we repent and ask God's forgiveness for following men and idols. We turn away from the false and seek the True. We rely on the Lord to bring us into fellowship with Him and His people that provides true worship and unity of Spirit. We believe that the Lord will bring us forth as His Body in the earth.

No one can give us a pattern for this. We can only study His Word and rely on the Holy Spirit to bring us together “bone to his bone” so that we are built together as a living body with every joint supplying the needs of the Body and doing the work intended by the Lord.