

Jerusalem and Babylon

by Richard E. Bieber

The Church must put God first and seek the Kingdom of God to avoid captivity and experience revival.

Scripture: Jeremiah 50:1, Matthew 6:24, Galatians 6:7

Topics: "Kingdom Of God", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches about the unseen war between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Satan, symbolized by Jerusalem and Babylon. Jerusalem represents the city of Spirit, God, and peace, while Babylon symbolizes the city of flesh, mammon, and war. The sermon emphasizes the importance of putting God first in our hearts, seeking His Kingdom above all else, and trusting that He will provide for all our needs. It warns against living a Babylonian lifestyle focused on money, possessions, and worldly desires, which leads to spiritual captivity and separation from God.

Transcript

READ: Jeremiah 50:1-5

Matthew 6:24-34

Galatians 6:7-5

In scripture there are two cities which were the centers of an unseen war raging between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Satan: Jerusalem and Babylon. From the time Melchizedek, king of Jerusalem, came out to receive tithes of Abraham and give him bread and wine, to the time Jesus of Nazareth offered his body and blood for the atonement of the human race, Jerusalem was the scene of holy things. Jerusalem was like a fountain giving forth God's blessing on the earth. But there was a city on the plain hundreds of miles to the east that played a different role --- the city of Babylon. Babylon was more glamorous with its towers and palaces and magnificent gardens. Babylon was the center of fashions and trade, the intellectual center of the world. Yet from this city there went forth an influence of evil which corrupted men and ruined nations. Beneath the glitter there was a strange supernatural decadence.

Jerusalem was the city of Spirit. Babylon was the city of flesh. Jerusalem was the city of God. Babylon was the city of mammon. Jerusalem was the city of peace. Babylon was the city of war.

The prosperity and abundance of Babylon had an influence on the entire known world. Songs that were sung in Babylon soon became popular in Damascus and Tyre and Sidon. Jewelry worn by the women in

Babylon was soon seen on woman everywhere.

There came a time when the people who lived in Jerusalem and had patterned their lives on the worship of God became dazzled like everyone else by the exciting ways of Babylon. They began to forget God and to spend their lives chasing after money and the things that money can buy.

Even the priests in the Temple got caught in the whirl of mammon. The important things in life became exotic foods, fine clothes, riches and abundance.

Sometimes a wild-looking man from the country would come to Jerusalem and climb the Temple stairs and denounce this hypocrisy and call the people to repent. Or a young Jeremiah would warn the people that Jerusalem is going to be destroyed by the judgment of God. But no one listened. They were busy dressing well, eating and drinking well. Their only thought was, "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? How shall we be clothed?"

Then one day armies appeared at the walls of Jerusalem. The city was conquered and the people were tied to each other with long ropes and led away slaves to Babylon. Why not? They had been living as Babylonians. Why shouldn't they dwell there? So they spent the rest of their lives pining for Jerusalem. "O, if we could only go home! If I could only see the Temple again before I die! Let me see Zion again!" But they died in Babylon.

"Be not deceived, God is not mocked. For whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."

The people of Jerusalem sowed to the flesh, lived for mammon, chose the Babylonian way of life. And when you choose the Babylonian way of life, you end up in Babylon, a slave to the relentless, "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? How shall we be clothed?"

Today the spiritual Jerusalem is not that city in the Middle East that bears the name. Spiritual Jerusalem is the Body of Christ... The true Body of Christ now plays the role that Jerusalem once played and will play again some day. We are Jerusalem now. And Babylon today is not that mound of earth where Nebuchadnezzar once ruled. Babylon is a spirit which has come to dwell in every city on this planet. Babylon is the world around us. Babylon is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life. Babylon is the sports page, the movie ad, the fashion magazine, the war headlines, the stock prices. Babylon is wherever men live by the cry, "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? How shall we be clothed?"

The difference between the people who belong to spiritual Jerusalem and the people who belong to Babylon is quite simple. The people of Jerusalem put God first in their hearts, absolutely first. And because God is first, everything they need, everything, is provided somehow by God. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you."

If we seek God and his will first, our churches will not have to worry about money. If we need money to expand our ministry, to send a missionary, to build a parking lot, the money will come. We look to God, and he provides what we need.

This is true in our private lives, too. When we seek God's kingdom and his righteousness every temporal need we have is met as simply as the sun rises and the rain falls. Keep your eyes on God and do your

work and your hands will never be empty. You won't have to waste time worrying about tomorrow's bread.

But the Church of Jesus Christ, in the main, does not live that way these days. From the individual believer to the giant church organization, the eye is not fixed on God and his holy love, but on things. What are we going to eat? What are we going to wear? How are we going to buy this? Where will we get the money for that?

The big thing in Christendom today is Money. Regardless of what they say, or how they sweeten the surface, it's Money first, God second. Money is the most sought after, the most worried about, the most seriously considered thing in the lives of individual believers as well as in the life of their churches. And when this happens, it means that the people of God are following the Babylonian way of life. They may be in Jerusalem, but they are living like Babylonians.

One doesn't have to be a prophet to see where this leads. The same thing is going to happen to us that happened to Jerusalem of old. What you sow you reap. If millions of professing Christians in this land have chosen to live by the ways of Babylon --- the way of money-love, the way of body-lust, the way of riches, glamour, violence and war --- then the day will soon come when the armies of Babylon will reach the gates of our city. And we shall go into captivity. We shall be enslaved to the way of life we have chosen, trapped in a prison of circumstances that will permit us to think of nothing but, "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? How shall we be clothed?"

We shall look back on the day when God was near and weep. But Mammon will be on us with the whip. Money will drive us like a tyrant. You may think things are commercial now. Wait another ten years. You may think our cities are lawless now. Chaos has only begun. You see war clouds now. But Babylon has not yet released the storm that's coming.

International upheaval. Urban chaos. Economic uncertainty. These are the shock waves caused by the fact that the Church of Jesus Christ is now going into a Babylonian Captivity worse than any it has known in all its two thousand years.

But in this captivity the Church will come to repentance and will become Jerusalem once more. As the Jews of old came to their senses when they wept by the waters of Babylon, so the Church, the people of God, will become humble and broken and single-minded and obedient during this time of trial.

In those days and in that time, saith the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping they shall go and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion (Jerusalem) with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.

They will weep. They will seek the way back to Jerusalem. They will commit themselves to the living God once more. And then the Church will be revived. It will be a smaller Church, a poorer Church, a humbler Church. But God will be first in its heart, and it will live once more by God's Spirit.

Of course, we don't have to go through all this in order to come to our senses. We do not have to wait until war and plague and pestilence strike the land before we become pure in heart. We can begin to live like citizens of Jerusalem now, if we will. It's a matter of making up our minds. Whom are we serving: Mammon or God? What are we after: things or God?

To live for God and his Kingdom in a world where Money is god, yes, in an era when Money is god even for the Church, is not easy. We ourselves have formed habits of anxiety and covetousness over the years that have rooted themselves in our very hearts. To begin to live like citizens of Jerusalem we really have to follow the footsteps of the people in Jeremiah's prophecy.....

Going and weeping they shall go. Weeping. Repentance before God for the years we have wasted in vanity. Weeping for the years we have wasted on the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life. The years we have wasted pretending a faith that was never there.

When God begins to show you what you look like to him, you'll weep. And when you begin to weep, don't try to stop. Better to weep now with godly sorrow that leads to repentance than to weep in that place where the weeping never stops.

And they shall seek the Lord their God They shall ask the way to Zion With their faces thitherward.

When a man says that he is looking for God, he is deceiving himself unless his face is set toward Zion unless he is asking and looking and seeking help every chance he gets. Seek the Kingdom of God. Don't claim to be trying to find the Holy Spirit when you are careless about getting fellowship with other believers, when your ears are dull to the Master's call to repentance. Those who are seeking in deed and in truth will find. But people who say they are looking for God and spend 90% of their time poking around the alleys of Babylon, living for mammon, will never find God.

Saying, Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord In a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.

Let's put God first. Let's seek first the Kingdom of God.

Many are Christians only by mood. When they are in the mood, when they feel pious, or frightened, or guilty, then they are Christians. When the mood is over, they are back in Babylon. Do you go to work only when you're in the mood? Do you wash the clothes only when you feel like it? You do these things whether you feel like it or not, because they are important. They have to be done.

Are you married when you're in the mood and single when you're not? If you are married, you're married day and night, wherever you are. So if you are committed to God, it's God first all the time. Moods have nothing to do with it. You put him first with an act of will at the beginning of each day, at the start of each week, in the way you handle your money, in the way you spend your time. God first. We have joined ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.

When the people of Jerusalem went into captivity, there was a little remnant that was permitted to stay behind in the Holy City. Life was not going to be easy for them. But they and their children would somehow hold the city --- what was left of it --- until the captives would be permitted to come home.

Today, while the Church in vast numbers is being led into captivity to Babylon again, there will be a remnant of people left behind to keep the flame of faith alive until better days return. Whether we are in that remnant or not depends on these questions:

Whom are we serving, God or Mammon?

What are we worried about, God's will or tomorrow's bread?

Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness,

and all these things shall be added unto you.

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