

Coming out of Babylon

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The Disobedience of the Children of Israel resulted in the Babylonian captivity. Seventy years later the opportunity to return to their homeland and rebuild Jerusalem, the temple and their way of life under God was presented.

Those captive Jews choosing to return to Palestine and rebuild the temple were faced with unprecedented Change and resistance from friends and foes alike.

The Jews in Babylonian captivity were never forced, the opportunity was only offered for them to come out of Babylon and return...the call was sent out.

Years later, the Apostle John, with divine inspiration, would pen words which were keyed to Jewish days of captivity in Babylon, yet, somehow, mysteriously connected and directed to Christians then... and perhaps for Christians now, as well.....

Revelations 18:4-8 (NIV) *Then I heard another voice from heaven say:*

Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes. Give back to her as she has given; pay her back double for what she has done. Mix her a double portion from her own cup. Give her as much torture and grief as the glory and luxury she gave

herself. In her heart she boasts, 'I sit as queen; I am not a widow, and I will never mourn.' Therefore in one day her plagues will overtake her: death, mourning and famine. She will be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her.

The parallel's between the Babylonian captivity of the ancient Jews and the captivation of the Church in today's world culture is striking. I think this parallel was ordained by God to reveal a picture and a warning in type, to the Church and to provide illumination into the cost of disobedience and foreshadow the strange repetition of history and things to come for the Church of Jesus Christ in the earth.

For the Jews, coming out of Babylonian captivity and having been immersed in her culture for so long would require unprecedented change. Most Jews, then, were unwilling to participate in this change. Many had been born in Babylon and had never even experienced a government truly under God's rule.

Historians have calculated that only about one sixth of all of the Jews living in Babylonian captivity, at the time the opportunity was present to return to their homeland and rebuild, choose to return. The majorities of the captive Jews remained in Babylon and were apparently assimilated into Babylonian culture without notable exception.

It has been said that; "*Change is one of the most difficult things that people must deal with*". I believe that change is also one of the most difficult things the Church and individual Christians must face.

Change may require; choosing the road less traveled, the straight and narrow way and dying to self interests.

Change may require; not only choosing to follow God but seeking God to reveal, destroy and change the dark motivations of our wicked hearts and therefore the manifest works of our flesh.

Change may require; relying on the word of God to be true when our flesh, our wicked hearts, our self righteous efforts, our traditional religious systems and the worlds systems are saying; *"go the other way"*.

Change may require us to be ready to tear down the familiar and to uproot and destroy so much we have learned to rely on.

Change may require us to confront and or set aside tradition, reputation, acknowledgment, adulation, money, things, and perceived security.

Change may require us to face resistance and adversity from friends, family, and the world at large.

I am reminded of the word of God to Jeremiah in the first chapter, verses 9 and 10;

...Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, "Now, I have put my words in your mouth. See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant."

In Matthew 7: beginning with verse 21 through verse 27: Jesus words are recorded;

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles? Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the

rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it **did not fall**, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

Whatever else the above verses in Matthew 7: may speak to, I believe these verses speak of **ENTRY** into the Kingdom of Heaven (or the rule of God within Christians). In other words; **to humble ourselves and choose to submit our flesh to the rule of God**, which is resident and available inside of every born again Christian. Therefore, let us **choose** to allow God to change us, when and where He deems it necessary. To allow Him to work both to will and to do His good pleasure in our hearts and therefore from a heart changed by Him will come forth His righteous manifest actions (**His righteousness**).

Christians, like the children of Israel were promised, with conditions, a land flowing with good stuff. In our case our promised land is inside of us, a land to be filled with PEACE, JOY AND RIGHTEOUSNESS in the Holy Ghost as we humble ourselves to His rule. However, even with the new birth, and the work of the Holy Spirit, we still have our free will... "**the freedom to choose**"... to obey or to disobey God's rule from within our hearts.

Babylonian captivity came to the Jews as a result of disobedience. I must remind myself that captivity comes to the Church and to individual Christians for the same reasons it came to the children of Israel; **sustained, un-repentant disobedience**.

ENTRY into the rule of God is still optional for Christians. God has his hand stretched out still, inviting His children to enter into and participate in His form of Government. I am talking to us born again Christians who therefore have the Holy Spirit and have the ability to hear God's words and have choices set before us to seek and obey God's rule within our hearts. The unregenerate can not yet even see the kingdom of God let alone **enter** in and participate in God's government.

The sufferings we go through as we willingly submit to the Holy Spirit in the process of our death to self interest, self will, self government, and the worlds way of doing things, can not be compared to the Glory that will be revealed in those Christians who will accept the invitation to pursue Kingdom rule with all perseverance.

True... narrow is the way, however; creation is waiting.....it's still our move! His hand is outstretched still.....

"Come out of her my people".

Romans 8: 18-19

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.

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