

How to Recognize Babylonian Inclusiveness

3-Year Bible Reading Plan

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Bible Text: Ezekiel 16
Preached On: Sunday, February 14, 2021

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Tonight, we find ourselves in a chapter of scripture that may not make sense on first reading. The book of Ezekiel 16.

Now let me remind you as we turn to the book of Ezekiel that it is probably one of, if not the most difficult book in all of the Bible to comprehend, to understand, but one of the things about reading through the Bible is we don't get the privilege of picking the ones that are easy versus the ones that are hard, we don't get the privilege of saying, "Well, that one's a little bit difficult. Let's just, you know, skip around it." One of the blessed curses of walking through scripture is you just navigate the waters no matter how difficult, no matter how choppy they are, and Ezekiel for me is probably one of the choppiest sections in all of the Bible. But one of the things that hopefully has made it a little bit more palatable is that it's one of those unique sections in the Bible that everything that takes place is in regards to the Babylonian captivity. Remember that Ezekiel along with Daniel are the two prophets that didn't speak about events to come before they happened but spoke of them while they were occurring. One of the things that I focus particularly on Sunday mornings is the dating of what we know of Ezekiel, that he begins to receive visions, at least five, maybe 10 years after that initial, shall we say, that initial movement into Jerusalem that Nebuchadnezzar initiated, and the entirety of his message is over the course of the 70 year Babylonian captivity.

Now the reason that that is critically important for us today is not only does it show us the mentality or the approach or the attitude of what we know as Babylon, but it also foreshadows for us the Babylon that is to come. You see, Babylon is not just an entity of days past. You get to the book of Revelation 17 and 18, it talks about mystery Babylon with all those end times events, and so one of the great things about studying and learning history, not just history in general but biblical history, is that it also shares with us what's going to occur in days ahead.

One of the things that was taught to me years ago, one of the most insightful things that anybody told me: read the New Testament to understand what to believe, read the Old Testament to discover what's going to happen next because so many of the prophecies from the Old Testament have either, A, not been fulfilled, or their fulfillment was a type or a picture of things to come.

One of the things that I think will help you as you study the book of Ezekiel, particularly as we get to the latter half therein, as we see all kinds of visions and concepts and temples and all this weird stuff, is that when you get to the end before what we know as the physically literal return of Jesus Christ, not only does the Bible speak of mystery Babylon but we have an entity that is evil at its core, that miraculously, supernaturally, not by the hand of God but allowed by the hand of God, dons all humanity under one giant human umbrella with one common goal, one command purpose, one common world.

Now in the secular world we hear terms like new world order and things such as that, really that's just a secular way of describing what the Bible's been saying for thousands of years that is to come, and one of the things that I've hopefully somewhat assisted in the reading of Ezekiel is to show us not only what it looked like to live in Babylon, why they were in Babylon, but that we might understand that you and I are walking through the days of Babylon as well. Now I don't believe that we're in those last days right before the immediate return of Jesus Christ, that's a whole other Bible study for another night, but that being said, the tentacles, the birth pains, the foreshadowing would most assuredly be that which would be experienced by those last generations of believers.

We've been talking about this Babylonian influence and the fact that we are walking in the midst thereof today, and so today I want to deal with a very politically incorrect topic. Some of you got a little excited, some of you got a little bit nervous. I want to talk about the problem with Babylonian inclusiveness. Now I know what you're thinking, "I thought we're supposed to include people." We're going to talk about that in just a moment. I want to go into chapter 16, I'm going to read the first eight verses, then verses 14 through 15, kind of use this as a springboard for us. We're going to cover a lot of material tonight in a very short amount of time, but I want you to see that the mentality of Babylon is not something that's coming around the corner but something that is currently deeply embedded in our culture. It says,

1 Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2 Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, 3 And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite. 4 And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. 5 None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the lothing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born. 6 And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live. 7 I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to excellent ornaments: thy breasts are fashioned, and thine hair is grown, whereas thou wast naked and bare. 8 Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over

thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine.

14 And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord GOD. 15 But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was.

Now that first passage I read is a beautiful oratory of when nobody else wanted you, you were my beloved. When everybody left you to die, when everybody desired your extinction, I made you my own. And how did Israel respond? Verses 14 and 15, they fell into the same trap that we do, they thought, "Ah, it's because of myself. It's because of my own innate qualities." And hence kind of a nutshell of why they ended up in Babylon. The Lord had told them for hundreds of years, "Repent. This is not because of your innateness, this is because of my grace and my mercy." And they began to believe, "Oh, no, no, it's because we're so wise. It's because we've made good decisions, we've made good investments." And thus they end up in Babylon.

Babylon was a world of inclusivity. If you don't believe me, when Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2, which would have taken place about 5-10 years before this writing, when he erected that huge statue of himself, he demanded that when the music played everybody do the exact same thing and pay homage to him. So tonight, I want to begin by defining the difference between being inclusive and including. Now that may sound like potato and potato but it's not. These are just actual dictionary definitions. To be inclusive is to not exclude based on a difference or particulars. To be including is to contain as a whole or part varied categories.

Now allow me to extrapolate in a very contemporary illustration that has caused a whole lot of verbiage, so to speak. You may or may not be aware, I'm sure you are, that we live in a world today that even in the sports world does not want to draw any lines of distinction between respective genders. Inclusivity says it doesn't matter how you were born, how you identify, however it may be, if that is your wish to compete, feel free to do so. That is why a couple weekends ago in the state indoor track championship in another state, all three, I guess, winners, first, second and third place of a respective sprinting event in the "girls" events were won by men who identified as ladies. That's what it means to be inclusive. Inclusive based on the definition means you cannot exclude even based on obvious blatant differences, particulars, or categories. So what's the difference? Including says we're going to have 100 meter race and anybody who wants to enter can, and whoever wins, wins. That's the difference. You see, to be inclusive means that even if you don't technically qualify for the event, you can enter it if you claim to do so, including says it's not about the qualifications, it's about the event, and we're just going to let anybody who wants to run, run.

I wish I could say that sports was the most devastating of the contemporary illustrations but sadly it's one of the nominal ones because we all know at the end of the day the

medals will rust and the trophies will break down. It's not in 100 meter relays and power lifting competitions and in the great sports of our world where we're seeing this happen, we're basically being told in today's Babylon that it doesn't matter what the differences, the particulars or the categories are, all individuals must be treated and responded to as they claim to be.

Now let me draw a distinction. When one is inclusive, association is more important than obvious differences. Association, the group, the construct is more important than obvious differences. When you are including somebody, differences are allowed to participate based on common rules. Now allow me to go to a much more serious eternal topic. Jesus Christ was absolutely positively non-inclusive. He said that he was the only means of salvation. Inclusivity says believe what you want to believe as long as you're sincere, but I'm a great one to believe in. Jesus was exclusive, "Nobody comes to the Father but by me." However, Jesus was very including in his description. You say, "What do you mean he was including?" Notice the definition. Differences.

Okay, let's go to Galatians 3. In Christ there is no male, there is no female, there is no slave owner, there is no slave, there is no Jew, there is no Gentile. Does that mean that when you come to faith in Jesus Christ, you surrender your gender? No. Does that mean you surrender your job meaning it doesn't exist anymore? No. What it's saying is if you're willing to admit you've got a sin problem that only Jesus can fix, you can be a man or a woman and get saved. You can be a Jew or a Gentile and get saved. You can be rich or poor. You see, including it says that any and all are willing as they're willing to submit to the excluding factor. Inclusiveness says that multiple means can all be right at the same time.

Now I understand a little bit cerebral tonight and I get it, but these are real world Babylonian issues that you and I are dealing with that begin in the sports world but end at the doors of eternity. How many people one day are going to face God face-to-face and say, "But they told me as long as I was sincere, I'm okay. They told me that it doesn't matter if it was Mohammad, Jesus or Buddha, they're all great leaders." Jesus says, "But that's not what my word said." By the way, Jesus never told anybody they could not be saved unless they weren't willing to repent of their sins. From the vilest offender to Pontius Pilate himself, all of them were included in his plan but his plan was very exclusive, was it not?

So allow me to give you a couple of depictions here. Why is this important? As we walk through contemporary Babylon, as we look at the Babylon of the future, I want to address a couple of issues that may seem far-fetched as far as chronology is concerned but it shows you where we're headed. The Bible speaks of the person of the Antichrist. The book of Revelation calls him the beast formally. 1 John calls him the Antichrist. 2 Thessalonians, he's the son of perdition. He's also referred to as the man of lawlessness. You do understand if the one day coming ruler of the world is described as the man of lawlessness, then "we've got to become a land of lawlessness" where the laws don't matter. It's what we desire, intend, want, etc.

Allow me to give you another politically incorrect illustration. Matthew 19, Jesus is speaking about the concept of marriage and putting away and divorce and all these issues that actually we dealt a whole lot with this weekend with our guests. With that being said, he said that God made them, this is in Matthew 19 from the mouth of Jesus, he made them male and female. That's the words of Jesus, not the words of a dogmatic denomination. Why is that important? Because the law of God says there are two genders. When you begin to state that there can be more, you've entered the realm of lawlessness. You have entered a world that says it doesn't matter what God has said, this is what we desire, this is what we want.

So that's important because what this ends up doing is it shows us a depiction of one day whom the Antichrist will be and what he will do. It will be a world you can be anything you want to be, at any time, and nobody's going to care as long as we are inclusive. But there's even a bigger prophetic picture. I mentioned Revelation 17 and 18, it talks about mystery Babylon. The leader of mystery Babylon, that Antichrist figure, this is important, Revelation 13, you know that famous mark of the beast and everybody likes to speculate what it is and who it will be and the 666, and I'm not here to discuss all that, but what's interesting in Mark 13, it says that the mark, it is a number of a man. Why is that important? Because if you remove all the qualifications of gender, you've removed the prophetic connection to how he will get the world under his umbrella. Do you see where this is headed? This isn't just about who can play a sport. This isn't just about how we can identify. What is taking place here is a very slow and can I say it's becoming to speed up, a methodology of not only preparing us but allow me to use a word, grooming us to one day accept everything that Babylon and its leader proposes to humanity.

Depiction number 2. Why is this important? Because Israel is referred to the wife of Hosea. Israel is the wife of God through Hosea. Well, if we break down the lines of distinction, if we no longer have categories of gender and relationship, then we have removed the depiction of who is the true wife of the Lord. Let's make it more personal. The church, we are called the bride of Christ. Ephesians 5, if you've ever had hopefully the privilege of being at a wedding ceremony that I've officiated, anytime that I read this passage in one of those settings, I always qualify it, that it is one of those passages that our world today sees as archaic, out-of-date, somewhat, shall we say, bigoted. What's interesting, though, is all the descriptions and, by the way, the description of the wife is actually only a third of the length of the description of the husband, conveniently oftentimes we only read the first third, we've got to read it all, but when you get to the very end, it talks very particularly about the husband, very particularly about the wife. It is not non-binary, to use contemporary terms. You know what it says at the end? "And I show you a mystery." The mystery of the church.

You see, when we begin to be inclusive, we not only set the stage for Babylon and the Antichrist, we take away the picture of Israel and the picture of the church, and we are no longer in a unique and special relationship with him, we just become muddied up with every other belief system in the world. Hear me clearly: this is more important than who wins a gold medal in a relay race, this is about what is coming with a world dominion

order led by the Antichrist and a "Israel and church" that is dissolved into the masses of nothingness.

So to Ezekiel 16 as far as walking through, I just want to talk about four simple things that God shows them in the midst of this, because this is the world they're living in. Remember Nebuchadnezzar bowed down and it's all very inclusive, okay? The first and we've read it, is what we call the provision of God. He was very protective to them. He said, "I brought you up as a child. I nourished you when the world wanted to throw you away. I took care of you." An incredible picture because we know today that over the course of time, what we know as the Jewish people have been the most persecuted people the world has ever known throughout time, and even in their inception all the way back to the book of Genesis 12, walking through the Old Testament, even from a secular history, all we have to do is read the book of Esther and Haman is wanting to get rid of all of them. I mean, it's a consistent desire for genocide. The Lord not only protected but promised them, "You are mine." But here's the problem. We read verse 14 and 15, the problem is pride. Now we know the Bible says that pride goeth before a fall, and I'm going to go there just because the word is there. Do you find it interesting that we have today very culturally accepted expressions of people's body that we call a celebration of pride? They're called parades of pride. There's flags of pride. We call them laws of pride. Now I don't think there could be a more ignorant thing to do in all the world. Why would we live a life and then label it pride? Because he says that's the problem, the problem is you're proud. The problem is you've literally thumbed your nose at God and say, "I don't care what you think, God, this is what I'm gonna do." You know that rarely ever, in fact, never works out.

The second thing as far as the problem is the part that they played. Verse 30 through 32, it says,

30 How weak is thine heart, saith the Lord GOD, seeing thou doest all these things [now let me just go ahead and warn your ears here] the work of an imperious whorish woman; 31 In that thou buildest thine eminent place in the head of every way, and makest thine high place in every street; and hast not been as an harlot, in that thou scornest hire; 32 But as a wife that committeth adultery, which taketh strangers instead of her husband!

If that's not a visual, I don't know what is. You see, the problem with humanity, the problem with Israel, and dare I say the problem with the "church today," is we would rather be intimate with the world than with God. We would rather to have the accolades of the world than of God. And we're no different than Israel. We are falling into the exact same trap. We want the awards of Babylon, we want the accolades of Babylon, we want everything of Babylon. Why? Because we're saying, "God, we got this. We can do this better." You to remember these were the same people who 150 years earlier, their cousins to the north fell in the same trap and they didn't learn the lesson. You and I have the privilege of seeing thousands of years of human history and yet what do we say? "Ah, we've got this. We've evolved. We're contemporary. We got it."

So what's the response of God? Look in verse 36,

36 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thy filthiness was poured out, and thy nakedness discovered through thy whoredoms with thy lovers, and with all the idols of thy abominations, and by the blood of thy children, which thou didst give unto them; 37 Behold, therefore I will gather all thy lovers, with whom thou hast taken pleasure, and all them that thou hast loved, with all them that thou hast hated; I will even gather them round about against thee, and will discover thy nakedness unto them, that they may see all thy nakedness. 38 And I will judge thee, as women that break wedlock and shed blood are judged; and I will give thee blood in fury and jealousy.

In other words, when we thumb our nose at God, when we're prideful toward a God who has cared for us, he has birthed us, he has taken care of us, his response is judgment.

Now you see on the outline, the first thing I put is it's proper. It is absolutely proper and right and deserved that God would judge his people for their behavior. Just like as a parent, a grandparent or a caretaker, you discipline a child or someone you're in the care of for their misbehavior. You do so – listen to me clearly – we don't discipline out of arrogance, we discipline because we love them so much we don't want them to continue on the path they're on. It is absolutely proper that God would respond in this way and his punishment, as you see in the following verses, is very simple. It's found in Galatians 6 again. You reap what you sow. It's a simple agricultural term, is it not? In fact, Galatians 6 says if you sow things to the flesh, you will reap things of the flesh. If you sow things of the spirit, you will reap things of the spirit. The problem is that the people in Babylon who claim to be the followers of the Lord, they want to sow in flesh and reap in spirit. They want to be as Babylon and then expect the blessings of God. And as you read the rest of chapter 16, all the Lord simply says is, "I'm just letting occur what has already been set up to occur when you violate or trespass my regulations."

So what are the picture of things to come? I want you to fast forward to verse 44. Again, chapter 16 is one of those we could spend hours on, but I know that many of you have children on our campus, you need to get home and such, so I promise we'll just spend a few more minutes. A picture of things to come. I'm not talking Antichrist, I'm not talking Babylon, I'm not talking all those things prophetically, I'm talking about tomorrow morning when you wake up, I'm talking about three months from now, six months from now, a couple of years from now. What are the things to come? Look in verse 44,

44 Behold, every one that useth proverbs shall use this proverb against thee, saying, As is the mother, so is her daughter.

Now by the way, it could have easily said, "As is the father, so is his son," alright? We jokingly say that in our culture when our children do something of whatever response, we jokingly say, "Well, the fruit does not fall far from the tree, does it?" I've had several

people, particularly in regards to my oldest son, walk in a room and go, "He's yours." Why? Because if you transplanted our heads, the bodies would remain the same. I mean, it's just that's the way it is. But this isn't talking about physical appearance, this is basically saying that what the mothers and the fathers do, their children are going to continue. Now let me take it just a step further as you read through chapter 16. What parents do in moderation, their children will do to excess. In other words, you can do all the studies you want, the rebellion we saw against the Lord a generation ago has become more expansive in this generation, and it will become more expansive in the next, and more in the next. I could give you every statistic that's out there even about faithfulness to the things of God and church, the statistics are all headed the wrong way. Why? Because if it's not important to a parent, it's really not going to be important to their kids. Or on the flip side, if the parent promotes it, the kids will celebrate it. What are we seeing? In the days ahead if we, the people of God, do not repent of our sin, we can only expect the influence of Babylon to increase exponentially.

The last thing I want to share is proximity. Go to verse 56. This is mentioned several times in chapter 16. It says,

56 For thy sister Sodom was not mentioned by thy mouth in the day of thy pride,

I find it interesting that the Israelites were not guilty technically of the sin of Sodom in the book of Ezekiel. There's no evidence that the Israelites were behaving in said manner. What is the Lord saying to them? He is saying to them that because of where they are, the behavior of Sodom is right around the corner, it eventually will lead to, and yet that brings us full circle all the way back to inclusivity. You and I live in a world today that is even a step further than verse 56. The proximity of what we're seeing in Ezekiel is not something that will occur in the next day or two, it is that which has already occurred.

We are now living in the throes of Babylon. I know it's not on the outline and we're not all the way through the book of Ezekiel yet, but the simple question is how do we respond? If it looks like Babylon, and it smells like Babylon, it needs to be rejected. If it looks and smells like the Lord, it needs to be received and accepted. When we claim the name of the Lord and then hold hands with Babylon, we're doing exactly what chapter 16 says, we are behaving in the exact same manner. The book of 1 Peter it says that judgment must begin at the house of the Lord, and if we don't see the world like Jesus did, then Babylon will continue to thrive exponentially.

Jesus was exclusive but he was including. He said he was the only way. He said the word of God was absolute truth and it didn't matter gender, age, or social standing. If you were willing to confess that, then you could be included in his family and in his plan. He was not inclusive, but he was including. Babylon is inclusive.