

Where Is The Beast? (Part 6)

Attributes of Israel

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We're going to begin this sermon by turning to Deuteronomy 7:5-11.

Deuteronomy 7:5-11 But thus shall you deal with them [meaning the people of the land]: you shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire. For you are a holy people unto the LOORD your God: the LOORD your God has chosen you to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LOORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you because you were more in number than any people; for you were the fewest of all people: But because the LOORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, has the LOORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the LOORD your God, he is God, the faithful God, which keeps covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations. And repays them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hates him, he will repay him to his face. You shall therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command you this day, to do them.

This series of verses is important to this sermon because God clearly and succinctly expresses that the basis of His and Israel's relationship is found in **His** faithfulness to **His** promises. And at the same time He openly declares His love for her (Israel), adding that she could add nothing to Him. In other words, He did not seek her out to get something from her, as in the manner of most human beings. The verses also tell us that Israel's responsibility was to be faithful to Him in that relationship by keeping His commandments, statutes, and judgments. There is nothing hidden nor mysterious in these terms. It is a basic and clear stating of the terms of the relationship.

The book of Deuteronomy was written early in their relationship, but later writings portray what happened over the course of history. This sermon is devoted to showing **why** this tremendously beneficial-to-Israel's relationship degenerated, and how she **earned** the names of Sodom, Egypt, harlot, Babylon, and mother of harlots in the book of Revelation.

This sermon is indeed a part of the "Where Is The Beast?" series, but like Revelation has inset chapters to provide background material, this sermon might be considered also as somewhat of a digression, hopefully intended to help us to see valuable application for us as "*the Israel of God*." Valuable for us, because we are cut from the same bolt of cloth as our ancestors.

Brethren, we are living right in the midst of the end-time epitomization of "BABYLON THE GREAT," and we, like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are surrounded by it, and we are subject to its influence almost on a minute-by-minute daily basis. Regardless of where we live we cannot flee from it physically. We are captive within it because it has become a worldwide system, but we can resist it and come out from its spiritual influence if we understand the proclivity we have that draws us to it, and what we must do to counteract its seductive attraction.

Turn with me to Psalm 78:56-57, which is a wonderful overview of the history of the people of Israel in its relationship with God.

Psalm 78:56-57 Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies: But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow.

Psalm 78:9-11 The children of Ephraim, being armed and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle. [Notice this "turned back" which keeps repeating itself over and over again.] They kept not the covenant of God, ...[That's what they turned back from.] ...and refused to walk in his law; And forgot his works and his wonders that he had showed them.

Now let's leap forward in time to the book of Hosea.

Hosea 7:11 Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.

I think that you understand that when God uses the term "Ephraim" He may be referring to the actual family of Ephraim, but it's even more likely that He's using Ephraim like He uses the term "Jerusalem" for the whole country, and that He is using Ephraim to represent or to symbolize the Ten Northern Tribes, because they were the lead tribe.

Hosea 7:11-16 Ephraim [meaning all of Israel] also is like a silly dove without **heart**: [Remember that—*without heart*.] they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria. When they shall go, I will spread my net upon them [like a man catches a fish]: I will bring them down as the fowls of the heaven; I will chastise them, as their congregation has heard. Woe unto them! For they have fled from me: [They not merely "turned," they **fled**. They ran away from their responsibilities.] Destruction unto them! Because they have transgressed against me: though I have redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against me. And they have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds: they assemble themselves for corn and wine, and they rebel against me. Though I have bound and strengthened their arms, yet do they imagine mischief against me. They return, but not to the most High: they are like a **deceitful bow**: their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue: this shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.

A "deceitful bow" is one that gives every appearance of being good and true to its purpose until it is put to the test. In the pressure of battle it does not shoot arrows where the archer aims them. This illustration is a good one in many ways as God describes His marriage relationship with Israel. He describes her as being a very beautiful woman, full of promise, who eagerly entered into marriage with Him, vowing to Him in Exodus 24:7, where they said, following the reiteration of all of terms of the covenant: "All that You have said, **we will do**." It's just like they said at the altar, "**I do**." But when she was put to the test—the test of life—she didn't behave like a beautiful wife. She quickly broke her vows to be submissive to Him, and Him only, and unfaithfully behaved **worse** than a common street harlot.

Now notice the description of the relationship from God's point of view in Ezekiel 16:27-34.

Ezekiel 16:27-34 Behold, therefore I have stretched out my hand over you, ...[meaning in punishment, as if He had stretched out His hand to give Israel a big hard swat on her behind] ...and have diminished your ordinary food, and delivered you unto the will of them that hate you, the daughters of the Philistines, which are ashamed of your lewd way: You have played the whore also with the Assyrians, because you were insatiable; yes, you have played the harlot with them, and yet could not be satisfied. You have moreover multiplied your fornication in the land of Canaan unto Chaldea; and yet you were not satisfied herewith. How weak is your heart: says the Lord GOD, seeing you do all these things, the work of an imperious whorish

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woman: In that you builded your eminent place in the head of every way [meaning every street], and make your high place in every street; and have not been as a harlot, in that you scorned hire; But as a wife that commits adultery, which takes strangers instead of her husband! They give gifts to all whores: but you give your gifts to all your lovers, and hire them, that they may come unto you on every side for your whoredom: And the contrary [meaning the opposite] is in you from other woman in your whoredoms, whereas none follows you to commit whoredoms: and in that you give a reward, and no reward is given unto you, therefore you are contrary.

In the language of the street, she paid the Johns to have sex with her, rather than the other way around. That is why He called her "contrary." She didn't do things the normal way, but was far worse than a common street walker.

Ezekiel 16:48 As I live, says the Lord God, Sodom your sister has not done, she nor her daughters, as you have done, you and your daughters.

Sodom is known in all of history to at least seemingly be the **worst** in terms of sexual sins that has ever existed on the earth, ...but not from God's point of view.

Ezekiel 16:48 As I live, says the Lord God, Sodom your sister has not done, she nor her daughters, as you have done, you and your daughters.

It's very helpful at this point to remember that the book of Ezekiel has strong indication of being an **end-time** book. It is clearly addressed to Israel, and yet it was written over 120 years after Israel fell in warfare to Assyria, and was transported into captivity. Ancient Israel never heard this message.

God, through Ezekiel, uses what happened **prior** to Ezekiel's time as the basis for what is essentially an end-time prophecy. History was written to guide the end-time church. Modern Israel has closely paralleled ancient Israel in its conduct, and so we can learn very much about how God is evaluating Israel at the end-time.

Now how can God make such a harsh judgment against us, to not just call us "Sodom" but also to call us "Egypt"? He doesn't stop there. He calls us "**Babylon**." I'll tell you one reason why. This is Jesus speaking:

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Luke 12:47-48 And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, ...[Think of this in terms of you and me.] ...neither did according to his [God's] will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

It is because of this principle of judgment. No other nation in history of mankind has been given so much, especially in regard to the knowledge of God, and how one's life **must** be conducted. Brethren, Israel should know better than to act as we do, and therefore our judgment is more stern than that of the other nations of this world. We are held to higher standards than are required of the other nations in terms of judgment by God.

Now does the Bible truly define its own terms? If it does, then the woman figured surely is a symbol of a city and a nation, and there is no doubt that the woman riding the Beast in Revelation 17 symbolizes an entity of considerable power, seeing she is portrayed as **riding** the fearsome Beast. This is not a church.

Ancient Babylon—the Babylon of Genesis 10 and 11 and the book of Daniel—is the model for the woman of Revelation 17 and 18. Now answer this: Was ancient Babylon only a church? No! Ancient Babylon was a city and a nation that manufactured, conducted business, selling what it manufactured, and made war.

Now did it have its brands of religion? Of course it did, but it was far more than that. It was a highly developed complete anti-God culture. The end-time "MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT" will be the same complete package, only far greater in terms of its influence and power than was ancient Babylon. It is **BABYLON THE GREAT!** It is Babylon brought to the epitome of its influence worldwide, and brethren, it is **this** that **we** live in.

The Beast power is symbolically portrayed in Revelation 13 as consisting of the strongest parts of a bear, a leopard, and a lion. Each one of these is a fearsome beast on its own. Now doesn't asking the question that is given in Revelation 13:4 —"Who can make war against the Beast?"—proclaim the Beast's power? There is a **fear** to make war engraved in that question, and yet the woman of Revelation 17 is **riding** the Beast! **She** is the one who is in control, much as the rider of a horse directs the movements, and commands the much stronger horse to go in this direction, or that direction, and do what the rider wants it to do.

In the previous sermon I continued to search the Bible with you for evidence of the woman's characteristics, and therefore her identity among the nations available to us at the end-time, for God's purposes. **There is no other viable candidate than ISRAEL—the end-time progeny of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.** It is the only nation that God made a marriage covenant with; the only nation God revealed Himself to; the only nation that God gave His word to—a nation of unparalleled blessings and grave responsibilities—that nonetheless turned its back from the great blessings and even forgot who we are.

The name "**mystery**" has an interesting aspect to it. If one looks into conservative Protestant commentaries, **they all** make the point to say that it is the Catholic Church. Now if that is true, everybody seems to already **know** who she is hundreds of years ago. Where is the mystery? Israel **is** the deceitful "**bow**," and unfaithfulness in its relationship with God is a major **key** to its identity.

Now God has identified who Israel is, and now it remains to be seen whether **we** will take advantage of this revelation and humbly submit in gratitude to the Great God, allowing **Him** to carry out His works of creation in us.

Paul tells us in Romans 16:25-26 why God's revelation of the mysterious, but tremendously influential woman of Revelation 17, is given.

Romans 16:25-26 Now to him that is of power to establish you [meaning you and me] according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God,

In other words, God revealed the mystery of the Gospel, the mystery of what He is doing with mankind. But not *all* of those mysteries have been revealed yet. We do have a mystery **continuing** to be revealed at the end-time—who "MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT" is.

Romans 16:26 But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the **obedience of faith**.

This is why God reveals things. He reveals things for "the obedience of faith."

We saw this woman described in Revelation 17, and mostly in Revelation 18, as proud to the point of arrogance, wealthy beyond belief, and committed to a life style featuring a compromising self-absorbed avoidance of suffering.

Regarding that last characteristic, it is not that God is demanding that we should **seek** to suffer, because suffering of and by itself is not inherently righteous. Indeed suffering in the wrong attitude is destructive, not edifying. It is the deceitful compromising aspect that God hates. This is because in the woman's impatient desire to **not** suffer, she will compromise from righteousness in all manner of lies to herself and to others.

In other words, Israel is constantly justifying why she is doing what she is doing, and she justifies it first of all to herself, and then to anybody else who will listen to her justification. And Israel pushes aside her covenant responsibility of submitting to God's commandments, statutes, and judgments in order to **please herself**. We're getting to the heart of a major problem, a major point of identification.

Through modern Israel's example we are shown hypocrisy on an international scale as she deceitfully pawns herself off as a Christian nation—a nation of people who have made the covenant with God, to be faithful to Him and to Him only.

Now is Israel Christian? How does Israel manifest its massive wholesale worldwide idolatry? I have said that Israel—MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT—is not a church. But does Israel have a religious component to her? Absolutely! This religious component consists of a wide variety of New Age religions which are nothing more than pantheistic worship of the occult. It is demonism, and you know that. It is witchcraft and demon worship in a nice dress. It's the ancient gnosticism in a modern setting.

Occult worship has given birth through the centuries to Hinduism, and one of the spin-offs, Buddhism. Now Israelites are accepting and adopting Buddhism almost in wholesale numbers. Along with these Israel has also made Islam its own as well, and Israel is exporting a tremendously wide variety of idolatries, including the worship of celebrities from the film and athletic industries.

We, more than any other nation, have accepted these false religions and have spread them worldwide, and we have spread them because we have the resources to enable us to do it. And most, if not all of these religions, are nothing more than modern representations and direct descendants of the religious form established in ancient Babylon under Nimrod and Semiramis and have come down to us through Israel's contacts with Canaan, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, and Israel itself.

Now turn with me to a scripture of very great importance in the book of Revelation, chapter 12, verse 9. I don't know how many times I heard Herbert Armstrong turn to this scripture. I think he wanted to get something across to us.

Revelation 12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, ***which deceives the whole world***: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

One of the greatest end-time deceptions that Satan has perpetrated has been to convince people that the Israelitish countries are Christian. A direct result of this has been the impulse in Israelites to colonize partly in order to spread, and thus share its gospel with those who are considered by them as heathen. In so doing she has spread the wine of her idolatrous religious influence worldwide. But all it has succeeded in doing is to give Christianity a bad name, and at the same time to spread lies about the true God and the purpose that He is working out.

Now among the nations of Israel the Dutch were the first of the modern Israelitish nations to carry the Babylonish/Roman brand of Christianity to other nations that they colonized, seeking raw materials and markets for their manufactured goods. They in turn were followed on the world stage by the French, and following the French came the British. In our day now it is the Americans who are doing the bulk of the influence. But all the others, especially those three that I already mentioned, are the ones who prepared the way for the end-time revival of the Great Whore.

Most Americans believe that the Founding Fathers of this Republic were Christian men. They indeed, for the most part, were men of considerable education, wealth, and high moral character who had a wonderful vision of a nation, of what a nation should be, and how it should be governed. These were men whose morality was largely in agreement with biblical morality. There is no doubt that they were religious men, but true Christians they were not, even though they and others would identify them as being Christians.

But neither were they what we would call today, "secularists." Secularists are people who believe in no God, or even if they believe there *is* a God, that this God has no direct influence in their lives. These men were, for the most part, what we would call today "deists." These are people who believe that God exists and that He created all things, but they truly do not believe God as a Christian does. They do not believe that He is actively involved, participating in, and governing His creation. They do not believe that this Great God is moving history and time toward a pre-determined end. They essentially believe that God created, stepped aside, and is merely watching what is

going on. There is to them no real purpose being actively worked out by the Creator, except that He is "**saving**" men, and thus they were not subject to Him in their understanding and loving cooperation with Him.

America's Constitutional foundation, which places the greatest burden of government on individual responsibility, as good as it is—and I personally believe that it is better than any other nation's that has ever existed, with the exception of ancient Israel at Mount Sinai—is still nonetheless flawed by the Protestant Reformation.

The Protestant Reformation burst from Catholicism, and it was the same Catholic Church that all the reformers thought of as the **true church** gone corrupt. But the truth of the matter is that the Catholic Church was **NEVER** the true church, and the Protestant Reformation did not re-establish the true religion. The Catholic Church is exactly what it has always publicly called itself: the **ROMAN Universal Church**. It stands identified by its own words! It's not the Christian Church. It is the **ROMAN Universal Church**. It is a syncretistic religion, having its roots in Babylon. It is **NOT** the Church of God.

The Protestant Reformation simply established more forms of the Roman Catholic Church. It established denominations of false religion masquerading as the **true** religion. The Reformation simply reformed the Roman Universal Church into many varieties without a pope. They altered ceremonial requirements, and greatly modified many of the more obvious corruptions. The Israelitish people then proceeded to spread these hybrid religions all over the world in their colonization of other areas. They were better than the Roman Universal variety, but they still were not the truth.

Now consider this: Was God involved in this? **ABSOLUTELY, HE WAS!** He is the Sovereign, Omnipotent Ruler. He did not raise up these churches, but He permitted these things to occur. He could have stopped it at any time, but it was within His purpose to allow these things to occur and to build toward the end-time. God governs all of His creation, and something of this magnitude could not have happened without His oversight. If He has oversight, and it happened without Him giving permission for it to occur, **then He is not sovereign!** Somebody put one over on Him! But nobody puts anything over on God.

One thing that the Protestant Reformation did produce that is good, is that it did produce the release for many, many people from a great deal of religious confusion and political slavery. But today, brethren, Protestantism has lost its cutting edge. In many cases it is nothing more than entertaining paganism. In other cases it is a Sunday morning fraternal organization. We are seeing the effects on the streets.

Morality has fallen in the market place, in the business area, and in the streets. America especially is being swept away in a homosexual and pornographic tsunami, as one writer recently proclaimed. And all of this in turn has created a problem of massive proportions for the true church, because church members gradually begin accepting Satan's lie that Israel being Christian as being true, and thus feeling a spiritual affinity with their countrymen that has no basis in fact.

Israel is **NOT** Christian, and **NEVER HAS BEEN!** And what some of you may feel an affinity with is a **LIE** masquerading as the truth. This is why Herbert Armstrong read this verse so often because he could see it. He could see the danger to God's people to think that what the people are practicing in Israel is part of the true church. **IT IS NOT! Do not be deceived!** It is a corruption of the **ROMAN Universal Church** which syncretistically adapted some aspects of true Christianity into it and became a major counterfeit of the truth. But it never was the **True Church**, not for even one second of its existence. We have got to understand that.

Israel's modern Christianity makes doctrine of little or no importance, leaving everyone free to do what is right in his own eyes. In the **True Church** it will produce the same tolerant non-judgmental "just do your own thing," politically correct, multi-cultural way of deism that we so commonly see accepted in Israelitish countries, and faith in trusting the Sovereign God to govern His creation vanishes. People in the church find justification for idolatry, for Sabbath breaking, for murder, lying, stealing, just as the so-called "Christian" nation finds justification for those things.

Do you think it was an accident that James wrote in James 4:1, "From whence come **Wars...**?" **God's people making war?** They were. Those things can creep into the church and into us individually if we allow them to take place.

Did you ever hear of Jesus using any of those methods—murder, lying, stealing, making war, committing adultery, breaking the Sabbath—to solve **His** problems? He said, "I **always** do the will of My Father." He didn't resort to those things, because they aren't Christian, even though He was surrounded by people (the Jews) who ostensibly were God's people, and ostensibly keeping the commandments.

It says that "He trusted no man," and He kept Himself separate from them spiritually even though He was among them constantly, healing and teaching the truth and receiving abuse and persecution because He was peculiar to them, and a threat. What was He a threat of? Making them face up to their justifications, their lies to themselves.

It's interesting that the Apostle Paul makes this statement in Titus 1:16.

Titus 1:15-16 Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. ***They profess that they know God:*** [Oh! Know the Lord!] ...but in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

Brethren, "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Spiritual adultery is committed on a massive scale in the Israelitish nations that have symbolically entered into a marriage covenant with God, and unfaithfulness becomes a way of life. And so there is idolatry and Sabbath breaking, and dishonoring of parents, and murder in a wide variety and ways of degrees, and breaking of marriage vows through multiple marriages.

Coveting has become a way of life, committed to and justified for a moment of self-absorbed gratification and ease. When push comes to shove, Israelites will back away in order to be comfortable. Does this affect any of you?

Today it is packaged for export two ways: (1) on the movie screen as entertainment for the international masses, and (2) through the combination of advertising and business practices, drugging others with the wine into our way of life as the way to be imitated if one is to have personal fulfillment, wealth, and national power, along with military power as well. Israel's great sin is ***unfaithfulness*** to its responsibilities.

There is a term that I will use several times as I proceed, and it needs defining, because this is a major part of Israel's problems. It is the term "fickle." My *Reader's Digest Oxford Complete Word Finder* defines fickle as "inconstant, changeable, especially in regard to loyalty." Israelites have a history of being grossly fickle, thinking that ***change*** and variety is the answer to fulfillment. This proclivity reveals itself in many areas of life. We change spouses through divorce. We have multiple sexual partners before marriage. Now merchandisers know this, and they take advantage of it by promoting frequent fashion changes. Automobiles must undergo design alternations.

Brittany Spears was the rage for a couple of years, and now she is hardly a blip on the radar screen. Always there must be something new to satisfy the craving for a variety of experiences, but it is costly. It renders the whole culture unstable in regard to ethics and morality, and it drives people into debt as they pursue satisfaction and fulfillment for the things from which it is impossible to receive it.

And thus Israel cannot be trusted to do what is right. She will instead do what she feels

like doing at the moment, rather than disciplining herself to do what is right **if** it might require some measure of sacrifice and experience some measure of painful discomfort in order to remain faithful.

One of the words that I used in that last paragraph was the word "right." Israel will back away from doing what is **right**. I do not mean just in the keeping of the commandments, statutes, and judgments per se, but including that which **is** right in terms of common sense **wisdom**.

It is very interesting that Proverbs 12:14 and Proverbs 16:25 are scriptures Mr. Armstrong turned to over and over again. These two Proverbs say: "There is a way that seems right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." I'll tell you, this describes Israel to a tee! There is a way in Israel's fickleness. You can almost be sure and certain that Israel is always going to take the way that will give her the least amount of pain and discomfort, the least amount of sacrifice **regardless** of whether it is the **right** way.

None of what I already said, or will say in the remainder of this sermon, will help us unless we become sharply aware that we live in the land where this is actively taking place, and it is strongly and constantly influencing us to buy into it and go along with it. The attitude and way of life doesn't just involve what we might term "church matter." It involves every aspect of living.

It might be a good exercise for you to look up the word "religion" in your dictionary. You will find that it is defined as "the system by which one responds to the Deity." One's religion, one's system of responding to the Deity is what governs what and how one's conduct is like.

Now God gave that **entire way of life** within the framework of the commandments, statutes, judgments, testimonies, laws, precepts, words, and examples given us. It is called in the New Testament **"THE WAY"! ONE DEFINITE WAY! ONE RELIGION** that is not to be syncretized with anything else. It is intended by God to be kept **PURE** and undefiled.

The principles reach into every aspect of life. It even shows, brethren, that having debt is slavery. There is hardly anybody in the United States who is **NOT** in debt. Americans are in personal debt to the tune of over \$5 trillion. This isn't government debt. It's not corporate debt. It is only **personal** debt, and all of those people are **slaves** of those to whom they owe the money. The Bible says it so plainly and simply that "the borrower is servant to the lender."

We spend money like it's going out of style. Why do we spend money like it's going out of style? Because we want to please ourselves. We don't want to sacrifice, making any cuts that might somehow get us out of debt. This is just one area of life—a big area no doubt—but it's just one area of life in which Americans are showing that they are unwilling to sacrifice. They will always go the comfortable way, and compromise with wisdom. Now have they broken one of the commandments of God? Yes, in its spirit. But this kind of attitude and approach to life goes into every area of life, not just debt.

This way of life given us by God is confronted by an alluring challenge on every side by what God names in the New Testament as "**the world**." Do you remember what *cosmos*, translated "the world," means? It means "an organized system." But it is an organized system **opposed** to the way of God's commandments. It is a way that basically seeks fulfillment in material things, and a titillation of the flesh and variety of experiences. Babylon—confusion, confusion as to a way of life—is the Bible's code name for that system.

Most of us hearing my voice live in the end-time epitome of Babylon, called "BABYLON THE GREAT," standing revealed as **ISRAEL**. Now God tells us to come out of it. We cannot escape it physically. We can only come out of it by not giving in and practicing Babylon's system for doing things, for doing its way of life. But Israel lives for the moment, and for as much immediate gratification as is possible.

Israel is afraid to pay the cost, to break away and be peculiar and to be distinctive in a right way. It is easier to be like everybody else and willingly accept it on their terms rather than on her Husband's terms. God warned Israel many times against it, because He could see this rebellious proclivity within her, this fickleness, this fear to discipline herself.

In Deuteronomy 12:1-5, over and over God pointed Israel in a certain direction.

Deuteronomy 12:1-5 These are the statutes and judgments which you shall observe to do in the land which the LOORD God of your fathers gives you to possess it, all the days that you live upon the earth. You shall utterly destroy all the places wherein the nations which you shall possess served their god, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree: And you shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and you shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place. You shall not do so unto the LOORD your God. But unto the place which the LOORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation

shall you seek and thither you shall come.

Now why did God give this instruction? Because He wanted to remove the temptation to be fickle and unfaithful and compromising away from her. He wanted to destroy everything that would be a temptation to her, and instead He gives a warning that they are to seek **only HIM** in His **only** habitation, even in their homeland. He did this because Israel is terribly smitten with "the grass is always greener" disease, and the people of the land that they were supposed to dispossess, they didn't.

In its carnality, Israel is disastrously curious, and inconstant in temperament, thinking that variety of experience, rather than the truth of God's word, is the answer to the discontented, rebellious, unsettled impatience of her nature. This grossly fickle discontentment shows up very early in the history of God's relationship with Israel.

Numbers 11:4-6 And the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely: the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all beside this manna before our eyes.

There are quite a number of very serious sins exposed in this particular issue—perhaps the most serious being the exposure to you and me of their lack of faith in God's promise. There they were, brethren, eating **angels' food**, as Paul later calls it—the very best nutrition they could possibly receive, and **it wasn't good enough!** They had to have something extra, just like all the people in the world did, and they were willing to go back into captivity in order to get it. Is that compromising, or **what?** Is that the fear of disciplining yourself, or **what?** Is that wanting to be like everybody else around them, or **what?** Is that seeking after a variety of experience, or **what?**

Where I'm heading right now is I want you to see that God is interested in unity. He is interested in oneness. There is one way. There is one God. There is one religion. There is one set of commandments, statutes, judgments, and on and on. But Israel wants to be like everybody else. They have the best laws, the best country, the best God, the best Husband, but it's not enough. Whenever self-denial becomes an issue, she will not deny herself to serve and submit to her Husband, who is God. Is that serious, or what?

God promises to supply our every need, but in Israel's fearful and fickle discontentment,

they didn't seek Him, to understand what He was doing, but instead sought something different from what He was providing in the way of experiences within their relationship. We really need to be aware of this, because this drive for fulfillment in variety is still within the Israelitish people, and therefore in us. God shows us in numerous ways that His desire is for His children to be unified in one system, and that is why He told Israel, ONE GOOD, ONE PLACE, ONE SYSTEM.

They were only permitted **ONE** place to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. I can remember in my experience in the Worldwide Church of God that there were people in almost every congregation who had to go to a different festival site every year practically. When we begin to see this picture, we will begin to see that this is immaturity, and we will begin to see that not everything that God makes available to us is a right choice for us. Do you know what? God shows this right at the very beginning of the book. In Genesis 3, what did Eve say in response to Satan? She looked at that forbidden fruit and saw that it was good to eat. She couldn't deny herself the satisfaction of tasting that luscious looking fruit even though God said not to.

We, (especially those of us who live in the United States of America which is far wealthier than any nation has ever been in the history of mankind) have so many things to make choices of, it is incredible. But what did God say is our responsibility? He said "Choose life," and there is more to that word "life" than merely being the opposite of death. By life, He means chose the right thing that is going to be good for **eternal** life.

I think, brethren, that this is a good time to stop, but I'm not done with this subject. We have gotten to that place where it provides us access to the next sermon which will, God willing, continue on this proclivity of Israelites to seek variety of experience through their fickleness. As a result they became unfaithful to God in every area of life. We will begin to see why it is so important that we **not** follow that trajectory if we're going to be like God.