

### Introduction:

Israel had been warned over and over again. But they continued in their idolatrous practices. Therefore, God conquered them through Assyria, deporting them to a foreign land. According to **II Kings 17:24**, the Assyrians placed foreigners in Israel. God punished these men because they did not follow His laws (**vs. 25**). So the Assyrian king sent an Israelite priest to teach these new inhabitants the customs of Jehovah. But then these men did a strange thing. Instead of simply obeying Jehovah, they tried to mix their previous religions with God's. As ridiculous as it sounds, they tried it. Even today people try to mix man's religion with God's. There are some great lessons we can learn from these men of antiquity regarding mixed religion today.

### Discussion:

- I. God's religion and man's religion are mutually contradictory.
  - A. God's religion is one of monotheism. That is, there are not many and numerous gods over different things and different regions. Rather, there is only one God and Father of all (**Ephesians 4:6**). God had demonstrated through His law to the Israelites that He wanted to be the sole object of worship. **Exodus 20:3** stated, "You shall have no other God's before Me." **Deuteronomy 6:13-14** read, "You shall fear only the Lord your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name. You shall not follow other gods ..."
  - B. The pagan nations around Israel, however, followed numerous gods. **II Kings 17:30-31** lists some of the foreign gods: Succoth-benoth, Nergal, Ashima, Nibhaz, Tartak, Adrammelech and Anammelech. These do not mention others we know about: Molech, Baal, Dagon and Ashtoreth. The sight of the foreign cities was probably much like Athens in Paul's day as recorded in **Acts 17:16**, "The city full of idols." These two religions cannot logically co-exist. They mutually contradict each other.
  - C. The same is true of the religions people are trying to mix today. Man's religion will not mix with God's because it is mutually contradictory. **Matthew 15:9** says, "In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrine the commandments of men." When we start trying to mix our religion with God's religion, it makes the whole thing vain, because they contradict.
  - D. God's religion says there is one church (**Ephesians 4:4**). Man's religion says there are many churches and you can go to any of them. God's religion says we must worship God in spirit and in truth (**John 4:24**). Man's religion says we can worship how we see fit. God's religion says a man's way is not within him and he should not trust his heart (**Jeremiah 10:23; Proverbs 3:5-6; 16:25**). Man's religion says trust the feeling in your heart. God's religion says the Bible is a blueprint for serving God (**II Timothy 3:16-17**). Man's religion says the Bible is not a guide, just a love letter. God's religion says we will be judged by the word of Christ according to our deeds (**John 12:48; Romans 2:5-10**). Man's religion says because of God's love there will be no judgment. God's religion says we must obey God in faith, confession, repentance and baptism if we desire to have our sins remitted and our souls saved (**Romans 10:9-10; Acts 2:38**). Man's religion asks for altar calls and sinner's prayers. These doctrines don't mix, they contradict.
- II. Eventually one or the other religion will have to win out.
  - A. Because man's religion and God's religion are mutually contradictory, they will never be integrated. Eventually, one or the other will win out. Regrettably, most often men allow their own religious customs to win out instead of God's. That is what happened in **II Kings 17:34**. Throughout the text of this story the scripture says they feared the Lord, but they still worshipped their gods. This verse brings insight to the whole situation. That is, while these people paid some homage to Jehovah, they had chosen their customs of religion over God's religion. Jehovah was simply "the god of the land" (**II Kings 17:26**). He was not the one and only God of all the universe to these people.
  - B. Jesus teaches in **Mathew 6:24**, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other or he will be devoted to one and despise the other." Jesus applies this teaching to money and God. But the principle is the same for any two masters. When people today mix religions with God's religion it won't work. Eventually they have to choose.

C. There are Christians today who are trying to do this very thing, trying to mix man's religion with God's. I once spoke with one Christian who had been on a radio program with a pastor of a church that teaches faith only salvation (contradicting **James 2:24**). On this program these two men, who teach mutually contradictory salvation doctrines, were claiming to be united. When questioned about their contradictory positions, both men claimed they were closer than we might think. I once spoke with a preacher who says he teaches baptism for the remission of sins is necessary for salvation (according to **Acts 2:38**) but also says there are people who haven't been baptized for the remission of sins who are saved. What is going to happen? These fence riders will eventually have to choose what salvation doctrine they will teach. Either they will teach God's doctrine: faithful obedience in repentance, confession of Christ and baptism for the remission of sins; or they will teach man's doctrine: a faith only sinner's prayer. What side will they come down on? Who knows? But, if they follow the example of most who have tried to mix religion, they will not be on God's side. In fact, already they are not on God's side.

III. People of mixed religion have nothing in common with true followers of God.

A. **Ezra 4:1-3** gives us great insight into the spiritual state of those who try to mix man's religion with God's religion. At the end of the captivity, the Israelites were released to go back to Jerusalem in Judah to rebuild the temple. When those who mixed religion asked to help, Zerubbabel replied, "You have nothing in common with us ...". The inspired writer calls these people of mixed religion the enemies of the people of God.

B. This has not changed. Those who strive to mix religion are the enemies of those who faithfully hold to the word of God. These do not abide in the doctrine of Christ. **II John 9-11** demonstrates we are not to receive this kind of teacher into our home or even give him a greeting, because then we become a partaker of his evil deeds. The point here is that we must not do anything that says we give approval to his teaching. After all, if I were having a study with someone such as this, of course I would give a greeting and invite him into my home to study. But, we must not do anything which says we approve of such false teaching and evil.

C. Our desire must be for their repentance and forgiveness, but we must recognize their doctrine and stance for what it is: rebellion against God. As such, they stand as God's enemies. Sometimes it becomes easy in our minds to find excuses for those who only partially serve the Lord. We see their devotion to their mixed religion and their commitment to what they believe God is and we think God must be happy with them in some measure. But the truth of the matter is God is not happy at all. They are enemies of God. We should not envy their pseudo-spirituality or their vain devotion to useless religion. Instead, we must continue to study our Bibles in order to follow the pattern God has laid out.

IV. We must examine our teachings and practices to insure we follow God's law.

A. We must be careful not to be so full of ourselves that we are constantly pointing the finger at others, never noticing where we might be guilty of mixed religion. The problem that the people in ancient Samaria had was they wanted to continue to follow their earlier customs (**II Kings 17:34, 40**). They wanted to mix their pagan idolatry because that is what they were used to.

B. We must be careful that we do not mix any of our customs or "want to's" in with God's religion. This has always been a problem with people coming into the church. New Christian's have often wanted to bring in some of their old religious baggage. In **Galatians**, the Christians were wanting to bring in old baggage from Judaism like circumcision. In **Revelation 2:14, 20-23**, we see that some Gentiles tried to bring paganism into their religion. It is no surprise then that today people try to bring denominationalism into Christianity. However, we must be careful not to bring in any of our own customs and baggage but to do simply that which Christ has taught and authorized through His word.

### Conclusion:

We need to be willing to study with others and constantly examine our own beliefs and teachings with the word. But, we must also stand firm on whatever the Word says. We must not allow mixed religion to enter this church or our lives. Instead, let us follow the pure and undefiled religion of Christ.