Religious Syncretism and the Time of the End

Ezekiel 6:1--7:1-27

Henry David Thoreau wrote: “The more we know about the ancients, the more we know about the moderns.” Judah fell because of “religious syncretism;” this is a different form of idolatry as it is the blending together of various religions; religious syncretism originated in the Far East but has invaded Christianity today.

In Ezekiel chapters 6 and 7 we will learn how it brought an end to Judah and the destruction of Jerusalem; in these two chapters we hear God saying to Ezekiel—be speaking to the mountains (6) and then, be signaling the end (7).

Be Speaking to the Mountains (6:1-14)

*The direction of Ezekiel’s face (6:1-3a)...* Ezekiel faces west toward Judah and addresses the far away mountains of Israel; the mountains were the “high places” where the people engaged in idol worship; Ezekiel speaks for God that He will bring a sword and destroy the high places and the men who worship there (6:3b-4).

When the Hebrews entered the Promised Land they were told to destroy all the idols worshipped by the Canaanites (Deuteronomy 12:2); once destroyed they could build temporary altars in the high places to worship God until the temple was built (1 Kings 3:2); once the temple was built they were to worship only at “the place where the Lord your God chooses” (Deuteronomy 12:5); while we can worship God anywhere, God still has a specific place to worship Him and it is called His Church and we are not to forsake gathering there (Hebrews 10:25).

After the temple was built the Jews erected pagan altars and shrines on the “high places” and fused together pagan worship with the worship of God; that is what we call religious syncretism.
The desolation of the land from God’s judgment (6:5-7)... The mountains of Israel were home territory to God; there are times when He refers to those mountains as “My mountains” (Ezekiel 38:21; Isaiah 65:9); in a special way God dwelt there and now is directing judgment toward His own territory.

Religious syncretism in the Church is serious business: theologian Peter Craigie wrote: “Fusing elements of foreign religion into true religion may seem noble, but it is playing with fire. There is always the risk that the old faiths will reassert itself and take over the true faith. The challenge to any living religion is to discover the means whereby the ways of the old world may be converted into the worship of God, without being converted by them.”

When you mix truth with what is false, the pure with what is profane, you will always get what is false and profane.

The deception within the Church... The Church is being deceived by introducing New Age practices slowly but surely into the Church (Eastern Hindu and Buddhist practices); take contemplative prayer with its mind emptying altered state of consciousness through repetitious repeating of a mantra, like “Be still and know that I am God.” These techniques come right out of Transcendental Meditation and the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi.

The Scriptural teaching on prayer is to pray according to God’s will (1 John 5:14-15); we can pray in God’s will through the help of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:26-28).

The popular women’s devotional book, Jesus Calling by Sarah Young was inspired by a New Age book, God Calling; Warren B. Smith, who over many years was involved in the New Age Movement, even serving as teacher of New Age principles and is now a Christian evangelist has referred to the book God Calling as a channeled New Age book; the Bible warns against this (Deuteronomy 18:9-12).

Dr. Harry Ironside, former pastor of Moody Memorial Church, Chicago warned against mixing truth with error: “Error is like leaven, of which we read, ‘a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.’ Truth mixed with error is equivalent to all error, except that it is more innocent looking and, therefore, more dangerous. God hates such a mixture! Any error, or truth and error mixture, calls for definite exposure and repudiation. To condone such is to be unfaithful to God and His Word and treacherous to imperiled souls for whom Christ died.”
Another example of religious syncretism is “Holy Yoga” or “Christian Yoga;” the word “yoga” means “to yoke;” it is “a Hindu discipline that promotes the individual with a supreme being through a system of postures and rituals;” Caryl Matrisciana, who grew up under Hinduism in India wrote in her book Out of India, “There is no yoga without Hinduism, there is no Hinduism without yoga. The two cannot be separated.... Every yoga class begins with the Hindu word, 'Namaste' which translated means: ‘The god within me bows to the god within you.’

The disgust of God (6:6,9,13)...God refers to religious syncretism as “idolatry” (gillul); it is a compound word for “to roll” and “detestable;” put it together, to roll a detestable object; in other words God is referring to these idols as human excrement; Baal and Asherah are a pile of dung.

The development of the remnants faith (6:8-10)... Those who survive God’s judgment do so based on three things: remembrance (6:9); regret (6:9); recognition (6:10); there will be Jews who escape the judgment for God will not wipe out His people (Jeremiah 31:35-37).

The dance of death (6:11-14)... Ezekiel’s dance of death was because the wicked will fall; in the end the people will “know that I am the Lord” (6:14); the worship of Baal and Asherah is still with us; Baal was the god of thunder-- the god of power, the male god of fertility; Asherah was the female goddess of fertility; to the Greeks she was known as Aphrodite, the goddess of love, or eros, from where we get erotica; the Israelites believed when the two gods copulated in heaven there would be rain and a good harvest; the Israelites would conduct sexual orgies in the fall and spring time to encourage these gods to copulate; these orgies were conducted under every green tree and on every high hill, wherever the altars and idols were located.

Baal and Asherah are in effect the patron saints of today’s Hollywood representing sex, power, money; we don’t need idols of wood and stone to be idolatrous; the idol is what is found in the “high places” of your heart.

The message of the world and from the church of religious syncretism is: “It does not matter what you believe, so long as you are sincere.”
The Signal of the End (7:1-27)

The pronouncement of the end (7:1-9)... There is no judgment without warning; the warning comes from Jehovah- Mekkeh “ the Lord who Strikes” (v9b).

The problems of the people (7:19)... There are four sins pointed out in this chapter:

1. The sin of pride (7:10b)...
2. The sin of pillaging (7:11)...
3. The sin of presumption (7:14)...
4. The sin from prosperity (7:19a; see Matthew 19:23-24; Deuteronomy 8:18; Job 1:21).

The plundering of the holy city (7:20-22)... God will give the beauty of Jerusalem as plunder into the hands of strangers.

The possession of Jerusalem (7:23-27)... I will bring the worst of the Gentiles to possess their houses ; they will be judged according to what they deserve and they will know the Lord did it.

The plan for the Christian... When the facts are presented, don’t ignore them; a study from the University of Michigan (2005-2006) discovered: “When misinformed people were exposed to correct facts on news stories, they rarely changed their minds. To the contrary, they even became more strongly convinced of their erroneous beliefs... It’s absolutely threatening to admit you were wrong.”

Many Christians today, unknowingly are getting caught up in New Age mysticism and they believe it is OK to do so; that is religious syncretism and that is what brought Judah down.