

Letter from Babylon



Reflections on living in a land under judgment

by 'Mishael'

In several of these letters I've stressed the importance of soaking up God's worldview from the Bible, to counteract the effect of the godless worldview that bombards us from all sides here in Babylon. There's one thing we need to beware of, though, in this. And that is of trying to live by two incompatible worldviews at once, without realising how schizophrenic that is.

The truth is that all of us were actually born in Babylon, and we grew up with its worldview until Christ came into our lives to displace it. Even those of us born in Christian homes unconsciously absorbed all the worldly baggage of any Christian community – whether the Victorian primness of English churches, the tribalism of those in Africa, or whatever prevails where you live. The Bible doesn't just teach us – it evicts our unconscious preconceptions. And that is a painful, though supernatural process. It puts us not only against the world, but against our natural selves.

Living with two worldviews is, to an extent, inevitable. I myself have a Babylonian name, Meshach, derived from the local god, Marduk. That's the name used on all my official correspondence, just as my boss Daniel has the official name Belteshazzar. It's impossible for either of us to work for Nebuchadnezzar without complying with local custom – that is, going along with the local worldview. The key is to know where to draw the line.

When God called Israel, the law made them so different from their neighbours that it was

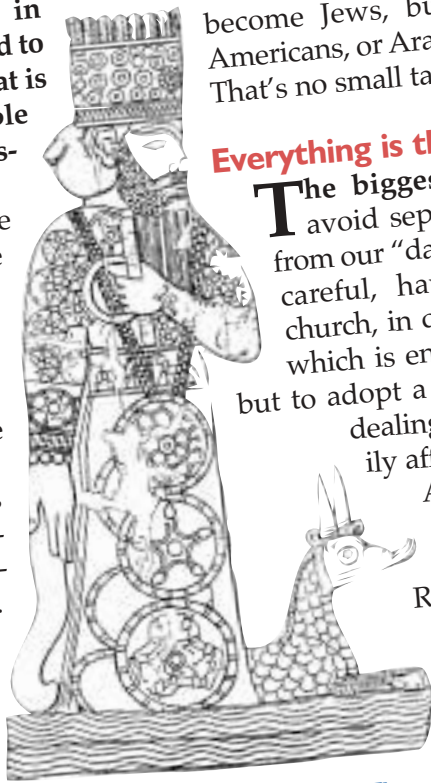
relatively easy for them to live God's way. But when he called the Gentiles in Christ, we were saved to live as foreigners, yet still to belong to our own cultures. We are to be "in the world, but not of it" – so we aren't supposed to become Jews, or Arabs, or Malays, or whatever. Americans, or Arabs, or Malays, or whatever. That's no small task!

Everything is theological!

The biggest challenge in this is to avoid separating our "religious" self from our "daily" self. We can, if we're not careful, have a way of thinking in church, in quiet times, or at conferences which is entirely Christian and Biblical; but to adopt a completely different way of dealing with business life, with family affairs and so on.

At worst this can mean sheer hypocrisy. I remember a headline about a "Born Again Rapist", a phrase which sounds insane until one sees how much of the old Adam (or Eve) remains in one's own darker corners. But I'm thinking here of the more subtle ungodliness that we're not even ashamed of, because we've never realised how unbiblical it is. I could give

endless examples, but there is not space and fortunately the New Testament does it supremely. I simply want to challenge us to check whether we are letting the Bible's worldview address our jobs, families, hobbies, politics – in fact, every part of our lives – as well as what we call the "spiritual." If we aren't (and if we were we'd be perfect) then we are like the doubled minded man in James 4.4-10. That passage tells us what to do next!



Meet Marduk and his dragon. They forced me to take his name – but they can't force me to take him seriously!

PF