

## SHILOH: GOD'S OBJECT LESSON TO ISRAEL ©

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Dr. Paul R. Shockley

www.prshockley.org

I absolutely love coming to Shiloh. The name itself means “*tranquil, secure.*” This name resonates geographically given all that you see around you. Shiloh is about thirty-miles north of Jerusalem. This was Israel's first religious center and political capital for over three hundred years following the conquest of the Promised Land under Joshua's leadership. From the time of Joshua about 1400 BC to the time of Samuel about 1100 BC, this was the home of Israel's tabernacle (Joshua 18:1). Because the Ark of the Covenant was located here in this exact area, it became a place of pilgrimage, a consecrated place of worship.

This was the Home of Eli (1 Samuel 2:12-14; 1 Kings 2:27), the place where Hannah prayed for a son (1 Samuel 1:1-19), and the specific location where the faithful prophet Samuel was raised and received his call unto ministry.

Even though this is one of my favorite locations in Israel because it was the site of the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant during the Period of the Judges, Shiloh offers a very obvious object lesson that we need to never forget. All around are ancient ruins. Did you know God Himself used Shiloh as an object lesson to Judah? In Jeremiah 7:12, God directs Israel to heed the history of Shiloh, for even during Jeremiah's day, Shiloh was already in ruins.

### What happened?

As we know from our reading of 1 Samuel, the religious leaders within the family of Eli had abused their priestly position for person gain, and idolatry was rampant. When the Israelites attempted to use the Ark of the Covenant as a talisman, namely, an object that possessed the power of God (just like you see in the classic movie, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*), the Ark was captured and this secure, tranquil sanctuary was destroyed by the Philistines. Just as the Philistines were instruments of divine punishment for the wickedness found and even celebrated among God's people, His love for them finds expression in term of

discipline : “*I will bless you if you bless Me; I will discipline you if curse me.*”

After the Davidic Monarchy was divided following Solomon's death, Shiloh, which was part of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, had turned away from the LORD to idols. This is what happened here in Shiloh. Shiloh lies in ruins because His people compromised their love and obedience. Compromise paves the way for idolatry. Idolatry is only matched by a hardening of the heart. Just as God used the Philistines to Shiloh into ruins and later the Assyrians to conquer this region, God used Jeremiah to warn the Southern Kingdom of Israel, namely, Judah and Jerusalem, of the same outcome that awaits them for their blatant idolatry and depravity.

### Carefully read the words of Jeremiah 7:1-20.

**Idolatry always invites discipline no matter the dispensation:** In fact, the Southern Kingdom had become so wicked that God instructs Jeremiah to not even pray for his people; no manner of intercession was to be made on behalf of Judah. God is going to use Babylon as a rod of discipline to Jerusalem. They were so bad that God would not hear any intercession from Jeremiah even though God was willing to hear Abraham's intercession for Sodom. But when we compare both accounts, namely, Sodom and the Southern Kingdom, we come to a profound truth: ***The greater the revelation, the greater the accountability.***

It is fitting to compare Shiloh to the present day Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Both Shiloh and the Temple Jerusalem are the two places where Israel's centers of worship have taken place. But why would God allow places like Shiloh and His Temple be destroyed, not once but twice: to vindicate His name and purge wickedness. In both cases Israel failed to whole heartily trust and obey God. Each and every time, they allowed the spirit of the world, the flesh, and the devil to occupy their heart, mind, soul, and strength.

Do we not do the same, namely, fail to whole heartily trust and obey God? We need to ask ourselves whether idols exist in our own lives. We may not have idols and altars in our homes dedicated to pagan gods, but I suspect if we are brutally honest, some of us are allowing something or someone take the place of God in our lives. See, the apostle Paul in Colossians 3:5 identifies greed, envy, and materialism

with idolatry. Your home can be your idol. Your car can be your idol. Your bank account can be your idol. Your job can be your idol. Your sports can be your idol. A particular relationship or person can be your idol.

Idolatry is foolishness. In Isaiah 44:9-20 we have perhaps the best description of the futility of an idolater. With God's divine perspective, He can see the ridiculous nature of an idolater who cuts down a tree, and takes half of it to provide warmth and a cooking fire for his basic needs, and the other half, he shapes into a rough reflection of a human form, and then proceeds to bow down before it and say, "Deliver me, for you are my god!" (Isaiah 44:17). But notice, he first takes the wood to make the fire to sustain his needs, but then he worships the rest. It seems that he is not able to distinguish its limitations consciously, but he can subconsciously for he burns the wood for warmth and cooks his meal first.

This is what we do! We do not distinguish our own creation's limitations. We create our tools of success, use them to not only meet our needs, but we also go far beyond their limitations, asking them to deliver us from our human conditions, frailties, our afflictions, our troubles.

**In conclusion:** Anytime we take God's provisions and blessings and allow them to occupy our affections, fill our mind, captivate our soul, and govern our decision-making whereby we not only need this particular item, person, or pleasure (s), we depend upon it, we trust it, we love it, we identify ourselves with it, we are an idolater, foolish, and in desperate need for divine perspective... because God will not stand for it. Shiloh is proof!

He will discipline us if we are unwilling to allow Him to deliver us! *"I am the Lord your God... you shall not have any other gods before Me!"* Rather, fulfill the first and greatest commandment in Scripture: Love the Lord your God from out of your whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. By fulfilling this supreme commandment our lives will never idolatry will be foreign to our experience, and our lives will never become a historical ruin.