

Come to Understanding

**They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding,
and they that murmured shall learn doctrine. — Isaiah 29:24**

May 1, 2005

Volume 4 Number 9

The Snare of Babylon

When the God of Israel, Yahweh, brought His people out of Egypt and into the land of Canaan, He gave them clear instructions:

- 32 Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods.
- 33 They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee. -Exodus 23

He told Israel that serving the gods of the people of the land would be a “snare” to them. By its very nature, a snare is a trap. It appears to be perfectly harmless, and is even inviting. Using bait, it lures its victim into a false sense of benefit and security. It especially seems good to the senses of the flesh.

The pagan altars, and their related ceremonial pagentry, were impressive. King Ahaz of Judah was so impressed with the altar that he saw in Damascus that he had a copy of it built in Judah:

- 10 And king Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and saw an altar that was at Damascus: and king Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest the fashion of the altar, and the pattern of it, according to all the workmanship thereof.
- 11 And Urijah the priest built an altar according to all that king Ahaz had sent from Damascus: so Urijah the priest made *it* against king Ahaz came from Damascus. -2 Kings 16

Under the leadership of Ahaz’s son, King Hezekiah, Judah repented of their idolatrous worship practices. Hezekiah destroyed the abominable images and the people of Judah enjoyed a great revival under his leadership. Judah witnessed the power of prayer as they were spared from being taken captive by the invading Assyrians. Hezekiah was even healed of a terminal illness and his life was miraculously spared.

Nevertheless, Hezekiah’s son, Manasseh, yielded to the temptation of false worship and led Judah back into nearly every idolatrous worship practice that could be imagined:

- 2 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD, after the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.
- 3 For he built up again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he reared up altars for Baal, and made a grove, as did Ahab king of Israel; and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them.
- 4 And he built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD said, In Jerusalem will I put my name.
- 5 And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD.
- 6 And he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards: he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the LORD, to provoke *him* to anger.
- 7 And he set a graven image of the grove that he had made in the house, of which the LORD said to David, and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever: -2 Kings 21

Manasseh did the following:

1. Restored the high places;
2. Set up altars for worshipping Baal, the male god;
3. Made a grove, or asherah, for worshipping the female god, which was the goddess;
4. Worshipped angels and/or stars;
5. Built altars to the pagan gods in the house of Yahweh;
6. Sacrificed his son to false gods;
7. Observed times;
8. Used enchantments;
9. Dealt with familiar spirits and wizards; and
10. Set up a graven image of the grove (which is usually the form of an erect pole, representing the male part of Baal, in a circle, representing the female part of the goddess) in the house of Yahweh.

Yahweh said that He gave the land to Israel. They could stay there as long as they kept the commandments that He had given to them through Moses:

- 8 Neither will I make the feet of Israel move any more out of the land which I gave their fathers; only if they will observe to do according to all that I have com-

**So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense,
and caused them to understand the reading. — Nehemiah 8:8**

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manded them, and according to all the law that my servant Moses commanded them. -2 Kings 21

Unfortunately, both Israel and Judah rejected Yahweh's commandments concerning the worship of other gods and images. He had told them clearly:

- 3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
- 4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of *any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth:
- 5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me; -Exodus 20

The people of the northern kingdom of Israel had already been seduced by kings such as Jeroboam and Ahab to worship other gods and to bow to images. They were taken captive by the Assyrians.

Even though the southern kingdom of Judah had been spared from the Assyrian captivity because of the prayers of Hezekiah and Isaiah, they were seduced by Hezekiah's son, Manasseh, into committing even greater evil than the heathen people they had displaced:

- 9 But they hearkened not: and Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than did the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the children of Israel. -2 Kings 21

Manasseh's grandson, Josiah, finally rose up as a righteous king. He was repairing the temple when the workmen discovered the book of the law, which was the Word of God. Josiah's response to the book of the law was one of sincere repentance:

- 10 And Shaphan the scribe shewed the king, saying, Hilkiyah the priest hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king.
- 11 And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes. -2 Kings 22

As he heard the Word of God, Josiah realized that the traditions of his ancestors had been in great error. They had brought false worship directly into the house of Yahweh, committing abominations against Him. Josiah's response was to destroy the images and tools of the idolatrous worship practices of his ancestors:

- 4 And the king commanded Hilkiyah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of the LORD all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the grove, and for all the host of heaven: and he burned them without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them unto Bethel.
- 5 And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem; them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven.
- 6 And he brought out the grove from the house of the LORD, without Jerusalem, unto the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and stamped *it* small to powder, and cast the powder thereof upon the graves of the children of the people.
- 7 And he brake down the houses of the sodomites, that were by the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the grove. -2 Kings 23

However, despite Josiah's repentance from the false worship practices of his ancestors, the seductive sins of Manasseh were too great. They brought Judah into the snare that led to their captivity by the king of Babylon:

- 3 Surely at the commandment of the LORD came *this* upon Judah, to remove *them* out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did;
- 4 And also for the innocent blood that he shed: for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; which the LORD would not pardon. -2 Kings 24

Yahshua, who is called Jesus, warned us also about such a snare in the latter days. He said it shall come upon the people throughout the whole earth:

- 34 And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.
- 35 For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.
- 36 Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. -Luke 21

He warned us to pay attention so that we are not unknowingly caught in the snare. He told us to watch and to pray that we may be counted worthy to escape the deception.

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