

Come to Understanding

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

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Seduced by Jezebel

The kings of Israel had already turned their backs on Yahweh (the LORD) by the time King Ahab married Jezebel. As the daughter of the king of Zidon (also called Sidon), Jezebel was well acquainted with Baal worship. Her father's name, Ethbaal, means "with Baal." Her name means the "wife of Baal." Under the influence of Jezebel, Ahab completely rebelled against Yahweh:

- 31 And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him.
- 32 And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria.
- 33 And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him. -1 Kings 16

No longer satisfied with worshipping the golden calves that Jeroboam had introduced to Israel (see 1 Kings 12), Ahab went even further into idolatry. He built a temple to Baal in Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel. He then erected an altar for Baal worship in the temple, and made a grove.

Jezebel then sought to eliminate the prophets of Yahweh (see 1 Kings 18:4) and replace them with hundreds of false prophets of Baal and of the groves. Elijah called upon Ahab:

- 19 Now therefore send, *and* gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table. -1 Kings 18

These false prophets were under Jezebel's direct influence and teaching. They accepted Baal as their god either because they did not know Yahweh's word, or because they rebelled against it. They ignored the very first commandment that Yahweh had given to Moses:

- 3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me. -Exodus 20

They also rejected Yahweh's clear instruction concerning the building of groves and images:

- 21 Thou shalt not plant thee a grove of any trees near unto the altar of the LORD thy God, which thou shalt make thee.

- 22 Neither shalt thou set thee up *any* image; which the LORD thy God hateth. -Deuteronomy 16

Strictly speaking, the modern word "grove" means a small wooded area without underbrush. It seems harmless to the casual reader. However, the word "grove" is translated from the Hebrew word that has a much greater meaning and significance. The Hebrew word אַשְׁרָה (asherah), refers to the goddess, which is the consort, or wife, of the god Baal.*

Israel was introduced to the practices of Baal worship even before they entered into the land that Yahweh had promised to give to them:

- 1 And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.
- 2 And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.
- 3 And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel. -Numbers 25

* "The word asherah in the Old Testament was used not only in reference to the goddess herself but also to a wooden cult object associated with her worship." -Encyclopedia Britannica, 2003

The goddess was worshipped under many different names, and was also called the "mother of the gods" or the "queen of heaven." She was worshipped through images depicting her form. The "wooden cult object" was a pole erected within a circle on behalf of the goddess near the altar of Baal. (The practice of erecting poles (steep poles, or steeples) near altars has been adopted and refined into various shapes and sizes in many cultures to designate places of worship.)

The worship of Baal through the goddess in the groves centered around the pole, which is believed by some to represent the male reproductive organ of Baal. The trees of the groves were used as hiding places in which licentious practices were performed under the guise of worship. (Isaiah uses the expression, "Enflaming yourselves with idols under every green tree..." -Isaiah 57:5. The word "enflaming" refers to passion.) The use of trees for hiding sin was first used by Adam and Eve (see Genesis 3:7-8).

**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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The point of these worship practices was to please Baal. We know some things about Baal worship. For example, the groves were places for worshipping the goddess, often through practices that included fornication, to gain favor with Baal. We also know that the worship involved the offering of children as sacrifices to the god:

5 They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire *for* burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake *it*, neither came *it* into my mind: -Jeremiah 19

They even ate the dead sacrifices that they offered:

28 They joined themselves also unto Baalpeor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead. -Psalms 106

While we understand some of the practices of Baal worship, we must be careful to avoid learning the details that can tempt and ensnare us into similar abominable worship practices:

30 Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise.

31 Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God: for every abomination to the LORD, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods. -Deuteronomy 12

The people of Israel were clearly warned to have no part in the places of the worship of gods such as Baal. They were even told to destroy their places of worship, including their altars, pillars, groves, and graven images:

2 Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree:

3 And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place.

4 Ye shall not do so unto the LORD your God. -Deuteronomy 12

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While they were to destroy the names of the false gods, they were not to destroy the name of Yahweh. Nevertheless, Yahweh said that false prophets would cause His people forget His name while remembering that of Baal (which means “Lord”):

27 Which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal. -Jeremiah 23

Why did Israel allow themselves to be deceived into worshipping the gods of the people around them? They did not obey Yahweh:

34 They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the LORD commanded them:

35 But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works.

36 And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them.

37 Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils,

38 And shed innocent blood, *even* the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood. -Psalms 106

It would be difficult to imagine that the churches (assemblies) which profess to be Christian would have anything whatsoever do to with any of the practices that have similarity to Baal worship. Nevertheless, Yahshua (Jesus) warned the assembly of Thyatira. He said that He knew the great emphasis they put on their works:

18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet *are* like fine brass;

19 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last *to be* more than the first. -Revelation 2

Despite the many wonderful things they were doing, Thyatira had a major problem:

20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. -Revelation 2

They were still tolerating many of the teachings of the self-proclaimed prophetess, Jezebel, within their assembly. The subtle deceptions of Baal worship were blended with their worship of Yahweh. While the “Christian church” of Thyatira emphasized their own works, they fell into the same snare that took Israel into captivity many years earlier:

39 Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions. -Psalms 106

Are we defiled by our own works? Do we glory in our own inventions more than in Yahweh and His word? Have we *also* been seduced by Jezebel?