

# Come to Understanding

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

December 1, 2005

Volume 4 Number 23

## The Busyness of Worship

The scribes and the Pharisees, who were the official leaders of the Jewish religion, reprimanded Yahshua (Jesus) and His disciples for not observing the many traditional practices of their religion:

5 Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? -Mark 7

Over the years, the Jews had developed many traditions. Even though these practices were not based on Scripture, they had somehow been adopted as holy traditions, which must be continued. Yahshua responded to them, quoting Scripture from Isaiah:

6 He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with *their* lips, but their heart is far from me.

7 Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

8 For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.

9 And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. -Mark 7

The traditions of false worship had crept into Israel hundreds of years earlier. After the death of King Solomon, the kingdom was divided into two. As Jeroboam became the king over the northern kingdom of Israel, he initiated his own practices for worship:

28 Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

29 And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan.

30 And this thing became a sin: for the people went to *worship* before the one, *even* unto Dan.

31 And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi. -1 Kings 12

Not only did Jeroboam make *his own* images, build *his own* temple, and ordain *his own* priests, he also developed *his own* feast days, or holy days:

32 And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that *is* in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made.

33 So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, *even* in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense. -1 Kings 12

The people of Israel then continued to keep the traditions that Jeroboam had started. They passed them from generation to generation, accepting them as valid, even though they were without Scriptural foundation. The results were devastating:

20 And the LORD rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight.

21 For he rent Israel from the house of David; and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king: and Jeroboam drave Israel from following the LORD, and made them sin a great sin.

22 For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them;

23 Until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day. -2 Kings 17

Judah also refused to obey the commandments of Yahweh. Desirous to worship something, however, they adopted that which Yahweh hated: the religious statutes of Israel. Rejecting the Word of God, they kept the man-made practices that were started long ago:

19 Also Judah kept not the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made. -2 Kings 17

**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**

## Come to Understanding

The people of Judah were diligent in worship, somehow thinking they were serving God in their busyness:

18 The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead *their* dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger. -Jeremiah 7

They were working hard, but their worship was misguided. Instead obeying Yahweh and His word, they were busy attending to the “queen of heaven,” along with numerous other gods. Even after Judah had been destroyed for this kind of false worship, they refused to listen to the warnings from Yahweh. They answered the prophet Jeremiah, who had brought the caution from Yahweh that they must abandon their abominable traditions of worship:

15 Then all the men which knew that their wives had burned incense unto other gods, and all the women that stood by, a great multitude, even all the people that dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah, saying,

16 As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the LORD, we will not hearken unto thee. -Jeremiah 44

They could only remember the good times, before judgment came upon them. They had forgotten that it was the same practices, which they insisted on keeping, that had led to the utter destruction of the kingdom of Judah. Therefore, they were determined to continue to worship the “queen of heaven:”

17 But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for *then* had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil.

18 But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, we have wanted all *things*, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine.

19 And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink offerings unto her, did we make her cakes to worship her, and pour out drink offerings unto her, without our men? -Jeremiah 44

Despite the Word of God, Judah continued the tradition of worship that had been started many years before.

Judah is not alone. Many of us discover that we have also been deceived into religious practices that we somehow thought were ordained by God, only to learn that they were creations of man. Paul recalled how he had previously tried to keep the religious traditions that had been passed down to him by his ancestors:

13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:

14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. -Galatians 1

Paul asked the critical questions of himself that each of us should ask of ourselves:

10 For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. -Galatians 1

Fully aware of his experience in being deceived by the traditions of men, Paul cautioned:

4 And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.

5 For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ.

6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:

7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. -Colossians 2

What should we do when we learn that we have been deceived in such a manner? We can reject God's word and try to defend the the busyness of our false worship. Or we can respond as the Jews did on the day of Pentecost when Peter convinced them that they had, while trying to protect the traditions of their religion, actually brought about the crucifixion of the Messiah:

37 Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?

38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. -Acts 2

What shall we do?

Come to Understanding is sent out twice per month free of charge. To add someone to our growing list of readers, please contact us at:

Institute for Biblical and Historical Studies  
Kerby F. Fannin, Ph.D., Director  
P.O. Box 260, 114 East Main Street  
Addison, Michigan 49220 U.S.A.  
biblical@ibiblical.org  
517-547-7494

You may view this and past editions online at:  
[www.ibiblical.org](http://www.ibiblical.org)

©2005 Institute for Biblical and Historical Studies. All rights reserved.  
You may freely copy this publication, provided you acknowledge its source and inform us of your use.