

# 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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## The Covenant of Liberty

As Judah was under relentless attack by Babylon, Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, finally decided that it was time to offer some kind of repentance from total disobedience against Yahweh and His word. He made a covenant that would give liberty to the Hebrews who were in bondage as servants to the people of Jerusalem:

- 8 *This is* the word that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh, after that the king Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people which *were* at Jerusalem, to proclaim liberty unto them;
- 9 That every man should let his manservant, and every man his maidservant, *being* a Hebrew or a Hebrewess, go free; that none should serve himself of them, *that is*, of a Jew his brother. -Jeremiah 34

Following the lead of King Zedekiah, the princes of Judah and all of the other people also entered into the covenant whereby they proclaimed liberty to their Jewish servants:

- 10 Now when all the princes, and all the people, which had entered into the covenant, heard that every one should let his manservant, and every one his maidservant, go free, that none should serve themselves of them any more, then they obeyed, and let *them* go. -Jeremiah 34

They were finally willing to obey Yahweh's commandment that they must not keep fellow Hebrews in bondage beyond six years:

- 2 If you buy a Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. -Exodus 21

While Judah repented from disobediently enslaving their own people, it is nowhere mentioned that they humbled themselves by repenting from the sins of false worship, as Yahweh had commanded them to do.

Yahweh had reminded Israel that He brought them out of the bondage of Egypt:

- 2 I *am* Yahweh your God, which have brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. -Exodus 20

Then He gave them ten clear commandments, which be-

came known as the "Ten Commandments." The first three of these commandments deal directly with the relationship between man and Yahweh. In the first commandment, He said they must have no other gods "before" Him:

- 3 You shall have no other gods before me. -Exodus 20

The word "before" is translated from the Hebrew word פָּנִים (paniyim). It means that they must have no other gods in His face or in His presence. Judah had continually violated this commandment by worshipping other gods, in addition to Yahweh. The kind of blending of worship that Judah did was described by the actions of King Manasseh, who brought other gods into the house of Yahweh. This was evil in the sight of Yahweh:

- 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 Yahweh, of which Yahweh 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 Yahweh. -2 Kings 21

The blended worship of Yahweh in the temple used the forms of images and was in direct disobedience to the second commandment:

- 4 You shall not make to you 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 You shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them: for I Yahweh your God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me;
- 6 And showing mercy to thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. -Exodus 20

Yahweh had told them that they must not even make an image of Him (that which is in heaven) to which to bow down. Paul called them "fools," which changed the "glory of the uncorruptible God" into "corruptible" images:

- 23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things. -Romans 1

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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Many of these images were also carved to represent figures of the dead, which were consulted as familiar spirits, as King Manasseh had done:

- 5 And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of Yahweh.
- 6 And he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards: he worked much wickedness in the sight of Yahweh, to provoke *him* to anger. -2 Kings 21

In the third commandment, Yahweh commanded that His name must not be taken in “vain:”

- 7 You shall not take the name of Yahweh your God in vain; for Yahweh will not hold him guiltless that takes his name in vain. -Exodus 20

The word “vain” is translated from the Hebrew word שָׁוְיָ (shav’), meaning empty or worthless. Yahweh said through the prophet Jeremiah concerning the false prophets:

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

The word “forget” is translated from the Hebrew word שָׁכַח (shakach), which means to forget, ignore, or cease to care. The name Baal also means “lord.” Therefore, the people paid no attention to the name of Yahweh, even confusing it with that of Baal.

Therefore, even though the people of Judah were clearly ignoring the first three (and perhaps the rest) of the ten commandments, they had entered into a solemn covenant to set their servants free.

However, as the siege of the king of Babylon was being eased from them (see Jeremiah 34:21), the people broke their covenant and put their servants back into bondage:

- 15 And you were now turned, and had done right in my sight, in proclaiming liberty every man to his neighbor; and you had made a covenant before me in the house which is called by my name:

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- 16 But you turned and polluted my name, and caused every man his servant, and every man his handmaid, whom you had set at liberty at their pleasure, to return, and brought them into subjection, to be unto you for servants and for handmaids. -Jeremiah 34

Even though the efforts of Zedekiah, the princes, and the people in proclaiming freedom to their Jewish servants was seen as an act of repentance and obedience, their hearts had not been changed. They still refused to keep Yahweh’s commandments and even violated the covenant they had made concerning liberty.

What does Yahweh do when wicked people repent and turn to righteousness?

- 21 But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he has committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.
- 22 All his transgressions that he has committed, they shall not be mentioned to him: in his righteousness that he has done he shall live. -Ezekiel 18

What then does He do when the righteous people turn back to unrepentant wickedness?

- 24 But when the righteous turns away from his righteousness, and commits iniquity, *and* does according to all the abominations that the wicked *man* does, shall he live? All his righteousness that he has done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he has trespassed, and in his sin that he has sinned, in them shall he die. -Ezekiel 18

Unlike the people of Judah who made a covenant of liberty, which they broke, Yahweh does not break His covenant. As we walk by faith in the new covenant that Yahshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) died for our sins, we are set free:

- 1 *There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in the Messiah Yahshua, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.
- 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in the Messiah Yahshua has made me free from the law of sin and death. -Romans 8

As we learn, know, and continue in the truth of His word, we are made free:

- 31 Then said Yahshua to those Jews which believed on him, If you continue in my word, *then* are you my disciples indeed;
- 32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. -John 8

As we continue in the truth of His word, we are able to distinguish the Word of God from the teachings of man. We are thereby equipped to avoid being caught in the snare that leads us back into bondage. Paul told us to:

- 1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty with which the Messiah has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. -Galatians 5