

Come to Understanding

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

September 1, 2008

Volume 7 Number 17

The Just *Do* Live by Faith

It is tempting for us to fall into doubt when we fail to see the promises of God come to pass. Some of us may question Yahweh and His word because He is not operating on our schedule or doing things the way we think He should do them. We may even begin to wonder whether He will actually keep His promises.

Yahweh had clearly warned Israel that He would remove them from the land and “scatter them beyond the river.” He was provoked to anger because they had “made groves,” continuing in the “sins of Jeroboam.”

- 15 For Yahweh shall smite Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water, and he shall root up Israel out of this good land, which he gave to their fathers, and shall scatter them beyond the river, because they have made their groves, provoking Yahweh to anger.
- 16 And he shall give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, who did sin, and who made Israel to sin. -1 Kings 14

In spite of Yahweh’s clear warnings, Israel continued in the “sins of Jeroboam.” Therefore, Yahweh finally kept His promise, using the powerful Assyrian empire to destroy their nation, take their land, and scatter their people:

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

The “sins of Jeroboam” were those that King Jeroboam had introduced into the northern kingdom of Israel through the worship of golden calves. These sins consisted of the worship of the Great Goddess through images in many different shapes and under countless variations of names [see *Come to Understanding*, Vol. 7 No. 16, August 14, 2008]. Regardless of the form or name of the images dedicated to the goddess, her shrines are called “groves” [also known as “asherah”].

Even though Yahweh destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel because of their sinful religious practices, Judah adopted the same religion. By worshipping the goddess (see Jeremiah 7:18) and making “groves” (see 2 Kings 21:7), Judah likewise rejected the commandments of Yahweh:

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

Even though Judah was doing the same things that the destroyed Israel had been doing, they were still prospering. As the prophet Habakkuk witnessed the iniquity of the unjudged sins of Judah, he cried out to Yahweh for justice:

- 2 O Yahweh, how long shall I cry, and you will not hear! *even* cry out to you *of* violence, and you will not save!
- 3 Why do you show me iniquity, and cause *me* to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence *are* before me: and there are *those that* raise up strife and contention. -Habakkuk 1

What was wrong? The wicked were being lifted up above the righteous in wrong judgments. Where was the fairness of Yahweh? Witnessing injustices all around him, Habakkuk concluded that the “law is slacked!” Judgment, he reasoned, will never come to Judah:

- 4 Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment does never go forth: for the wicked does encompass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceeds. -Habakkuk 1

Yahweh, however, stands against those who call good evil and evil good:

- 20 Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! -Isaiah 5

Even though people may not yet see it, Yahweh is clear that iniquity will not go unjudged. He reassured Habakkuk that the judgment of Judah was imminent, telling him that it will happen “in your days:”

- 5 Behold you among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvelously: for *I* will work a work in your days, *which* you will not believe, though it be told *you*. -Habakkuk 1

Just as He had used the Assyrian empire to destroy the northern kingdom of Israel, He would use the Babylonian empire (the Chaldeans) to destroy Judah:

- 6 For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, *that* bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling places *that are* not theirs. -Habakkuk 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

Come to Understanding

Even as Habakkuk continued to ask questions of Yahweh about His methods for judging Judah, he said he would watch to see how Yahweh answers his plea for justice:

1 I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say to me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved. -Habakkuk 2

Yahweh answered him again, giving him clear instructions. He told Habakkuk to write this prophecy down and make it plain! That way, whoever reads it at a later time will know that it is fulfilled:

2 And Yahweh answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make *it* plain upon tables, that he may run that reads it. -Habakkuk 2

Unlike the prophecy about the judgmental destruction of Judah by Babylon, which Yahweh said would be fulfilled within Habakkuk's lifetime, this prophecy is for a later time. At an "appointed time," that which is written "shall speak." Even though it will not be immediately seen, the prophecy will surely be fulfilled:

3 For the vision *is* yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. -Habakkuk 2

At that time, says Yahweh, those who try to lift themselves up will not be upright. Instead, when that time comes, He says the "just" shall live by their faith:

4 Behold, his soul *which* is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith. -Habakkuk 2

Rather than trying to rely on their own righteousness to lift themselves up, the "just" will be those who accept by faith the righteousness of God as their own. They believe Yahweh and thereby receive the salvation that He offers to them. From "faith to faith" His righteousness is revealed to them. According to the prophecy, Paul writes that "the just shall live by faith:"

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of the Messiah: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. -Romans 1

The simple gospel is that salvation is received by faith. Those who believe Yahweh and His word accept it. Those who fail to believe Him are easily deceived into basing their salvation on the works of their own hands, as they try to lift themselves up. Paul describes this as "another gospel," into which the Galatians were soon deceived:

6 I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of the Messiah unto another gospel:

7 Which is not another; but there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of the Messiah. -Galatians 1

Paul called the Galatians "foolish" because they had been "bewitched" into believing "another gospel." They thought they could be saved by the works of the law rather than by an unwavering faith in the promises of Yahweh:

1 O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Yahshua the Messiah has been evidently set forth, crucified among you? -Galatians 3

Whatever we have been "bewitched" into believing, Paul emphasizes that we cannot make ourselves "just" in the eyes of God by keeping the works of the law. Instead, he reminds us again, "the just shall live by faith:"

11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, *it is* evident: for, The just shall live by faith. -Galatians 3

The prophetic promises of Yahweh are revealed through Yahshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ). They are true:

20 For all the promises of God in him *are* yes, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us. -2 Corinthians 1

When we refuse to believe the promises of God, many of us respond as Israel did when they made the golden calf. After Moses delayed his return from the presence of Yahweh, the people grew impatient. They told Aaron, "Arise, make us gods, which shall go before us...." (see Exodus 32:1).

Likewise, delays by Yahweh concerning His promise should not be considered slackness. Instead, we should know that He is giving us time to repent from our unbelief:

9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. -2 Peter 3

In His time and on His schedule, Yahweh will judge those who do not believe Him and His word as surely as He judged Israel and then Judah:

37 For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if *any man* draws back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. -Hebrews 10-11

If we are among the just, we know His promises are true without even seeing them... because we live by faith.

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
Scriptures are from the:
Proper Name Version of the King James Bible. 

©2008 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.