

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 Abomination of Desolation: Part 2

When Yahshua (Jesus) told of the coming “abomination of desolations,” He said it was that which was spoken of by the prophet Daniel:

14 But when you shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that reads understand,) then let them that are in Judaea flee to the mountains: -Mark 13

At the time of Daniel’s prophecy, Yahweh had already judged Judah. He had used Babylon, a foreign nation under the leadership of King Nebuchadrezzar, to make Judah and the surrounding nations “perpetual desolations:”

9 Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, says Yahweh, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and a hissing, and perpetual desolations. -Jeremiah 25

Yahweh used His prophets to warn Judah over and over again, telling them that He would spare them from judgment if they would only listen to His word and stop worshipping false gods:

4 And Yahweh has sent to you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending *them*; but you have not listened, nor inclined your ear to hear.

5 They said, Turn you again now every one from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that Yahweh has given to you and to your fathers forever and ever:

6 And go not after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, and provoke me not to anger with the works of your hands; and I will do you no hurt. -Jeremiah 25

Instead of listening to Yahweh, however, Judah fell deeper and deeper into the abominations of misguided worship. Even the sons of righteous kings, who had already heard the truth, fell into the ecumenical practices of worshipping other gods, in addition to Yahweh. For example, Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, led Judah into these abominations:

2 And he did *that which* was evil in the sight of Yahweh, after the abominations of the heathen, whom Yahweh cast out before the children of Israel. -2 Kings 21

What were the abominations of Manasseh? They are described in 2 Kings 21:3-9.

He built up the “high places,” which were altars upon hill-tops for worshipping various gods (see related Scriptures Numbers 22:41; 1 Kings 12:32; 2 Chronicles 14:3). He reared up altars for Baal, whose name means “lord.” Baal is the chief male god competing with Yahweh (see related Scripture 1 Kings 18:21). He made a “grove,” which is also called “asherah,” representing the goddess known as the “Queen of Heaven” (see related Scriptures Exodus 34:13; Deuteronomy 7:5; 1 Kings 18:19; 2 Kings 23:15; 2 Chronicles 14:3; Isaiah 17:8; Isaiah 27:9; Jeremiah 7:18; Jeremiah 17:2; Jeremiah 44:25; and Micah 5:14). The grove, or asherah, is often in the form of an image of the goddess. It is also in the form of a tree, a pole, or an obelisk representing Baal, erected within a circle in honor of the goddess. He also worshipped all the host of heaven, which were the moon, stars, and sun, sometimes represented as images of the goddess believed to have come from them (see related Scriptures Deuteronomy 4:19; Acts 19:35).

Moreover, however, Manasseh brought the images for pagan rituals into the house of Yahweh, which was the place where Yahweh said He would put His name. There was already an altar for Yahweh in His house. Therefore, other altars would have been made for other gods (see related Scriptures 1 Kings 9:25; 2 Chronicles 33:15). He also built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of Yahweh:

Furthermore, he set a graven image of the grove in the house of Yahweh:

7 And he set a graven image of the grove that he had made in the house, of which Yahweh 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 forever: -2 Kings 21

Using these images for worship, Manasseh convinced the people to perform abominable rituals. These included human sacrifices, astrology, invoking spirits by incantations, rituals for the dead, and sorcery:

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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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 eyes of Yahweh, the religious practices of Judah were even greater than those committed by the nations that Yahweh had already destroyed:

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

Because of the abominations of Judah, Yahweh warned them of their impending desolation:

10 And Yahweh spoke by his servants the prophets, saying,

11 Because Manasseh king of Judah has done these abominations, *and* has done wickedly above all that the Amorites did, which *were* before him, and has made Judah also to sin with his idols:

12 Therefore thus says Yahweh God of Israel, Behold, I *am* bringing *such* evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whoever hears of it, both his ears shall tingle. -2 Kings 21

While their land lay desolate, Yahweh said, they would serve the king of Babylon for seventy years:

11 And this whole land shall be a desolation, *and* an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. -Jeremiah 25

Therefore, the land and the sanctuary, the temple of Yahweh, was already desolate when Daniel prayed:

17 Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of your servant, and his supplications, and cause your face to shine upon your sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. -Daniel 9

After Daniel prayed, some of the people of Judah eventually returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the temple (see Ezra). Daniel, however, prophesied of more abominations that would lead to further desolation of the sanctuary:

31 And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily *sacrifice*, and they shall place the abomination that makes desolate. -Daniel 11

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Many believe that Antiochus Epiphanes fulfilled this prophecy when he ordered that swine be offered upon the altar of the second temple:

And when the king had built an idol altar upon God's altar, he slew swine upon it, and so offered a sacrifice neither according to the Law, nor the Jewish religious worship in that country. He also compelled them to forsake the worship which they paid their own God, and to adore those whom he took to be gods; and made them build temples, and raise idol altars in every city and village, and offer swine upon them every day. -*The Works of Josephus* 12:5(253)

In reality, however, the abominations of the second temple were too numerous to count. Shortly after its construction, the priesthood was polluted (see Ezra 10:18). Even after they were apparently cleansed, the priests again soon defiled themselves (see Nehemiah 13:29). The defilement of the priesthood and, consequently, the temple, continued until Yahshua (Jesus) called the religious leaders "serpents," having little hope of escaping the damnation of hell:

33 Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? -Matthew 23

The temple had become like the religious leaders. They were beautiful on the outside but on the inside they were "full of dead *men's* bones, and of all uncleanness:"

27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead *men's* bones, and of all uncleanness. -Matthew 23

Pretending to be holy, the religious leaders ignored the Word of God and based their religion upon their own traditions. Yahshua told them:

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

Failing to distinguish between the holy and profane, they had profaned the holy things of Yahweh. In doing so, they also profaned Him:

26 Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned my holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shown *difference* between the unclean and the clean, and have hidden their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them. -Ezekiel 22

The temple was profaned by the abominations of the religious leaders, making it spiritually desolate:

38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. -Matthew 23

Unsuitable for the holy name of Yahweh, the physical temple was eventually destroyed by the Romans (see *The Works of Josephus, The War of the Jews*, 4, p. 888.) Did this event fulfill Yahshua's prophecy? Or should we look for a further "abomination of desolation," as spoken of by Daniel?

(To be continued in Part 3.)