

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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Healing Our Land

When we hide our faces from the brightness of Yahweh's light, we find ourselves in the midst of the judgment of His anger. However, as we grope around as in the darkness of the night, we have the hope of knowing that light comes in the morning. With it comes the joy of a new day:

5 For his anger *endures but* a moment; in his favor *is* life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy *comes* in the morning. -Psalms 30

Here is our hope!

- 1 Arise, shine; for your light is come, and the glory of Yahweh is risen upon you.
- 2 For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but Yahweh shall arise upon you, and his glory shall be seen upon you. -Isaiah 60

As we look upon the darkness that seems to cover the earth and the "gross darkness" of its people, Yahweh gives us a clear promise:

- 14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. -2 Chronicles 7

This promise begins with the word, "if." That means it is a conditional promise, which can only be fulfilled if certain conditions are met by Yahweh's people. If we are among His people, those who are called by His name, then we must seek Him through prayer offered in humble repentance for our "wicked ways." He promises to hear such prayers and to answer them by forgiving our sins and healing our "land."

Yahweh's conditional promise is that He will bless us if we obey Him. If we refuse, however, then He will curse us:

- 26 Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse;
- 27 A blessing, if you obey the commandments of Yahweh your God, which I command you this day:
- 28 And a curse, if you will not obey the commandments of Yahweh your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which you have not known. -Deuteronomy 11

Yahweh demonstrated the power of His judgment to an unrepentant land in Sodom and Gomorrah:

- 20 And Yahweh said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous;
- 21 I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come to me; and if not, I will know. -Genesis 18

It troubled Abraham to think of the impending judgment that was about to come upon Sodom and Gomorrah. Therefore, he asked Yahweh whether the righteous would perish with the wicked. Wouldn't Yahweh be just?

- 23 And Abraham drew near, and said, Will you also destroy the righteous with the wicked?
- 24 Perhaps there are fifty righteous within the city: will you also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that *are* therein?
- 25 That be far from you to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from you: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? -Genesis 18

Yahweh answered that He would not destroy it if it contained fifty righteous people. When pressed by Abraham, Yahweh responded that He would not destroy it for forty five, forty, thirty, twenty, or even ten righteous people (see Genesis 18:28-32). After allowing Lot, Abraham's nephew, and his family to flee, Yahweh destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah:

- 24 Then Yahweh rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from Yahweh out of heaven;
- 25 And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground. -Genesis 19

There was no humble repentance and no prayers to Yahweh by the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. Therefore, their land was not healed and it was subjected to Yahweh's judgment.

When we contrast the outcome of Sodom and Gomorrah to that of Nineveh, the powerful city that was the capital of Assyria, we see a major difference. Yahweh sent Jonah to Nineveh to warn them of their impending destruction. They responded in humble repentance:

- 5 So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

**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 For word came to the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered *himself* with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

7 And he caused *it* to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything: let them not feed, nor drink water:

8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God: yes, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that *is* in their hands.

9 Who can tell *if* God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?

10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do to them; and he did *it* not. -Jonah 3

God chose Israel to be His chosen people when they were only a small number of humble people:

7 Yahweh did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people; for you *were* the fewest of all people: -Deuteronomy 7

However, when they lifted themselves up in pride, as King Solomon did through his riches and his many wives, which turned him to worship other gods, Yahweh judged Israel. He destroyed their united kingdom and divided it into two kingdoms, named Israel and Judah (see 1 Kings 11, 12).

Yahweh had saved Nineveh from destruction because they repented. He then later used the Assyrian King Shalmaneser IV, who reigned from 727 to 722 B.C., to destroy an unrepentant Israel and capture its people (also see Max Kellner, *The Assyrian Monuments, Illustrating the Sermons of Isaiah*, Boston: Damrell & Upham Old Corner Bookstore, 1900, p. 5.):

9 And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Hezekiah, which *was* the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, *that* Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria, and besieged it.

10 And at the end of three years they took it: *even* in the sixth year of Hezekiah, *that is* the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was taken. -2 Kings 18

This destruction came upon Israel because of their disobedience against Yahweh:

12 Because they obeyed not the voice of Yahweh their God, but transgressed his covenant, *and* all that

Moses the servant of Yahweh commanded, and would not hear *them*, nor do *them*. -2 Kings 18

Israel had adopted the religion of the nations around them, which included idol worship:

12 For they served idols, whereof Yahweh had said to them, You shall not do this thing. -2 Kings 17

Unfortunately, Judah had been doing the same thing:

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

Therefore, Sennacherib, who was King of Assyria from 705 to 681 B.C., took the fenced cities of Judah (also see Kellner, p. 5):

13 Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them. -2 Kings 18

Sennacherib boasted of this victory and recorded it on a clay document known as “The Taylor Prism,” where he mentioned Hezekiah by name (see George Smith, *Assyrian Discoveries: An Account of Explorations and Discoveries on the Site of Nineveh, During 1873 and 1874*, Third Ed., New York: Scribner, Armstrong & Co., 1876, p. 305).



The Taylor Prism

Neo-Assyrian, 691 BC, from Nineveh, northern Iraq, Recording the first eight campaigns of King Sennacherib (704-681 BC)

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Sennacherib then set his sights upon Jerusalem and put it under seige. However, King Hezekiah and others in Judah responded with humble repentance and prayer:

1 And it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard *it*, that he tore his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of Yahweh. -2 Kings 19

Yahweh heard the humble prayers of Hezekiah. He miraculously saved Judah from destruction by Assyria:

35 For I will defend this city to save it for my own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

36 Then the angel of Yahweh went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they *were* all dead corpses. -Isaiah 37

Whether our “land” is our world, our nation, our family, or even our own hearts, Yahweh promises healing... if we will humble ourselves, repent, and pray. We can then leave the night behind and know that His joy comes in the morning.

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