

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 Way of Man is Not in Himself

Saul had a mission and purpose for his life. It was to protect the religious system of which he had become a significant part. He had only recently witnessed and consented to the fatal stoning of Stephen, whose last words on earth revealed the truth of the Gospel of Yahshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) to any that had ears to hear what he was saying:

- 58 And cast *him* out of the city, and stoned *him*: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.
- 59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, Lord Yahshua, receive my spirit.
- 60 And he knelt down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.
- 1 And Saul was consenting to his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the congregation which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. -Acts 7 and 8

To Saul, those who challenged his religion were worthy of persecution and even death. He was so determined to rid the world of the Jews that had come to believe that Yahshua was the promised Messiah, that he chased after them to cities beyond Jerusalem and even to nations outside of Judah. In his zeal, he sought and obtained permission from the high priest to follow his pursuits. Saul was focused on his mission as he approached the City of Damascus, which was located in Syria. That is when a life-changing event happened to him. He saw "a light from heaven."

- 1 And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest,
- 2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.
- 3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: -Acts 9

Then Saul heard a voice, which called him by name:

- 4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why persecute you me? -Acts 9

As Saul later recalled this miraculous occasion, he said that the voice spoke to him in the Hebrew language, which is written in the Greek text as εβραϊς (Hebrais):

- 14 And when we had all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking to me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecute you me? *it is hard for you to kick against the pricks.* -Acts 26

The voice told Saul that it is hard to "kick against the pricks." This seems to mean that the more he resisted God's calling on his life, the more it would hurt him.

The language that Saul heard is significant because the speaker identified Himself by name:

- 15 And I said, Who are you, Lord? And he said, I am Yahshua whom you persecute. -Acts 26

Regardless of what the Greek text says, many believe the voice actually spoke in the Aramaic language, rather than in Hebrew. The Aramaic language had been learned by the Jews while they were captives in Babylon nearly six centuries earlier and was commonly spoken in Judah during the first century. If the resurrected Messiah did speak to Saul in Aramaic, then He probably called Himself "Yeshua," instead of "Yahshua."

The influence of Babylon on the name is revealed in the name Joshua, the son of Nun, which is the same name as "Yahshua" or, as it is spoken, "Yahshua." After the captivity, the name of Joshua, which means "Yahweh is salvation," was changed to "Jeshua," which means "he is salvation."

- 17 And all the congregation of them that had come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths: for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun to that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness. -Nehemiah 8

"Yah" is the short form of the name of God, which is "Yahweh." If the Messiah spoke Hebrew, as the Scripture says He did, then He would have likely called Himself "Yahshua," rather than "Yeshua." He would have thereby clearly identified Himself to Saul as the One who fulfilled the prophecy as the Savior that would come in the name of Yahweh:

- 25 Save now, I beseech you, O Yahweh: O Yahweh, I beseech you, send now prosperity.
- 26 Blessed *is* he that comes in the name of Yahweh: we have blessed you out of the house of Yahweh. -Psalms 118

**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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When Saul, who had fallen down to the earth in the sight of the bright light which came upon him, finally rose up from the ground, he was blind! Instead of aggressively marching into Damascus as he had planned, he was led into the city by hand. Saul remained blind for three days, during which time he also fasted:

- 8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought *him* into Damascus.
- 9 And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink. -Acts 9

By Saul's own account, he had been a prideful and zealous Pharisee:

- 4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinks that he has whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:
- 5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;
- 6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the congregation; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. -Philippians 3

Suddenly, however, his whole life changed. After Saul was humbled and blinded, Yahshua told him that He had another purpose for his life. He was sending Saul to minister the Gospel to the Gentiles!

- 16 But rise, and stand upon your feet: for I have appeared unto you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of these things which you have seen, and of those things in which I will appear to you;
- 17 Delivering you from the people, and *from* the Gentiles, to whom now I send you, -Acts 26

Ironically, Yahshua told the blinded Saul that He was sending him to open the Gentiles' eyes! He sent Saul to tell them that, through faith in Him, they could be turned from darkness to light, as they were delivered from the power of Satan to God. Their sins could be forgiven and they could be sanctified:

- 18 To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. -Acts 26

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Saul thought that he knew the purpose for his life, which was to defend the traditions he had been taught. It was only after he was humbled that Yahshua revealed a greater purpose for him. Ironically, Yahshua used this "Hebrew of the Hebrews" to bring the truth of the Gospel to the Gentiles.

Many of us also think we know the best course for our lives. Some of us, like Jonah, who was called to prophesy to Nineveh (see Jonah 1:1-3), resist Yahweh's calling until unbearable afflictions overtake us. A great storm arose in Jonah's life that put him in a helpless and hopeless situation, in the belly of a fish. That was when he was willing to humble himself before Yahweh and cry out to Him:

- 1 Then Jonah prayed unto Yahweh his God out of the fish's belly,
- 2 And said, I cried by reason of my affliction unto Yahweh, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, *and* you heard my voice. -Jonah 2

Many of us already think we are in Yahweh's will and doing what He has called us to do. However, it is only after He humbles us that we are able to see His greater purpose for our lives. This was the case with the prophet Isaiah. He was a prophet during the reign of Uzziah, the powerful king of Judah. Uzziah, however, died of leprosy because he ignored the holiness of Yahweh by illegally offering incense in the temple. Isaiah recorded the events of his life:

- 22 Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, first and last, did Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, write. -2 Chronicles 26

It was in the year that King Uzziah died that Isaiah began to see more clearly the awesome holiness of Yahweh:

- 1 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. -Isaiah 6

As Isaiah got a glimpse of Yahweh's holiness, he was humbled as he saw more clearly his own sinfulness:

- 5 Then said I, Woe *is* me! for I am undone; because I *am* a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for my eyes have seen the King, Yahweh of hosts. -Isaiah 6

It was in Isaiah's state of humility that Yahweh cleansed him of his sin. Only then did he know that he was ready to fulfill Yahweh's calling for his life:

- 7 And he laid *it* upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged.
- 8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here *am* I; send me. -Isaiah 6

Many of us make great and prideful plans for our lives, which we zealously try to fulfill. Then, after we are humbled through afflictions, Yahweh shows us that it is He, and not ourselves, that directs our steps:

- 23 O Yahweh, I know that the way of man *is* not in himself: *it is* not in man that walks to direct his steps. -Jeremiah 10