

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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Be Not Entangled Again

Paul encouraged the Galatians:

- 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

He was writing to those that had been set free from oppressive man-made religious bondage through their faith in Yahshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ).

Yahshua described this religion to the multitude of people, as well as to His own disciples. He said the “scribes and Pharisees” were sitting “in Moses’ seat,” supposedly teaching the law that had been given by Yahweh to Moses. In reality, however, they were confusing the people because they blended the law of Moses with the traditions, which they had made up. When they read the Scriptures to the people, that which they said was true. However, when they made their own rules and regulations, they were adding unnecessary grievous and heavy burdens upon the people. They were, in effect, enslaving them under their controlling authority:

- 1 Then spoke Yahshua to the multitude, and to his disciples,
- 2 Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat:
- 3 All therefore whatever they bid you observe, *that* observe and do; but do not you after their works: for they say, and do not.
- 4 For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay *them* on men’s shoulders; but they *themselves* will not move them with one of their fingers. -Matthew 23

These religious leaders set themselves apart from the rest of the people by adorning themselves with wonderfully crafted wide-bordered garments. To give the appearance of being keepers of the Word of God, they wore large boxes, called “phylacteries,” containing Scriptures:

- 5 But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, -Matthew 23

They elevated themselves over the other people, setting themselves up in the most important positions at feasts and in the synagogues:

- 6 And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, -Matthew 23

They even taught the people to call them by such seemingly holy titles, as “Rabbi,” “Father,” or even “Master,” lifting themselves up in a manner that Yahshua condemned:

- 7 And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.
- 8 But be not you called Rabbi: for one is your Master, *even* the Messiah; and all you are brethren.
- 9 And call no *man* your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.
- 10 Neither be you called masters: for one is your Master, *even* the Messiah. -Matthew 23

The first mention in the Bible of the use of the title “Father” as applied to a religious authority was in connection with the worship of images as idols among the tribe of Dan. They set themselves up a priest, calling him “father,” to lead them in the very worship practices that Yahweh had clearly condemned (see Deuteronomy 4:15-19):

- 18 And these went into Micah’s house, and fetched the carved image, the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image. Then said the priest to them, What do you?
- 19 And they said to him, Hold your peace, lay your hand upon your mouth, and go with us, and be to us a father and a priest: *is it* better for you to be a priest to the house of one man, or that you be a priest to a tribe and a family in Israel?
- 20 And the priest’s heart was glad, and he took the ephod, and the teraphim, and the graven image, and went in the midst of the people. -Judges 18

According to Yahshua, the religious leaders of the Jews had lost their perspective. They had exalted themselves over the people, whereas they should have humbled themselves before them as servants:

- 11 But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.
- 12 And whoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. -Matthew 23

The religious leaders, whom Yahshua addressed as “scribes and Pharisees,” would not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Furthermore, by teaching their hypocritical traditions, they were keeping others from entering therein also!

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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13 But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for you neither go in *yourselves*, neither allow you them that are entering to go in. -Matthew 23

They took advantage of the helpless and the needy, such as widows. Under the guise of long prayers, they gave the pretense of holiness while robbing them of their property:

14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayer: therefore you shall receive the greater damnation. -Matthew 23

As they sought to convert others to their religion, the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees were only increasing the heathenism of the heathen. Yahshua said they were making each of their converts "twofold more the child of hell than yourselves:"

15 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, you make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. -Matthew 23

Their entire man-made religion, Yahshua said, was a sham. Their object was not to lead the people into the truth toward salvation. Instead, it was for financial gain for themselves and for their religion:

16 Woe unto you, *you* blind guides, which say, Whoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor!

17 *You* fools and blind: for which is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifies the gold?

18 And, Whoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty.

19 *You* fools and blind: for which *is* greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifies the gift? -Matthew 23

They had put their focus upon the gifts brought to the altar and upon the rulers of the temple, instead of upon the God of heaven:

20 Whoever therefore shall swear by the altar, swears by it, and by all things thereon.

21 And whoever shall swear by the temple, swears by it, and by him that dwells therein.

22 And he that shall swear by heaven, swears by the throne of God, and by him that sits thereon. -Matthew 23

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Institute for Biblical and Historical Studies
P.O. Box 12, 114 East Main Street
Addison, Michigan 49220 U.S.A.
biblical@ibiblical.org

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By focusing on the physical, they had forgotten the spiritual. As Stephen was about to be stoned to death, he reminded the Jewish leaders that God didn't even live in their temple!

48 However the most High dwells not in temples made with hands; as said the prophet,

49 Heaven *is* my throne, and earth *is* my footstool: what house will you build me? says the Lord *Yahweh*: or what *is* the place of my rest? -Acts 7

The scribes and the Pharisees had missed the point about God. While emphasizing the details of their traditions and rituals, they failed to see the bigger picture:

23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier *matters* of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought you to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

24 *You* blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. -Matthew 23

Their religion was an outward show, hiding the darkness that was within their hearts:

25 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

26 *You* blind Pharisee, cleanse first that *which is* within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.

27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you are like unto whitewashed sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead *men's* bones, and of all uncleanness.

28 Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but within you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. -Matthew 23

The unrepentant Jewish leaders were, Yahshua says, the children of those that had killed the prophets. They were, He says, "serpents" on their way to hell:

31 Therefore you are witnesses unto yourselves, that you are the children of them which killed the prophets.

32 Fill you up then the measure of your fathers.

33 *You* serpents, *you* generation of vipers, how can you escape the damnation of hell? -Matthew 23

Paul warned the Galatians about "false brethren" that came in secretly to subtly undermine their liberty and to bring them back into religious bondage:

4 And that because of false brethren secretly brought in, who came in privately to spy out our liberty which we have in the Messiah Yahshua, that they might bring us into bondage: -Galatians 2

Peter says such people are slaves themselves, bringing people back into bondage by promising them liberty:

19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. -2 Peter 2

Might there still be "false brethren" among us that are secretly trying to bring us back into religious bondage? If so, then we must "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