

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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We Seek Your God, as You Do

One of the definitions of the word “confuse” is “to mix indiscriminately” (see *Merriam-Webster Dictionary and Thesaurus*, 2010). This is exactly what the religious leaders of Judah did before their nation and the temple of Yahweh were destroyed. They led Judah into confusion by making no difference between the holy and the profane:

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

Consequently, they adopted the religious practices of the heathen and brought their abominations into the house of Yahweh as images and idols:

14 Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of Yahweh which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. -2 Chronicles 36

King’s, such as Manasseh, totally defiled the house of Yahweh:

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.

3 For he built up again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he reared up altars for Baal, and made a grove, as did Ahab king of Israel; and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them.

4 And he built altars in the house of Yahweh, of which Yahweh said, In Jerusalem will I put my name.

5 And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of Yahweh.

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.

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

Under Manasseh’s leadership, Judah had totally ignored Yahweh’s commandment concerning making images and bowing before them:

4 You shall not make to you any graven image, or any likeness of *anything* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth:

5 You shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them: for I Yahweh your God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me; -Exodus 20

They defiled the house of Yahweh by placing in it altars for Baal. They even placed an image of the goddess, which is known as “asherah” and translated as “grove,” in the house of Yahweh!

Among their religious practices were human sacrifices and spiritualism, which included communications with the spirits of the dead. All of these and more were “an abomination unto Yahweh.” They were utterly forbidden:

10 There shall not be found among you *any one* that makes his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that uses divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch,

11 Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.

12 For all that do these things *are* an abomination unto Yahweh: and because of these abominations Yahweh your God does drive them out from before you.

13 You shall be perfect with Yahweh your God. -Deuteronomy 18

Yahweh sent prophets to warn Judah against such practices. However, the people of Judah ignored and despised them:

16 But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of Yahweh arose against his people, till *there was* no remedy. -2 Chronicles 36

Consequently, Yahweh sent the king of Babylon (king of the Chaldees) to destroy them, as well as the house that had been built for Him alone for His name:

17 Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave *them* all into his hand.

18 And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of Yahweh, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes; all *these* he brought to Babylon.

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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19 And they burnt the house of God, and broke down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. -2 Chronicles 36

After seventy years of captivity in Babylon, Yahweh stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, the king of Persia, to grant Judah permission to return to their homeland and to rebuild the temple unto Yahweh:

20 And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia:

21 To fulfill the word of Yahweh by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfill threescore and ten years.

22 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of Yahweh spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, Yahweh stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

23 Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth has Yahweh God of heaven given me; and he has charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? Yahweh his God be with him, and let him go up. -2 Chronicles 36

As the captives returned to Jerusalem and began to work on rebuilding the temple of Yahweh, they were met with residents of the land that offered to help them. These people, however, were their enemies! They attempted to justify their efforts to join them in their work by saying they all worshipped the same God:

1 Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity built the temple unto Yahweh God of Israel;

2 Then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chiefs of the fathers, and said to them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as you do; and we do sacrifice to him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur, which brought us up here. -Ezra 4

Ironically, while Esarhaddon was the king of Assyria, Manasseh, the king of Judah, was his “loyal vassal” (see John Bright, *A History of Israel*, Philadelphia: The

Westminster Press, 1959, p. 289.) As such, Manasseh, while he was leading Judah into the abominations of image worship and spiritualism, was really a servant, or a feudal tenant, of the Assyrian king.

After Esarhaddon’s grandfather, Sargon, had conquered Israel (Samaria), he resettled the land with foreigners (see W. G. Hird, *Monumental Records; or the Inscriptions of Assyria & Babylonia and Their Bearing on Bible History*, London: Hamilton, Adams & Co., 1889, p. 52). In doing so, Sargon also returned religious confusion back to the people of the land:

33 They feared Yahweh, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from there. -2 Kings 17

By blending their worship of Yahweh with other gods, they completely ignored His clear words:

35 With whom Yahweh had made a covenant, and charged them, saying, You shall not fear other gods, nor bow yourselves to them, nor serve them, nor sacrifice to them:

36 But Yahweh, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt with great power and a stretched out arm, him shall you fear, and him shall you worship, and to him shall you do sacrifice.

37 And the statutes, and the ordinances, and the law, and the commandment, which he wrote for you, you shall observe to do forevermore; and you shall not fear other gods.

38 And the covenant that I have made with you you shall not forget; neither shall you fear other gods.

39 But Yahweh your God you shall fear; and he shall deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies.

40 However they did not listen, but they did after their former manner.

41 So these nations feared Yahweh, and served their graven images, both their children, and their children’s children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day. -2 Kings 17

King Esarhaddon, while he ruled over the king of Judah, had apparently continued in that which he had learned from his grandfather. It appears that the discerning leaders of the people of Judah recognized the error of the people of the land and rejected their help in rebuilding the temple:

3 But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said to them, You have nothing to do with us to build a house to our God; but we ourselves together will build unto Yahweh God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us -Ezra 4

Nevertheless, the people of the land were able to accomplish their underlying agenda, which was “to frustrate their purpose” in completing Yahweh’s work:

4 Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building,

5 And hired counselors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia. -Ezra 4

When those that claim to strengthen our hands in Yahweh’s work fail to distinguish between the holy and the profane, have they really come to help?

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