

Come to Understanding

They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding,
and they that murmured shall learn doctrine. — Isaiah 29:24

November 1, 2012

Volume 11 Number 21

God Meant It For Good

None of us knows the mind of God. His ways are beyond our comprehension. Things that seem tragic in our eyes are often revealed as a blessing once we are able to see a larger picture. After Joseph endured great tragedies, he miraculously found himself to be the second most powerful person over all of Egypt. As his guilt-ridden brothers bowed before him, he told them that what they had intended for evil, God intended for good:

- 19 And Joseph said to them, Fear not: for *am* I in the place of God?
20 But as for you, you thought evil against me; *but* God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as *it is* this day, to save many people alive. -Genesis 50

Many years earlier, Joseph's brothers maliciously threw him into an empty pit:

- 23 And it came to pass, when Joseph had come to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph out of his coat, *his* coat of *many* colors that *was* on him;
24 And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit *was* empty, *there was* no water in it. -Genesis 37

They even considered killing him, until they decided to pull him out of the pit and sell him to the "Ishmeelites," who took him to Egypt:

- 28 Then there passed by Midianite merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty *pieces* of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt. -Genesis 37

Afterwards, an Egyptian master who had apparently purchased him from the "Ishmeelites," had Joseph thrown into prison because of false accusations made by his wife (see Genesis 39:19-20). However, Yahweh was with Joseph so that he not only survived in prison, but he prospered!

- 21 But Yahweh was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.
22 And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that *were* in the prison; and whatever they did there, he was the doer *of it*.
23 The keeper of the prison looked not to anything *that was* under his hand; because Yahweh was with him, and *that* which he did, Yahweh made *it* to prosper. -Genesis 39

In a life-changing moment, Yahweh revealed to Joseph the interpretation of the Egyptian Pharaoh's dream concerning a coming famine. As a result, Joseph soon found himself, not only out of prison, but in a position of great authority as the second in command over all of Egypt!

- 39 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, Forasmuch as God has shown you all this, *there is* none so discreet and wise as you *are*:
40 You shall be over my house, and according to your word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than you. -Genesis 41

The famine did occur, just as Yahweh had revealed to Joseph. However, by having advance knowledge of the famine, Joseph was able to store large quantities of food and was in a position to not only help Egypt survive the famine, but also his own family. When his brothers came to Egypt for help, Joseph revealed himself to them as the brother that they had sold into slavery:

- 3 And Joseph said to his brothers, I *am* Joseph; does my father yet live? And his brothers could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence.
4 And Joseph said to his brothers, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I *am* Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. -Genesis 45

However, Joseph told them that the terrible things they had done to him were really all part of the work of God! It was part of God's larger plan to send him into Egypt to "save your lives by a great deliverance!"

- 5 Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that you sold me here: for God did send me before you to preserve life.
6 For these two years *has* the famine *been* in the land: and yet *there are* five years, in which *there shall* neither *be* plowing nor harvest.
7 And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. -Genesis 45

As Joseph explained to his brothers, this was not their doing! They were merely the tools that God used to accomplish His greater purpose:

- 8 So now *it was* not you *that* sent me here, but God: and he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt. -Genesis 45

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

Come to Understanding

Yahweh puts people in positions of power and authority for His purpose, not for theirs. Another notable example of this is seen in Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon. After he built the great kingdom of Babylon, which included the destruction of Judah and the captivity of many of its people, the king thought that he had done it by and for himself:

30 The king spoke, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty? -Daniel 4

Little did he comprehend that his great victories were not about him at all. Yahweh was using him for a much greater purpose than anyone could comprehend. Yahweh worked through the prideful Babylonian king to judge the unrepentant kingdom of Judah! In doing so, “Yahweh God of Israel” weakened the defenses of Judah and brought the Babylonians (also called the Chaldeans) upon them:

4 Thus says Yahweh God of Israel; Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that *are* in your hands, with which you fight against the king of Babylon, and *against* the Chaldeans, which besiege you outside the walls, and I will assemble them into the midst of this city. -Jeremiah 21

While the people of Judah thought they were fighting against the king of Babylon, they were actually fighting against Yahweh Himself!

5 And I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and with a strong arm, even in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath. -Jeremiah 21

Because the people of Judah rejected His word, Yahweh used the Babylonian king against them as His “servant!”

8 Therefore thus says Yahweh of hosts; Because you have not heard my words,

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

Come to Understanding is sent out twice per month free of charge. To add someone to our list of readers, please contact us at:

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

You may view this and past editions online at: www.ibiblical.org
Scriptures are from the:
Proper Name Version of the King James Bible.



©2012 Institute for Biblical and Historical Studies. All rights reserved.
You may freely copy this publication, provided you acknowledge its source and inform us of your use.

The destruction was devastating. The Babylonians not only destroyed the walls of Jerusalem, the people’s houses, and the king’s house, but they also destroyed the “house of Yahweh,” which had been built for His name!

8 And in the fifth month, on the seventh *day* of the month, which *is* the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, to Jerusalem:

9 And he burnt the house of Yahweh, and the king’s house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great *man’s* house burnt he with fire.

10 And all the army of the Chaldees, that *were with* the captain of the guard, broke down the walls of Jerusalem round about. -2 Kings 25

It is difficult for many of us to grasp, but Yahweh gave the kingdom of Judah into the hands of the Babylonians! All things are His to give to anyone He pleases, for His own purpose. He took the kingdom of Judah from those that refused to listen to Him and gave it for a season to His servant, the king of Babylon:

5 I have made the earth, the man and the beast that *are* upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it to whom it seemed pleasing to me.

6 And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him. -Jeremiah 27

Those that resisted the king of Babylon were, effectively, resisting Yahweh. As a member of the religious council in Jerusalem later said of the work of the apostles:

39 But if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it; lest perhaps you be found even to fight against God. -Acts 5

We can never win in a fight against God. Those that trusted Yahweh knew that His judgement had come upon Judah because they had resisted His word. They yielded and submitted to the rule of the king of Babylon:

11 Now the rest of the people *that were* left in the city, and the fugitives that fell away to the king of Babylon, with the remnant of the multitude, did Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carry away. -2 Kings 25

It was Yahweh that caused them to be carried away as captives into Babylon:

4 Thus says Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon; -Jeremiah 29

While they remained in that land of Babylon, Yahweh told the captives to “seek the peace:”

7 And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto Yahweh for it: for in the peace thereof shall you have peace. -Jeremiah 29

In our limited vision, this is one thing we know:

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. -Romans 8