

Come to Understanding

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

April 14, 2013

Volume 12 Number 8

But in Vain They Do Worship Me

Isaiah opened his book of prophecy to the people of Judah with a warning about worthless worship. Calling them “rulers of Sodom” and “people of Gomorrah,” he described their practices of worship as “iniquity:”

- 10 Hear the word of Yahweh, you rulers of Sodom; give ear to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah.
- 11 To what purpose *is* the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? says Yahweh: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.
- 12 When you come to appear before me, who has required this at your hand, to tread my courts?
- 13 Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot endure it; *it is* iniquity, even the solemn meeting. -Isaiah 1

By identifying the people of Judah with Sodom and Gomorrah, Yahweh reminded them that, even though they claimed to be His people, whatever they were doing could be traced back to the wickedness that had ultimately led to the destruction of those two cities:

- 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

Judah is called the sister city of Sodom. Both have produced daughters of iniquity. However, if it could be imagined, the sins of Judah and her descendants had become even greater than the sins of Sodom and her descendants:

- 48 As I live, says the Lord Yahweh, Sodom your sister has not done, she nor her daughters, as you have done, you and your daughters. -Ezekiel 16

While the outward sins of Sodom are well-known to those with eyes to see and hearts to understand, the root of her sin was her pride, wealth, idleness of time, and selfishness:

- 49 Behold, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. -Ezekiel 16

The pride that often accompanies wealth, idleness of time, and selfishness can soon blind our eyes to the truth of

Yahweh’s word. This was the case with King Solomon of Israel. After he reached the height of his wealth and fame, he ignored the word that Yahweh had spoken to him:

- 6 *But* if you shall at all turn from following me, you or your children, and will not keep my commandments *and* my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them:
- 7 Then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all people: -1 Kings 9

Instead of obeying Yahweh, Solomon made his own religion in which he blended the worship of the images of other gods and goddesses with that of Yahweh:

- 4 For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with Yahweh his God, as was the heart of David his father.
- 5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.
- 6 And Solomon did evil in the sight of Yahweh, and went not fully after Yahweh, as did David his father. -1 Kings 11

Likewise, when King Uzziah of Judah reached the height of his power and fame, he also ignored the word of Yahweh. He took it upon himself to enter into the temple and perform acts of worship as he saw fit, rather than as Yahweh had commanded:

- 16 But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to *his* destruction: for he transgressed against Yahweh his God, and went into the temple of Yahweh to burn incense upon the altar of incense. -2 Chronicles 26

At the height of their pride, both King Solomon and King Uzziah had ignored the holiness of Yahweh and sought to develop their own system of worship. In doing so, they did that which Yahweh had warned Israel against doing as they entered into the promised land. Each one did “whatever *is* right in his own eyes:”

- 8 You shall not do after all *the things* that we do here this day, every man whatever *is* right in his own eyes. -Deuteronomy 12

**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

It is during our times of greatest prosperity that we become most tempted to take Yahweh and His word for granted. In doing so, we can persuade ourselves that He really does not mean what He says. Such was the case with Israel, which during times of prosperity was also called “Jeshurun,” meaning “upright one:”

15 But Jeshurun grew fat, and kicked: you have grown fat, you have grown thick, you are covered *with fatness*; then he forsook God *which* made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.

16 They provoked him to jealousy with strange *gods*, with abominations provoked they him to anger.

17 They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new *gods that* came newly up, whom your fathers feared not.

18 Of the Rock *that* begot you, you are unmindful, and have forgotten God that formed you. -Deuteronomy 32

In their pride, Israel “lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.” The Hebrew word that is translated as “lightly esteemed” also means “to regard or treat as foolish.” In his letter to the prideful Corinthians, this is exactly the way Paul describes the way the “natural man” views the “things of the Spirit of God.” He sees them as foolishness:

14 But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned. -1 Corinthians 2

Like Sodom, Corinth, and many people today, Israel regarded the things of Yahweh as foolishness. In their prideful wisdom, they developed their own methods of worship, which, as it turned out, was actually the worship of devils (demons) in the form of the images of new gods, which they made with their own hands.

Pleasing themselves instead of Yahweh, Israel had invented their own feast days, solemn religious services, offering services, and even songs. None of it pleased Yahweh:

21 I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.

22 Though you offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept *them*: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts.

23 Take you away from me the noise of your songs; for I will not hear the melody of your viols. -Amos 5

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.



©2013 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.

Ignoring Yahweh’s word, Judah imitated Israel!

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

Judah diligently sought after Yahweh, acting as though they were a righteous nation that had not forsaken His word. They delightfully approached Yahweh, confident that He would justify them because of their impressive worship:

2 Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God. -Isaiah 58

After all they had done for Yahweh in worship, which even included fasts and self-affliction, they somehow thought that He was obligated to listen to them. However, Yahweh informed them, their worship was focused upon pleasing themselves and then exerting demanding pressure on others to do the same. This was not, Yahweh said, the way to make Him hear their voices:

3 Why have we fasted, *say they*, and you see not? why have we afflicted our soul, and you take no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, and exact all your labors.

4 Behold, you fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: you shall not fast as *you do this day*, to make your voice to be heard on high. -Isaiah 58

Yahshua (Jesus) says that He does not even know many of those that think they are pleasing Him. Even though they are doing many wonderful works and even calling upon Him as “Lord, Lord,” He calls them workers of iniquity!

21 Not every one that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven.

22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? and in your name have cast out devils? and in your name done many wonderful works?

23 And then will I profess to them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity. -Matthew 7

Yahweh does not dwell with the workers of prideful worship. Instead, He whose name is Holy and who alone is “high and lofty” dwells with those whose hearts are humbled before Him with a “contrite and humble spirit:”

15 For thus says the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name *is* Holy; I dwell in the high and holy *place*, with him also *that is* of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. -Isaiah 57

Prideful worship in the absence of humble repentance is worthless. As Yahshua says, it comes from the mouth and lips according to man’s teachings, and not from the heart. Such worship, He says, is done in “vain:”

8 This people draw near to me with their mouth, and honors me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me.

9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men. -Matthew 15