

Meaningless Worship

Key Verse:
***“Wherefore the
Lord said,
Forasmuch as this
people draw near
me with their
mouth, and with
their lips do
honour me, but
have removed their
heart far from me,
and their fear
toward me is
taught by the
precept of men.”***
—Isaiah 29:13

Selected Scripture:
Isaiah 29:9-16

ALTHOUGH THE LESSONS

contained in our selected verses were directed at natural Israel during the days of Isaiah, the principles contained therein equally apply to mankind in general. Our opening verse says that Israel was “drunken” and “staggered,” yet it was not the result of wine or strong drink. (Isa. 29:9) They had become drunken with the false teachings of the heathen nations around them, and had forgotten the principles of righteousness contained in their Law, delivered by God through the hands of Moses. Because of this “drunken” condition, God gave them “the spirit

of deep sleep,” closing their eyes, mercifully “sealing” his word from any further understanding.—vss. 10,11

Mankind in general has also forgotten God’s laws of righteousness, instead substituting in their place the laws of selfishness, greed, pride, and other principles which have their origin in Satan, the “god of this world.” Here too, God has turned away his face from fallen man during this present period of sin and iniquity on the earth, counting them in ignorance. The Apostle Paul said, concerning Israel and by extension the world of

mankind, “God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.”—Rom. 11:32

Thus, the “vision” of God’s truth became to Israel “as the words of a book that is sealed.” John the Revelator also spoke of this in similar language, as he looked out upon the results of sin upon man. In vision, he heard an angel ask the question, “Who is worthy to open the book [of life], and to loose the seals thereof? And no man . . . was able to open the book. . . . And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.”—Rev. 5:2-4

The words of our Key Verse point out that at the heart of Israel’s unfaithfulness was the condition of their heart. They had an outward show of obedience to God, but had removed their heart “far from” him. Even their fear of God was taught by the fallen “precept of men.” It was a slavish fear of bondage to outward ceremonies and manmade traditions, rather than a reverential fear based on full faith and trust in the great God who had provided for their every need.

Despite the unfaithfulness of natural Israel, as well as man’s general lack of faith and obedience toward God, he has made a wonderful provision through the salvation provided by his only begotten Son, Jesus. Continuing the vision of John, he hears these words, “Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.” (Rev. 5:5) This “Lion,” the “Root of David,” was Jesus. By dying as man’s perfect Redeemer, he was found worthy to open the book of life which had been sealed for centuries, since our first parents fell from perfection in the Garden of Eden. As a result, all of Israel and mankind will have the opportunity of coming back into “heart” harmony with God in Christ’s coming kingdom. How we echo Isaiah’s words, “Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, . . . a marvellous work and a wonder.”—Isa. 29:14 ■