

## Testimony owned and shared

*And I bowed down my head, and worshipped the LORD, and blessed the LORD God of my master Abraham, which had led me in the right way to take my master's brother's daughter unto his son.*

*Genesis 24:48*

This testimony of Abraham's servant demonstrates the impact of God's revelation of Himself to and through Abraham. Though not stated in the context of the account in this chapter, the servant is presumably still Eliezer of Damascus, whom Abraham identified earlier in chapter fifteen as the steward of his house, as he postulated how the LORD might fulfill the promise revealed to that point. In that early time of the incrementally revealed promise to Abraham, there was not an Isaac, nor even an Ishmael, on the scene. Yet, by the time we reach chapter 24, the servant Eliezer, in the position of chief steward of the household, would have been acquainted with all of the events that had unfolded in Abraham's life. These would include the difficult, yet resolved, experience of Abraham's testing with the command to sacrifice Isaac.

With all of this in his memory, Eliezer would still be challenged by Abraham's explicit command regarding the obtaining of a wife for Isaac. We see him continually referring to the LORD as the God of his master Abraham throughout this account. Yet, as he moved from knowledge of Abraham's experience with the LORD to his own actual experience with the LORD, he is overwhelmed by the preponderance of confirmation in each step of his journey. As a result, he was not reticent to share his testimony of the LORD's guidance with the household of Bethuel here in our text. Further, when they agreed to send Rebekah back with him to marry Isaac, he promptly interrupted the transaction with his worship: "And it came to pass, that, when Abraham's servant heard their words, he worshipped the LORD, bowing himself to the earth" (v. 52).

Thus, as Eliezer could be acquainted with the God of Abraham based on observing Abraham's experiences, there was apparently a difference for him after stepping out himself to perform such an explicit task, and then watching the LORD answer his own prayer and clearly direct him. For our own application, it is edifying to hear and observe others' testimonies of the work of the LORD; but to step out in faith ourselves and watch Him direct, confirm, and answer on our own behalf is an important aspect of growing faith. Let us trust Him to equip us to take such steps and then be sure to join Eliezer in worshipping and blessing the LORD as He shows us His mercy and faithfulness, to encourage others to follow likewise.

## **Plain Paths**

*Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies. – Psalm 27:11*

Excitement and adventure. This is what many in our modern generation desire life to be a majority if not all of the time – a day-in-and-day-out escape from or avoidance of the dull, the humdrum, and the ordinary. To some degree, it is understandable. Life in a cursed world brings significant amounts of trial and trouble, and the tendency can be to fill the hours with “fun” things in the subliminal hope that nothing bad will happen. Add social media into the mix and our propensity for emulation catapults many into the realm of striving to live a life that looks fulfilling by means of extravagant or diverse experience, but in the end is little more than a quest for a string of events that appear to be extraordinary but deliver no stability or sustainable fulfillment.

Believers should know better. Life with the Lord is indeed exciting and adventuresome, but not usually in any kind of external fashion. In fact, just the opposite is true. It is not the wind, the earthquake, or the fire where our God most frequently manifests His voice and His dealings in our lives, but in the still, small voice of the inner man and in the very undressed occurrences of daily life. There can be and indeed are hilltop experiences and great and mighty works that happen in the service of the Lord, no doubt – even sometimes seasons of the same – but this is not the normal venue of God’s most profound working in our lives. Abraham’s life was that of the mundane existence of a herdsman sprinkled with trials and a but a few significant events. Moses lived forty years on the backside of a desert, culminating in one miraculous call from the burning bush. For the next forty years, while great things were indeed seen and experienced, they were in context of time little more than oases of excitement in the dry and thirsty wanderings in the wilderness. Elijah’s battle with the priests of Baal was a momentary climax of a life hidden away. The life of our Lord Jesus Himself was less than ten percent eventful when we realize that his ministry was but three out of thirty-three years of earthly pilgrimage.

The truth is, while God intends for us to be active for Him, that activity must recognize that His blessing is upon the most usual and customary actions of life and living. It is presenting our ordinary, everyday lives on the altar to Him that He consumes the sacrifice and responds with the fire of fellowship and the opportunity for service and impact. All of this is done in the covert of the plain path of discipleship, where devils often forget to notice.

Let us be mindful that our very ordinary life today is of great interest to our God. He can and will use it to build our faith and stifle the powers of hell when we sincerely ask Him to lead in us a plain path. – *D. Murcek*

### **Too Smart For Your Own Good**

*Ecclesiastes 7:16: neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself?*

The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries liberated the common man's conscience from the oppressive authority of the Catholic Church. For over a millenium the European population suffered under the capricious jurisdictions of papal oppression. Corruption in the priesthood, the building of great cathedrals on the backs of heavily taxed citizens, forced conversions under the Crusaders, the selling of indulgences, and other problematic practices were forced upon a largely illiterate population who did not have the ability to read the Bible for themselves—and certainly not in their own languages. Such problems created a climate in which many were happy to consider the claims of the Protestant Reformers and learn to read the Bible in their mother tongues.

As an outgrowth of this liberation, the Great Enlightenment was birthed. Having justifiably renounced superstitions, ritual, and obsequious submission to the clergy, many went a step too far in also abandoning the Word of God as the final arbiter of truth and only authority for moral ethics. Rather than exercising faith in the invisible God and His infallible word, men became subscribers to the fatuous notion of empirical reasoning. The enlightened mind would hail back to the greek philosopher Protagoras' assertion that "Man is the measure of all things". Empiricists demand physical proof( ie.what one can see, hear, or touch) and only what can be reproven to be true through experimentation and outward observation. Science would now be enthroned as the final court of appeals, while the Bible would be ridiculed as fable or at best sententious aphorisms.

Rationalism paves the way for "scientific" skepticism. Man may now demand of God proofs and evidences that satisfy their contrived definitions of truth. In their distorted view, the Bible does not deserve our trust until it is deemed worthy by the hard evidence and higher authority of scientific rationalism—which has no room for the divine or the miraculous.

Happy is the man who has bound his conscience to the Holy Bible and not been enslaved to the musings of "science falsely so called" I Timothy 6:20. What a sagacious word then is this, found in Psalms 131:1: "LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me." Truly the omniscient Creator, the originator of all wisdom, owes no man explanations.

Have a blessed day

Pastor

## What a Privilege

*But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.*

*John 4:23*

Worship is a topic that is addressed throughout the Bible. The word is first mentioned in the twenty-second chapter of Genesis, and it is last mentioned in the final chapter of Revelation. There are accounts in the Scriptures where worship is corrupted and given to men and idols, but true worship is to be exercised in spirit to the one and only eternal God. At the conclusion of his revelation, when the Apostle John attempts to bow down to worship the angel that brings him the vision, he is forbidden to and told to worship God. God, and God alone is worthy of our worship. We can and should do it now, and we will certainly worship Him throughout eternity.

Today's verse tells us that real worshipers are those who worship the Father in spirit and truth, and that He seeks people to worship Him. God certainly does not need our worship, for He is self-sufficient in all ways; but all things were and are created for His pleasure (Rev. 4:11). Though the Lord has pleasure in us, it is we who truly benefit from spending time in worship. It is in that secret and private place where we meet God, far from all the noise and distraction of this world where we can bare our heart and lay our burdens down. When we worship Him, His voice in return becomes clearer, and we can recognize His Spirit bearing witness with our spirit. Spending concentrated time in worship helps us to have a deeper and more intimate relationship with our God. But our worship should go beyond our private meeting place and be exercised many times throughout our day. Meditation on God's word and His works woven through the activities of our day helps us to be aware of His presence in our lives. *God that made the world and all things therein, seeing he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands*; but He does inhabit the praises of His people. Incorporating praise to God in our daily conversations and affirming our love to Him affords us the opportunity to acknowledge that He sits on the throne of our hearts. All of our life is to be a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable to God.

May the Lord open our eyes to the fact that every day is a gift from God, and remind us that each day we are to give our life back to Him as a living sacrifice. Remember that the Heavenly Father seeks us to worship Him in spirit and truth, so let us do so today.

J. Ekis

## Dysfunction overridden

*Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram.*

*Matthew 1:2-3*

This brief portion of the genealogy of Jesus is aligned with numerous accounts in the book of Genesis, from chapter twelve to chapter 38, concerning those named. As we read the corresponding accounts of each of these, we can recognize a common theme – the overarching sovereignty and grace of God in the affairs of mankind and the accomplishment of His purpose. While these people all had a part in the incarnation of the Son of God, they were obviously not chosen because they were without fault.

Starting with Abraham, although his faith in the promise of God was counted for righteousness, we see early on the necessity of grace, as he and Sarah lied about their relationship on two different occasions, and later concocted their own version of fulfilling God's promise, which of course was rejected. Isaac, in turn, followed in his father's footsteps by lying about his wife to save his own neck. He and Rebekah also introduced family favoritism that would cause ongoing trouble.

Afterwards, even though Jacob seemed to have some understanding of the preeminence of God's promise to the seed of Abraham, he unethically accentuated the familial deceptive traits in alienating his brother, until he had to flee for his life. That trip brought Jacob to tastes of his own medicine, as he was deceived by his uncle Laban multiple times. A consequence of that unhealthy relationship is observed in Genesis 29-30, when Jacob was enslaved by the heathen practices of Laban and his daughters.

After Jacob's return to Canaan, and God's merciful working in the heart of Esau to spare Jacob's life, he nevertheless continued to deal with the innate dysfunction among his sons, which was exacerbated by his favoritism toward Joseph, until Joseph was sold into slavery by his own brothers, who deceived Jacob into bereavement for his supposedly dead son. Then chapter 38 presents the sordid activities of Judah among the Canaanites, which resulted in the aberrant birth of Pharez.

These accounts of the ancestors of Jesus lead to some obvious conclusions. First, the Bible does not present the history to exalt the characters, so we should not worship nor necessarily emulate them. It presents the bare facts, which supports its veracity. Second, the purpose of God worked in spite of the participants and the circumstances. The corollary to this is that He did not choose them for their outstanding behavior. This could be extended through much of the ensuing genealogy. We can obviously be thankful that God's grace was able to override the dysfunction in the lives through which He worked. Therefore, let us be careful to observe His grace and power, not assume that His blessing is connected to such behavior, but also understand the aspects of a faith that pleases Him. "So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham" (Galatians 3:9).

## **Confident Faith**

*Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise up against me, in this will I be confident. – Psalm 27:3*

May believers have a timid faith – wanting to be bold but lacking the confidence in both God and God’s purpose for them to courageously take hold of heaven and shake the earth within their sphere of influence. The Lord desires us to trust Him. As such, we should expect that He also wants that trust to be firm, unyielding, and advancing. His Spirit has provided us with necessary tools to live just that way. The twenty seventh Psalm is a fourteen-verse instruction manual on how to be confident in our faith.

Our confidence in God begins with recognizing our weakness. The Lord is my light and my salvation. The Lord is the strength of my life. If He is my light, that means without Him I am blind. If He is my salvation, that implies that without Him I am doomed. If He is my strength, then without Him I am most certainly sickly and weak. But with Him, I have all that is required for life and godliness – whom then shall I fear?

Our confidence in God requires us to be willing to stand alone. An host may encamp against us, but He is here. Our hellish foe will certainly rise up against us, marshalling his demon hordes, but one man or woman with God makes a majority. If we are not willing to stand alone, we won’t be able to stand at all. Stand therefore with God and watch Him work.

Our confidence in the Lord will be directly proportional to our desire for Him. One thing have I desired. One thing is needful. The eye must be single. If it is Him and Him alone and Him above all and Him in total that I want and need and desire, then He will pour great assurances into my being of His presence, His power, and His preservation in even the most pressing of exigencies. If we engage our whole body, soul, and spirit in our pursuit of Him, how could anything but great confidence in Him be the result?

Our confidence in God is tied to our engagement in the local assembly. It is in the house of the Lord – His tabernacle, His temple, His pavilion, i.e., the assembly of His saints – where confidence is strengthened. Like-minded brethren sharing their love for God’s Word and God’s work builds within each heart a sure and steadfast fortification against the advancements of hell. Show me a Christian who does not attend church regularly, and I will show you a Christian who is not confident in their God.

Our confidence in God is built in frequent and vibrant communication with Him. Praying without ceasing means lifting our hearts before Him continuously. Cry with our voice at times we must, because we must hear His answer. It cannot be that He leaves us. He would not and He could not do that. But have we left Him? Prayer secures us against such propensity.

Our confidence in God will blossom if we have a teachable spirit. Teach me Thy way, O Lord. We have not arrived until we reach Heaven’s shore. Until then, there is much to learn, whether we are new in the faith, or have walked with Him for decades. We all stumble in many ways. Teach us Thy way, O Lord, because our own way will always lead us astray.

Our confidence in God will invite resistance from men and devils. False witnesses will indeed show themselves. There will be cruel conspiracies. No matter. It means we are in the game. Stand fast. Stand firm. If we aren’t advancing, we are retreating. Advance and watch God move.

If we wait on the Lord, He will strengthen us and build in us a vibrant and confident faith. May He do just that for us today. – D. Murcek

## Be Careful What You Wish For!

*Psalms 106:15: And he gave them their request;  
but sent leanness into their soul.*

In the Greek fable, King Midas pined for the power to convert whatsoever he touched to gold. Dionysus granted the power but the expected satisfaction was never realized for Midas could not eat, drink, lay his head down, or embrace his children without the cursed touch destroying the simple pleasures of life.

The children of Israel lusted for meat. The heavenly supplied manna no longer satisfied their palate and they longed for the diet of the Egyptians. Their complaint reached the ear of the Almighty and He gave them what they wished for but before too long the petitioned quail became loathsome to them as well.

How many times believers fall into this syndrome. We wish for temporal success and prosperity, some “must have” desire only to find it bringing leanness to the soul. “Oh Lord” we pray, “this job, this man, this woman, this house, this car, this inheritance, this ability, this degree, this gift, this thing that I must have to satisfy my desire”. In 1 Samuel 8 the elders of Israel longed for a king: “make us a king to judge us like all the nations.” The prophet warned them that this request would bring leanness to their soul: “ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day.” In the fatuous desire to emulate their heathen neighbors they forfeited the unique favor of Divine superintendence.

In the gratification of their desires, in great temporal success and prosperity, individuals, churches, nations, often forget their dependence on God; lose their sense of the value of spiritual privileges and blessings: are satisfied with their condition; become self-confident and proud, and forfeit the favor of God.

May the Lord make us blissfully satisfied with His daily provision being assured that He will provide what is most needful for our spiritual maturity.

Have a blessed day,

Pastor

## A Good Blend

*Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves.*

*Matthew 16:10*

All of us have strengths and weaknesses. Maybe a person is gregarious and makes friends easily but may not be perceptive that they can overwhelm an introvert. A person may be neat and well-organized while being intolerant of someone who is a bit messy. Someone who is driven to accomplish tasks can be impatient with others who plod along. As believers we should desire to utilize our strengths and, by God's grace, improve our weaknesses so we can have a blend of strengths to better serve the Lord.

When Jesus commissioned the disciples to go forth to proclaim the gospel, they were to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. This blend would be helpful for the evangelists going out into a hostile world. As followers of Christ, they were to be lights in a very dark world. Their lives would stand in contrast to the religious Jewish population as well as to the idol-worshipping Gentiles. They would seem strange and might not always be welcomed by the populace. The world was both physically dangerous and spiritually deceptive and the disciples would need to know how to conduct themselves. In giving forth the message of the Kingdom of God being at hand, the disciples must have wisdom to convey the message and an awareness of how not to unnecessarily alienate the spiritually lost. The Apostle Peter comes to mind as one of the disciples who had an impulsive spirit and would need these insights. A willingness to speak out boldly was a strength that Peter possessed, but what he said often needed tempering. Though the Apostle Paul was the most educated of the apostles, he often simplified the message so the hearers could understand and be receptive. Paul strove to be able to mix with diverse people for the advancement of the Gospel. *To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. (1Corinthians 9:22)*

The command of today's verse is still applicable in our day. Our world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is still under the curse, and the Christian's lifestyle and message is not always welcomed. With God's spirit working in us, may we develop our strengths and improve our weaknesses so we can be more effective in God's harvest field, and may we be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

J. Ekis

## Grudge not

*But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.*

*Genesis 50:20*

This answer from Joseph to his brothers reflects his attitude of faith towards God. It had been many years since they had schemed to kill him, and then instead sold him into slavery, in reaction to his sharing of his dreams of preeminence over them. That beginning of events resulting from their hatred of him would have left an indelible mark in Joseph's memory. The brothers' last memory of Joseph would have been that event. But he would also remember the ensuing events. In contrast to previously having been the favorite of his father, he was now further sold as a mere slave to Potiphar in Egypt. Then after rising in Potiphar's house to be chief servant, he was framed by Potiphar's unfaithful wife and thrown into the king's prison, although innocent. After that, having again risen to a responsible position in the prison, he had the opportunity to share his gift from God to interpret dreams for the jailed servants of Pharaoh. At least from the favorable interpretation for the chief butler, Joseph was expectant that the butler would remember him from his restored post and rescue him from prison. Yet the butler forgot him. This chain of events provided ample opportunities for Joseph to become bitter in his circumstances, and especially towards his brothers who had forged the first link.

However, when after two years Pharaoh had his own prophetic dreams, the butler was reminded of Joseph, and after interpreting Pharaoh's dreams Joseph was elevated to manage the food supply in Egypt. That possibly was a time when Joseph began to understand the purpose of God in the events of his life. But when he saw his brothers coming to buy food from him in Egypt and bowing to him just as his childhood dreams had indicated (Genesis 42:6-9), it is evident that much more unfolded before his eye of faith. While the Genesis account doesn't reveal all that Joseph considered as he dealt with his brothers without their recognition, it is clear that he understood more of God's purpose, not only for himself, but for his family, when he revealed his identity to them (Genesis 45:5-8). Yet, even after dwelling with him in Egypt for seventeen years, after the death of Jacob his brothers were still afraid of retaliation from Joseph and came reminding him of Jacob's intercession for them. His answer to them in our text clearly demonstrated that he bore no grudge against them. We do well to recognize that a key element of his response to all that came to him had to be faith in God's purpose for him, even when it was not necessarily clear at times throughout the process.

We can learn much from Joseph's example. Most of us would not compare the events of our own lives to the circumstances that came to him. And yet, should some even approach that extreme, we must remember his response. He bore no grudge. Instead, he typified the ultimate example of our Lord Jesus, "who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (I Peter 2:23). With such examples, let us commit ourselves to bear no grudge, but to leave all in the hands of the Lord (James 5:9).

## **Darkness's Hour**

*When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness. – Luke 22:53*

Here at His arrest at Gethsemane and in His cooperation with the authorities who were sent to illegally take Him to the council, Jesus alluded to something expounded yet not fully explained in the remainder of the sacred Scriptures. He notes that His acquiescence is based upon His understanding that the "hour [of] the power of darkness" had arrived. While He knew fully that He would ultimately crush the head of the Serpent, the matter must unfold as prophesied and the free moral agency of man must be put to the test at Hell's attempted conquest.

The Scriptures are replete with references to a power struggle unseen by the human eye, occurring incessantly in the spiritual dimension. In this habitation of angels and devils, Satan's dark legion is constantly vying for position and power in matters that affect humanity on both the individual and the national scales. If we could see these beings and their interactions, we would no doubt be overcome with paralyzing dread. What is even more enigmatic is that God permits this struggle between good and evil, between light and darkness to play out in time and space. In His eternal wisdom, the mystery of godliness and the mystery of iniquity must co-exist until the Day of Judgement. Hence, there appear to be "moments" or "hours" – i.e., periods of time – in the unfolding of human history where Heaven suspends some of its restraining power and darkness has license to advance. This all appears to be coordinated and executed in concert with human will.

The hour of darkness that occurred during our Lord's arrest, trial, and execution was the result of the recalcitrance of the leaders of the nation of Israel. Their hard and impenetrable hearts were calloused, like Pharaoh's before them, over the course of Jesus' three-year ministry. They became ripe agents for evil and orchestrated the condemnation and crucifixion of the Son of Man at the prodding of Satan himself.

It is possible that another such hour of darkness is upon us. The Holy Ghost has been drawing mankind for over two millennia, but it would appear that His overtures are being increasingly rebuffed and more forthrightly rejected. As humanity turns toward "science" (falsely so called), individuals and nations are both willfully and unwittingly ushering in an era primed for the Devil to escalate his assault against Heaven. In my own lifetime I have witnessed the gradual shedding of Christian principle and syntax from the common culture. This gradual descent seems to be accelerating into out-and-out rejection of all things God and Christ, mirroring the hardness of heart that met our Lord in Gethsemane.

The wonderful news is that no matter the hour and the depth of the darkness, our Lord has overcome it all! As He defeated Hell on Calvary's cross and death at Easter's tomb, so He will defeat this current (and possibly final) hour of darkness by His glorious appearing. But until the heavens open to reveal His triumphant train, we remain His ambassadors in this foreign land, and He has vouchsafed to each of us all that is necessary to thwart the powers of darkness and Hell. Let us be confident in His Word and in His Spirit. May we be willing agents to bring light into the dark until He comes. – *D. Murcek*

## **Bon Appétit**

*Jeremiah 3:15: And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.*

As I enter my 48th year of ministry, these words of the Lord to Jeremiah are particularly meaningful. It should be the goal of every true pastor to feed the people that have been placed under his care. There is this sublime symbiosis that binds the heart of a pastor to his people and it ought to result in the spiritual maturity of those who are thus fed the knowledge and understanding of God's word.

If we may now carry the metaphor of "feeding" to its literal connection, we liken the preacher to a chef preparing a meal. This preparation must begin at the market where the choicest of meats and vegetables are sagaciously chosen. The scrupulous culinarian visually inspects every food element of the ensuing banquet so as to maximize the prospects of a successful feast. Once the selections are made the chef rushes back to his kitchen where he artfully applies his considerable skills of readying, trimming, seasoning, and baking to produce a meal that will please the palate while nourishing the body. A chef de cuisine takes great pains not only in the preparation but also in the presentation, employing garnishes and decorations to stimulate the appetite and add visual appeal to the table.

Sermon preparation follows a similar course. The minister of the Word must search the scriptures and choose doctrinally sound themes from which to assemble the "meal" for his congregation. "Strong meat" (Hebrews 5:12) "seasoned with salt" (Colossians 4:6) is the Bible recipe for teaching that nourishes and edifies. A balanced and varied fare is critical to the maturation of the believer and so the Bible with its plethora of themes and styles must be expounded in its entirety from Genesis to Revelation. But let the preacher always present this glorious Word in an interesting manner, garnished with enthusiasm and power, lest the recipients complain as in Numbers 11:6: "But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna".

So let the hungry children expectantly gather at the table with plates full of the meat of God's Word. Let them eat to the full "For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness" and with "knowledge and

understanding”.

Have a blessed week,

Pastor

## **Blessed Simplicity**

*And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.*

*2Kings 5:10*

Ever since being banished from Eden, mankind has been trying to earn his way back to paradise. Adam and Eve had the most intimate fellowship with God and they lost it because of willful choice. With a huge void in their life, which would be passed on to all of their descendants, mankind began to develop a system of complicated self-works to reestablish relationship with his Creator and fill that vacuum in the heart. Many varied types of religions resulted, but all had the common root of striving for a salvation of sorts, but always based on human performance.

The account of Naaman in 2 Kings is an example of someone who because of his pride overlooked the simplicity of salvation. The chapter begins with the accolades of the captain of the Syrian army Naaman. He was great, honorable, victorious, and mighty in valor, but he was a leper. A lowly servant girl who was a captive from Israel suggested to Naaman that he go to the prophet Elisha for healing. Hearing of this, the King of Syria sent a letter to the King of Israel requesting a healing for his captain Naaman. Eventually Elisha received the king's message and sent a simple response directing Naaman to go and dip himself in the Jordan River seven times and he would be healed. At first, Naaman's pride and superstition caused him to refuse to follow the prophet's instructions. He was angry that Elisha gave him such a simple remedy to cleanse his leprosy. When Naaman finally humbled himself and dipped his body in the Jordan River seven times, he was cleansed of his affliction.

All of us have been infected with the spiritual leprosy of sin. Receiving God's cleansing and favor is not achieved by some elaborate ceremony or any works of our own making. That thought pattern has been passed down to us from Adam. A simple message about a simple remedy came from a simple servant maiden but it produced wonderful results in Naaman. We should be eternally grateful that the way back to right standing and fellowship with God and cleansing from sin does not come from our laborious effort or self-sacrifice. Unfortunately, man's pride gets in the way and causes him to do what he thinks is best. Not until we humbly submit and spiritually immerse ourselves in the blood of the Lord Jesus, do we find the cleansing and restored relationship that was so desperately needed. Today, walk in the Light as He is in the Light, remembering that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. ~J. Ekis

## Unleavened life

*Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days; and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters. And thou shalt shew thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the LORD did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt.*

*Exodus 13:7-8*

This feast of unleavened bread that coincided with the Passover was instituted by the LORD for Israel to commemorate their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. As noted in these verses, this annual feast was to be a reminder to those Israelites of God's powerful and swift deliverance, after the final plague upon Pharaoh and his kingdom caused him to relent and send the Israelites away in haste. It was not only a reminder for those delivered, but the annual observance would also be an opportunity for them to rehearse the history to their children, that they also would be aware of God's great power to deliver His people from the bondage of the world.

However, beyond that purpose, we also see the further reach of the symbolic lesson of that literal deliverance employed centuries later by the apostle Paul in his letter to the Gentile Corinthians: *Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (1 Corinthians 5:6-8).* Just as the purging of leaven from the Israelite households was to remind them of their release from the bondage of Egyptian slavery, the apostle uses the image of leaven representing sin to emphasize to the Corinthian church the importance of purging known sin, and in this context evidently flaunted, from their midst. Just as the Israelites were to flee the bondage of Egypt after that Passover night when the Lord protected their households from the death angel, so New Testament believers are to remove themselves from the bondage to worldly sin, by the power of Christ's eternal sacrifice, which was the ultimate Passover fulfillment.

Just as these memorials for Israel were to remind them of the LORD's grace and mercy in delivering them, so that they would walk in His ways, how much more should we who have been eternally delivered by His grace be constantly remembering to live thankful lives unto Him. "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:2)

## **Aqua Viva**

*John 7:37-38: : In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.*

Oh what a fountain from which flows that life giving water! How few there were on that great day, that took advantage of so gracious an invitation. Had they only known the import of this magnificent promise; for before them, on that last day of tabernacles as they poured out their water pots upon the ground, stood the One who could forever sate their desiccated souls with the vivifying water of life.

God has so ordained that all life on earth depends on finding a water source if they are to continue to thrive. Likewise, there is an innate thirst for things eternal that all humans experience and that compels them to find a source to satisfy that vital need. How difficult the devil has made this in our "dry and thirsty land where no water is". Jeremiah lamented: "For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Jeremiah 2:13. We see that the worldly minded have found their broken cisterns in a vain hope to quench a thirst that only Christ can satisfy. The image of parched souls lapping up the polluted waters from a contaminated cistern would be laughable if it were not so tragically true.

The woman at the well found living water that day at Jacob's well. This despised, Samaritan interloper was caught in the act of stealing a precious commodity. Once finding the source of living water she left her waterpot and hastened back to alert her countrymen that she had found that well which would never would run dry. And we, like her, have also been invited to bring our dehydrated souls to that same well and draw up from its never ending supply.

In our text the Master bade them "come unto me, and drink", and now the Comforter, whom He has sent, reiterates the invitation: Revelation 22:17: And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.