

BIBLE LIGHT AND TRUTH

Reflections on Scripture

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DAWN CHRISTADELPHIANS

“SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS
RIGHTEOUSNESS” MATT 6:23

JOHN THE BAPTIST

If we try to visualise from the evidence available the kind of man John was, particularly from the point of view that he was full of the Holy Spirit from birth. It is apparent that this great gift did not make John proud or arrogant. He was a great prophet with a firm message. Although the message was delivered forcefully, and sincerely, it was delivered humbly. Whether or not the people expected to see in John a "reed shaken with the wind", or "a man clothed in soft raiment", it is certain they saw a prophet and there was "none greater", said Jesus.

He was "clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of skin about his loins". This was the clothing of the prophets (Zech. 13:4) and was how Elijah had appeared to Ahaziah (2 Kings 1:7-8). "Camel's hair" was not a skin, but woven, and well suited for desert use. It was the clothing of the poor. The girdle of skin—made of

leather—was used to make a shapeless garment hold to the figure. It was used for centuries and until recent times in the East. The clothes John wore were the mark of austerity and poverty—the man about whom he preached "had not where to lay his head". The gospel was a message of hope to the poor, for they that "wear soft clothing live in kings' houses", and as such invariably do not want the Truth. John's food was "locusts and wild honey". Locusts were permitted food under the law (Lev. 11:21-22), and were a delicacy if properly cooked, fried in oil. The poor boiled them in salt water, but with wild honey, found in the woods, it became more palatable. (See 1 Sam. 14:25-57).

John was sent by God with a powerful message of repentance for Israel, but John recognised that his preaching had to wane and give way before the one who was to follow. John did not perform any mira-

cles for he came to prepare the way for Christ. The role of John was to "turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (Luke 1:16-17)

John did not consider himself worthy to touch the sandal strap of the shoes of the Son of God. When Abram returned from the slaughter of the kings, the patriarch said he would "take nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap" (Gen. 14:23). This was the most insignificant thing he could mention. Small and valueless though this was, John said, "I am not worthy to touch it". And the tribute of Jesus to John was "Among those born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist".

(Adapted)

“LORD, YOU CAN MAKE ME CLEAN”

The Leper cried out to Jesus, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." Other diseases were cured or healed, but leprosy was always cleansed. The reply came "I am willing; be cleansed."

The hand of Jesus reached out, touched the man and he was made clean. Consider the man's thoughts as he felt the touch, the healing power and knew that he was restored to his family, able to worship and no

longer an outcast.

Symbolically we see resurrection when the full power of Christ's cleansing will be felt as he transforms "our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body."



Commandments of Christ

Out of the same mouth ought not to proceed blessing and cursing (James 3:10)

In our prayer and worship we thank God for His goodness, mercy and love. Worship is carefully thought out and words chosen to express thoughts in a way that is acceptable to Him. But do the same lips express a curse or speak against our fellow men or worse our brethren and sisters? Gossip of course comes into this same category!

James makes it clear that the tongue has great potential for evil saying, "It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison", and poses the question, "Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening?"

Human relationships are not always easy and so often we are like Moses who at "the waters of strife" was so provoked by the people that "he spoke rashly with his lips." Psa 106:32-33

We are made aware, by James in particular, that to control the tongue and make it an instrument for good instead of evil, is a vital part of striving to be in harmony with God and endeavouring to be like Jesus, "Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth."

Thus we must follow the example of Jesus as Pater exhorts:

"He who would love life and see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit." 1Pet 3:10



Jesus said:

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

"INASMUCH"

"Come! Give account of all the gifts

Entrusted to thy care:

The wealth I lent thee, did'st thou give

To others? Did'st thou share

This favour with less favoured ones,

Thus sharing it with me?"

"Lord, give me grace to use this gift

To succour those in need; As thou hast succoured me, O Lord,

Grant I in turn may feed Thy hungry ones; and doing so,

Do it as unto thee."

"The health I gave thee; did'st thou use

This gift—not given to all—

To minister to those in pain?

To spread the Gospel call?"

"O grant I may thy vigour use,

In glorifying thee."

If we could thus fulfil thy will,

E'en so, Lord, we should be

Unprofitable servants still,

Such is our need of thee."

(H. M.)

SELF EXAMINATION

Question to consider:

Do I fully consider it a great honour to be a King-Priest in the Kingdom age, to the extent that it motivates me to endure any hardship in this age.

SPEAK LORD FOR THY SERVANT HEARETH

The sense of hearing is an important one, part of the five senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch) by which we discern what is going on around us. We are given two ears, and they are complicated structures! We are "fearfully and wonderfully made".

The piece on the side of the head which we call the ear is fleshy and is mostly cartilage, and "bendy". All sound comes in waves of vibration through the air, and the outer ear is merely a sound-catcher to funnel the vibrations down a tube to the more important parts of the structure. It also makes earwax which is anti-septic to keep the tube healthy.

At the bottom of the tube is the ear-drum which receives the vibrations and passes them on into the section known as the

"middle ear" where 3 small bones (the hammer, anvil and stirrup) vibrate in a very tiny space full of air. They pass the vibrations on to a second ear-drum. The middle ear is connected to the throat by the Eustachian tube to allow a free passage of air up to it from the mouth.

The second ear-drum is embedded in bone (behind the outer ear) and is connected to the nerves which are the real "hearing" centres — they transmit the vibrations to the brain and translate them into messages we can recognise and remember. With these nerves are 3 semi-circular canals filled with fluid which control our sense of balance -- very sensitive. The brain can receive a range of sounds from very high to very low and can register them in the memory so we can recognise sounds and voices.

A child who is born deaf will not be able to talk, having never heard sounds to reproduce by imitation.

Loss of hearing can be from many causes: some diseases, like measles; too much wax in the ear; damage to the little bones from too loud sounds, such as a pneumatic drill or continual loud music; hardening of the little bones; or infection in the middle ear, from the throat.

We can willingly ignore background noise and concentrate on what we want to hear! And there are none so deaf as those who WON'T hear.

Israel were commanded "not to curse the deaf" (Leviticus 19 v 14). Jesus healed a deaf man (Mark 7 v 31-37) and helped him to "speak plain" at the same time.

D. Oakley

Are we not fearfully and wonderfully made!

THE WAY OF SALVATION

We cannot recall or alter the six days that are gone. They have taken their place in the archives of the ages. But the six days to come are ours in a certain sense. To a certain extent, we have the making of them.

What is the decision of wisdom in the case but to "redeem the time because the days are evil." Turn away your ear from those who would counsel slackness in this matter. No good was ever done by this class of counsel. The writings of the apostles and prophets are our patterns, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God."

The prophets and apostles without exception advise men to take heed, to fear lest they come short, to be in fear of the Lord all the day long, to be as Christ was, to pursue Godliness, to pass the time of our sojourning in fear, to crucify the old man, to walk in the narrow way, to follow after holiness, to agonise to be saved.

Our wisdom as ephemeral beings, invited to the mighty emancipation purposed in Christ, is to reject all contrary counsel, from whomsoever proceeding, and to walk in the narrow way that leads to life.

"The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath ap-

peared", not only teaching that Christ is coming, and that man is subject to death, but "teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world," while looking for the coming (Titus 2:11-13).

The teaching that deals only with the mortality of man and the coming of Christ, and omits, and still worse opposes, the teaching that "we should be holy in all manner of conversation," will be found at last to be valueless as the sounding brass and the tinkling cymbal.

(R. R.)