

# TABLE TALK

Official Publication of the LMS-USA

...these words... shall be upon your heart; you shall  
teach them... and talk of them... Deut. 6:6,7



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## FINAL ISSUE

With this issue of *Table Talk*, this publication of this periodical comes to a close. The Lutheran Ministerium and Synod is in its twenty-seventh year. There was one year of publication of this periodical that shared news concerning what was going on in the time of the talks that lead up to the formation of the church body. Then in August of 1995 the LMS was incorporated and *Table Talk* became the name of this official publication of the LMS.

When the LMS was formed it was formed as a "forum by subscription" where there was to be "an ongoing discussion of theological issues and concerns among clergy and lay alike." This periodical has sought to be an instrument in that "ongoing discussion." Over the years there has been interest and feedback from our readers... and we have sensed God's blessings on our little synod and our work for the Kingdom. We thank you, our readership, for your connection with us over these... for some of you... 27 years!

Rev. John Erickson, Editor

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## *The Despising vs. The Esteeming of God's Word*

*by Rev. John Erickson*

### First - The Despising of God's Word

From the dictionary:

Despise - feel contempt or a deep repugnance for; to look down on with disrespect or aversion; to regard as negligible, worthless, or distasteful; regard with contempt, distaste, disgust, or disdain; scorn; loathe.

The Bible speaks of various ways God's Word is despised:

They were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs (Nehemiah 9:26); did not believe His Word (Psalm 106:24); rejected the Law of the Lord (Isaiah 5:24); closed their ears... Word of the Lord has become a reproach... they have no delight in it (Jeremiah 6:10); made their hearts like flint so that they [can] not hear the law and words ...[of] the Lord (Zachariah 7:12); invalidating the word of God by your tradition (Mark 7:13)

Numbers 15:30-31 - note how, in different ways, translations define what constitutes despising:

NIV - "...anyone who sins defiantly... blasphemes the LORD... Because he has despised the LORD's word and broken his commands..."

ESV - "...the person who does anything with a high-hand... reviles the LORD... Because he has despised the word of the LORD and broken his commandment..."

KJV - "... the soul that doeth ought presumptuously... reproacheth the LORD... Because he hath despised the word of the LORD, and hath broken his commandment ..."

NASB - "...the person who does anything defiantly... is blaspheming the LORD... Because he has despised the word of the LORD and has broken His commandment..."

How does the Third Commandment, "Remember the Sabbath day; to keep it holy," (Exodus 20:8) tie into all this?

Luther's translation of Exodus 20:8

"Du [singular] sollt den Feiertag heiligen."

"You should 'holy' [sanctify] the holiday [understood as Sunday] ."

Luther used the following as a memory verse for the commandment. His aim

Also in this issue - *Psalms For The Ages!* . . . . . page 9

was to direct the catechist to the hearing of the Word... and not to the notion of the Sabbath as a rest day [no or low activity].

"Gedenke des Sabbattages, dass du ihn heiligest."

"Remember [commemorate, better, honor] the Sabbath Day that you sanctify it."

Some Catechisms' rendering of the third commandment and its meaning:

• M. Reu's - *An Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism*

**Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.**

What does this mean?

**We should so fear and love God so we do not despise His Word and the preaching of the same, but deem it holy, and gladly hear and learn it.**

• Joseph Stump - *An Explanation of Luther's Small Catechism*

**Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.**

What does this mean?

**We should so fear and love God as not to despise His Word and the preaching of the gospel, but deem it holy, and willingly hear and learn it.**

• Dr. Erik Pontoppidan - *Explanation of Luther's Small Catechism*

**Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.**

What does this mean?

**This means that we should so fear and love God so that we do not despise His Word and the preaching of it, but consider it to be holy, and gladly hear and learn it.**

• Jacob Tanner - *The Senior Confirmation Book*

**Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.**

What does this mean?

**We should fear and love God so that we do not despise His Word and the preaching of the same, but deem it holy, and gladly hear and learn it.**

• Concordia Publishing - *Luther's Small Catechism*

**Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.**

What does this mean?

**We should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but deem it holy, and gladly hear and learn it.**

• Concordia *The Lutheran Confessions* - *Luther's Small Catechism*

**You shall sanctify the holy day.**

What does this mean?

**We should fear and love God so that we may not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred, and gladly hear and learn it.**

Looking now at the meaning Luther gave to the commandment:

As you note in the several examples above, different editions of the catechisms use different wording. The catechisms I grew up with words it... We should fear and love God so that we do not despise His Word and the preaching of the same, but deem it holy, and gladly hear and learn it. (Carl O. Pederson as well as Jacob Tanner - the ELC of 1917). M. Reu uses the same wording. Joseph Stump uses a little different wording - We should so fear and love God as not to despise His Word and the preaching of the gospel, but deem it holy and willingly hear and learn it. Note the wording in the recent edition of the Book of Concord, *We should fear and love God that we may not despise preaching and*

*His Word, but hold it sacred, and gladly hear and learn it.*

A friend of mine shared the following with me in connection with this Commandment. "Luther joined Augustine, if you will, in the notion that "Our souls do not rest until they rest in the Lord." That rest focuses on God's activity of feeding His people with His Word and Sacrament. There is not, and cannot be in that light, a distinction between preaching and His Word. They are one in the same. And this answers the question: Where does God speak? He speaks in His Word. And how does He make His Word known? He makes it known through preaching/proclamation of His Word.

I couldn't agree more. However...words are important... and word order is important! And very often in our day people will try to work around what should be so clearly understood. I don't want to be picky here, or add to something that is not there, but I don't think it should be considered insignificant, the wording that follows the word *despise* in the meaning to the Third Commandment. In our day... there are many (I am thinking here of those in the various Lutheran camps, but of course it goes beyond Lutherans) who would take the wording to mean that people should not despise an individual's preaching... and they would separate that from His (God's) Word.



I recall seeing in the ELCA website some 20+ years ago... from a conference that was held... where the statement was made, that the church leadership has the responsibility to inform the laity as to what portions of Scripture are taken as legitimate or not legitimate, for church teaching and religious practice.

*God is speaking in the preached Word.*  
**Yes, I hear the sermon, but who is speaking? The minister? No indeed! You do not hear the minister. True, the voice is his; but my God is speaking the Word which he preaches or speaks. Therefore I should honor the Word of God that I may become a good pupil of the Word. (Luther)**

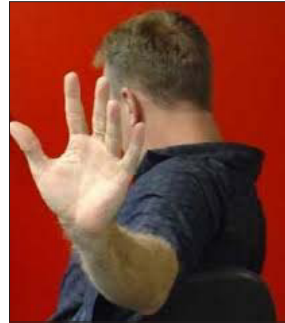
So in our day, I am afraid we can not be too careful as to how things are stated. We need to be clear on this. We are not to despise His (God's) Word *and/or the preaching of the same*. There are many churches (synods and congregations) that, in their documents, claim to hold to a high view of Scripture... but, at the same time, whose preaching is often not firmly, or at times even loosely, rooted in Scripture. And there are those whose view of Scripture is sorely lacking... and whose preaching has therefore no foundation. Clearly, in many cases, this has been a problem for generations. Just consider where the largest "Lutheran" church body is today in so much of her teaching and practice. Therefore I hope I am not doing Luther any injustice, and I do not believe I am doing so, by wording the meaning to our commandment more as we find it in the catechisms with which I grew up, i.e., that we are not to "despise His Word and the preaching of the same". Notice here... our preaching is to be *of the same*. It seems to me that preaching in the church (although often wanting in the church today) is here assumed ... and further... it is assumed that the preaching is to be the preaching *of the Word*.

## Now - What brings about this despising of the Word?

Historically... in Christian theology... three enemies of the soul have been emphasized. Namely, the devil, the world, and our sinful self.

### The Devil

First of all, as we consider the devil's role in all this, we recall that from the very beginning of the human race Satan has been at work in this very thing... of calling into question the Word of God. "Did God actually say?" was the question asked of Eve in the Garden. And note that his questioning had its effect on Eve. In short order, she was not exactly clear on what God had said. And we find her listening to the devil's fleshing out, in his words, what God had said (see Genesis 3:1-5).



**Despising the Word**

The devil is still at work today in the distortion of Scripture. I think of how, especially in the past 30 or so years, there are those who the devil has deceived in their interpretation of the Sodom and Gomorrah account... making the claim that the sin dealt with in that portion of Scripture is not that of homosexuality, but the sin of inhospitality. Likewise we are told that the sin addressed with regard to homosexuality in the New Testament is not that of homosexual relationships but of relationships in which there is a lack of love.

It is no small problem today. It is one thing when people in the world at large have an issue in believing in the reality of Satan, but when those who themselves claim to be Christians disbelieve, then for many even in the church, Satan is not recognized as having any possible influence in human lives. Recent research bears this out.

Four out of ten Christians (40%) strongly agreed that Satan "is not a living being but is a symbol of evil." An additional two out of ten Christians (19%) said they "agree somewhat" with that perspective. A minority of Christians indicated that they believe Satan is real by disagreeing with the statement: one-quarter (26%) disagreed strongly and about one-tenth (9%) disagreed somewhat. The remaining 8% were not sure what they believe about the existence of Satan. [Used with Permission - Barna survey - <https://www.barna.com/research/most-american-christians-do-not-believe-that-satan-or-the-holy-spirit-exist/>]

But the Bible makes clear that the devil/Satan is real. And it doesn't make any difference whether or not I believe in the existence of Satan, or whether or not I believe that what the Bible says about Satan (or anything else for that matter) is true. The fact of the matter is that "The Bible is God's Word and self-revelation to us, and as such, it is without error in all it touches, whenever and however it speaks, whether in matters of faith, doctrine, history, geography, or science" (LMS-USA Statement on Scripture). We remember that the God of the Bible is the great I AM. He is what and who He is. His Word is what it is. Our attempts to make of God and/or of His Word what we want... it changes nothing. God is, and His Word is.

So... as for Satan... the Bible informs us that Jesus experienced an encounter with Satan - see Matthew 4:1-11. We might also consider Jesus's comments to a number of persons as recorded for us in John 8:44, "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out

your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies." Did our Lord believe in the devil? He clearly did. And as for Satan's cunning? John records for us something of the influence he had in Judas Iscariot's life. "The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus" (John 13:2). Consider also the following. Acts 10:38 "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him." Acts 13:10 "You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord?" Ephesians 4:27 "and do not give the devil a foothold." Ephesians 6:11 "Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes." James 3:15 "Such 'wisdom' does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil." First Peter 5:8 "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." First John 3:10 "This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother."

There can be no question... the devil/Satan is real and he still influences people today. His desire is that we, in one way or another, will despise God's Word. And he is good at what he does because many throughout history and yet today do just that. As Peter spoke of it in his Second Letter, chapter 2, "But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them--bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute."

## The World

But there is the world around us that also has influence in the despising of the Word. The influence of the world is powerful. There is more to it than just the people around us that can influence us... but let me only touch on that. There are many examples in Scripture... for example, what happened in the golden calf episode at Mount Sinai... or we think of the advice of the world given to many of the kings in Israel's history... or of what happened to influence the crowd that led to the crucifixion of our Lord.

Well... consider what is happening today. The world has dismissed the biblical account of creation and embraced evolution. The world with its 'thinkers' has not only influenced the public and secular institutions with its evolutionary ideas, it has also influenced many, if not the majority, of church institutions of learning. And we might also consider the issue of abortion and more recently of sexual orientation and gender identification and of the institution of marriage and family. Peter puts it plainly, "In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up" (Second Peter 2:3).

People may refuse to acknowledge the devil's part in much of the thinking of today, but the influence of the world cannot be denied, in fact people openly embrace it.

I think back to when Bishop Chilstrom and his friend Rev. Erdahl wrote their volume attempting to justify their stand on homosexuality... they



made an issue on how they used contemporary studies on psychology and sociology among other things, and then brought in how they set these studies alongside of Scripture in order to formulate their views on the subject. Their understanding and view as church leaders, was a long way from the historic Lutheran, *Sola Scriptura*, position of Scripture.

James writes of worldly wisdom in his Epistle, chapter 3, verse 15, "Such 'wisdom' does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil." And to compare such wisdom with that of God is foolishness. "For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength" (1 Corinthians 1:25).

### **Our own human flesh**

There are many verses of Scripture that help us understand the negative influence we can have, and frequently oftentimes do have, on ourselves. But the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah states it well, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). The NIV words it, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" And the NASB has it, "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?"

We may not want to admit it, but appears that we formulate in our own hearts and minds, our opinions, beliefs, and viewpoints with regard to God's Word, His commandments, and teachings. I don't know what kind of poll could be taken that might encompass all the ideas people have concerning the person and nature of God or of man. Granted, we may be influenced by the devil and the world, but in the end, we are responsible for the beliefs we embrace and our own resultant behavior.

We might think how, from the very beginning, attempts were made to excuse personal responsibility. I'm again referring back to Adam and Eve. "The woman you gave to be with me, she gave..." "The serpent deceived me and I..." It isn't recorded that God told this to the woman, but to Adam God did say, "because you have listened to the voice..." In other words because Adam listened to a voice that had been deceived (i.e., Eve's)... he was deceived. He had no one to blame but himself. We might think of Saul (1 Samuel 28), growing impatient with the word God had promised him... he looked elsewhere and allowed himself to be deceived. David... yes even David, "a man after God's own heart," allowed himself to be deceived by what he 'saw,' rather than to act on what he knew to be right and true as a result of his close fellowship with God. We might also consider the apostle Peter... who having been given a clear word from God, chose rather to make the thinking of others around him his own opinion on the matter... and had to be chastised for it, by Paul (see Gal. 2:11-4). And we might consider others who throughout the centuries have followed after their own corrupted thinking and brought heretical teachings into the church... something that is still happening in our day.

And how about ourselves? Do we in the most true sense, have a proper love for God's Word - law and gospel? Are we not tempted... and do we not at times, and in certain areas, lean in the direction of our own thinking rather than taking God's Word at face value? I often think of how it becomes especially easy to become a little soft in our thinking when it comes to things that directly affect us personally, or affects someone close to us. This has become very obvious in the past decade or two with the way the church (keep in mind, the church is made up of individuals) deals with, for example, its understanding of Scripture with

its resultant understandings of things like divorce, abortion, homosexuality, and same sex marriage.

**Lord, keep us steadfast in your Word; curb those who by deceit or sword would wrest the kingdom from your Son and bring to naught all he has done. Amen.** (Martin Luther 1542)

## Second - The Esteeming of God's Word

From the dictionary:

Esteem - respect and admiration; high regard; think much of

To esteem the Word of God is to receive it as did the Thessalonian Christians. Paul wrote to them of how thankful he was, "because, when [they] received the word of God, which [they] heard from us, [they] accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe" (1 Thessalonians 2:13). Paul in his letter to Timothy stated: "All Scripture is inspired by God" (2 Timothy 3:16). And Peter wrote in 2 Peter 1:20-21, "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

The Bible clearly teaches that it is the Word of God. It is the divinely inspired, infallible, inerrant Word of God. And those who receive it as such... but more than that... those who accept it as such... will be blest. Notice with regard to the Thessalonians mentioned above... they accepted it as it actually was/is, the word of God." They didn't question it. They didn't try to evaluate it in light of any other person's opinions. They accepted it for what it was/is.

The reader may be familiar with the following Collect for the Word.

This prayer gives expression to what it means to Esteem the Word.



*Blessed Lord, You have caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning. Grant that we may so hear them, read, mark, learn, and take them to heart that, by the patience and comfort of Your holy Word, we*

*may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*

Notice there is recognition here:

- 1) that all Holy Scripture is of God.
- 2) there is a most positive attitude in relation to the Word.
- 3) there is recognition as to the effect the Word can have in one's life.

The Psalmist bore witness that acceptance [esteeming] of the Word will bring blessing.

Psalm 1:1-2 *Blessed is the man. . . [whose] delight is in the law of the Lord .*



Psalm 119:50 *This is my comfort in my affliction, That Thy word has revived me.*

Psalm 119:52 *When I think of your ordinances from of old, I take comfort, O LORD.*

Psalm 119:54 *Your statutes have been my songs wherever I make my home.*

Psalm 119:105 *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.*

Psalm 119:111 *Your statutes are my heritage for ever; they are the joy of my heart.*

Psalm 119:127-128 *I love your commands more than gold, more than pure gold, and because I consider all your precepts right, thy law do I hate every false way.*

Psalm 119:165 *Great peace have they which love thy law.*

How much more so should be one's experience of blessing having access to not only the Old Testament Scriptures, but the New.

The apostle Paul informs us that saving faith has its source in the Word (Romans 10:17), and beyond that "It is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16:17).

The Psalmist wrote in Psalm 8, "When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?" Paul speaks of something similar in Romans 1:18ff. For the one who will receive/accept that Word for what it is... God will reveal much of himself by means of his creation. He will reveal much of Himself by means of His Words. With the result that we will come to have much reverence for God. We will be in awe of his power, of his love, of his mercy and grace. "How Great Thou Art!"

Further we see in Psalm 8 how that when we come to some understanding of God... we also come to see something of ourselves and we cannot but marvel over that God would have anything do with us. We are fallen sinful beings. And when we take God at his word, the Holy Spirit will educate our conscience and we will come to grieve over our sin. We will come to seek His forgiveness. We will repent of our sinful ways and seek to live lives to the glory of God. We will come more and more to see the world and the people in the world as God sees them.

Another blessing we will find is that God's Word will arm us so we can face times of difficulty, trouble, and temptation (Ephesians 6). The Word tells us that the Lord is with us and will never leave or forsake his own.

However - if one Esteems the Word, there will be a cost.

One could look elsewhere, but in Paul's First letter to the Thessalonians, chapter 2, verse 14, Paul writes, "For you, brothers, became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own countrymen the same things those churches suffered from the Jews..." And in the previous chapter we see something similar, "You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe

suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit” (1:6). But notice, in spite of suffering, they at the same time experienced joy.

And how can this be? I think Peter can help us with this. We see this in the opening verses of his first letter. “Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours: Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”

What more is there? We find there - in His Word - “everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness... along with his very great and precious promises.”

To be in possession of the Word of God is to be in possession of the blessing of God; to despise or lack the Word is to be vulnerable to the curses of life. God’s Word is the cure for the curses of life and the guarantee of the Blessing of God.

**Your Word is like a garden, Lord, with flowers bright and fair; and everyone who seeks may pluck a lovely cluster there. Your Word is like a deep, deep mine; and jewels rich and rare are hidden in its mighty depths for every searcher there.** Edwin Hodder (1863)



*Tehillim - Psalms*

## Psalms For The Ages!

*by Rev. Ralph Spears*

“The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want” begins one of the most famous scriptures of all time. Words that are just as alive as the day they were first conceived three thousand years ago. Less than a hundred words are packed with inspiration and symbolic meaning for countless millions of believers over that period of time. Words of a shepherd boy, commander, general, poet and philosopher, sent to countless souls who have been touched, inspired and changed by them. David was the shepherd boy who gave genesis to the enduring image of the Good Shepherd, Jesus.

But this is just one of the one hundred and fifty one songs or Psalms (if we count David's biographical Psalm #151). We should say of them all together, that they are phenomenal, diverse, poetic, expressive, the very backbone of the Judeo – Christian belief system. They have been set to music and dance countless times. Much of the original instrumentation is listed in Psalm 150; cymbals of two kinds. trumpet, lute, timbrel, strings and pipe.

The first of these Psalms or Songs sets the tone and definitions for the whole book if not the entire Bible, the theological markers for Old and New Testaments. It does so in such a subtle fashion that we need to rethink what we have read, reanalyze the thoughts, and see the dynamic and didactic methods that it uses, to begin to appreciate the depth of this seminal book.

I must say that doing this over my lifetime I have learned so very much from its mother's milk of language to the depth of wisdom of greatest matu-

rity.

**I am not in any way a self-made man**, for instance... for "it is He that has made us and not we ourselves".

**I am not alone**... for I am "one of the many sheep of his pasture".

**I cannot be lost**... for "he will come for me personally" even and especially in the hell of my own making or the traps that others have set.

**There is also shoel**... that state of animated suspension and not knowing that we must be delivered from.

Such an understanding is "too great... I cannot wrap my head around it." Because it is not about me. It is all about Him... He and I together. Death is nothing, it is the fear of death, "the valley of the shadow of death," that brings such great apprehension. Yet, when I understand it, even this is really nothing to fear with the presence of God about me.

But there is another dimension to Psalms. One that we may seldom consider. *This book stands on par with the prophets*. It is a book of prophecies. It has much to say about the Messiah that needs to be fulfilled just as the laws of Moses and the prophets. Jesus (in Luke) reminds the Apostles of this after the resurrection... that David, who came nearly 400 years before the prophets, was as much a prophet as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel and Ezekiel.

David, the shepherd boy, musician, and King, inspired the four major (and several minor) prophets and not the other way around. He set the tone. He brought the concepts into being. He defined the spiritual and made real, true inspiration. No wonder that his name is mentioned more often than any other name in the Bible even though he messed up big time in the case of Bathsheba. He sought forgiveness through Nathan the prophet, David repented, sat in sackcloth and ashes, and received forgiveness. Psalm 51 is an eloquent reminder of that.

I have often been intrigued by what Jesus says in the 24th chapter of Luke in the 44th verse. "These are my words which I have spoken to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms, must be fulfilled." David was a prophet, his understanding embraced prophecy as much as the prophets which was fulfilled in Jesus a thousand years later. Fascinating. It is easy to think of him as a great warrior, beginning with his defeat of Goliath, as a poet, and as the writer of many Psalms of enormous value. But David was a prophet... easily... his greatest contribution.

It wasn't until I read of the great esteem that one group of people 2000 years ago had for David, that this all sunk in. The writers were of the Essenes writing in what we call the Dead Sea Scrolls. Here is what they say in scroll 11 QPa Psalter [11 means from Cave 11, Q means from Qumran, P for Psalms, a the primary Psalms scroll from Cave 11 - there were several. There was also a Psalm scroll found at Masada without doubt from Qumran originally] "and David, the son of Jesse, was wise, and a light like the light of the sun, and literate..... and the total of his psalms and songs was four thousand and fifty. All these he composed through prophecy which was given him from before the Most High."

How is it that the Psalms were prophetic in that they had to be fulfilled in relation to Jesus as he states in Luke 24? There are all kinds of Psalms. Penitential Psalms cries for help, reflective Psalms of beauty, reflective Psalms that are very personal such as 51 and 139, and directing one to worship, praise and the like.

Having thought about this for some time, my conclusion is that Jesus lived the Psalms. He used the Psalms as personal expression in the "the Father and I are one" mode as expressed in chapters of John 14 thru 17. Perhaps at times they framed Jesus's thoughts and desires. That being the case, we are allowed to share personally with him, sharing feelings and concepts.

Even as he died on the cross, Jesus had on his lips the opening of Psalm 22, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It has long been suggested that the following verses describe the agony of suffering, crucifixion, physical agony and taunting crowds (verses 6, 7, and 8 down to verses 12 and 13). The physical state is described in verses 16 through 21 while the reaction of faith is outlined after that beginning in verse 19 to the end of the Psalm. The last three verses of the Psalm are victorious, overcoming all difficulty with the praise and thanks coming to him who has gone through all of this, even he "who cannot keep himself alive" - an amazing verse in itself. "Posterity shall serve him then shall tell of the Lord to coming generations. And proclaim his deliverance to the people yet unborn that he has wrought it." The whole Psalm of course, is indicative of the passion crucifixion and victory that becomes the basis of the gospel to future generations, the story delivered to the CHURCH.

The meaning of the Psalms begins with the winnowing of wheat (Psalm 1). It's that easy. Let's take another look. First wheat is compressed, then it is tossed into the air where the precious grain of wheat (probably more like our barley) is separated from the chaff. So it's a matter of separating the two and disposing of the husk, "the chaff which the wind blows away."

Temple Mount upon which the great temple was built was a place that was used originally to winnow wheat because the wind was plentiful up there. But even before that, this was the mount where Abraham was directed by God to sacrifice his son, his only son, Isaac. The purpose was never for Abraham to kill his son, Isaac, it was the mount on which he was to separate the righteous from the unrighteous in his own mind, the good from the bad, the enduring from the temporal.

This is the theme that runs throughout the Bible from beginning to end, the toil in the labor to help mankind see the purpose of living, the good from the bad. This happens to the very end where Jesus in the final judgment at the end of Matthew separates the sheep from the goats, the righteous from the unrighteous. The Temple on the great mountain is destroyed and must be rebuilt until the New Temple, the perfect Temple, comes down from heaven as described in Revelation. The winnowing of the wheat is compared to the winnowing of the heart, it's brilliant! And the remainder of the Psalms is all that's involved in the process of the soul choosing the righteous path, discarding the chaff.

We have an introit which asks "that we so pass through things temporal, that we lose not the things that are eternal." That's what is involved here. That's the purpose for the temple. When the purpose of Israel was lost for a time, the temple was destroyed so that the people would again employ the righteous in their actions to appreciate once more that process and claim again the eternal by choice. In the same way Moses in his last address to Israel to choose life in the path of righteousness instead of the way of death. "The Lord knows the way of the righteous but the way of sinners, will perish".

Even 2000 years ago there was a great respect for the Psalms, because they saw them as prophecy. There was a great respect for David as we have seen from the quote of the scroll from Qumran.

There is one more intriguing fact about the habit of study at Qumran. In the assembly Hall excavated at Qumran, there is a raised platform and it is believed from this platform that the priest led the Essenes in a study of the law both day and night. So they literally meditated on the law day and night. Can we do that? IS there any way that we can keep in mind what they did physically day and night?

The Psalms give us the clue even today on how our study of the Bible and respect for Scripture can lead us to fuller life.

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