

The Affirmation

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Balaam and the Ass by Rembrandt, 1626

Life's Little Interruptions

Scripture Reading: Numbers 22:2-25:9

If God could speak through a donkey, He could speak through anything and anyone. A person should always be attentive to the words of others, always listening for the voice of the LORD.

Life is full of irritating obstacles that get in the way of our plans. Throughout any given day, a person experiences countless distractions and complications. It is easy to become impatient and upset with the things and people that get in the way of what we are trying to accomplish. We should learn a lesson from Balaam. Those irritating obstacles might be from the LORD. God may have other plans for us. Rather than get upset when our plans are derailed, we should seek the LORD's direction. In Balaam's life, God was in the midst of the interruptions. The next time the car breaks down or the flight is canceled or some other unforeseen interruption rears up, rather than get irritated, remember the story of Balaam.

People of faith sometimes speak of God opening and closing doors. This is an idiom that refers to God's divine direction in life. For example, suppose a person set out to take a job in a certain field. He submitted an application for a position for which he was fully qualified. He was confident that the job would be his. Inexplicably, he did not get the position. A person like Balaam would become bitter over the disappointment. A person of faith would say, "God closed that door. He knows what is best. I will look elsewhere."

When seeking direction in life, a person needs to keep an eye on the donkey to see what God might be saying.

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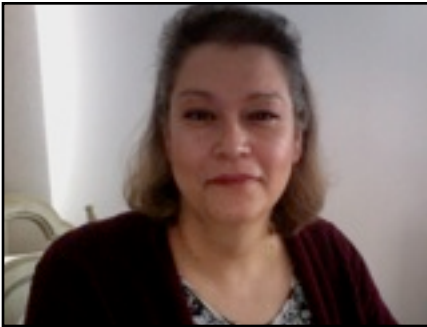
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SALVATION IS BY GRACE

So, let's ask a tough question: What about people who died before Jesus came? Have they all gone to hell because of their sins had not yet been paid on the cross?

Think about the great heroes of the past: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, and Elijah. All of these men seemed to be in some kind of relationship with God, yet even these great men were not faultless. They sinned just as we have. Numerous times we read of them lying, committing murder, or disobeying God. According to God's own standard, they deserve to be punished.

However, we know that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are receiving their reward. Our master and teacher, Jesus, states, "I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 8:11

We also know that Moses talked to God face to face according to Numbers 12:8, and he and Elijah appeared to Peter, James and John at the transfiguration (Matthew 17:3; et al.). Even though David committed some very grievous sins, he was still called a man after

God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14 and Acts 13:22). It seems reasonable, then, to assume that both of these men will be in heavenly paradise. Furthermore, it is written that Elijah actually ascended to heaven in a chariot (2 Kings 2:11).

None of these great men fully obeyed every written commandment, yet in some way, they must have been forgiven of their faults--even before Jesus' sacrifice.

Many people believe that those who lived before Jesus gained forgiveness from their sins through offering animal sacrifices. This is a common belief, especially in light of verses like Leviticus 17:11, which says, "For it is the blood that makes atonement by the life." However, the writer of Hebrews makes it absolutely clear that "it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4). Offering sacrifices cannot perfect the worshipper (Hebrews 9:9, 10:1). That's not what the sacrificial system was designed to do.

If animal sacrifices and/or obedience to the commandments of God could bring eternal forgiveness to our souls, then Jesus wouldn't have had to die for our sins. There would have been no need for God to send his precious Son to be tortured to death! Galatians 2:21 states, "I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose."

The heroes of faith did not keep every single commandment perfectly, nor were they able to remove their sins through offering sacrifices.

Romans Chapter 4 explains that God's grace comes by faith alone and cannot be earned. Paul supports this claim by quoting from Genesis 15:6, which says that Abraham "believed the LORD, and God counted it to Abraham as righteousness."

Abraham received righteousness by grace through faith, which is--and always has been--the only way for anyone to receive right standing before God and forgiveness for sin. Any other heroes whom we will see in Paradise will undoubtedly have obtained righteousness in this fashion.

In fact, the faith of these devout ones is attested to in Hebrews 11, demonstrating that their faith led to their eternal reward: "But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city" (Hebrews 11:16)

But wait. At this point in history Jesus hadn't died for the world's sins, had he? Jesus himself said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6

Is it possible that Abraham came to the Father through some other means? Absolutely not! If he had, then the words of our own Messiah would be a lie, and he is not a liar. Thus Abraham must

FROM THE EDITORS DESK (CONTINUED)

have been made righteous and reconciled to God through Jesus.

In Temple times, people didn't offer a sacrifice before sinning; they offered it after they sinned. Sacrifices applied retroactively. In the same way, Jesus' sacrifice did not apply only to the future, but, in a timeless way, it was the means by which the Lord granted grace to those in the past. Hebrews 4:3 affirms the timelessness of Messiah's sacrifice: "His works were finished from the foundation of the world."

Genesis 15:6 says that Abraham "believed the LORD." He believed in the promises of redemption and blessing; he looked forward in time with belief, and he longed for that time of the coming Messiah. Paul even proclaims that the gospel was preached to Abraham beforehand. (See Galatians 3:8)

Moreover, Jesus said Abraham "rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad" (John 8:56). Since God's Spirit showed this vision of redemption to

Abraham, we can assume he did likewise to others.

Every person since Adam only comes to the Father by grace through faith. This faith is through God's promised Redeemer. God sent the Redeemer and will send him again at the end of days. Now we, like the ancient heroes, await his coming through an act of faith.

(Boundary Stones: Divine Parameters for Faith and Life - by Aaron Eby - Second Edition 2009)



REV. DAVID FISHER

David Schrader the National Pastor of the Congregational Christian Churches in Canada has been touring the country communicating the vision of our National Church. The vision itself is straightforward, clear and Biblical. Simply put it is to **“Proclaim Jesus Christ, to make disciples and to grow healthy churches.”** I rejoiced when I first heard about it at our last National Conference held in North Bay, Ontario. Having worked in a denomination that emphasized so many other things, the renewed emphasis on the basics was refreshing. It also fits in well with the vision of Christian Fellowship Church, namely that we be a Healthy/Healing church. I shall briefly touch on each of the three components in what follows.

Proclaiming Jesus Christ

In the Western Hemisphere the need for effective evangelism is growing increasingly apparent. Did you know that there are more Baptists in the Congo than in Great Britain? Christians in countries that the West had once viewed as mission fields now look at the West, and with good reason, see us as one of the toughest mission fields in the world. There are, for instance, more Christians worshipping in evangelical Anglican churches in Nigeria each week than in all the Episcopal and Anglican churches of Britain, Europe, and North America combined. There are ten times more Assemblies of God church members in Latin America than in the U.S. and Canada combined. There are many more Korean missionaries than British, and some Nigerian evangelical mission organizations are larger in personnel than most Western ones.

Christian Fellowship Church is currently renting space for two other small Christian groups both with an ethnic base. The first is the Jesus is Lord congregation, which is comprised of many Filipino Nationals. Their congregation is small but growing.

The second is affiliated with the Redeemed Christian Church of God, which originated in Nigeria. A few years ago I was invited to speak to Redeemed Christian Church of God representatives as to how to cross the cultural barrier and speak to Canadian Christians. Judging from their ability to

develop new congregations around Edmonton, they have been somewhat successful in their efforts to “Proclaim Jesus Christ.” They have placed a heavy emphasis on prayer, fasting, lively music and an enthusiastic devotion to Jesus Christ. Proclaiming Jesus Christ is a lifestyle we must learn to live. Our National Pastor the Rev. David Schrader has listed several ideas as to how to Proclaim Jesus on <http://www.cccc.ca/page.aspx?id=40674>

The second emphasis is on *Making Disciples*. When it comes to making disciples of out of young believers, Western Christianity must realize the sad state we are in today.

Although the number one reason people cite for leaving churches is that they are not helping them grow spiritually, and while the numerically dominate religion in Canada may be Christian, according to George Barna a religious sociologist, only 18% of Christians surveyed claim to be “totally committed” to engaging in personal spiritual development. Among adults who claim to be Christian only one in seven say that their faith and their relationship with Jesus Christ is their highest priority in life. Several years ago Reginald Bibby a Canadian Christian sociologist described the mindset of the religious in Canada as seeking “religion a la carte.” In other words Canadians have a propensity toward church shopping and picking and choosing their own belief system. It is as if to say that if we like the idea of reincarnation then we can choose to believe in it, even though it is contradictory to a foundational doctrine for Christianity namely the doctrine of the resurrection. (This is in keeping with what the Bible clearly teaches in Hebrews 9:27, that it is appointed once for a man to die and then comes judgment). To give another example, some people see no contradiction between consulting mediums and receiving advice from their spirit guides, and their claims to be a Christian. Yet the Bible explicitly forbids such practices for our God is a jealous God.

There is a profound irony to the fact that there are a greater number of resources available today to become fully developed Christian disciples than ever before, but the passion to do so has waned for the majority of Canadians who have identified themselves as Christians. Bill Hybels senior pastor

Willow Creek Church, of one of the most influential evangelical churches in America has said, "We made a mistake. What we should have done when people crossed the line of faith and become Christians is we should have started telling people and teaching people that they had to take responsibility to become 'self feeders.' We should have gotten people and taught people, how to read their Bible between services and how to do the spiritual practices much more aggressively on their own". The challenge for our membership is real. To what extent are we "self-feeders" and to what extent is Christian Fellowship Church helping others to grow on their own?

The final part of the vision for our National denomination is to grow "healthy churches." This is a central part of our vision here at Christian Fellowship Church. Jesus said, "*The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the ground; and goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts up and grows – how, he himself does not know. The earth produces crops all by itself; first the blade, then the head, and then the mature grain in the head. But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.*" Mark 4:26-29 David Schrader makes the point that at least two conclusions can be made from this scripture. First, we have a role to play in the growth of the church as clearly demonstrated by the farmer's work at seedtime and harvest. And second God alone through his Spirit has a role to play as seen in the seemingly

"all-by-itself" growth automatism. You and I cannot grow a healthy church. But if God has given us a vision to be a healthy church then we do have a responsibility to recognize the seasons, to do our part in cooperating with the work of the Holy Spirit. I have emphasized the need to "love one another," to "not take offense" and to seek, through prayer, the leading of the Holy Spirit. I know and most certainly God knows that in order to fulfill this part of our vision we must be willing to work together to build something greater than ourselves.

I once knew a man who loved ice cream so much that he would sneak a lot of it, even though he was afflicted with diabetes. In spite of his wife's best efforts he was killing himself. Our own agendas can be like the ice cream, that is pretty sweet, and tasty on a hot day. But when played out with an attitude of pride and selfishness and without deference to God's will, they can become deadly to a church. The positive side is that when we seek the Lord, and in His will His blessings will flow to us. Church health becomes as simple as following the lyrics of that old hymn, "Trust and Obey". It states in part, "Trust and obey, for there is no other way, to be happy in Jesus, than to trust and obey." That's true for our personal lives, and for the church community. Let's seek to apply it to both, sowing to the spirit, for the sake of our spiritual health, knowing that the Lord promises that we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

THE REFINER'S FIRE

AUTHOR: UNKNOWN

He sat by a furnace of seven-fold heat,
As He watched by the precious ore.
And closer He bent with a searching gaze
As He heated it more and more.
He knew He had ore that could stand the test
And He wanted the finest gold,
To mold as a crown, for the King to wear,
Set with gems of price untold.
So He laid our gold in the burning fire,
Tho' we fain would say Him, "Nay",
And watched the dross that we had not seen,
As it melted and passed away.
And the gold grew brighter and yet more bright,
But our eyes were dim with tears,

We saw but the fire-not the Master's hand, And
questioned with anxious fears.
Yet our gold shone out with a richer glow
As it mirrored a form above,
that bent o'er the fire, tho' unseen by us,
With a look of ineffable love.
Can we think it pleases His loving heart
To cause us a moment's pain?
Ah, no! but He sees through the present cross
The bliss of eternal gain.
So He waited there with a watchful eye,
With a love that is strong and sure,
And His gold did not suffer a bit more heat
Than was needed to make it pure.

THE FEAR OF THE LORD

My fear of Thee, O Lord, exults
Like life within my veins,
A fear which tightly claims to be
One of love's sacred pains.

There is no joy the soul can meet
Upon life's various road
Like the sweet fear that sits and shrinks
Under the eye of God.

Oh, Thou art greatly to be feared,
Thou art so prompt to bless!

The dread to miss such love as Thine
Makes fear but love's excess.

But fear is love, and love is fear,
And in and out they move;
But fear is an intenser joy
Than mere unfrightened love.

They love Thee little, if at all,
Who do not fear Thee much;
If love is Thine attraction, Lord!
Fear is Thy very touch.

—F. W. Faber

Proverbs 1:7 (Amplified Bible) *"The reverent and worshipful fear of the Lord is the beginning and the principle and choice part of knowledge - that is, its starting point and its essence; but fools despise skillful and godly wisdom, instruction, and discipline."*

GOD IS LOVE: LOVE DEFINED

(AUTHOR UNKNOWN)

"God is Love", but how do we define it? The American Heritage Dictionary defines love as "an intense affection for another person based on familial or personal ties". Often this "intense affection" stems from a sexual attraction for that other person. We love other people, or we say we love other people, when we are attracted to them and when they make us feel good. Notice that a key phrase in the dictionary definition of love is the phrase "based on". This phrase implies that we love conditionally; in other words, we love someone because they fulfill a condition that we require before we can love them. How many times have you

heard or said, "I love you because you are cute;" or "I love you because you take good care of me;" or "I love you because you are fun to be with"?

Our love is not only conditional, it is also mercurial. We love based on feelings and emotions that can change from one moment to the next. The divorce rate is extremely high in today's society because husbands and wives supposedly stop loving one another or they "fall out of love". They may go through a rough patch in their marriage, and they no longer "feel" love for their spouse, so they call it quits. Evidently, their marriage vow of "till death do us part" means they can part at the death of their love for their spouse rather than at their physical death.

Can anyone really comprehend "unconditional" love? It seems the love that parents have for their children is as close to unconditional love as we can get without the help of God's love in our lives. We continue to love our children through good times and bad, and we don't stop loving them if they don't meet the expectations we may have for them. We make a choice to love our children even when we consider them unlovable; our love doesn't stop when we don't "feel" love for them. This is similar to God's love for us, but as we shall see, God's love transcends the human definition of love to a point that is hard for us to comprehend.

How does God Define Love?

The Bible tells us that "God is Love" (1 John 4:8). But how can we even begin to understand that truth? There are many passages in the Bible that give us God's definition of love. The most well known verse is John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." So one way God defines love is in the act of giving. However, what God gave (or should we say, "who" God gave) was not a mere gift-wrapped present; God sacrificed His only Son so that we, who put our faith in His Son, will not spend eternity separated from Him. This is an amazing love, because we are the ones who choose to reject God, yet it's God who mends the separation through His intense personal sacrifice, and all we have to do is accept His gift.

Another great verse about God's love is found in Romans 5:8, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." In this verse and in John 3:16, we find no conditions placed on God's love for us. God doesn't say, "as soon as you clean up your act, I'll love you;" nor does He say, "I'll sacrifice my Son if you promise to love Me." In fact, in Romans 5:8, we find just the opposite. God wants us to know that His love is unconditional, so He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for us while we were still unlovable sinners. We didn't have to get clean, and we didn't have to make any promises to God before we could experience His love. His love for us has always existed, and because

of that, He did all the giving and sacrificing long before we were even aware that we needed His love.

It's Unconditional

God is Love, and His love is very different from human love. God's love is unconditional, and it's not based on feelings or emotions. He doesn't love us because we're lovable or because we make Him feel good; He loves us because He is love. He created us to have a loving relationship with Him, and He sacrificed His own Son (who also willingly died for us) to restore that relationship.

How Should we Define Love?

When the Scriptures say, "God is love," they aren't telling us that God is some nebulous, warm fuzzy feeling of love. The writers who penned the scriptures weren't saying that in our limited form of human love we will find God. Not at all -- in fact, when we read that God is love in the Bible, this means that God defines love. And when we say that God defines love, we don't mean that He defines it like Webster might define something -- we mean that God is the very definition of love itself. There is no such thing as love without God. As hard as we might try, we cannot define love outside of knowing God. This essentially means that our human definition of love is false.

God is the Creator of all things, and by His very nature, He is love. God says love is unconditional and sacrificial, and it's not based on feelings; therefore, love is not an "intense affection... based on familial or personal ties". To understand what true love is and to be able to truly love others, we

must know God, and we can do this through a close personal relationship with Him. We can have that close relationship with God by putting our faith in Jesus Christ, who was God's sacrifice of love for us.

True Love Only Comes Through a Relationship With Him.

God is Love! As such, true love -- God's love -- can be summed up in this passage of scripture: "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." (1 John 4:7-11)

If you want to know this love - true love -- get to know God. He is ready to pour out His love on you, and He wants to teach you how to love others as He loves you.

John 15:13

God's love towards us, His estranged creation, is graphically depicted in the sacrifice He made on our behalf. "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13 NIV).

Jesus Christ is God's unique and eternal Son.¹ He is the Alpha and Omega,² the Great I AM,³ the "Mighty God"⁴ by whom all things were created⁵ and in whom all

things consist.⁶ Jesus, who is the head of all things,⁷ humbled Himself in such a way that the human mind couldn't even bare the thought of it. He came into this sinful world and actively partook in our sufferings. Even as we are flesh and blood, He shared in the same.⁸ He became a man and dwelt among us.⁹ He shared in the sufferings we brought upon ourselves through our rejection of His holy precepts.¹⁰ And as if that were not enough to convince us of His love and concern for us, Jesus, the immortal God and the Giver of Life, gave up His own human life upon the cross in the greatest act of love the world has ever known! In doing so He took our sins away, effectively nailing them to the cross with Himself. Thus, He who knew no sin became sin for us¹¹ and He who gave life to all, tasted death for those condemned to it.¹²

For God so Loved the World

This is God's love! "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" (John 3:16-17). Jesus Christ loved the world so much that He gave everything for it, from His rights and privileges as the unique eternal Son of God, to His very life! If you want to see the love of God, look to the cross. "This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins" (1 John

4:9-10). "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

It's For You!

God's love has been made known to us and now He stands at the door and knocks.¹³ It's up to every individual to either pursue a personal relationship with God or else reject Him outright. The only barrier between us and God's love is our own freewill and Jesus Christ is the door.¹⁴ "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'" (John 14:6). Salvation is a free gift bought and paid for by the blood of Christ. There is no other way. "...Do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!" (Galatians 2:21). You can't earn God's forgiveness through good works. How will doing the good works that you should have done all your life make up for the countless times you've failed? God's no fool. You can "use an abundance of soap, the stain of your guilt is still before Me..." (Jeremiah 2:22).

A man once fell on his knees before Christ and begged, "If You are willing, You can make me clean." Christ, "filled with compassion" replied, "I am willing; be clean" (Mark 1:40-41). We too can fall on our knees and acknowledge God's only provision for our sins. We too can hear, "I am willing; be clean." Christ willingly took God's righteous indignation upon Himself so that you don't have to; whoever accepts His death upon the cross as payment for their sins will be

reconciled to the God whom they've offended. "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ...God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them...God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:18-19, 21). Will you accept God's love today?

Footnotes:

Bible References:

¹ John 1:1-3; 3:16;

² Revelation 1:8; cf. Revelation 1:13-18, 21:4-7; 22:6-7, 12-16, 20;

³ John 8:56-59; cf. Exodus 3:13-14;

⁴ Isaiah 9:6;

⁵ Colossians 1:16;

⁶ Colossians 1:17;

⁷ Colossians 1:17; 2:10;

⁸ Hebrews 2:14;

⁹ John 1:14; cf. John 1:1-3;

¹⁰ Galatians 6:7; 1 Peter 3:18;

¹¹ 2 Corinthians 5:21;

¹² Hebrews 2:9;

¹³ Revelation 3:20;

¹⁴ John 10:1-7

BIBLE STUDY - SUKKOT: FEAST OF TABERNACLES & FEAST OF HARVEST

by Rev. Willem J.J. Glashouwer with permission

Sukkot (Feast of Booths, Feast of Tabernacles) is a Biblical holiday celebrated on the 15th day of the month of Tishrei (late September to late October), only 5 days after the Day of Atonement. It is one of the three biblically-mandated Shalosh ragalim on which Jews made pilgrimages to the Temple in Jerusalem. The holiday lasts seven days, including Chol HaMoed and is immediately followed by another festive day (the 8th day, known as 'Shemini Atzeret'). The first day and the day after Tabernacles are considered to be sacred assemblies, or Sabbaths (Leviticus 23:36,39).

The Hebrew word *sukkot* is the plural of *sukkah*, "booth, tabernacle". The sukkah is intended as a reminiscence of the type of fragile dwellings in which the ancient Israelites dwelt during their 40 years of wandering in the desert after the Exodus from Egypt. It is a festival to celebrate God's goodness, in the past, present and future. It is the most joyful and festive of all Israel's feasts. The people were to live in booths, filled with fruits and vegetables, and rejoice before the Lord with branches (Leviticus 23:33-43); there were to be many daily sacrifices (Numbers 29:12-39) and in a sabbatical year, the Torah (law) was to be read publicly (Deuteronomy 31:10-13).

According to the prophet Zechariah, in the messianic era, Sukkot will become a universal festival and all nations will make pilgrimages annually to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast there.

It was during the Feast of Tabernacles that the Shekinah Glory of the Lord descended from heaven to light the fire on the altar and fill the Holy of Holies. We read in 2 Chronicles 5:13-14:

"The trumpeters and singers joined in unison, as with one voice, to give praise and thanks to the LORD. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, they raised their voices in praise to the LORD and sang: 'He is good; His love endures forever.' Then the temple of the LORD was filled with a cloud, and the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the temple of God." (Compare 1 Kings 8, 2 Chronicles 7:1-10)

The Feast is also called the Feast of Ingathering and the Feast of the Harvest (Exodus 23:16, 34:22). But the Bible speaks also about the Harvest as being the final judgement when Israel and the nations are gathered in. Malachi 4:1-4 says:

"Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire," says the LORD Almighty. "Not a root or a branch will be left to them. But for you who revere My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall. Then you will trample down the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I do these things," says the LORD Almighty. "Remember the law of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him at Horeb for all Israel."

Revelation 14:14-16 speaks about the reaping of the earth's harvest:

"I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one "like a son of man" with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. Then another messenger came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, "Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested." (See also Joel 3:13, Matthew 13:39b, Hosea 6:11a).

One day, Messiah will gather His people, the remnant of Israel back to her Promised Land. Isaiah describes this event as the harvesting of olives, where rods beat tree branches and the olive berries were gathered once they had fallen on the ground: Isaiah 27:12-13 says: *"In that day the LORD will thresh from the flowing Euphrates to the Wadi of Egypt, and you, O Israelites, will be gathered up one by one. and in that day a great trumpet will sound. Those who were perishing in Assyria and those who were exiled in Egypt will come and worship the LORD on the holy mountain in Jerusalem."* (Read also Isaiah 11:11-12, Jeremiah 23:7-8).

The righteous among the Gentile nations will be gathered in as well to worship the King: *"Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King,*

the LORD Almighty, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. If any of the peoples of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, they will have no rain." (Zechariah 14:16-17). The nations who do not come to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem will not get any rain.

Finally, the Lord will 'tabernacle' among His people. Ezekiel 37:27-28 says: "My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people. Then the nations will know that I the LORD make Israel holy, when my sanctuary is among them forever" and Revelation 21:3 says: "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.'"

The Shekinah will be present again, Isaiah 60:1,19,22 say: "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you... The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the LORD will be your everlasting light and your God will be your glory. Your sun will never set again, and your moon will wane no more; the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your days of sorrow will end. Then will all your people be righteous and they will possess the land forever. They are the shoot I have planted, the work of My hands, for the display of My splendor. The least of you will become a thousand, the smallest a mighty nation. I am the LORD: in its time I will do this swiftly."

The man with the measuring line in Zechariah 2:1-5 symbolizes the hope of a rebuilt Jerusalem and a restored people: "Then I looked up

and there before me was a man with a measuring line in his hand! I asked, 'Where are you going?' He answered me, 'To measure Jerusalem, to find out how wide and how long it is.' Then the angel who was speaking to me left, and another angel came to eat him and said to him: 'Run, tell that young man, 'Jerusalem will be a city without walls because of the great number of men and livestock in it. And I myself will be a wall of fire around it,' declares the LORD, 'and I will be its glory within.'"

Therefore Israel has to return from all the corners of the earth, and so Zechariah 2:6-13 speaks about the future joy of Zion and many nations: "Come! Come! Flee from the land of the north," declares the LORD, "for I have scattered you to the four winds of heaven," declares the LORD. "Come, O Zion! Escape, you who live in the Daughter of Babylon!" For this is what the LORD Almighty says: "After He has honoured me and has sent me against the nations that have plundered you—for whoever touches you touches the apple of His eye—I will surely raise My hand against the so that their slaves will plunder them. Then you will know that the LORD Almighty has sent me. "Shout and be glad, O Daughter of Zion. For I am coming, and I will live among you," declares the LORD. "Many nations will be joined with the LORD in that day and will become my people. I will live among you and you will know that the LORD Almighty has sent me to you. The LORD will inherit Judah as His portion in the holy land and will again choose Jerusalem. Be still before the LORD, all mankind, because He has roused Himself from His holy dwelling."

Isaiah 4:2-6 speaks about the renewal of Zion: "In that day the

Branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of the survivors in Israel. Those who are left in Zion, who remain in Jerusalem, will be called holy, all who are recorded among the living in Jerusalem. The Lord will wash away the filth of the women of Zion; He will cleanse the bloodstains from Jerusalem by a spirit of judgment and a spirit of fire. Then the LORD will create over all of Mount Zion and over those who assemble there a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night; over all the glory will be a canopy. It will be a shelter and shade from the heat of the day, and a refuge and hiding place from the storm and rain."

And Ezekiel sees the Shekinah return to the Temple. He says in Ezekiel 43:1-7a: "then the man brought me to the gate facing east, and I saw the glory of the God of Israel coming from the east. His voice was like the roar of rushing waters, and the land was radiant with his glory. The vision I saw was like the vision I had seen when He came to destroy the city and like the visions I had seen by the Kebar River, and I fell facedown. The glory of the LORD entered the temple through the gate facing east. Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. While the man was standing beside me, I heard someone speaking to me from inside the temple. He said: "Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place for the soles of My feet. This is where I will live among the Israelites forever."

BIBLE WORD SEARCH

King Saul & David

G	A	T	H	R	I	S	N	O	P	A	E	W	O	B
H	I	H	S	A	S	S	A	T	P	U	R	S	U	E
P	E	A	I	H	T	E	H	S	O	B	H	S	I	R
I	C	L	H	T	N	N	T	E	H	P	O	R	P	B
Z	A	I	C	A	R	A	I	M	I	C	H	A	L	
I	L	E	A	I	V	E	N	R	K	D	N	O	B	J
K	A	K	S	B	R	D	O	P	E	E	J	A	W	E
L	P	A	I	A	E	L	J	H	K	G	L	A	A	R
A	A	R	B	N	S	I	E	G	T	N	T	A	R	U
G	D	R	I	N	G	W	A	I	N	E	I	P	M	S
A	U	O	E	N	E	D	L	H	R	O	R	F	Y	A
N	L	W	L	N	C	R	O	J	S	A	R	A	E	L
G	L	S	T	E	E	E	U	M	H	I	E	B	H	E
E	A	S	K	I	N	G	S	A	U	L	B	P	E	M
R	M	E	D	I	U	M	Y	L	E	U	M	A	S	H

- ABIATHAR
- ABISHAI
- ABNER
- ACHISH
- ADULLAM
- AMALEKITES
- ANGER
- ARMY
- ARROWS
- BOW
- EN GEDI
- GATH
- GENERAL
- HARETH
- HARP
- HEBRON
- HIGH PRIEST
- ISH
- BOSHETH
- JEALOUSY
- JERUSALEM
- JOAB
- JONATHAN
- KEILAH
- KINGDOM
- KING SAUL
- KNIFE
- MEDIUM
- MICHAL
- NOB
- PALACE
- PRINCES
- PROPHET
- PURSUE
- SAMUEL
- SERVANTS
- SPEAR
- WATER JUG
- WEAPONS
- WILDERNESS
- ZIKLAG
- ZIPH
-

- BLESSINGS
- COAT
- COMMANDMENT
- COMMUNITY
- CURSES
- DISCIPLES
- DO GOOD
- FATHER
- FOLLOWERS
- FORGIVE
- FRIENDSHIP
- GOLDEN RULE
- JESUS
- KINDNESS
- LUKE
- MARK
- MERCY
- MONEY
- MOST HIGH GOD
- NEEDY
- NEW COMMAND
- NUMBERS
- OTHERS
- PEOPLE
- PERFECT
- PERSECUTE
- PLANK
- POOR
- PRAISE
- PRAY
- RECEIVE
- REWARD
- SHIRT
- SINNERS
- SONS OF GOD
- SPECK
- THANKFUL
- VIRTUE
- WARNINGS

T	P	P	E	R	F	E	C	T	R	I	H	S	F	D
M	E	I	S	P	E	C	K	E	V	I	G	R	O	F
E	O	H	G	S	E	V	I	E	C	E	R	G	L	B
R	P	S	S	O	E	T	H	A	N	K	F	U	L	P
C	L	D	T	T	L	N	C	R	O	O	P	E	O	R
Y	E	N	P	H	E	D	D	U	S	M	S	T	W	A
O	T	E	L	E	I	M	E	N	R	S	U	E	Y	
E	S	I	A	R	P	G	O	N	I	S	S	C	R	N
O	G	R	N	S	L	S	H	N	R	K	E	E	S	N
V	N	F	K	U	M	O	G	G	E	U	J	S	R	F
I	I	N	K	U	M	S	N	T	O	Y	L	R	E	A
R	N	E	W	C	O	M	M	A	N	D	M	E	N	T
T	R	E	W	A	R	D	O	O	G	O	D	P	N	H
U	A	D	S	E	L	P	I	C	S	I	D	R	I	E
E	W	Y	M	A	R	K	N	U	M	B	E	R	S	R

ACROSS

- 1. we must ___ these men to speak no longer to anyone (Acts 4:17)
- 5. since the days of Esar-haddon king of ___ (Ezra 4:2) KJV
- 9. "Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me ___ (Ruth 1:20)
- 13. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such ___ (1,7) (Acts 8:22)
- 14. whosoever shall exalt himself shall be ___ (Matt 23:12) KJV
- 15. he did the things that were commanded him? I ___ not (Luke 17:9)KJV
- 16. a King who will ___ wisely and do what is just (Jer 23:5)
- 17. They ___ from the Book of the Law of God (Neh 8:8)
- 18. The camel, though it chews the ___, does not have a split hoof (Lev 11:4)
- 19. Like a lion I will devour them; a wild animal will ___ them (Hos 13:8)
- 20. I may tell all my bones: they look and ___ upon me (Ps 22:17)
- 21. laid on you a heavy yoke; I will make it even ___ (1 Kings 12:11)
- 23. Hoshea the son of ___ made a conspiracy against Pekah (2 King 15:30)
- 25. Above all ___, guard your heart (Prov 4:23)
- 26. This gate is to ___ shut. It must not be opened (Ezek 44:2)
- 29. the lizard, and the ___, and the mole (Lev 11:30) (KJV)
- 32. Heal the sick, ___ the dead, cleanse those who have (Matt 10:7-8)
- 34. because of you the heavens have withheld their ___ (Hag 1:10)

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8		9	10	11	12
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29	30	31				32	33					34		35
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39				40		41		42		43				
	44		45					46	47					
48			49					50				51	52	53
54	55	56					57					58		
59						60						61		
62								63						
64						65						66		

- 36. wisdom has built her house; she has ___ out its seven pillars (Prov 9:1) KJV
- 38. Whom are you pursuing? A dead dog? A ___ ? (1 Sam 24:14)
- 39. eighth letter of Greek alphabet
- 40. he saw at the water's edge two ___ (Luke 5:2)
- 43. She saw the basket among the ___ and sent her slave girl (Ex 2:5)
- 44. The woman was a Greek, born in ___ Phoenicia (Mark 7:26)
- 46. whose rider is called Faithful and ___ (Rev 19:11)
- 49. Absalom had appointed Amasa over the ___ in place of Joab (2 Sam 17:25)
- 50. if the plague be greenish or ___ in the garment, or in the skin (Lev 13:49) KJV
- 54. But ___ foolish controversies and genealogies (Titus 3:9)
- 57. What I mean, brothers, is that the ___ is short (1 Cor 7:29)
- 58. Blessed are ___ merciful: for they shall obtain mercy (Matt 5:7)
- 59. a net by the wayside; they have set ___ for me (Ps 140:5) KJV

LASHON HARA' (EVIL SPEECH OR GOSSIP)

Our Master, Jesus Christ, has given us a wonderful and strategic challenge. This challenge is simply our service to Him in these last days before Jesus' return.

With this in mind, the primary question for us all is this: what kinds of things will Satan attempt to put in our path in order to cause us to fail in the mission Jesus has designed for us? I believe his strategies may be multifaceted, but I want to emphasize just one ... lashon hara' known in English as "evil speech" or "slander/gossip". Perhaps nothing tears apart the ability of a congregation to work together in service more than the sin of slander/gossip - speaking in a derogatory way against a brother or sister. Unfortunately, everyone of us must admit that in one way or another, we have engaged in this sin and to one text or another have therefore weakened our corporate ability to fulfill the mission Jesus has designed for us. A recommitment to not engage in lashon hara' will help strengthen us against Satan's schemes.

Lashon hara' was considered a great evil by the ancient Sages. They taught that three persons are destroyed by lashon hara', namely "he who relates the slander, he who accepts it, and he about whom it is told". The punishment for lashon hara', according to the Sages, was severe. Those who engage in slander "are immediately chastised by plagues" and "rain is withheld from them". Whoever makes derogatory remarks about deceased scholars is cast into

Gehenna (destination for the wicked). Furthermore, slanderers will not enjoy the Shekhinah (Divine Presence) and a bearer of evil tales is considered as denying God.

These teachings of the Sages appear harsh until one considers the words of the Apostle James in the New Testament in which he teaches that the ability to control the tongue is a genuine mark of spiritual maturity (2:1); that the tongue is like a fire, able to set an entire forest ablaze (2:5) and able to burn all the other members of the body, defiling them and even setting the course of life on fire. He boldly states that the slandering tongue is set on fire by hell itself (2:6). He calls the tongue "a restless evil and full of deadly poison" and chastens his readers with the thought that with the same tongue we bless the Lord and curse our fellow man who is created in His image (2:9). Clearly, James recognized that lashon hara' could easily be a factor for the demise of the cause of Messiah. He therefore warns the community in his time, as well as a warning to us.

If what has been suggested is true, then we can count on Satan urging us to engage in lashon hara' as a means of defeating us and making us less than effective in the service of our Messiah. How can we guard against this sin? How can we thwart the deceitful schemes of the evil one? How can we prepare so that we do not fall into this trap?

First, we must agree that lashon hara' is a sin, and commit ourselves to view it as such.



Lashon hara' may easily be defined as speech about another person that will cause that person to be diminished or despised in the mind of those who listen. Thus, lashon hara' may be engaged in either by speaking slander or by listening to it. We must commit ourselves, therefore to not engaging in it, and gently but firmly refusing to listen to it. One may excuse oneself when such speech begins, or even warn the speaker: "I wouldn't want to be spoken of like this, so I don't want to participate in speaking about... in a negative way". This will be humbling, but if we all commit to guarding our tongues as James teaches, we will welcome the gentle reminder when we begin to slip into slanderous speech.

Secondly, we must commit ourselves to seeking the forgiveness of someone we have slandered. This is very difficult, but has a twofold benefit. It restores a path of fellowship between the slanderer and the one slandered, and it reminds the slanderer of the consequences of lashon hara'.

Thirdly, we find ourselves in a situation where we can neither leave the room nor rebuke the speaker, we must commit ourselves not to believe the slanderous speech. We simply are not allowed to have the person who is being slandered diminished in our opinion or perspective. We must think of that person and act toward him or her as though the slander had never occurred.

Fourthly, we must commit ourselves to wholesome speech, and to building each other up in the faith. Speaking good of each other is an obvious offensive measure against lashon hara'. We must look for those qualities and actions in each other which we can be the basis of our praise, and when speaking of one another we must do so with the intent of causing the person we talk about

to be appreciated all the more by those who listen to our speech. One Sage taught that when you see someone else do something wrong (or hear about it), realize that God brought this before you because you have done something similar, and so you will repent. Do not judge him, judge yourself. Since you have done something of the same sort, you will not be arrogant in judging him, but will be busy correcting your own faults, not his. Once the log is out of my eye, I will see more clearly to help my brother remove the splinter in his.

There are times when it is necessary to speak in a negative way about another person, but this must be reserved for issues where two or three witnesses are attempting to secure justice in regard to a crime committed, or

where the welfare of the congregation requires a warning about a given individual. Even here, however, every effort must be made to find ways of warning without specifically demeaning someone else. So while there are legitimate cases where negative speech must occur, let us not make the exception a platform for lashon hara'. May God strengthen us to love each other in word and deed, and not allow the trap of lashon hara' to diminish our effectiveness for Him!

- This article was taken from "Lashon Hara' (Evil Speech or Gossip) - Some Thoughts, written by Tim Hegg.





Later, another man showed that he would obey God. Abraham trusted God enough that he would even sacrifice his own son, Isaac. God provided a ram as a substitute sacrifice. This was a picture of the substitute who would be sacrificed for our sins many many many years later - Jesus Christ.



John the Baptist and Jesus

“After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out the heavens said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” - Matthew 3:16-17