

## God is near

We should remind ourselves of the words of Moses, 'For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the Lord our God whenever we call on Him'. He spoke these words to encourage the children of Israel that in all things their lives were safe and they had a future.

When Jesus appointed the seventy, He commanded them to preach, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you'. The truth of these words was not found in any outward evidence or activity, but rather, the bread of heaven had come down to them. When Jesus walked among them, He was Emmanuel – God with us. The kingdom of God was indeed among them.

In the book of Jeremiah, the Lord said, 'Am I a God who is near ... and not a God far off?'. And wondrously, not only has the Lord come down and drawn near to us, He has become our very life source. He was the Word in flesh dwelling among them. We are reminded of the words of the apostle John, 'We have heard ... we have seen with our eyes ... we beheld and our hands handled ... the Word of Life'. Paul makes this very personal when he speaks of the word of faith which is near you, in your heart and in your mouth.

When Jesus spoke of Himself saying, 'I am the bread of life', John accounts that many of His disciples were offended and walked with Him no longer. They rejected Him as He drew near to them. He is the bread of God, able to give life to the world, but we must receive Him as He draws near.

### References:

Deut 4:7      1 John 1:1  
Luke 10:9    Jer 23:23  
Rom 10:8

### Further Study

John 6:28-33

### Daily Psalm

Psalm 48

## Signs and faith

Throughout His ministry, Jesus healed many people who were sick. As He walked among them, He performed many signs and wonders. John accounts that a multitude began to follow Him on account of the signs He was performing for the sick. Nevertheless, the immediate lesson for us is that signs themselves will never produce faith. The gospel is full of accounts of people who were healed and received miracles, but who did not come to faith. This is most peculiar, but faith only comes by hearing the word of God. It is the word of faith that draws near to us. If we do not feed on Him by receiving His word, then we will not continue in faith.

John accounts that many demanded that He prove Himself and His authority by demonstrating signs and wonders. There is no doubt that signs and wonders followed Him, and indeed, they ought to follow those who preach the kingdom. Nevertheless, it is the word of life, the word of faith that is the true bread from heaven.

Jesus said, 'He who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst'. We can determine here that while seeing signs, many people never truly came to Him. Let us take care that we are hearing the word of faith. Let us cry out, 'Lord, evermore give us this bread'. When the multitude cried out in this way, they were referring to the signs and wonders which He was performing. We should cry out for the bread of heaven. If we behold the Son and believe in Him we will have eternal life.

### References:

John 6:2,34-35, 40  
Rom 10:8,17

### Further Study

Rom 10:8-21

### Daily Psalm

Psalm 49

## Receiving unleavened bread

Jesus declared Himself to be 'the bread of life' when the Feast of Passover was at hand. We recall that the Passover was always celebrated with unleavened bread. And the unleavened bread which accompanied Passover carried within it an obligation to purge and cleanse. John accounts for three Passover celebrations during Jesus' earthly ministry. Each of these Passover feasts provoked a cleansing and purging among those who were accompanying Jesus. According to their Israelite heritage, this was a very literal and practical process by which leaven was removed from their houses. In our case, it is referring to purging leaven from our hearts. The Lord is seeking to purge our motivations and attitudes so that we can keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

It was not a coincidence that Jesus fed the five thousand with five barley loaves at the time of Passover and Unleavened Bread. The lesson for them, and indeed for us, is not about being filled with natural bread or about miracles. Rather, Jesus was teaching them the need to receive Him and His words. Many were offended by this and walked with Him no longer. The evidence of leaven within the hearers quickly became apparent. They began to grumble about Him and ultimately said, 'This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?'. There will be many things that we find difficult to receive. The apostle Peter said of Paul and his letters that there are 'some things hard to understand'. However, it is evident that Peter applied himself to receiving the words of the Lord. In contrast to many of the other disciples, Peter said to Jesus, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life'.

### References:

John 6:60, 68  
2 Pet 3:16

### Further Study

John 6:52-71

### Daily Psalm

Psalm 50

## Not withdrawing

It is no coincidence that the Israelites grumbled with respect to the manna, in the same way that the disciples grumbled concerning the bread of heaven. It is quite evident that the words of Jesus confronted their inner man. It confronted their discipleship. And so it is with us. Jesus said, 'If you continue in My word, you are truly disciples of Mine'. Paul drew a comparison between those who receive the word by faith and those who do not. 'If any man draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him'. He went further by saying, 'We are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul'. Let us be sure that we do not withdraw when the word of life confronts us.

Like the manna in the wilderness, the true bread of heaven is feeding us if we will receive it. The Israelites had to collect this manna daily. It was truly bread or 'food convenient'. Nevertheless, the manna in the wilderness had no capacity to change the inner man. It was bread which perished and had no capacity to overcome corruption and mortality. The bread of heaven which we receive daily is the bread of eternal life. It is miraculous provision as Christ brings His word to us. The first evidence that we are receiving eternal life is that our inner man is being changed, even though the outer man is perishing. If we continue to eat this bread, it will result in the purging of all corruption from us. And by this same word, we will be changed into the likeness of His resurrection at the last day.

### References:

John 8:31  
Prov 30:8  
Eph 3:16

### Further Study

Heb 10:38-39  
2 Cor 4:16  
Heb 10:16-39

### Daily Psalm

Psalm 51

## Not taking offence

We all know the feeling of being offended. Luke accounts the words of Jesus, 'Blessed is he who does not take offence at Me'. In one situation, the disciples came to Jesus saying, 'Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard?'. And we know that in the final Passover night, Jesus warned the twelve, 'You shall all be offended because of Me this night'. If it happened to them, it can most certainly happen to us.

When we begin to grumble, it is quite clear that something has offended us. And it is likely that we will only decline in our responses if we do not receive the word with a pure heart. We clearly observe this decline, when Jesus spoke of Himself as 'the bread of life'; 'the bread of God' that gives life to the world. If grumbling continues then we will most certainly begin to quarrel and 'argue with one another'. Once we begin to argue, our capacity to receive the word is greatly diminished. We become fault-finders, and ultimately those who oppose and betray.

Jesus was 'conscious that His disciples grumbled', so He said to them, 'Does this cause you to stumble?'. It was His kindness and mercy to ask this question. He understood that He was the stumbling stone and the rock of offence. Having gone through his crisis, Peter was quite familiar with having been offended. In his first letter, he was quite sharp on the point, 'They stumble because they are disobedient to the word'. In contrast to this he wrote, 'He who believes in Him shall not be disappointed'.

### References:

Luke 7:23    Matt 15:12  
Mark 14:27    John 6:52, 61  
1 Pet 2:6

### Further Study

1 Pet 2

### Daily Psalm

Psalm 52