

The Lord – the Word of God

Greetings in the Messiah. There can be no better way to begin my contributions to this magazine than to turn our attention first and foremost towards God's greatest gift to us in His Son – the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Word of God. He is the Word made flesh, *“who dwelt among us and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”* Jn1:14. He is the Memra, the Logos, the brightness of God's glory and the exact representation of His person. He is the one who upholds all things by the Word of His power and He's our Saviour! I want to thank Him so much for allowing me to be grafted into all the promises and covenants made to Israel and granting me eternal life because of the shed blood of the Lamb.

Passover and the Feast of the Firstfruits

In March, Israel celebrates the Jewish Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Passover and the Feast of the Firstfruits. All these are marvellously fulfilled in Jesus, the Messiah of Israel who was the sinless, substitutionary offering to atone for our sins. He also by resurrection became the firstfruits of those who rise from the dead. Pray that Israel at this Passover might recognise the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world and put their trust in Him who came to them first of all.

Consider if you will, that He came on time at the right time; He came to the right place;

He came to the right people. He fulfilled all righteousness by His own sinless obedient life. He came as a servant yet He came with power and authority to destroy the power of the Devil and take away from him the keys of death and Hell. He came to deliver us from Satan's kingdom, taking away the fear of death, and to transfer us into the kingdom of His dear Son. From that day onward no-one in Israel or the whole world need have any doubts about what life is for and where it all leads. Jesus came to change man's destiny and one day all the rest of the details of His marvellous work will become crystal clear when those Jews and gentiles who know Him meet Him face to face.

Thank God that all this is possible because we have a living Word of God available to us today. Our faith is in a living God who has shared the truth with us uniquely through His Word that is trustworthy and sure. Thank God for the Scriptures that make us wise unto salvation.

Recently we listened to Keith Parker's triple CD on the History of the Church. In these CD's, Keith reminds us how God has preserved His Word for us down through the centuries so today we might read the truth in peace and safety. How privileged we are and how thankful we should be for all those who gave their lives to preserve the truth for later generations. In our day too we need to be grateful for all those who uphold the truth of God's Word in pressured situations in Israel and other lands where persecution of Christians is becoming all too frequent. But as we pray for Israel let us not forget to pray for the Western Church that increasingly sees the Word of God as an irrelevance and is no longer the basis for faith and practice.

The Word of God is reliable but what of our words? The author of the book of James, writes to his Jewish brethren in James 3:1 *"...let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment, for we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body."* He goes on to illustrate his concern for the whole body by looking at an untamed horse, which needs a bridle to

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direct its energies. *"Look also at ships..."* he says, which are turned by the pilot through fierce storms by such a small rudder. Even so the tongue is a little member of the body yet can have such a power for good or evil.

He concludes this section by saying that *"With it we bless our God and Father and with it we curse men ...Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren these things ought not to be."* 3:9 And with that, we all agree. Yet how can the tongue be controlled? How can we ensure that what comes out of our mouth is always honouring to the Lord and a blessing to His people? Is it an unrealistic hope?

Someone once said, *"Jewish people are just like everyone else but more so!"* Whether it's their Jewish family upbringing or their cultural background in the country of origin or whatever else, there is the popular notion that Jewish people can be more direct with you in their conversation which in more delicate circles, can be hard to swallow. In my experience, there are other ethnic groups who would run a hard second but the issue

is this. Sometimes - just sometimes, people say things that they possible didn't mean to say and even if they did, with the benefit of hindsight would rather have said in a completely different way. In paraphrase, James concludes this section, *"If you always said what you ought to say in the way it ought to be said - you would be perfect."* Sadly, none of us is there yet.

In Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost, we read of the impact of the Holy Spirit on the way in which the gathered disciples worshipped God. The tongue of His people was radically affected as they spoke a new heavenly language worshipping God *"...in the Spirit,"* just as He had promised to the woman at the well Jn 4:24 and later in Acts 1:8. Their hearts and tongues were to be inseparable as He became Lord of their tongues, so that they might be as His mouth, (Jeremiah 15:19) for such had been His hope from the beginning. Isaiah experienced the seraphim of the Lord touching his mouth and taking away his sin - Isa 6:7 He did the same for Jeremiah in Jer 1:9 where *"...the Lord put forth His hand and touched his mouth."* For others like Moses, He provided Aaron to be his spokesman. But for all the prophets, God did a work of cleansing and filling so that the curse of Babel might be removed and that His own people might demonstrate a new unity in the Spirit.

Was the gift of tongues that Paul spoke of in 1 Corinthians 14:17 given to him to boast about? Certainly not, since the main thrust of the chapter was to ensure that the Church was edified by sound speech. He knew the blessing of communicating in the spirit with God who is Spirit but he also knew the need to teach sound doctrine and practice amongst believers who clearly

had not yet learned how to truly love and honour one another. The Greek word for edification is 'oikodome' which means 'to build a house,' whether literal or figurative. So, the expression of sound words will build up the house. Proverbs 15:4 puts it this way, *"A wholesome tongue is a tree of life but perverseness in it breaks the spirit."* Again in 16:24, *"Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones."* The psalmist rejoices in the revealed Law of the Lord in which he rejoices day and night. Your Mitzvot are my meditation. *"How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth...therefore I hate every false way."* Ps 119:99-104 Oh, that we could guarantee that only wholesome words came out of our mouths!

Finally, just a word about ourselves. In late 2007 as the prospect of leading PFI became more clear, the Lord reminded us of Esther who came to the kingdom for the sake of the Jews in Babylon *"...for such at time as this."* Esther 4:14 We are not Esther! Nevertheless, we recognised that these are very significant times when we need great help from the Lord in order to keep the lamp burning for the sake of Israel. Whoever we are, if we are Christians today, we will all face enormous challenges to our faith. Yet, with all the potential for failure that faces us every day, we can be confident that He who chose us is utterly faithful and He will sustain us in all the work He has given us to do. Praise His Name.

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