

Eastern Customs and
Idioms of the Bible

The Teachings of
Orientalisms

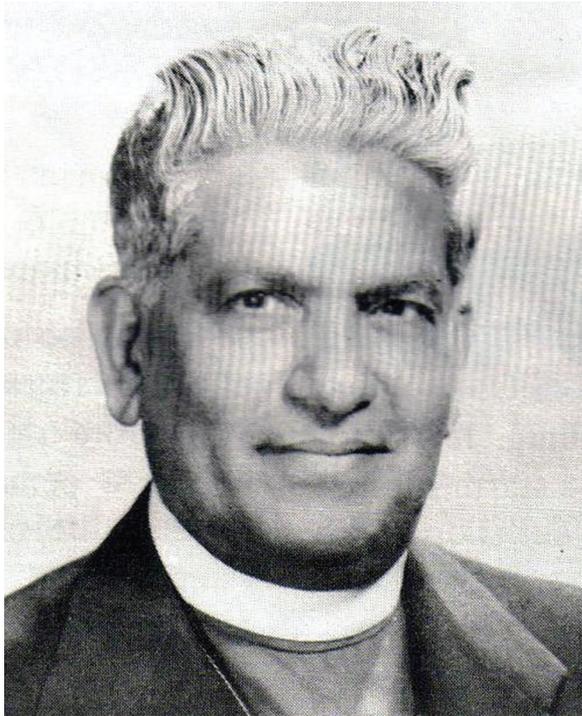
By

Bishop K. C. Pillai

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The scriptures used throughout this book are quoted from the King James Version unless otherwise noted. All explanatory insertions within a scripture verse are enclosed in brackets. All Greek and Sanskrit words are printed with English letters and italicized.

While limited grammatical editing has been done to enhance contemporary readability, care has been taken to preserve the integrity of Pillai's work.



Bishop K. C. Pillai

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<p>“Much of the Bible is based on the facts of life of the Eastern people; this is why people of other cultures. . . cannot understand it. I have devoted my life to teaching these Orientalisms in the Bible, so that people can understand and believe that it is a Book based on truth.”</p>	
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FOREWORD

As a convert to Christianity from Hinduism, Bishop Karnam Chengalvaraya Pillai, D.D. came to the Western world on a singular mission: to teach the Eastern culture of the Bible. Although Christianity is generally considered a Western religion, it is important to recognize that the Bible itself was written and set in the Eastern world, and it must be viewed through the light of that Eastern window. It is primarily the area referred to at varying times as the Near East, Middle East, or Orient where the people and events described in the Bible resided. Resultantly, in order to really understand the Bible, one must become knowledgeable of the culture, manners, and customs of the Eastern world.

Every part of the world has developed a culture that in many ways is unique to that specific locale. For example, when dining at someone's home in many Asian and Central America countries, it is well-mannered for a guest to leave right after the dinner; staying longer may indicate to the host that they have not eaten enough. Yet, in European and North American countries this is considered rude, indicating that the guest only wanted to eat and was not really interested in the company of the hosts. In modern times, we have become increasingly aware of cultural differences as they affect world politics, global economies, and social interactions. To some extent, we all face situations that require an understanding of cultural diversity; for some, an awareness of the unique manners and customs of different regions becomes essential to success.

Distinct cultural differences occur throughout the

world; often even one region of a country develops language, manners, and folkways different from other parts of the same country. There is no place, however, where those differences are more pronounced than between the East and West. The manners, customs, idioms, traditions, and even the very way of thinking of the people of the East strikingly contrasts with the Western world.

While understanding cultural differences is important in many aspects of life, it is most significant in the field of Biblical research. As Bishop Pillai shared:

When we consider the “light through an Eastern window” we must always remember that the Bible is an Eastern book, written by men who spoke an Eastern language and used words expressing Eastern customs. Many of the Eastern phrases used as figures of speech are interpreted literally in the West and that to our own hurt. Doing this has caused great confusion and much harm to the work of God.

The Bible is filled with passages that perplex the Westerner’s mind, simply because he lacks an understanding of the peculiar idioms, traditions, customs, and manners underlying the scriptural passage. Those same Scriptures, however, were readily understood by the people that inhabited the Bible lands when they were first written. And, since a great deal of those expressions and practices remained unchanged in the Orient even to modern times, present-day Easterners often grasp the meaning of Scriptures that elude Christians in the Western world.

Born in 1902, at the time of K. C. Pillai’s early life, his native India had remained an isolated country for thousands of years. Therefore, the customs and manners of the people were still aligned with the Eastern, Biblical culture; and as such, it provided an indispensable resource. As, one of the founders of the Western

academic field of Indian studies and the discipline of comparative religion, Friedrich Maximilian Müller, the noted German philologist and Orientalist wrote in his book, *What Can India Teach Us?*

... India occupies a place second to no other country. Whatever sphere of the human mind you may select for your special study, whether it be language, or religion, or mythology, or philosophy, whether it be laws or customs, primitive art or primitive science, everywhere, you have to go to India, whether you like it or not, because some of the most valuable and most instructive materials in the history of man are treasured up in India, and India alone.

In his book, *Light through an Eastern Window*, Pillai acknowledges Müller's assertion. "As a native of India, born into a Hindu home, I was reared and educated in the rich Eastern tradition to which Max Müller makes reference. Therefore, the Indian Orthodox Church assigned me to the ministry of teaching these Orientalisms throughout the Western world. As far as I know, I am the only Hindu convert to Christianity who is engaged in this kind of teaching."

Karnam C. Pillai's conversion to Christianity is a witness of God's heart, as well as a lesson in one of the most significant Eastern customs found in the Bible. The Bishop was raised as a Hindu. When a Hindu child of the ruling class is born, a little salt is rubbed on the baby who is then wrapped in swaddling cloth. This custom invoked one of the oldest and strongest covenants in the Eastern world, the "salt covenant." In this particular instance, the child was salted for a lifetime of dedication to the Hindu religion. The "salt covenant" is used in like manner throughout the Bible to seal the deepest commitment.

As a result of the salt covenant, it is difficult for

Hindus to convert to Christianity. When they do, their family actually conducts a funeral service to symbolize that the individual is dead to their family, the community and Hinduism. Their family will carry a portrait of the “deceased” to the cemetery and bury it. Many times Bishop spoke of his “burial day” when he was disinherited for becoming a Christian; the only Hindu willing to break that covenant of salt in his community during that time.

K.C. Pillai held a doctorate of Divinity and served as Bishop of the Indian Eastern Orthodox Church, Antiochian Succession in North Madras. In the United States, he held the offices of Primate of the American Episcopal Church in Birmingham, Alabama; and Archbishop of the Indian Eastern Orthodox Church. First introduced to the United States by Dr. H.J. Ironside, then pastor of the Moody Church, Pillai gained acclaim throughout America as the foremost authority on the Eastern culture of the Bible. He describes how he came to teach Orientalisms to the Western world.

I have been asked to state how it was that I came to teach the Orientalisms of the Bible. I suppose it seemed like an accident at the time, but of course with God, nothing is an accident.

I am an Indian by birth, of the Hindu caste, and of the Christian religion. I was converted to Christianity in my own village in the south of India, but it was not until I went to England for the first time, in 1932, that I became aware of the great need for the Westerners to understand the culture of the East so that they could better understand the Bible.

When I went to churches in England, I heard preachers who simply did not understand what they were trying to preach, and in fact had missed some great Biblical truths due to ignorance of the Oriental

idioms, customs, parables, and the like. I began to enlighten them on these matters. Later, my church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, assigned me to the ministry of teaching these things in the Western world. This I have done, both on the continent of Europe, in the British Isles, and now on the North American continent. As far as I know, I am the only Hindu convert to Christianity who has engaged in this kind of teaching.

Perhaps the way in which I received the holy spirit will also be of interest. I was attending a ministerial conference in a city in Tennessee; I had gone to my room in the hotel to rest awhile. There came a knocking at the door, and upon learning that they were friends from the Conference, I called out, "Come in!" and did not even rise. There were five ministers who came into the room, and when I told them to sit down, they would not sit down at all, but paced excitedly about the room saying, "Praise God!" and other such exclamations. I saw that something wonderful had happened to them and they finally told me that they had received the holy spirit through a man who had made it his ministry to go about laying hands on other ministers so that they could receive; and then they felt led to come straightway to me. I was not entirely sure what it meant to receive the holy spirit, but I saw that my friends had something wonderful and I told them that I wanted it also. Therefore, sitting on the edge of the bed, they laid hands on me and prayed for me to receive; I did so, and spoke with tongues. For over twenty-five years I have continued this work under the title, "Light through an Eastern Window"; I have been in churches of nearly every denomination and also in colleges and seminaries.

In the summer of 1953, the Bishop met Dr. Victor

Paul Wierwille, a man who was to have a profound impact on his life and understanding of the Bible. For many years, Dr. Wierwille, a graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary, quested for greater understanding of the Bible. His tremendous spiritual hunger led him to travel throughout the country in order to learn from various Christian leaders, as well as inviting them to Ohio to share their knowledge with his rapidly growing ministry. V.P. Wierwille's invitation to Pillai for a brief visit that summer led to an extended visit a couple of months later. Over the course of six weeks, the two men read every verse in the Bible together, with the Bishop pointing out and explaining each Orientalism that appeared.

The relationship between V.P. Wierwille and K.C. Pillai proved mutually beneficial in many ways. As told in the book *Born Again to Serve*, Dr. Wierwille expressed his admiration for Bishop Pillai. "I'll always be grateful for that man. There was much in the Bible I couldn't understand and didn't know. I had no idea about Eastern culture. But the Bishop did; and when he explained Eastern culture to me, it became simple. An interesting thing about our relationship was that the Bishop taught me Eastern customs, and I taught him renewed mind, of which he became the greatest exponent." Later the Bishop said, "I came over 10,000 miles from India to the United States just to hear the truth from Dr. Wierwille."

In October of 1953, Dr. Wierwille first began teaching Power for Abundant Living, the preeminent class on Biblical research and the receiving of the holy spirit. Bishop Pillai was a student in the second class that was run on January 10, 1954. He was so thrilled by the knowledge he gained that on February 3, 1954 he wrote Dr. Wierwille, inviting him to tour his native country to bring spiritual enlightenment to the people of India.

My Dear Dr. Wierwille:

I would like to place it on record that you're teaching on the fullness of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the spirit has been most original, enlightening and thoroughly scriptural. I greatly profited while I sat at your feet in the class for a fortnight, absorbing almost every word coming out of your lips. What you teach is just the Word of God, and I did not realize it until you opened my eyes to it. Why did I not know it before? I can answer that question myself. It was because I did not in total accept just what the Word of God said, but only what others said about it. I realize for the first time that this has been the reason why the Christian church is a paralyzed institution without much power.

. . .Your teaching on the renewal of the mind is dynamic. That is just what the believers all over the world need. I am indebted to you for this enlightenment as well. I have traveled much and seen much and heard the best of the preachers and teachers of the word, but never as unique, original, and as scriptural as yours. India and the East will readily take your teachings and message. This is just what we need. We have heard enough about the other kind, "having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof," and now we want to hear the truth which alone will set us free.

I am wondering if you would care to accept an invitation to India and the East in the fall of 1955 to quicken us from the awful spiritual decay in the Church of God throughout the world? I know that you have the key to its solution. Furthermore, because I am benefited, the Indian church and people also will be benefited through my teaching and leadership. You have therefore done much for us and we are eternally indebted to you and can never

repay our debt of gratitude to you in this life, but would love to show you our appreciation as best we can as a small token of what we have received from you.

Bishop Pillai traveled to India on December 3, 1954 to make arrangements for the Wierwilles' eight month tour of the country, a pivotal event in Dr. Wierwille's ministry. As Bishop Pillai had encouraged, the Indian people enthusiastically accepted Dr. Wierwille's teachings, and he saw the power of the holy spirit manifested greater than he had ever previously experienced.

The Bishop came to regard Dr. Victor Paul Wierwille as his spiritual leader:

. . . Dr. Wierwille, I look upon him as a great guru, my guru; who opened my eyes of understanding in many ways, in many fields. The guru is one who imparts knowledge: spiritual knowledge. Guru is not just the teacher, who teaches you reading, writing and arithmetic. That is a teacher; it's a man of the world. But a guru is a spiritual man who has been appointed, ordained of God, to teach us spiritual knowledge.

Bishop Pillai continued working closely with Dr. Wierwille for the remainder of his life. His articles explaining Eastern manners and customs of the Bible, "Light through an Eastern Window," appeared regularly in the Biblical research magazine Dr. Wierwille's ministry published. He taught fellowships, classes, and camps alongside Dr. Wierwille; like the Renewed Mind Camp of 1969. He continued illuminating the Western world with his knowledge of the Orientalisms found in the Bible until the time of his death on February 10, 1970.

The interest Bishop Pillai generated in the field has led to numerous further studies by other scholars in the field of manners and customs in the Bible, as well. His

books and teachings continue to illuminate and inspire students of the Bible throughout the world. Bishop Pillai's work was published in three books during his lifetime: *Light through an Eastern Window*; *Orientalisms of the Bible, Volume 1*; and *Orientalisms of the Bible Volume 2*. While those books remain a valuable resource, the small volumes represent only a fraction of Bishop Pillai's work in the field of manners and customs of the Bible.

Bishop K.C. Pillai left a rich legacy of work that far exceeds those three books. Although volumes of Pillai's Eastern studies exist in both written and audio recordings, a comprehensive collection of his valuable contributions has never been published. While not an exhaustive assemblage of K. C. Pillai's scholarship, this volume presents to the reader an extensive compilation of the Eastern customs and idioms that he brought to the Western world. The record of Bishop Pillai's exposition of Orientalisms in the Bible during his six-week stay with Dr. Wierwille in the summer of 1953, along with other recorded teachings throughout their long association, served as the source for this book. The material from that work has been arranged here in categories according to covered topics. With this arrangement, when researching a specific Eastern custom or facet of Biblical culture, the reader can access all of the included references to a particular subject without prior knowledge of the related scriptures. Conversely, if someone is endeavoring to discover if a particular verse contains an Orientalism, they can determine so through the use of the Scripture Index included in the back of the book, which will then in turn lead them to the broader understanding of the categorical background.

Knowledge of the Eastern customs and idioms used in the Scriptures is essential to understanding the Bible. This book opens the doors of enlightenment into the culture that provides the setting for the lives, events, and

tenets central to Christianity. It is a book that warrants more than a cursory reading. For the serious students of the Bible, it will occupy an important place in their reference library.

AGRICULTURE

Oriental people are largely agricultural people, therefore there are many figures of speech relating to life on the land, which may be found in the Scriptures. Most of the property of Easterners consists of cattle, and farming is their occupation. Almost all men in the East are farmers. They grow their own food and live in their own home. Seventy-five to ninety percent live by cultivating their own land. A man without land in the East is a pauper. Nearly every Indian in upper classes owns his own home, and land is handed down from father to son. They practice “concentrated farming”—every family grows what it needs. They do not usually live on the farm, but travel there each day to work, taking animals and implements along.

Beside each Eastern home are shelter houses for all of their animals. Buffalo, oxen, and cows are kept in a cowshed at home in the village. The oxen stay in a shelter called a manger. Cows live in a manger too. The actual manger itself is built of two long slabs of stone forming a hollow deep place where the grass is spread for the animals to eat. Many poor people work for the owner of a farm and live in mud huts near the manger. A common practice among the poor at the time of birth was for a pregnant woman to sleep in the manger and give birth there on the grass. The place where donkeys are kept is called the crib. Sheep live in a fold, as do goats. These are adjacent to the Eastern home.

Ox Knoweth His Owner

Isaiah 1:3

The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's

crib: *but* Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.

Isaiah was speaking the way the Easterner speaks. He is telling the children of Israel how hard-hearted they are since they would not come back to God for repentance. In a small village, the animals owned by a household are gathered up in the morning by boys of the town who are entrusted with the job. They go around to the different homes collecting maybe 2000 animals. The boys drive them into the street and then take them up to the nearby highlands to graze, pasture and water them all day. About six o'clock in the evening they come back. The cows are in the streets only at these two times of the day. Western people say the cows are "always" in the street because they happen to see them when they gather the animals up in the morning and drive them along the streets. Because the animals are in the street in the morning and evening, the Westerners think that the cows are sacred. They are not!

In the evening they are brought back to the edge of the town, headed in the right direction, and they then find their way into their own enclosures. The boys that are hired only bring the animals to the entrance of the village and then they go home. Each type of animal has a specific kind of enclosure: the ass has a crib, the sheep have a sheepfold, etc. The donkeys and oxen find their own mangers. These animals never make a mistake; they always go to their own place. Animals had enough sense to go to their cribs and stalls, but the people didn't have enough sense to go back to their God. Animals do not get confused. Only humans are confused. The ass represents dull headedness, but even they have enough sense to find their way home to their master. That is what this verse is saying. Israel was being more stupid than the ass. They had strayed away from

God and did not have enough sense to return home. Isaiah is lamenting in this verse that even dumb animals have enough sense to go home to their proper owners, but the people of Israel who have been chosen by God to be His children do not have sense enough to know their God. Israel had turned away from God who should have been their “Master.” They know there is protection and security there. The people were grumbling and wandering, rather than taking their burdens to God.

We should also know that our provisions and safety are in the crib of our Master. The donkey does not stand without his crib praying, “Lord, Lord, send me something to eat out here.” Only humans do that. It is our business to get to the crib, and God’s business to take care of us there. Christ Jesus is now the crib of the whole world. All mankind can find salvation, satisfaction, sustenance, peace, etc. in him. Christians get out of fellowship and then wander around, not returning to their cribs. The donkey would think:

If I stay in the streets, someone would whip me. If it rains, I could get wet. I will have nothing to eat; everyone who passes by will hate me; I will be like an orphan (no shelter). If I get back to my master’s house, I have a shelter over my head, four walls, food for the night and water. If I do not go back, it is not my master’s fault, because he has provided for me.

The Christian has been provided for in Christ Jesus. Yet, when he is out of fellowship, out of his shelter, praying, “Lord, Lord. . . .” God said, “This is my beloved Son, hear him.” Christ Jesus is our crib. With problems, go to God through Jesus Christ, not to human beings. In Him there is all provision, healing, security, sustenance, providence, joy, and peace; all our needs are met.

Jeremiah 17:5-8

Thus saith the LORD; Cursed *be* the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD.

For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, *in* a salt land and not inhabited.

Blessed *is* the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is.

For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and *that* spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

We need to keep our mind off of our disease and on God. This way our problems are solved. If we don't take our problems to God, our problems remain unsolved.

Plowed with Heifer

One of the many figures of speech relating to plowing is found in the Book of Judges; this is the record of Samson's marriage to the Philistine woman.

Judges 14:1-18

And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines.

And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife.

Then his father and his mother said unto him, *Is there* never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest

to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well.

But his father and his mother knew not that it *was* of the LORD, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.

Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath: and, behold, a young lion roared against him.

And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and *he had* nothing in his hand: but he told not his father or his mother what he had done.

And he went down, and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well.

And after a time he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcase of the lion: and, behold, *there was* a swarm of bees and honey in the carcase of the lion.

And he took thereof in his hands, and went on eating, and came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat: but he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcase of the lion.

So his father went down unto the woman: and Samson made there a feast; for so used the young men to do.

And it came to pass, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him.

And Samson said unto them, I will now put forth a riddle unto you: if ye can certainly declare it me within the seven days of the feast, and find *it* out, then I will give you thirty sheets and thirty change of garments:

But if ye cannot declare *it* me, then shall ye give me thirty sheets and thirty change of garments. And they said unto him, Put forth thy riddle, that we may hear it.

And he said unto them, Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. And they could not in three days expound the riddle.

And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they said unto Samson's wife, Entice thy husband, that he may declare unto us the riddle, lest we burn thee and thy father's house with fire: have ye called us to take that we have? *is it* not *so*?

And Samson's wife wept before him, and said, Thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not: thou hast put forth a riddle unto the children of my people, and hast not told *it* me. And he said unto her, Behold, I have not told *it* my father nor my mother, and shall I tell *it* thee?

And she wept before him the seven days, while their feast lasted: and it came to pass on the seventh day, that he told her, because she lay sore upon him: and she told the riddle to the children of her people.

And the men of the city said unto him on the seventh day before the sun went down, What *is* sweeter than honey? and what *is* stronger than a lion? And he said unto them, If ye had not plowed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle.

It is a very ancient custom to put a riddle before a group of people in the East. Samson had proposed a riddle to the groomsmen, and they had plagued his bride until she obtained the answer to the riddle. The Philistine men did not have the brains to figure out the riddle, so they went to Samson's wife for the answer. She went and cried for the answer. Culturally, the Oriental tells important matters to: first, his mother; second, his father;

third, his teacher (pastor); fourth, God; and fifth, his wife. So, Samson said here, “Dad comes first, and I haven’t told him, and you want me to tell you?”

Samson said to them, “. . . If ye had not plowed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle.” A heifer is a young cow that has not been calved. This is what some people in the East call a bride who is just married before she has the first child. It is not meant to be derogatory. Certain tribes use this term in a sort of slang language. It is not used by “cultured people,” however. After a woman has a child, she is no longer called a heifer.

Very seldom is a heifer put to the yoke for plowing. It is illegal to put a heifer by the side of a bull for plowing. The law says you are not to be unequally yoked together.

Deuteronomy 22:10

Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together.

You need two oxen to do plowing. But many poor people in the East do not have two oxen, for poor people could only afford one ox. The poor man must find another ox; otherwise, he cannot plow. What he will usually do then, if he has a heifer, is to match the ox with the heifer. He, therefore, puts a heifer next to his ox even though it is still illegal. If you put two different animals together they will pull in different directions; they are unequally yoked together.

2 Corinthians 6:14

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

The oxen, which are used for plowing, are kept in the furrow by means of pricking with a goad, which is a

nail fixed on the end of a stick. The goad or prick is held against the ox's thigh so that when he kicks it hurts. The more he kicks, the more it hurts. The plowman uses one hand on the plow and a goad in the other. If a man has only an heifer and puts it in the same yoke with an ox, when the farmer begins plowing, the heifer will not go. First the farmer ties a rope to her horn and stands behind her with a goad. He pricks the heifer with a goad and pulls her with a rope. The ox will go forward, but the heifer won't go. As he places the yoke on, the heifer stops and tries to shake off the yoke. She refuses to move in spite of pricking. She kicks at it and gets pricked more. Without the yoke, the heifer will run; with it, she pretends she is helpless and weak. Then the heifer begins foaming and breathing heavy. It's afraid to go forward. It gets beaten and falls down playing dead. The heifer does not want to go forward, because she thinks, "If I go forward and carry the yoke the first time, my neck will be broken. If I give in they'll have me for life; but if I dodge it now, he will let me go." The farmer may get discouraged and let her go. It takes a week or two for the heifer to get ready for the yoke. The farmer must use the goad many times to get the heifer to go.

In the Book of Judges, the men scared and pricked Samson's wife, which is why the phrase "plowed my heifer" is used. Samson is saying that the bride was goaded by the groomsmen.

Kick Against the Pricks

The same goad is the basis of the remark Jesus made to Paul, when he was struck down on the Damascus Road:

Acts 9:1-5

And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaugh-

ter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

The goad is also called a prick. The goad is a stick two or three feet long at the end of which is a sharp nail. In the East when they plow, they only use one hand because the plow only goes about two inches deep—not like the plows in the United States, which dig deep. A man plowing with horses may look back, because he has two horses and the plow is wide; it cuts deep. If the Eastern man looks back, the small, narrow plow will jump from side to side, and he will have crooked rows. Both oxen must go straight. That is why it says in the Word, if a man puts his hand on the plow and looks back, he's not fit for the kingdom of God.

Luke 9:62

And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

The farmer uses the prick to keep the oxen on course. As long as the ox goes straight down the furrow, he is not pricked with the goad. But if he starts to stray out of line, he is pricked. A precocious ox may kick back at

the plowman, but the canny plowman holds the goad so that the ox kicks right into it. He does not take the goad away because he knows the ox will kick after being pricked. As he kicks, he meets with the same goad again; when he kicks back, he kicks the prick. He will get hurt until he learns not to kick back. If you kick against the pricks, you are hurt all the more.

Our goad is the Word, which is never removed. If we kick against it, we get hurt. The conviction of the Word is the prick. Most people are afraid to read the Word for their fear of being convicted by it. When God convicts us with the Word, we kick back. The more we kick back, the worse the prick hurts. If you go forward thanking Him for the yoke, you'll have no pricks and only go forward.

The Backsliding Heifer

Hosea 4:16

For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer: now the LORD will feed them as a lamb in a large place.

Like the heifer, Israel refused to bear the yoke for fear. How did Israel slide back as a backsliding heifer? God gave Israel a good land to possess it and the leaders of the Israelites sent spies to go look over the land. They saw that it was a good land, but also saw the giants in the land. They said the land was beautiful but they were afraid to go because of the giants. Even the women began to cry all night because of fear. This report made Israel not go. They backslide like the heifer; the reason being fear. They thought if they refused to bear the yoke, the giants wouldn't bother them. The children of Israel overestimated the giants with their physical eyes and underestimated the power of God who brought them out of Egypt; the same God who parted the Red Sea and

brought the water out of the rock. They forgot God's greatness. The same thing happens to us today. Jesus said:

Matthew 11:29, 30

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light.

The yoke is made of wood and fits on the back of the neck of the oxen. A leather strap goes around under the neck. Before the heifer carries the yoke, she is afraid of it. She thinks it is too heavy. We are like heifers. We refuse to bear the yoke of Jesus Christ because we imagine it is a heavy yoke. But Jesus said, “. . .my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” It is nothing compared to the yoke of other religions. The easiest thing is to obey Jesus Christ. The more Israel refused to go, the more pricks she got; the more Christians refuse to bear the yoke of Jesus, the more we suffer. We are afraid of the yoke, or we would go forward. The Word tells us to do certain things, but we won't do them because we are afraid it will hurt us. Fear keeps God's people from bearing the yoke of Jesus. His yoke (his commandments) are light, easy to bear. We don't even want to try it, just like the heifer. We try to shake it off. Fear is the believer's only enemy. People are always afraid of what they could lose. “God may be true, but I don't want to try anyway,” is our attitude. Israel was afraid because they looked at the giants and not at their God. We look on encompassing circumstances rather than at the truth of God's Word. We should look to God's hand. His hand is not shortened that it cannot save.

Isaiah 59:1

Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:

God is able to overcome any giant in our life. We must step out on the land and God will fight our battles. We need only act on God's Word. At that moment we will realize His Word is truth. Israel refused to go with God; they slid back. Fear keeps us from going with God.

A Lamb in a Large Place

Hosea 4:16b

. . .now the LORD will feed them as a lamb in a large place.

These "lambs" are above one year of age. Sheep are not put together with lambs of the first year. The first year male and female lambs are taken care of near the shepherd's home by the shepherd's children. They get special attention. They prepare special grass for them, remove the land of all the stones and thorns and thistles; everything is taken care of. The lambs are given a pond and grazing land near home. They eat the grass and drink the water; no other animals are near. These lambs of the first year are chosen for Passover, a male of the first year without bruise or blemish. That's why they are so well cared for. That's why there can be no stones and rocks where the lambs walk during their first year. Nearer to home, they have plenty to eat and drink, plenty of security surrounds them: there is no lack, no drought, no fear—everything is just right for them. But the rest of the lambs, not chosen for Passover, go into the wilderness wandering here and there to look for water and grass. After the first year, they are looked upon as sheep. They may fall in a pit and break their neck, or be eaten by a tiger. All these fears confront them. There are lots of dangers and no longer any certainty. That is a "large place"—a place where there may not be water or food, and may be danger of tigers and lions. If we refuse to walk with Christ, bear His yoke, and do His

will, we are as a lamb in a large place (this wicked world) where there is no peace, certainty, surety, and freedom.

God says that because you have refused to walk with Him, and have compromised every step for fear, and have not done those things that you have promised to Christ; you will suffer defeat, frustration, agony, misery, poverty, disease and crisis. The LORD will feed you as the lamb in a large place where there is no security, no certainty of water or food; in a large place as opposed to the first year lambs' confined rich grazing area. We bear needless pain because we fail to adhere to His Word. Those who want freedom from fear and insecurity and lack, must turn from their strayed ways unto Jesus; ask forgiveness for failing to bear the light yoke of Christ, and being burdened down with the yoke of the devil. Christ would lead us as lambs of the first year into green pastures and water.

Heifer Trained

Hosea 10:11

And Ephraim *is as* an heifer *that is* taught, *and* loveth to tread out *the corn*; but I passed over upon her fair neck: I will make Ephraim to ride; Judah shall plow, *and* Jacob shall break his clods.

The phrase “*that is taught*” means trained to tread the corn. Ephraim was only trained to tread out the corn like a heifer. A heifer is a young cow that has not been calved.

“*. . . and loveth to tread out the corn;*”—Certain heifers are only trained to tread out the corn. That is the easiest task of all for an animal. The corn is put all over the threshing room floor. All the cows, ten to twenty of them, go around, driven by one man. As the cows walk, the corn is crushed by the weight of their feet. It is not a hard job like plowing. It is an easy job.

“ . . . passed over upon” means to put a yoke upon. A heifer is always afraid to carry a yoke because the fear is that the yoke will break. The text should read: “But I will place a yoke and plow upon. . . .” The animal doesn’t plow but they carry the instrument that plows.

“ . . . fair neck” means a neck that has never been broken by a yoke and plow.

“ . . . make Ephraim to ride” means to pull the plow. The yoke is placed on the animals in plowing, and then the animals must pull the weight.

Treading out the corn is just walking; it is the easiest thing to do. People like to do the easiest thing also. It is easy to hear evangelists preach sermons; it is more difficult to take the Word of God and become born-again, because then they must act upon it. People don’t want to use their hands. But here in Hosea, God put a yoke upon Ephraim’s head, which he did not like. It was heavy, and then it was pulled.

“ . . . Judah shall plow, *and* Jacob shall break his clods.”—One man (Judah) plows, and the other man goes behind him and breaks the big clods that come from the plowing. That is the work of Jacob. “Judah shall plow,” means Judah stands behind the plow with a goad. Judah has one hand on the plow and the other is used to goad the animals. “. . . Jacob shall break his clods.”—If there are big clods when plowing, Jacob shall break them.

Ephraim wanted it easy and was afraid of breaking his neck. This applies to us also, if we want to have it easy in everything. Some want to go easy on religion: if we give a testimony we may lose our reputation, our job, our business in the community. People may despise us, so we go easy on it. “Ephraim” represents a materialistic man. People do not like change. The Bible is not a burden: it is a yoke. It is the Word of God and

the will of God—the yoke. People are afraid to bear that yoke because they do not want to do the will of God.

Thorn in the Flesh

2 Corinthians 12:7

And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

Paul's "thorn in the flesh" also has an agricultural origin. In the East, a thorn in the flesh is common. The plowman walks across the land with bare feet, and occasionally he will get a thorn in his foot. Occasionally, a thorn in the foot may be two inches deep. When this happens, they cannot remove the thorns at once because it is very painful to remove a thorn which is deep down in the flesh without a doctor, anesthetics, surgical instrument, etc. These conveniences are not available in remote places in the East. Lacking modern sterilization methods, it is far safer to leave the thorn in his foot than it is to pull it out. He must limp about for a couple of weeks until a thick layer skin is formed over and around it, and then he may take his knife and cut it out safely. If a man does get a thorn, sometimes he will limp for an entire summer. Thorns can also get into the hands, because gloves are not worn. People complain more about thorns than any other injuries.

Paul's thorn in the flesh was the attack which was made against his apostleship. They said he had not been with Jesus, and so they tried to belittle his work. These attacks and doubts annoyed him. "...messenger of Satan" means false teachers who attack him.

When used as a figure of speech, a thorn in the flesh always refers to irritating or bothersome people. Some

wild guesses have been published about Paul's thorn: bad eyesight, a speech impediment, etc. But as this saying is used in the East, it always refers to people; and in fact, is so used in the Bible itself. For instance:

Numbers 33:55

But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them *shall be* pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell.

Joshua 23:13

Know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no more drive out *any of* these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you.

Judges 2:3

Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be *as thorns* in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you.

People are the thorns in the flesh. We must be careful not to misinterpret idioms—we must understand them properly. They are thorns; it's not a disease.

Sow in Tears; Reap in Joy

Psalms 126:5, 6

They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves *with him*.

Eastern farmers do not live on the farm but in the village. Leaving in the morning, they go and work all

day, then they bring oxen, implements, etc., home in the evening. "He that goeth forth"—he must go forth because he does not live there on the land. Many of the poor people do not own land and must rent it.

". . .and weepeth"—Why does he weep as he goes forth? The renters must pay the rent, cultivate the land, sow the seed, and harvest the crop, in order to get enough to feed their families. Many of them are deep in debt. The renters must also pay by the seed and borrow money for it. There is a very high interest charged by the money lenders. A landowner does not have to pay rent but must engage laborers. At harvest time the money lender comes to the field and takes his share first. Not much is left for the sower and his family. Some of the seed must be saved for the next planting season. The family may be starving, but the seed must be saved anyway. As he carries the seed to sow in the land, he looks at his starving family and weeps. At harvest, he comes back "rejoicing, bringing his sheaves."

Tares Among the Wheat

Matthew 13:24-30

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:

But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.

But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?

He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?

But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.

Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

Every parable Jesus used was factual in the life of the people. Jesus used the existing incidents to convey a message through it. In the East, when the farmers sow wheat or barley, if they have enemies, they hire some men to watch the field day and night. If a man wants to take vengeance on you, he will wait for you to sow seed in your field. Within three days following the sowing of the seed, the enemy will come to sow tares on an unguarded field. Tares must be sown within three days of the wheat in order to be effective. If he sows tares within three days of the planting, they will come up before the wheat and destroy the wheat; but if later than three days, it won't work. If they sow tares after three days, they will have no effect. A tare is a seed that looks like barley or wheat. It is not a weed, although it looks like one; it chokes off the roots. To avoid tares in his field, the sower will employ some men to watch his field for those three days. They set fires at different places around the land and they watch. The servants are not supposed to sleep. During the night, some of them will fall asleep. The enemy waits and watches for these men to go to sleep. Once they fall asleep, the enemy comes to sow tares, and then goes their way. This is an actual happening in the East.

We should watch and pray at all times. When we watch and pray, we are awake and have confidence in God. When at peace, aware of God, constantly watching and praying, and speaking in tongues; we do not sleep nor have tares sown. When we are sleeping spiritually,

when we are not alert; our enemy will sow tares of depression, doubts, fear, worry and anxiety in our mind. When the enemy comes and sows tares of negatives, they uproot and upset the person. As the actual tares are a foreign element with the wheat, so are the negative thoughts against the Word of God. If we watch and pray always, the enemy has no chance to plant temptation and negatives. The enemy uses our minds, the senses. He will sow negative thoughts in our minds when we remain in a state of strain, looking only to situations, and not to God. If we're wide awake, we can eliminate those fears. We can shut the door of our mind on the enemy. Constantly abide in Christ, as the branch does in the vine.¹

The Threshing Floor

Matthew 3:11, 12

I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire:

Whose fan *is* in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with un-quenchable fire.

“Floor” in this verse is the threshing floor. “Fan” also indicates that it is a threshing floor. The threshing floor is a common floor for the whole village or community, and it is usually named after an important person, just

¹ John 15:4-5—Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

like “Jacob’s well.” In 2 Samuel the threshing floor is named after Nachon.

2 Samuel 6:6

And when they came to Nachon’s threshing floor, Uzzah put forth *his hand* to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook *it*.

The threshing floor is usually on a rocky place. During the harvest, the people bring corn or barley and spread them on the rock. Next they get two or three oxen, buffaloes, calves, or donkeys, and they string them together in a line to walk on the corn, then the grain. While the animals are doing this, they will try to eat the grain. Wicked people will place a muzzle on the ox. The oxen should not be muzzled because they have a right to partake of the fruit of their labors. It is against the law to muzzle the animals. It says in the Bible:

Deuteronomy 25:4

Thou shall not muzzle the oxen when he treadeth out *the corn*.

When the threshing is finished, the oxen are driven away. After the threshing is through, the kernels have settled down under the ears of corn. The ears of corn are then removed to one side, leaving kernels which they gather together into one place on the rock. Next the chaff must be separated out. “Purging the floor” is the process of separating the chaff from the grain. It’s a very ancient process still done today. This is done with a fan. A fan is like a tray used to pick up the kernels and the chaff. As the kernels are poured slowly onto the ground, the wind will blow away the chaff. The corn is gathered into one place having been separated from the chaff. The chaff which has been separated is then burned up. This is done at night by moonlight.

Jesus Christ likewise sifts out the good grain from

the chaff and will gather good grain into the garner (barn). Jesus came with a fan in his hand so that he may blow away all the chaff from our life. God says that He will blow away the chaff and gather up His own children into His kingdom. The rest will be burned with unquenchable fire.

The threshing floor has always been a significant place in the Eastern culture.

Ruth 3:1-4

Then Naomi her mother in law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?

And now *is* not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley to night in the threshingfloor.

Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor: *but* make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking.

And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do.

Why did Ruth go to the threshing floor at night? Each village has a threshing floor, usually above the village on a rocky place. They chisel the rock and make it beautiful. It is usually about twenty feet by twenty feet, but it may be larger; the size varies depending on the size of the village. It can always be seen from the village. Since it is elevated, people throughout the community can see what is going on at the threshing floor; it is even possible to see in the evening by moonlight. Only men were supposed to work on the threshing floor, and it was bad etiquette for a woman to come on the floor at night while the men were working. It did not mean that

there was immoral intent or thought, just bad etiquette. This is the place where things are settled such as cases of redemption, marriage agreements, etc. Any negotiation is made there because it is an open public place, not a place for improper conduct because everyone can see. The owner will sleep on the threshing floor to keep an eye on the workers. This is why Ruth met Boaz at the threshing floor in the night. Ruth had married a man before, and he died. This man, Boaz, was related to him. She told Boaz he was the next kinsman. Ruth went there to get his assurance he was going to marry her.

Ruth 3:9

And he said, Who *art* thou? And she answered, I *am* Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou *art* a near kinsman.

She laid at his feet to show submission. She did exactly as Naomi had told her to do! This is a sign of complete surrender to Boaz so that she might be redeemed by him, for he was a near kinsman. When she said, spread thy skirt (mantle) upon thy handmaid, this was the assurance that he would marry her. Spreading the mantle is a sign of redemption and protection.—*See also: People—Women in the East (Ruth); Apparel—The Mantle (Assurance of Redemption and Protection).*

Animals Dedicated to the Lord

Mark 11:1-3

And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples,

And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring *him*.

And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither.

The criticism in the Western world is that Jesus was teaching his disciples bad manners and that they should have asked permission first to take the colt. In the East, everyone gives the firstborn of their animals to the temple. These animals are tied around the temple and are cared for by servants waiting to be used in the Lord's service. They belong to God. Most of the time, the temple was at the entrance to the village. If these animals go and do something bad at a shop when they are let loose, people cannot beat them because they are the Lord's. Sometimes they would lie in the streets and eat fruit in the market. Any beasts in the streets have been let loose for a walk and then they are gathered to be put under shelter. These animals are taken through the town to go grazing early in the morning; later in the evening, as the cattle and men return to the temple, they again travel through the town. So Jesus said to get a colt. The colt did not have a private owner—it belonged to the Lord. This is why Jesus needed no one's permission. God was the owner. The men who carried this out were from the Orient and understood what Jesus wanted. The disciples were not breaking any rule of etiquette.

“. . .whereon never man sat” does not mean that the colt was too rude to be sat on. No one had a right to sit on it because it belonged to God. Anyone who claimed the animals for the service of God could take them.

TREES AND PLANTS

The Mustard Seed and The Sycamine Tree

Luke 17:5, 6

And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.

And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.

The disciples ask the Lord to increase their faith; he answers with an indirect answer, the mustard seed and the sycamine tree.

Brownish black in color, the mustard seed of the East is the smallest of all seeds in the world. And it is so small that if put into an eye, it won't sting; the person would hardly be aware that the seed is there. The American and Eastern mustard seeds are different sizes. The American seed is white or yellow and much bigger. The Eastern mustard seed is about ten times smaller than the Western mustard seed. But the mustard seed of the East grows into a tree as big as a palm tree, or the size of a plum tree in America. That is why Jesus said, in Luke 13:19, "It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it." Birds can't build their nest in a Western tree, it's only a small shrub.

The "sycamine" tree is same as a sycamore tree. The

sycamine tree of the East is the wild fig tree, and it produces fruit six times a year. The cultivated figs are bigger and have more juice in them. It is under the cultivated fig trees that the women would take their children when they had to work and had no one to keep their child for them, for two reasons: first, for shade, and secondly, because they are taught if the children grow up under the fig tree, they will prosper because this tree is a symbol of prosperity. If you would say to any man, “I knew you since you were a child,” you would say, “I saw you under the fig tree.” This is the cultivated fig tree—not the wild fig tree.

The wild figs are very small and red in color. The Western sycamore is tall and bears no fruit. The sycamine tree in the East is about the size of an apple tree and once again bears fruit six times a year. They are edible, but not as juicy as cultivated figs. This tree is plentiful in Eastern countries, but the people of the East despise this fruit, and won’t eat it. Wild figs are despised because only pigs and cows eat them.—*See also: Foods—Despised Foods.*

However Zacchaeus climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Jesus when he passed that way.

Luke 19:1-6

And *Jesus* entered and passed through Jericho.

And, behold, *there was* a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.

And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.

And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.

And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make

haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.

And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.

Not much could be seen from the sycamore tree because it is no bigger than an apple tree. Why didn't Zacchaeus go upon a housetop or on top of a camel? The housetops in the East are flat and that is where people stood to watch events happening in the street. Zacchaeus could have climbed up on the rooftop or up on a camel or he could have engaged four men to hold him up in a chair. Why did he climb up in a sycamore tree of all trees? He wanted to empty his heart of all pride. He was a very rich man and a publican in the community. He wanted to go against public opinion and humble himself to make room for Christ in his life. Going by public opinion is a disease of the mind. We are too concerned about people looking at what we are doing. We keep our eyes on everybody and that is why we remain worried and fearful. Our minds should instead be on God. Jesus called out only one man—Zacchaeus. He had cast out all his pride.

When Jesus came by, he saw Zacchaeus there and called to him. He knew how greatly he had humbled himself by climbing up in that tree. Jesus once said, "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:4)." Jesus knew that here was one man who had emptied himself of all pride, and had made room for Him in his heart, because "the LORD looketh on the heart (1 Samuel 16:7)." Zacchaeus had gotten rid of all his superiority complexes and pride; he knew what people would say about him, but he did not care.

Also back in the Book of Amos, mention is made of the sycamore fruit. Amos had been preaching in Israel

and was told to go back to Judah and prophesy there. Amos answered and said:

Amos 7:14

. . . I *was* no prophet, neither *was* I a prophet's son; but I *was* an herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit:

Amos was saying that he was doing the most menial of all work. But God raised him up into a prophet! God has chosen the foolish and weak things, even a man who gathers sycamore fruit to make him somebody, to set him on the rooftops warning man to flee from the wrath to come.

Although the sycamine tree is a small tree, it has enormous, innumerable roots. They range in size from thin as a hair to thick as an arm. There are so many roots spread far and wide and deep, that it is impossible to pluck a sycamine tree with all its roots with any modern gadgets, without leaving some of the roots behind. But with faith the size of a mustard seed, it is possible to perform two miracles: first, to pluck the sycamine tree with all its roots; and second, to plunge it into the sea. One act of faith, as of a mustard seed, will perform two impossible things. This is possible for any of us, when we have the faith.

Many believers will say, "I do not have that much faith." But, a believer must never say that, otherwise, how was this believer saved? The only way to be saved is to be saved by faith. When you have enough faith to be saved, which is the first miracle, then you have faith enough to solve all of your problems also. This faith is still in you, because the Christ that you have received by faith is still in you. This is the truth that Jesus was telling the disciples, that you don't need an increase of faith, because if you have only a small faith, you can still say to the sycamine tree to be plucked up and it

will obey you. With the faith that the believer has *right now*, he can do the seemingly impossible.

So many of us talk and complain about our problems, but do we have as many problems as the sycamine tree has roots? So many of us think that our problems are too numerous for the Lord to solve. But let us look at the sycamine roots, thousands of them: some as thick as my thumb, others as thin as my hair; some are deep, very deep, but by faith you can pluck them all up. So, no matter how big a debt you have, no matter how big a cancer you have or what the doctors have told you about it; no matter how rude your children are; no matter how many enemies you have or how little money you have, you can't have as many problems as a sycamine tree has roots! If we have a little faith we can tell our problems, "Be thou plucked up in the name of Jesus Christ," and they will be plucked up and solved in His name!

The Palm and Shittim Tree

There are many different species of palms in the West that do not produce fruit. But when the Bible talks about a palm tree, it means a tree that produces fruit all year.

From the time the palm tree is planted it takes approximately three years or more to produce fruit. But, for the most part, the palm tree in the East is not planted or cultivated. Often it grows in the most hopeless places where no other tree could grow. Many times they reach extreme heights. Frequently the beams of a palm tree are used for houses. The leaves of the palm are used for writing. They are four or five feet long and two inches wide. The green leaf is soaked in water for days until they turn white. The writing on the palm leaf is impressed with the pen of iron (Job 19:24¹). After the writing has

¹ Job 19:24—That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!

been completed the leaf is placed back in water for three or more days. The writing on the palm turns green and never fades out.

The palm fruit is as big as the average human head and is different in quality at various times of the year. From January until March you can eat the fruit like you would eat a plum. From April until June it is like coconut. And the third quarter you eat it like an apple by peeling it. In the fourth quarter you can only drink the milk for the external fiber is tough and hard.

The strongest ropes in the world are the palm ropes made of the fiber of the palm. There is no stretching in a palm rope. The roots of the palm tree are frequently used for medicine. It is interesting to note also that according to Bible practices the palm tree is not owned by anybody, but belongs to everybody; anyone can eat its fruit at any time. Worms never get into the tree and the leaves are always green. The spiritual significance is manifold, but none greater than that man puts no labor in it or its fruits.

Of all the fruits on the East, the sweetest fruit of all is the fruit that grows on the shittim tree.

Isaiah 53:2

For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant,
and as a root out of dry ground.

They just shoot up and when they have grown and produced their fruit it is the sweetest of all the fruits of the East.

The Oak Tree

1 Kings 13:14

And went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak: and he said unto him, *Art* thou the man of God that camest from Judah? And he said, *I am*.

The oak tree in the Eastern countries is symbolic of God's eternal presence (Judges 6:11, 19; Joshua 24:26²). Some of the rich people are buried (1 Chronicles 10:12³) under an oak tree. If you are going to take a long journey, you begin under the oak tree. When the priests take a journey, they sleep under the oak tree, because they believe God is present under the tree. (A man of God would not go to other people's houses to eat or drink. A man of God must lead a separated life.)

The Juniper Tree

1 Kings 19:4, 5

But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.

And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise *and eat*.

In the East, anyone who sits down under a juniper tree is finished. He is all down in the dumps, very discouraged; he is despondent. He has come to the end of his rope. There is no more hope for him. He is ready to die.

² Judges 6:11a—And there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under an oak. . .

Joshua 24:26—And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that *was* by the sanctuary of the LORD.

³ 1 Chronicles 10:12—They arose, all the valiant men, and took away the body of Saul, and the bodies of his sons, and brought them to Jabesh, and buried their bones under the oak in Jabesh, and fasted seven days.

Bitter Herbs of the Margosa Tree

Exodus 12:8

And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.

There is a tree with bitter herbs called a Margosa tree. Its leaves are used for medical purposes. When a person has small pox or chickenpox, until they are healed, it is applied to the body. It can be made into a pastry. This is a big tree. From the branches they take the little twigs and press them down and make it like a brush. This is what they use to clean their teeth with in India. One in a thousand people go to the dentist if they go at all, in the East. If a person is too lazy to get these twigs, he uses charcoal and salt. They mix it together in a powder form, and they carry it wherever they go. That is the next best thing.

On Saturday all the women bathe in oil. They get another woman who is well trained in massaging and they pour oil on the head and in the ears to get all the dust and dirt out. That is why their eardrums are strong. They keep the oil all over their bodies for about two or three hours then the oil washes off very quickly. That is why they have long hair.

These bitter herbs represent the bitter times that the children of Israel had while they were under Egyptian bondage. By remembering the bad times, they will be grateful to God for their liberty.

Almug or Sandalwood Tree

1 Kings 10:11, 12

And the navy also of Hiram, that brought gold from Ophir, brought in from Ophir great plenty of almug trees, and precious stones.

And the king made of the almug trees pillars for the house of the LORD, and for the king's house, harps also and psalteries for singers: there came no such almug trees, nor were seen unto this day.

Almug tree is a sandalwood tree. It is plentiful in the East. They make pillars and perfume from sandalwood trees. It is used in the temple, not for its hardness, but for its wonderful sweet smell. Musical instruments are made from sandalwood also. There is a paste made from the sop and put on the forehead; this is a symbol of God's favor to the Oriental (native to India, Palestine, Burma, Salon, etc.). When a person is cremated in the East, they put sandalwood on the fire or burn the air to sweeten the odor. The wood is used for all these things.

The Fig Tree

Some temples in the East are built on hilltops. You may see several wild bananas planted which are "sweeter than honey"; pomegranates, figs and apples are nearby as well. Nobody has to pay to eat these fruits; they are freely available. (However, no one is to take a knife along the way.)

Mark 11:13, 14

And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not *yet*.

And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard *it*.

When Jesus came to the fig tree, he only found leaves—no figs. If the time of figs was not yet, how dare Christ look for figs? He looked for figs because there were leaves. Leaves and figs come together. You can't see

figs without leaves or leaves without figs. Once again, they come together. It was the *fig* season, but not the *fruit* season. The time of ripe figs was not as yet. But, it was fig season because there were green leaves. When Jesus saw leaves, he expected to see the green figs also. Not the ripe figs as of yet, but the green figs. Figs take time to ripen as does other fruit. These figs aren't as sweet as the ripe figs, but they are edible.

Since the tree was on the roadside, people may have eaten them up. Although there were leaves, the figs may have been eaten by those that went before him. Every person has a right to eat the fruit of these trees on the roadside. People usually leave something for the next person to eat—generally they don't eat everything. “. . .he found nothing but leaves” means Jesus found no sign of figs. If the figs had been plucked from the tree, you could have noticed where it had been plucked from. There was no such evidence that figs had ever been on the leaves in the first place. “. . .for the time of (ripe fruit) figs was not yet.” Once again, it was the fig season, that's why there were leaves, but not fruit season as of yet. This tree never had any buds on the leaves to start with.

The Green Tree

Deuteronomy 12:2

Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree:

The words “green tree” should be translated “heavenly tree”; it is not a “green tree.” This is an idiom. It should read “heavenly” instead of “green” because it is not green all year long. This distinct tree in the East is a species of the banyan tree family. It grows by the roadside,

planted, watered and grown by God. It is not a “domestic” plant. No man plants this tree; no one waters it or takes care of it. For the heavenly tree plants itself. From each branch come down several more branches and stick to the ground and they become a tree again. It is a big tree. It begins, in time, to spread out in circumference to the end of perhaps one to three miles. There is a big tree at Calcutta, India that they say is three miles wide. The leaves are wide, bushy, tender, and about four times as big as a peach leaf, but they look like a peach leaf. It has on it small figs, red in color. Birds eat them; no human eats them.

During the summer, people go and lie down under this tree. It is better than air conditioning. It gives shelter, and it calms and gives security to all who come to it. Anybody can come under it. The passers-by may live under the tree and may camp under it all night. At night time, travelers cook and sleep there. There is no thieving under such a tree either. No thieves will bother you as you sleep because you are under the shadow of the heavenly tree and under God’s protection. The Book of Psalms says:

Psalm 91:1

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

When people were upset they would go sleep under the heavenly tree to ease their minds, then they would be healed. If doctors can’t help someone regarding their sickness, they tell them to lie under the tree. All diseases of the heart or mind, if you are afflicted of them, you come under this heavenly tree.

No one dare carry a knife or hammer under this tree. No weapons are allowed to be taken under the tree. The idea is that if the tree is destroyed, God is being destroyed, and the tree symbolized God. If you destroy

the tree, God will destroy you. This isn't true of the entire fig family. If there is a plague in the country, or a drought, the people pray to God under this tree, for rain and healing to come, believing God is under the heavenly tree. That is why in the Old Testament, you find places where they committed whoredoms, because they set up their altars to worship the wrong god.

Hosea 4:13

They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and elms, because the shadow thereof *is* good: therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery.

Thy daughters have committed adultery under every green (heavenly) tree. Adultery is not physical adultery. It is not actual sexual intercourse; rather it means worshipping any god other than the true God. This is like loving someone other than their husband—adultery. They called upon gods other than the true God.

People who wish to train their minds in concentration spend time fasting under this tree. They renewed their minds under this tree better than they could any other way. There is a spiritual atmosphere there. They fast, because with an empty stomach, the mind becomes easier to renew.

Holy men spend weeks under this tree. They drink the milk from the tree by plucking the leaves. If you take about ten leaves and hold a glass under the place where you pick the leaves, you get milk. The leaves are also eaten like lettuce. Holy men go and meditate and concentrate under the tree. They believe there is something in the leaves that give you a power of concentration to keep your mind stayed on God as long as you want. (Holy men sit up to three hours a day with legs crossed for six months in order to learn to concentrate, and they

say after that period of time, there is nothing that can disturb their concentration.)

German scientists went to India and tried to transplant the tree in Germany unsuccessfully. They discovered that butter diluted with honey equaled the results of the heavenly tree. When they ate the leaves and drank the milk, the leaves tasted sweet, so they called it honey, and the milk they turned to butter.

2 Samuel 17:29a

And honey, and butter, and sheep, and cheese of kine, for David, and for the people that *were* with him, to eat: . . .

Wherever it is translated butter and honey it should be translated “heavenly milk” and “heavenly leaves.”

Luke 23:27-31

And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.

But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.

For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed *are* the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck.

Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.

For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?

When Jesus was being escorted to be crucified, the women gathered together and were weeping for him. The women were sensitive and cared. Verse 29 refers to the second coming: When Christ comes, they will say “Blessed woman who never bore a son. I have quite a few and they are not saved. They are all fear-filled.

They will run to hide.” “Pray and weep for them, not for me,” Jesus said. When they call on the mountains, they could not face the day of Jesus Christ.

Jesus likened himself to this heavenly tree. Jesus said, “I came as a heavenly tree from glory. I came to die for the sins of mankind. I came to make mankind into sons and daughters of God. I came to give them joy, peace, security, life and liberty. I came to do these things for them, to lift them up. I am the heavenly tree from glory, come under my shadow. I came to do all of this for them. What did I get? Abuse and name-calling. They spat upon me. They are crucifying me. I came to do good, not harm, just like the heavenly tree. If they do these things to the heavenly tree, these wicked things to me who came to give more than abundant life, what things shall happen in the dry?” Anything that is not of Jesus is a dry tree. Dry is the world, the devil and the flesh. All liberty, life and truth are from the Almighty. No matter where we are or go, we are still under the shadow of the Almighty. As long as we are under the shadow of the Almighty, we are not afraid of thieves, robbers, disease, or anything else. They must come under the tree to get all of the benefits.

The tree protects every person who comes under its shadow. It gives poise, peace, security, protection; it also heals insomnia and sets people free from fear. The dry tree, the world, the pomp and the glory, the flesh and the devil are dry and can’t save a soul. The heavenly tree, like Jesus Christ, came from glory to this sin-stricken world, to heal and to save all that call upon him. There is no place where we go where God is not. The fig tree is symbolic of the presence of God and a sign of prosperity.—*See also: 1 Kings 14:22,23; Psalm 55:21; Jeremiah 2:13; 3:6.*

WILDLIFE

Apes and Peacocks

1 Kings 10:22

For the king had at sea a navy of Tharshish with the navy of Hiram: once in three years came the navy of Tharshish, bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks.

The ships of Solomon went to Tharshish in South India where apes and peacocks were plenteous. Why did Solomon get the ivory, gold, silver? As decoration and wealth. Why did he get apes and peacocks? Apes were well trained to be palace guards, better than men. They were symbolic of trustworthy protection. Peacocks were symbolic of continued prosperity and fortune. They believed that when peacocks walked the palace grounds, there would never be lack in the kingdom. If a person goes to temple, the priest touches his head with peacock feathers to bless him.

Solomon followed the practice because all the other kings were doing it. It was the first step in his downfall. God had given Solomon all of the wealth that he had which was more than any other king had or ever would have. He also bestowed on Solomon abundant wisdom. He should have trusted God for continued prosperity and protection. Instead, Solomon leaned to his own wisdom and followed the worldly method of trusting in apes and peacocks. His second step down was his love for many strange women, even though God warned him against this. We, like Solomon, do not need to trust in the arm of flesh for anything. Our sufficiency is in God who

satisfies, heals and supplies every need. As we trust in God, He can open a way where there is no way. Worry is an insult to God. He never fails us; we fail Him. Men get tricked by trying to follow one another instead of God. It is not our business how God is going to make a way for us. It is our business to trust Him. Then we reap peace.

Eagles

Several verses in the Old Testament make reference to eagles, and I want to tell of their significance in Oriental thinking.

Isaiah 40:31

But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; *and* they shall walk, and not faint.

Psalms 103:5

Who satisfieth thy mouth with good *things*; *so that* thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Micah 1:16

Make thee bald, and poll thee for thy delicate children; enlarge thy baldness as the eagle; for they are gone into captivity from thee.

There are two kinds of eagles in the East: one is a "holy" eagle and the other is a "dirty" eagle. The dirty eagles are those that gather around any dead carcass; they gather to eat of it, and are the wild vultures. Jesus said in Matthew 24:28, "For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together." In this passage, Jesus referred to the dirty eagles or vultures, because where the dead body is, the vultures are there picking at it.

When a fasting Hindu breaks his fast, the first thing

he wants to look at is a holy eagle. If he sees a dirty eagle instead, he goes back and fasts again. To the Hindu, it is an evil omen to break a fast without seeing a holy eagle.

These dirty eagles are like carnal Christians; they are always looking to material things; their vision is not high enough because their faith is not high enough. They are looking for the husks that the swine did eat, having pleasure in things, instead of looking to the spirit. We who are Christians must not walk according to the flesh, but we must walk according to the spirit. There are many saved Christians who have walked according to the flesh from the time they were saved; they were saved by the spirit but they walk by the flesh. But they should be just like the holy eagles who are opposite to the dirty eagles.

The holy eagles never eat anything that is dead; they always pick up live things for food. They build their nests in the tops of coconut palms, perhaps 80 or 90 feet off the ground. They are like the church of God: the real believers who are saved by faith and walk by faith; the believers whose home is not in this world, but whose home is heavenward. We are only earthbound in body; we are seated with Him on the throne in spirit. The Bible says:

Ephesians 2:5, 6

Even when we were dead in sins, [God] hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace are ye saved;) And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus.

Many Christians do not believe these things, because they are too supernatural for them. But for the real believers, these facts are natural. We are seated in heavenly places with Christ Jesus; we were crucified with him; we were buried with him; we arose with him; and we ascended with him and are now seated with him in heav-

enly places! This is very wonderful and thrilling if you believe it.

Isaiah 40:29, 31

He giveth power to the faint; and to *them that have* no might he increaseth strength

But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; *and* they shall walk, and not faint.

The holy eagles are likened to heavenly beings; they are the “king of the birds.” Once every five, ten or fifteen years, (people differ on the time interval) the eagles build a nest high in the coconut tree, and then abandon themselves, like advanced swimmers that dive into the water. So these eagles, from the top of the high palm tree, dive down into a lake, or pond or well, or any still water; they don’t fly, but dive headfirst, with their wings folded intact on their backs. They abandon themselves and we see them dropping into the water, and when they come up they have lost every single feather. They are floating on the water, and the eagles are left stranded in the water, unable to swim or fly. Somehow, they struggle and manage to reach the shore. Then the people come and feed the eagles, because the Eastern people look upon these holy eagles as representatives of God. Nobody will hurt them because they look upon them as heavenly beings. Then in six or seven weeks’ time, their new feathers have grown out and they fly back to the treetops. Nothing can stop them now. They renew their strength!

The eagles lose their feathers first; then they wait. They lose all their old feathers of negativism and of limitations. Too many Christians say, “I can’t do it; I can’t see it.” These are negative feathers, which must be done away with when we are born again and start believing

God. The Christian must say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me!"¹ This is a positive feather. When you come to Jesus Christ you say, "I can give anything." Then you will be in the mountaintops all the time. Then everyone in your town will be saved, when they see your positive witness for Jesus Christ.

When we come to the Lord Jesus Christ, we must examine ourselves, because we must be willing to say, "Lord, break me, melt me, mold me and take away any wicked feather of unbelief in my heart, and remove any old feathers that have made me weak and brought me into limitations." A Christian has no limitations, because Christ has none. A Christian can do anything he wants to do, but generally he doesn't *want* to do anything!

A Christian loses all his feathers when he comes to Christ because, ". . . old things are passed away; behold all things are become new (2 Corinthians 5:17)." Paul says, ". . . I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Galatians 2:20)."

Is it any wonder that we are defeated Christians, when we try to live by sight and by things? We, who have been saved, are to live by faith, not by sight; by the spirit and not by the flesh. When you come to the Lord Jesus Christ, he convicts you of how many old feathers you have.

Each person knows his own hindering feathers; maybe it is anger, maybe malice, maybe selfishness, maybe criticism, or gossip or some other dirty old feather hanging onto you. We come to Him, and the Holy Spirit will put His finger on the feather, and we must be willing to throw it off. After we have thrown away all the old feathers that have been holding us from blessings, **THEN WE WAIT ON GOD!** We can't wait on God and ask for new feathers, when we still have all our old dirty ones!

¹ Philippians 4:13.

That is why the eagles have better sense than we do. The eagles don't pray, "Lord, these four feathers are getting old. I want to lose only these four feathers, Lord, because the others still look good to me. So please let me lose four old ones and you give me new ones." But that is what we Christians do, isn't it?

The eagle says, "Why don't I make a clean breast of the whole thing and become a new creation?" So you should say, "I am going to give up all my old feathers." If you lose only four feathers, you will fly a little better, but not as well as you should, because the old ones are still hanging on. That is why Christian people are gloomy and defeated. They get tired with every little step. Why don't they let new strength come to them? Because they don't want to lose those old feathers!

That is why I don't believe in old age. Our people in India live to be over 100 years old and we who are Christians are complaining and gray-headed at 45 or 50. Then when we get flat on our backs we go to bed and say, "Praise the Lord; the Lord put me here. This is my cross to bear."

What a lie that is! The Lord never gave you such a cross. Our only cross in this world, my friends, is not suffering, although a great many saints are suffering; but our cross is to BEAR WITNESS TO JESUS CHRIST: a cross of joy and peace. It is not the fault of God that we suffer, because when he was wounded, it was for all our sicknesses. All our sicknesses were laid on him; therefore don't say "It is my cross!" Don't bring in Paul's thorn in the flesh, because Paul didn't have any sickness; people just think he did.—*See also: Agriculture—Thorn in the Flesh.*

We should either quit calling ourselves Christians or else start practicing our faith, because we can't carry on as negative, defeated Christians. We bring disgrace on the church of God. Let us try to think right:

Proverbs 23:7

For as [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he: . . .

You can't change that law, so be careful what you think. You can become a new creation this minute, and get rid of those negative feathers right now. The moment that you say, "Yes, Lord, I believe," that moment the old feathers are gone, and He will give you all new ones. They are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. From that time on, you can live like a monarch, a prince, an heir and joint-heir with Christ!

I believe in healing. Every Christian ought to believe in healing. You can't believe one part of the Bible and just forget the rest of it. We have to believe all or none. We must shake off our old feathers of unbelief and LIVE. You are saved to live! The eagles don't pray. "Lord, I am poor and weak; there is no harm in having old feathers, Lord. After all, you created my feathers. They're weak, but that's my cross, Lord. Just let me suffer in it." They don't pray that way. That is the prayers of human beings. Eagles show better sense. That is why they are called heavenly eagles. They know that the only way to get rid of the old feathers is to abandon themselves. You abandon yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ and he will give you all new feathers, beloved friends.

Doves**Psalms 68:13**

Though ye have lien among the pots, *yet shall ye be as* the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.

Doves were the first tame bird, easily attainable and faithful. They send messages and they bring them back. Nobody hurts them because of their peacefulness. The

dove is a pet in the East. Some people tie up their wings with silver coins to beautify them. Yellow gold is used for decoration of feathers and flowers. It is not real gold, but inferior gold. (Ophir gold is real gold.) In this case, silver is a symbol of strength. It means, “God will bless you, lift you up.” As the doves are decorated, so will you be.

Doves are so well accepted and loved by everybody. The “dove” is a symbol of purity, gentleness, peace and sincerity. When they say, “He is like a dove,” they mean, “He is very sincere and pure in heart.” The houses and palaces of the East almost all have doves. They don’t have dogs and cats for pets, but doves and peacocks. The people play with them and sometimes send messages by them. The doves are most sacred to them because they are trustworthy.

Foxes

Nehemiah 4:1-3

But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews.

And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?

Now Tobiah the Ammonite *was* by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.

The fox is called a jackal in the East. Jackals have very thin legs and are very thin animals. A fox is very weak. Do you think a fox could break down a stone wall? No, of course not. This is a negative, threatening, desecrating statement. All of the questions asked are

negative ones. A negative person always magnifies, exaggerates the negative side. This is one of the sayings in the East to tell people that what they do won't last long. The expression is used with a fox because a fox has very thin legs like deer legs and they are light. They are very small, just a little bigger than the rabbit. All the Eastern animals are thinner except the horses, which are much bigger than the Western horses. He was just trying to frighten them in this verse. In spite of the negatives and enemies, they completed the wall.

Song of Solomon 2:15

Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines:
for our vines *have* tender grapes.

Little foxes are more dangerous than big ones which can't get in through the fence. Before the young grapes begin to develop, a hedge is built around the vineyard to keep out thieves and foxes. But the little foxes can easily climb through even small openings in the hedge. When the grapes are young and tender the little foxes go in and uproot the vine, destroying it, to get to the grapes. The worst part is the uprooting of the vine.

“Take us” should be “keep out” or “catch for us.” The little foxes represent false prophets and teachers who come in and upset the believing of the believers in the church. Also, the foxes are negative thoughts. They are treacherous and subtle. They need only a small space to enter in and they widen the gap and infiltrate. They uproot the mind and destroy it. They destroy the root, as well as, the fruit.

PRAYER AND WORSHIP

The Holy Mountain Zion

Psalm 125:1

They that trust in the LORD *shall be* as mount Zion, *which* cannot be removed, *but* abideth for ever.

Mount Zion, in the Bible, means any mountain with a temple atop it. In the East, people feel that the highest place is the best place to build a temple because it is closer to God.

The people regard these mountains as very sacred. People may be seen going up and down the mountain at any time of the day or night, to worship at the temple. Even if there are wild animals on the mountain, the people are not afraid because they believe they will not be harmed on the holy mountain.

In the summer, people voluntarily carry water up the mountain to water the trees and grass. Anyone who is hungry is free to eat of the fruit of any of the trees on this mountain, but no one may destroy or deface anything there; not even a stone is moved or touched in an area fifty feet from the base of the mountain, to the very top.

I remember once when the British wanted to build a railroad, which would destroy part of one of these holy mountains, that the people became desperate. God's holy mountain must not be touched. When the day came for the machinery to move the earth of the mountain, all the people came, even women with little babies in their arms, and children, and lay down in front of the earth-moving equipment. They would rather lay down their

lives than to see the sacred mountain defaced. These people believed that God was in the mountain. We Christians are like Mount Zion, because God lives in us by His spirit.

He will never leave us nor forsake us. He will provide our needs and sustain us, because He abides within us. And as Jesus said to the woman of Samaria:

John 4:21-24

Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.

Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth.

What a wonderful blessing this is for believers of today! Those who trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion which cannot be removed and that in this, the Holy Spirit age, we may worship Him in spirit and in truth.

In the East, many of the temples are built on top of the hills. The people look up to the hills where the temples are because they think God lives in the temples. If a person is involved in a crisis, he will look for a hill with a temple on top. He will stand near it and beat his chest, complain verbally of the crisis, "Lord what have I done to deserve this?" This is what the pagan people did, thinking their god could only be in that temple. Let us look for a moment at the first verse of Psalm 121.

Psalm 121:1

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.

I do not believe this translation is quite correct, for I am sure the Psalmist knew that God did not live in the hills, even though the pagans who lived around the Israelites often believed this way. In the next verse, we read:

Psalm 121:2

My help *cometh* from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.

Because of this, I feel that the writer of the Psalm was asking two questions in the first verse: “Shall I lift up mine eyes unto the hills? From whence should my help come?” Then in the second verse, answering this with the glad affirmation: “My help *cometh* from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.”

We do not have to look to the hills or temples; we look to the LORD. That is what David was saying in verse 2. Today, God is wherever there are believers.—*See also: People—Women in the East (The Woman at the Well)*.

Upon Their Knees

Judges 7:5-7

So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink.

And the number of them that lapped, *putting* their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water.

And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the *other* people go every man unto his place.

Those people that kneel down to drink water shows laziness. They are not quick to do the job. The people that kneel down are used to worshipping idols. Any man who worships idols has to kneel down before he receives anything. God did it to find out who was an idol worshipper and who was a God worshipper. The idol worshipper always kneels down to do anything. The Mohammadians won't have anything to do with the Indians who kneel down to worship idols. They cannot have any fellowship with them because they worship two different gods.

Idol Worship

Ezekiel 8:6-10

He said furthermore unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they do? *even* the great abominations that the house of Israel committeth here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary? but turn thee yet again, *and* thou shalt see greater abominations.

And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall.

Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door.

And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here.

So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, pourtrayed upon the wall round about.

Jerusalem's temple was filled with all kinds of idols and abominations; the people thought that God was not looking. God knew what their thoughts were and what abominations they were doing. God took Ezekiel to show him what was being done secretly. God sent Ezekiel

there to see it for himself. The idol was hidden inside the temple so the heathen thought God could not know because they had “hidden” it from God.

Ezekiel 8:11, 12

And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up.

Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth.

They worshipped the burning incense which is against God’s law. Burning incense is not God’s will. In verse 11 “the ancients of the house of Israel” means the elders of the people among them.

Ezekiel 8:13, 14

He said also unto me, Turn thee yet again, *and* thou shalt see greater abominations that they do.

Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the LORD’S house which *was* toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz.

In the East, there is a god for everything—for water, field, rain, etc., there is a deity. Tammuz is a god for the pomegranate, a religious tree, an emblem of a certain religion, offered at certain religious festivals in the East. Tammuz, the god who created the pomegranate, supposedly lied. People were told in Hindu, Jewish, and Buddhist religions not to have a prayer meeting on the anniversary death of this god of pomegranate. They were told not to mourn for this god. These Jewish women

gathered to weep for Tammuz in the temple; they thought God was not looking.

Ezekiel 8:15, 16

Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen *this*, O son of man? turn thee yet again, *and* thou shalt see greater abominations than these.

And he brought me into the inner court of the LORD'S house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, *were* about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east.

“Faces toward the East” is how they worshipped the sun. These men had stopped worshipping God and had turned to the East to worship the sun. They did any and every abomination.

Ezekiel 8:17, 18

Then he said unto me, Hast thou seen *this*, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? for they have filled the land with violence, and have returned to provoke me to anger: and, lo, they put the branch to their nose.

Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, *yet* will I not hear them.

The people thought God could not see them inside the temple, therefore, He could not blame them for it; therefore, He would not punish them for it.

“Hast thou seen *this*? . . .they put the branch to their nose.” If anyone is ill or had frequent attacks of shock, fainting, then they stick a branch to their nose. That

means they took a piece of gold or silver about the size of a nickel, they engraved the symbolic branch of a vine on it, put a hook on it, and would stick it up in their nose. Their belief was that God would see the branch and save them; God would look at the branch and honor it, and would not punish him. People put all their belief in the branch, not God. They do this to save themselves from robbers also.

Hosea 4:12, 13

My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused *them* to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God.

They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and elms, because the shadow thereof *is* good: therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery.

“Stocks” are idols made of wood. In this case “staff” means authority, power, strength. Beside the idol is a staff that is symbolic of the idol’s authority and the idol is supposed to speak through the staff. On festival days they let one of the religious people bathe and give him this staff of the idol. Then the people beat drums, sing and dance around this chosen one. As he stands there, the spirit is supposed to come upon him. He is supposed to be the idol’s servant holding the authority of the idol in his hands. The people look to this man to see what the idol is going to say in answer to their prayer. They know the idol can’t speak, but through this staff they believe he can. Suppose, for example, someone lost something; they would call upon the priest and beat the drums and get the man with the staff to say what was lost or stolen. Then when this man gets the spirit of the idol he goes and shows with the staff who stole it. Both

the man and the crowd will follow him, and this man will then go and put the staff where the stolen property is. This ritual is done to avoid thieving in the East. Nobody steals another's property because they are afraid of the staff.

“Whoredom and adultery” is spiritual, worshipping other gods. If there is a drought or plague, the people (often women) get together and set up altars under trees and on mountains to worship pagan gods. It is not a moral whoredom but spiritual. Look at the context whenever you read about adultery. When we put something material ahead of our love for Christ, it is adultery. A harlot or harlotry sometimes means the same thing—divided loyalty.

Widows and Long Prayers

Matthew 23:14

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

When a woman became a widow in the East, she became secluded and was not allowed to take part in feasting and fastings. She didn't talk to men and always wore a veil. Not permitted to go to court and talk to lawyers, she engaged a guardian or trustee by sending a note to a religious man or pastor, telling them she wanted a holy man or godly man to take care of her affairs. A godly man is looked on as a trustworthy man. The widow goes to the temple and listens to the godly men make long prayers. She picks the one who makes the longest prayer to be her guardian. If a man knows she is listening, he prays a long prayer. When she picks him she takes him home to explain the deeds and property, wherein he takes over. The most pious, the one

with the most beautiful prayer, the longest prayer, is the one selected by the widow. The man prays not for the benefit of God, but rather for the benefit of the woman to attain self-gain. He is off the Word to deceive her this way. The guardian becomes father of the children and takes control of everything. Then he begins to devour the house. From there on, he starts swindling the widow. The widow is deceived by her senses.—*See also: People—Women in the East (Woman at the Well)*.

CEREMONIES AND RITUALS

Marriage

The Arrangement

Genesis 24:1-4

And Abraham was old, *and* well stricken in age: and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things.

And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh:

And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell:

But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.

Parents always choose the bride for their son in the East. Whoever the parents choose, the son will marry. How is a girl chosen for a son? As soon as the child is born, everyone is told. His name and the date of his birth is put in the book of the family tree or registry. When the father wants a wife for his son, he looks in the book and sees who is of the same age as his son, and who would be a fit wife for the son. Then the father writes the family of the girl: the first paragraph is greetings and blessings, like Paul's letters to the church; the second paragraph is business. Next the parents go to meet each other. The parents will watch the girl checking her dignity, modesty, etc. Girls in the East wear lots

of jewels on their feet and everywhere else. She is taught how to walk so these jewels don't make any sound. Eastern women walk with shamefacedness looking at the ground. Her first examination is walking properly. Her head is pointed down to the ground with no noise. The family also looks at the forehead of the girl. She should have no wrinkles if she trusts in God. Wrinkles signify worry and indicate a lack of faith. Western marriages are often based on materialism, wherein Eastern marriages are based on spiritual.

Genesis 24:63-65

And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels *were* coming.

And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel.

For she *had* said unto the servant, What man *is* this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant *had* said, It *is* my master: therefore she took a vail, and covered herself.

Women wear a veil, and the son to be married never sees her until after she becomes his wife. In the East, it is immoral for a couple to be together before marriage. Rebecca came to be married to Isaac. She put her veil on when she got off the camel before Isaac saw her.

Ten Pieces of Silver

Marriages in the Eastern countries are still often arranged by parents as they were thousands of years ago. The Scriptures testify to the fact that Jesus also knew the marriage customs and used them to teach God's will to the people.

Luke 15:8-10

Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if

she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find *it*?

And when she hath found *it*, she calleth *her* friends and *her* neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.

Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

After the bride and groom are brought to meet each other seated face to face, before the gathering of family and friends, the bride holds forth her cupped hands into which the bridegroom drops ten pieces of silver. These coins have been handed down from generation to generation in the young man's family. The Oriental girls are taught, "He who places the ten pieces of silver in your hand is he who will love you." By receiving the ten pieces of silver, the bride is considered to have been purchased, just as Christ died for us on the tree and purchased us. "Ye were bought for a price."¹ Christ paid the price for us.

The bride also receives gifts of other jewels at the betrothal ceremony, but none of the others will have the significance which the ten pieces of silver have for the bride. Although they would have a value of only about fourteen cents each, if they were melted and sold for the metal, there is a unique symbolical importance to them. She will wear them hooked with little hooks into her hair at the wedding ceremony, and she must guard them with her life thereafter.

This parable has been widely misunderstood by the Western world who does not appreciate the importance of this Oriental belief. Scholars have tried to say that this woman was poor and needed the money so she

¹ 1 Corinthians 6:20—For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

swept the house, and upon finding the coin, called in the neighbors to rejoice, and so forth, because she needed the money. The Eastern people think God withdraws favor from the household if the woman loses even one of her ten pieces of silver, and the blessings which they (the husband and wife) formerly had is lost. If she cannot find the coin, she will have to be put out in the street as an outcast. No wonder the poor woman desperately swept the house until the coin was found, and called in the neighbors to rejoice with her, for she had been saved from being an outcast. Jesus said, "Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." There was so much significance placed on the ten pieces of silver which Jesus knew about, that he could teach this spiritual application concerning them.

Jesus said, "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God." Joy is an inner satisfaction, which is much deeper than the happiness that we experience from time to time. Joy is lasting. Imagine how great the joy in heaven over one sinner who chooses to receive what has been purchased by the blood of Jesus.

If we can have such happiness and such a feeling of satisfaction about earthly things, which are only temporal, how much more joy, love and satisfaction from the things of God, which are eternal.—*See also: Apparel—Jewelry (Ten Pieces of Silver).*

The Wedding Ceremony

In New Testament Bible times a wedding ceremony lasted ten days. On the tenth day the bride and groom are declared husband and wife. In the East, all people join a marriage ceremony in the community.

Matthew 9:14, 15

Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why

do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?

And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.

“. . .children of the bride chamber” means the guests invited to the marriage. Whether invited or not, everyone in the village joins the ten day marriage celebration. All those who join the marriage feast will give up their fasting and family rituals in order to take part in the ten days. When the bride and bridegroom leave for their honeymoon, the guests will return to their homes and continue with their fasting and family rituals (such as birthdays, anniversaries).

“. . .the days will come” are the days after the marriage. While the bridegroom is with them, they don’t do any fasting; when he is taken away, they begin fasting. Jesus is simply saying, “I am the bridegroom, these are my guests. They should not fast as long as I am with them. I will be taken away, and then shall they fast.” While the Lord’s present, they shouldn’t fast; when he is gone, they fast in order to pray and concentrate better.

Matthew 22:1-14

And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said,

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son,

And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.

Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and *my* fatlings *are* killed, and all things *are* ready: come unto the marriage.

But they made light of *it*, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise:

And the remnant took his servants, and entreated *them* spitefully, and slew *them*.

But when the king heard *thereof*, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.

Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.

So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.

And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment:

And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.

Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast *him* into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

For many are called, but few *are* chosen.

Wedding garments are handed down through the families. The family can be identified by the kind of robe worn. The wedding of verse 1 was for a king's son. When attending the wedding of nobility, one cannot wear his own wedding robe. Rather, the king sends a wedding robe to each person invited. You must wear the robe the king sent you to the wedding ceremony. The king will only receive you when you are wearing this robe. He

sends out wedding robes to the guests an hour or a day ahead, and each robe has the king's seal on it.

In verse 11, this man deliberately came without the robe which had been sent to him. He was speechless because he knew what was coming. Fear made him speechless. The man here knows the consequences of not wearing the robe. This was insulting to the king. He had to pay for the insult. It was not the king's fault that the man did not have his robe on. God has given us a robe of righteousness. This man was also given a robe, but he would not put it on. He'll be tied hand and feet and thrown out for insulting the monarch by not putting on the robe after receiving it. The king gave the man only one chance as it was the culture.

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son to us. As many as received him, they have put on the robe of righteousness and have become the sons and daughters of God; having known that Christ came from the royal wardrobe, bringing the robe of righteousness to every man that would accept him. We are acceptable before God because He clothed us with a robe of righteousness in Jesus Christ. It came as a free gift. The world was offered the gift, and they have refused it. What will happen to them? When they appear before God at the end of the world, they will be dumbfounded, speechless, helpless, and hopeless. Why? Because they know they won't have a second chance. Having heard the gospel and rejecting it time after time, they shall appear before God without excuse and naked—not clothed in the robe of righteousness. They have only their own filthy rags, which are not acceptable before God. God made provision for us through His son. Only when we wear the robe of salvation He sends us are we acceptable.

We have rejected the robe, rejected the light, limited God, and made it a religion. Religion is man's idea. God's

desire for us is eternal life. We must demonstrate that we have life, not religion. There is no life in religion. The standard of living has become the chief idol to the American.

The marriage takes place in the bride's home most of the time. Wherever he may be from, the bridegroom comes to the marriage, and the marriage begins at midnight.

Matthew 25:1-13

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

And five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish.

They that *were* foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.

Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.

But the wise answered, saying, *Not so*; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

The villages in the East are walled around. The gates are open at certain times and shut at certain times. On the wall at the gate of the city, a house called "an inn" is built. In this house are two divisions. The first division is for travelers who have no relatives to stay with. They can stay overnight, eat, and then go their way the next day. This is a public hospitality. There is nothing to pay by the people who stay there. It is taken care of by the townspeople who collect money to pay for this courtesy. The second purpose of the inn is for the bride's virgins. Any bride's ten virgins will stay in this inn. Before midnight they wait for the bridegroom to come. The marriage ceremony lasts ten days, and each day there is a duty for each of the ten virgins to do. The bridegroom must come through that gate with his party just before midnight. These virgins are sitting there with their lamps, torches or pots of oil, awaiting the arrival of the groom. When he comes in, his best man blows a trumpet saying, "Behold the bridegroom cometh." So, all the virgins trim their lamps, light them, and stand in a line to meet the bridegroom and escort him and his party to the bride. They escort him home to the bride's home. The bride's father and mother stand outside.

A week before the marriage takes place, the bride's home is decorated inside and out with coconut leaves and bananas. Everyone can see by the decorations that there is to be a marriage there. The bridegroom and his party will come and stand under this decorated place at the front of the bride's home. The bride's father brings a basin full of water and washes the feet of the bridegroom, and then the bridegroom and his people are received inside. At this point everyone is waiting with their wedding robes on, and all the virgins are keeping their lamps trimmed and making sure they are burning.

If the lamp goes out for lack of oil, she will not be admitted; she will be thrown out. By the time everyone has been received in, it's midnight. The front door has been shut. In the Word, it says, ". . .the door was shut." The groom has an apartment in the bride's home. These are actual statements and facts in the Bible with cultural evidence that the people understood. Their religion and culture were one and the same.

During each of the ten days, the wedding ceremony lasts approximately one half hour, sometime between 10:00 and 12:00. The priest will come to the bride's home; the bride and groom will sit down on a throne of flowers. The priest will tell them how they are to treat each other, and so on. This continues for ten days, yet the bride and groom still don't see each other. He tells them how they are to give their offering to the Lord, how to take strangers into their house. The priest is only reminding his people of these things; they are taught them in their religion. He tells the groom not to make her cry. If she cries, God's tears fall in heaven.

After the service, the bride goes with her attendant for that day and the groom goes to his apartment with his best man. They don't see each other because the girl wears a veil on her face. The veil symbolizes protection, security. The woman with a veil won't be attacked in the East. They respect the veil as God-given protection. Only the husband can unveil a woman when she is married.

Beginning Married Life

Did you know that the words in John 14:1-4 as used by Jesus are taken directly out of the Oriental marriage ceremony?

John 14:1-4

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not *so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also.

And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

Many preachers and teachers use these words in a funeral service. They are wonderful words, Jesus used them, and they are still being used today in India. But let me give you the background.

In the East, the "honeymoon" lasts for twelve months. For the first twelve months of a man and woman's wedded life the two young people just learn to understand and live with each other. They live one to two months with the groom's parents, then one to two months with the bride's parents. They commute back and forth between the in-laws every one to two months, concluding their first year of married life in the home of the bride's parents. They are taken care of by the parents.

At the conclusion of this first year of marriage, there is a unique religious service with all the people of the town present. Hundreds of friends and relatives gather together in an open space. Appearing before all the village people, the husband brings forth his wife. He stands her in front of himself with the best man on his right side and the virgins that attended the wedding on his left hand. With loving authority the husband says to his wife before them all, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: If it were not so, I would have told you, I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may

be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.” This is his “goodbye.”

Every son in the New Testament times had to live in his father’s house until his father’s death. So the son after his first year of marriage leaves to prepare a “mansions,” a new apartment, in his father’s house. After it is completed he returns for his bride and wife. “. . . the way we know” means the bride knows the way because she has been going there during the honeymoon. The couple will live together in the home of the groom’s father. The bride’s reply is “All that thou sayest, I will do.”

Jesus by using the very words of a bridegroom to his bride teaches a lesson of great spiritual power. The bride trusts the groom while he is away preparing their “mansions” in his father’s house. She does not worry although she fails to receive a letter, or a bouquet of roses, or sweet smelling perfume day after day. She believes her husband’s words, “Let not your heart be troubled: . . .”

Jesus Christ is coming back again for his own. He has declared it publicly before his people, therefore, let not your heart be troubled in any way for Jesus Christ’s return is more certain than the return of a man for his wife.

There are a great many references in the Bible to weddings and the customs, which surround them in the traditions of the Eastern peoples. Western people do not always understand the full significance of these Scriptures because they are not familiar with the details of these Oriental customs. In Jeremiah, we find this prediction for the people of Israel.

Jeremiah 25:10

Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the candle.

God was telling the people what would happen to them if they forsook Him. Westerners do not understand what kind of punishment it was for the Jews to have the voice of the bridegroom taken from them.

Child Birth

Genesis 35:16, 17

And they journeyed from Bethel; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour.

And it came to pass, when she was in hard labour, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; thou shalt have this son also.

Jacob's wife, Rachel, had a second child born after Joseph, which was Benjamin. In the East, women worry during childbirth. First of all, they worry and wonder if the baby will be male or female. If a woman does not produce sons, she may get divorced because she has not been blessed to bear sons. If she does have a son, then the whole village comes and blesses her, "Blessed be thy womb which has produced a son." All of the women bless her because she brought forth a son. A son is God's blessing to the Eastern people. The midwife will cheer her up by saying that she is going to have a son. The midwife, therefore, is trained to constantly encourage the mother by saying, "Don't worry, don't worry, you will have a son. . . ." If the woman is sick when the child is born, they say, "Do you know you have a beautiful son born?" This helps the mother forget all about her sickness and makes her happy. If it is a boy, everyone will praise her, great gifts will be given, people will gather to bless her. When a son is born, a banquet is made. Nothing happens when a daughter is born. The woman is favored by her husband and family because

they believe God has blessed her to have a son. It is a great joy to have a son.

In the East, a son is more precious than a daughter for three reasons. First, The son will become head of the family. Secondly, the son is looked upon as a lamp from God. And thirdly with significance to culture, the son attends to the funeral of the parents. When the father and mother are dead, the son will carry the golden bowl (Ecclesiastes 12:6²) at the funeral. Without the son carrying the golden bowl, the funeral is a great disgrace. When people have no sons they will adopt one for that purpose.—*See also: People—Children and Child Bearing (A Man is Born)*.

The Birth of Christ

Matthew 1:18-20

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.

But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

Man had nothing to do with the birth of Jesus Christ. Mary and Joseph were espoused even before they came

² Ecclesiastes 12:6—Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.

together. Espoused means married. Mary and Joseph were married, although Westerners say, “they were engaged,” only because they misunderstand the custom and culture. Eastern elders fix a date according to the stars for the newlyweds to consummate the marriage. When the husband and wife come together after about ten days of marriage, it takes place in the bride’s parents’ home. Mary and Joseph would have been accompanied by friends and relatives during this time. When the time set for coming together arrives, relatives go back home and leave the couple alone together.

On the morning after, if the man finds that the woman is not a virgin, he can divorce her and sue the parents. The parents are liable. The parents do their utmost to prove their daughter’s virginity, otherwise the girl will never marry. Joseph and Mary were married before she conceived by the Holy Spirit.

Gifts

Matthew 2:1, 2, 11

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

The Bible does not say how many wise men came. If a son is born to a king in the East, then the subjects will bring gold to the king and then kneel down and pay hom-

age (the wise men worshiped instead of just paying homage). There is a desire to have a son because this means a blessing to the family. The son is a gift from God; “a lamp from God” as David said (1 Kings 15:4³). Thou hast given thy son a lamp where Solomon was born.

Rajahs, princes of high caste rulers and chieftains, do something rare when a child is to be born to them. They build a grand celebration party. If the baby is a son, the midwife hits the ceiling three times with a stick and begins singing: “For unto the chief a child is born, unto the chief a son is given, wonderful counselor, etc.” This is what Isaiah wrote concerning the birth of Christ.

Isaiah 9:6

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given:
and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and
his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The
mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of
Peace.

Eastern monarchs are richer than Western monarchs. All of the people in the family take incense, frankincense, myrrh, gold, coconut, fruits, etc., and come to the palace. As all are gathered there to see the newborn king, the priest comes and leads them. They will bring coconuts, myrrh, incense, and gold to pay homage to the newborn child. Each person who comes will bring a little gold.

Gifts usually offered to a king are gold, frankincense, and myrrh. In the East, no one goes to any of the following without a gift: to a king, to a prophet, to a pregnant woman and to someone who is sick.

³ 1 Kings 15:4—Nevertheless for David’s sake did the LORD his God give him a lamp in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him, and to establish Jerusalem:

Swaddling Clothes

Luke 2:1-7

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.

(*And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.*)

And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)

To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

The baby is washed in water with a pinch of salt in it. Then the baby is bandaged with linen cloth, two inches wide, starting at the forehead and on down to the feet, all over the body. They are on the child for five to ten minutes. This is the “swaddling clothes” our Lord Jesus Christ wore. Swaddling clothes are beautiful silk or linen cloth. His family was not poor. After a while they take off the cloth and clothe the baby with beautiful clothes.

The significance of swaddling clothes is that they are symbolic of uprightness with man and God. Why start at the forehead in the swaddling? Because when a man is upright, he should have no wrinkles in the forehead, no fear, no worry and no wrinkles. The swaddling says that the baby is so righteous, free from worry and wrin-

kles. Job said wrinkles were a witness against him (Job 16:8⁴). Paul said, Jesus Christ shall present us before God without spot or wrinkle (Ephesians 5:27⁵). Salted and swaddled signified someone unbreakable; salted to lead a life in alignment and harmony.

In the Orient, children are taught throughout their childhood to pray five or more times daily, give a tithe, never go to work without praying, and always keep God in their head, mind, heart, and in everything they do. If the child complains, the mother says, “Look, you’ve been salted to do this. We as parents are responsible for you and you are responsible for yourself. Remember you are bound with God by this covenant of salt. If you want troubles, insult God and break the covenant. If you want to live joyously, properly, then you fulfill the covenant which we made for you.” People are caring for God first rather than anything else (Colossians 4:6⁶). We who are not salted do not always mean what we say.

Shepherds and Manger

Luke 2:8

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

The sheep flocks are used for fertilizing the land after the harvest. The sheep are put on the land at night for two or three nights. They put a small hedge around the

⁴ Job 16:8—And thou hast filled me with wrinkles, *which* is a witness *against me*: and my leanness rising up in me beareth witness to my face.

⁵ Ephesians 5:27—That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

⁶ Colossians 4:6—Let your speech *be* always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

sheep and dogs also. Then the shepherds will stay up all night singing. This is done only in summer. They would freeze if they did this in the winter. They only have to watch at night for fear of the jackals and tigers.

Luke 2:9-14

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

And this *shall be* a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,
Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace,
good will toward men.

Why did the angels come to the shepherds rather than go into town and wake up the people? The shepherds go on little sleep and would stay up all night. The Eastern shepherds have always been considered very diligent, alert and trustworthy. The angel appeared to them because they were trustworthy and would go publish the good news in the street. They listen very well and because of these things, the angels came to them. The birth of a monarch's son is good news only to those people ruled by the monarch. The birth of Jesus Christ is good news to the whole world.

Luke 2:15, 16

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to

another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

The cowshed is not where the cows are kept. The manger is where the food is kept for the cows. It is a stone building. A manger is the place where cows are kept. People when traveling will often ask to stay in the straw in the manger and sleep next to one another to keep warm. Mary, Joseph and babe were lying in a manger. Eastern children sleep with the mother until they are five or six years old.

Sacrifice and Purification

Luke 2:21-24

And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present *him* to the Lord;

(As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;)

And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.

Every male child when he is eight days old is taken to the temple and an offering is made. A lamb must be given for every boy as a sacrifice. If you can't afford a lamb, then two turtledoves are given instead.

The days of purification lasts forty days. During this

time the women don't walk and can only do a bit of work. They aren't allowed to touch anyone or touch any vessels of the Lord. They cannot enter their kitchen or bake any bread. They have a separate room for themselves and the child, and have servants looking out for them. After the forty days the mother and child are taken to the temple and the child is dedicated to the Lord. They then return home and the mother is again allowed to work and resume regular activities as usual.

Blessing and Widows

Luke 2:25, 26

And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name *was* Simeon; and the same man *was* just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost *was* upon him.

And it *was* revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

Luke 2:36-38

And there *was* one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she *was* of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;

And she *was* a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served *God* with fastings and prayers night and day.

And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

When Jesus Christ was born, there were two people who blessed the child. These were Simeon, who was not to die before seeing the child, and Anna. There is

very little background on Simeon, yet a great deal of background for Anna. Why are all these credentials listed for Anna and not Simeon? Eastern people do not accept the testimony of a woman, especially a widow, unless she is fully qualified. She must have lived with her husband at least seven years from her virginity and be at least 60 years old. Otherwise, her testimony would not be accepted as real. Widows in the East can be admitted for service in the temple if she is unmarried, who will promise never to marry. However, if a woman at 26 years old was married for one year and her husband dies; she becomes a widow but cannot be accepted for service in the temple. She must wait until she is 60 years before being eligible. If she were 33 years old when her husband dies, then she would be qualified, having been with her husband at least seven years. Then she could serve in the temple. All of the information is given on Anna, because it identifies her and is necessary. In the East, if this information was not given, then no one would pay attention to her (they accept no one who is not qualified). Anna is very acceptable. Anna was 84, had been married seven years, and she did not just walk into the temple. She had been there night and day.

Death and Burial

Burial in the East is not nearly the expensive affair that it is in the West. The Easterners believe that since the soul has departed, the body that remains knows nothing anyway, so it is not thought necessary to spend money on it.

A typical Eastern burial is described in the twelfth chapter of Ecclesiastes. This is the chapter that begins:

Ecclesiastes 12:1

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth,

while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;

Most of the rest of the chapter is a continuation of this thought, describing old age and death:

Ecclesiastes 12:2-5

While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain:

In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble [a figure of speech meaning one's feet], and the strong men shall bow themselves [knees], and the grinders cease because they are few [teeth], and those that look out of the windows be darkened [eyes],

And the doors shall be shut in the streets [ears], when the sound of the grinding is low [not much grain to grind for meal] and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird [even a bird call frightens him], and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low [his voice is no longer strong];

Also *when* they shall be afraid of *that which is* high [afraid of falling from high places], and fears *shall be* in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish [the almond tree in bloom looks like a white-headed old person], and the grasshopper shall be a burden [showing weakness], and desire shall fail [no appetite]: because man goeth to his long home [grave], and the mourners go about the streets:

The “mourners going about the streets” is indeed an apt description, since the whole town turns out whenever a funeral is being held. Easterners think they do a service to God in participating; even a prince will attend the funeral of a beggar of his town for this reason. Jesus

said, "Follow me," and the young man replied, "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father." (This is an old saying which means, my father is old and I do not know when he will die; let me see him buried before I come.)

Luke 9:59, 60

And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.

Jesus replied, "Let the dead bury the dead." This is a mistranslation and should read, "Let the town bury the dead," a very understandable saying when one realizes that the whole town does take part in funerals.

The body is dressed in the best clothes the person owned: if a woman, she wears her wedding clothes; if a bishop, he is buried in his robes, and so forth. They have no caskets; the body is taken on a bier to the cemetery. The bier is like a stretcher and stands with four wheels. There are several main pall-bearers but the other men make it a point to assist sometime during the trip to the graveyard. This is the origin of the saying, "Put your shoulder to the wheel."

The eldest son is of great importance in the burial. If a man does not have a son, he adopts one for this purpose. This son carries a clay bowl gilded with gold on the outside and filled with burning coals. This bowl is broken by the son at the head of the grave to symbolize the soul departing the body.

The only woman who may accompany the body is the wife, if there is one, for she goes to the grave to loosen the silver cord she received as a bride and put it in the grave with the body. By giving back the silver cord a

woman can be loosed from her husband in order to marry again (1 Corinthians 7:27⁷). She must then immediately leave, because the men who have been bearing the bier must go to the fountain of the cemetery and wash themselves. The pitchers which are used are then broken. The women wash at home, and wash the whole house, collecting the clothes of the deceased and burn them.

With these few words of explanation, you can now read the next verse with understanding:

Ecclesiastes 12:6

Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.

And the closing phrase to the thought:

Ecclesiastes 12:7

Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return to God who gave it.

It seems to me that Hindus know how to die more gracefully than some Christians. A Hindu believes that dying is just like changing a suit of clothes, and that when he dies, he will immediately be given another body. A Hindu seems to have a premonition as to when he is going to die, so he puts on his good clothes, lies down on the bed and calls the family to the bedside to give them a final blessing. The Holy Book is brought and a suitable passage is read. Then he raises his hand in blessing, and expires. It is the honor and duty of the eldest son to close the eyes. In Genesis 46:4 we find God promising Jacob: "I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up *again*: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes." The son who closes

⁷ 1 Corinthians 7:27—Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.

his father's eyes in death is the son which inherits the father's place in the family. Sometimes the father designates his heir before the hour of his death. This is done by putting a white robe on the son and laying the keys of the household upon his shoulder. Doubtless this was the significance of the robe which Joseph wore, and which infuriated the older brothers so much. A further reference to the keys on the shoulder may be found in Isaiah 22:22: "And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder;. . ." speaking, of course, of Christ who received the key from his Father in heaven.—*See also: Apparel—Coat of Many Colors.*

Covenant of Salt

An important thread in the fabric of life in the East is the covenant of salt. We find this covenant mentioned in the Old Testament:

Numbers 18:19

All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer unto the LORD, have I given thee, and thy sons and thy daughters with thee, by a statute for ever: it is a covenant of salt for ever before the LORD unto thee and to thy seed with thee.

And again:

2 Chronicles 13:5

Ought ye not to know that the LORD God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David for ever, *even* to him and to his sons by a covenant of salt?

There are three covenants in the Bible: covenant of salt, covenant of bread, and covenant of blood. What is this covenant of salt? In the East, the taking of salt is a pledge, a promise of fidelity. If I come to your house and eat food with you which has been seasoned with

salt, I can never betray you or do you harm. Even if you commit a crime and I am asked to testify, I cannot do it because I have eaten salt with you. Perhaps I may come to you and try to persuade you to do the right thing, but I would die before I would break the covenant of salt. In fact, the penalty for so doing, is death. Anything said while eating with salt must never be broken.

A servant and master exchange the salt covenant to show that the servant will be trustworthy. So the men eat salted food such as an olive or something and say, "in the name of the salt on the food, I am eating, I will never betray you. I will never rob you. I will never cause damage to your property as long as I am in charge, so help me God." The master says, "I will never treat you as a servant, I will treat you as my equal, my brother. I will trust you." This is how the steward in the East has full control of the family.

God gave the kingdom of Israel to David and his sons forever by a covenant of salt. Everything done in the East is related to the religion, which is the culture, the way of life. The covenant of salt is unbreakable forever and ever. This is a sign to the people that he will do what he said. Of the three covenants: covenant of salt, bread, or blood, this salt covenant is most frequently used.

Of course, this is what a bride and groom do at the conclusion of their ten day wedding ceremony. "What I have said and promised you here during the ceremony, I will never break it, so help me God." Both bride and groom make this covenant. This is one reason for the few divorces in the East. They would never break this covenant even to the place where they would die before breaking it.

There is a caste of thieves in the hills and plains of India who live by stealing. The salt covenant is so respected that if a traveler happens upon a thief camp and

wants to stay the night for protection, he will offer to make a salt covenant. He usually will say, "Oh, come in, blessed of the Lord." As the traveler, you give your money to the thief for safekeeping. It is counted at that time by both and then again when the thief returns it. The covenant is taken and the thief will protect the stranger with his life. He will eat salted food with you and say, "I will never betray you, rob you or let anybody rob you, in the name of the salt. I will never see any damage to you or your life, so help me God." He puts you to bed, guards your money and life. If someone comes to rob you, he will say, "This man is under the covenant of salt." The robber will say, "Bless the Lord, I cannot touch you." In the morning, he will feed you and take you to where you want to go and he will not accept a gift. He will say, "I have rendered a service to an angel of God; in the name of God by the covenant of salt. I dare not charge anything for it. I cannot take anything for it, although I need it. Go in peace."

We find New Testament references to the covenant also. We find Jesus saying:

Matthew 5:13

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and be trodden under the foot of men.

In the East we do not only have salt in the form that you have it in America, but our salt also comes in large stone jars, twenty or thirty pounds in one jar. This jar stands on the floor in the kitchen, and is like brown rock salt. The top of the jar is covered with a stone slab. Every morning the kitchen floor is washed with water, and in the course of time, the bottom of the stone jar becomes soaked with water. Many times the salt in the bottom of the jar actually loses its saltiness. By the time the salt is

used down to the part that the saltiness has been leached away, the remainder is simply thrown out into the street and it is trodden under foot.

In Ezekiel we find another reference to the covenant of salt concerning a childbirth custom.

Ezekiel 16:4

And *as for* thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple *thee*; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all.

After reading about the covenant of salt and its meaning, you can doubtless surmise that these phrases indicate that the person to whom they are directed is not reliable or truthful. The sons of kings and princes in the East today are still “salted and swaddled.” A tiny bit of salt is rubbed on the baby to indicate that the parents intend to teach the child to be truthful. The baby is then wrapped in swaddling clothes. These are fine linen or silk strips two or two and one half inches wide, which are wrapped around the baby’s body to straighten him out. This is a sign to God that the parents will rear the child to be straightforward before the Lord, and free from crookedness.

The child is left in this position from fifteen minutes to two hours, while the parents meditate and make their vows to God concerning their sacred trust which was given them when they received the child.

We know that that Mary was told by the angel that her son would be called the Son of God; therefore she rightly treated him as royalty and used swaddling clothes.

Luke 2:7

And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger. . .

I have been amused at hearing Western commentators say that these swaddling clothes must have been rags, since Mary and Joseph were poor and could not afford proper baby clothes. Some of the wealthiest people in India who send to Paris for fabulous layettes for their babies, still use swaddling clothes in order to carry out this ancient tradition.

As soon as a child is old enough to understand, he is told about having been salted and swaddled as a baby. A Hindu mother often says, “You were salted to pray seven times a day; you were swaddled not to be crooked.” These mothers truly believe the saying, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it (Proverbs 22:6).”

Ceremonial Washing

Purification

1 Samuel 20:25, 26

And the king sat upon his seat, as at other times, *even* upon a seat by the wall: and Jonathan arose, and Abner sat by Saul’s side, and David’s place was empty.

Nevertheless Saul spake not any thing that day: for he thought, Something hath befallen him, he *is* not clean; surely he *is* not clean.

Saul did not ask about David’s empty seat because he assumed that David was not clean. “Not clean” does not mean physically dirty from not having washed. The word should be “defiled” rather than “not clean.” There are many defilements in the Eastern culture. A person becomes defiled by going to a funeral, by having the shadow of an untouchable fall across him, etc. In reference again to funerals, if a person is even close enough

to look upon the dead body, that person is defiled and must bathe. Bathing accommodations are provided at the funeral. The dead person's house must be thoroughly scrubbed clean and all of his personal articles disposed of. Food cannot be prepared in that home for twenty-one days.

If the shadow of any untouchable falls on a man, he must first bathe and not eat until evening. This is what Saul thought might have happened to David. He thought David might be defiled and if so, he would not be able to eat at the table with Saul.

Another defilement is a woman's menstrual period. She cannot eat with others during her menstruation. She eats alone in a room prepared for her. No children are allowed to touch her. One servant is assigned to care for her. If a man goes near her, he is defiled. She can touch no holy vessels. Many men are trained to cook food and help their women during this time. Even the clothes that a menstruating woman wears or sleeps on must be sterilized. At the end of this time, she bathes and offers her peace offering before the Lord.

Isaiah 30:22

Ye shall defile also the covering of thy graven images of silver, and the ornament of thy molten images of gold: thou shalt cast them away as a menstruous cloth; thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence.

The idiom means that Jerusalem was cast out spiritually from God, secluded from the people just like a menstruating woman (Lamentations 1:17⁸). In Christ we are always cleansed before God.

⁸ Lamentations 1:17—Zion spreadeth forth her hands, *and there is none to comfort her: the LORD hath commanded concerning Jacob, that his adversaries should be round about him: Jerusalem is as a menstruous woman among them.*

Mark 7:1-5

Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem.

And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault.

For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash *their* hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders.

And *when they come* from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, *as* the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables.

Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?

Hindus, Jews and all other Orientals wash their hands every time they have a meal. They also wash themselves if they go to market. They not only wash their hands, but they also wash their feet every time they come in the house. If they go to the market and bring back something, they wash that, too. If they buy clothes, or bananas, they wash them before bringing them into the house. They won't bring anything into the house unless it is washed. Everything they get, they wash. They eat with their hands. That is why they always wash their hands and also cut their nails so short, so there won't be any dirt. Every time you pray, you must wash both your hands and feet before you pray.

John 13:10

Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash *his* feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.

This teaching of the Master is far more than that which meets the eye of the casual reader. Since the Bible is an

Eastern book, written by Eastern men of God, perhaps we from the East find it somewhat easier to apprehend in certain places. To us the teaching here is very clear. So much error in biblical interpretation comes from taking literal what is figurative or vice versa. Figures of speech in the Word are used for *emphasis*.

The word “washed” in the verse should be translated “bathed”—“He that is bathed needeth but to wash his feet.” The Orientals bathe first thing in the morning. We do not sit in a tub with the dirt from our bodies, taking a bath, but we stand and pour clean water over our heads and shoulders allowing it to run down our bodies and thus wash away the dirt.

Immediately after our morning bath we have our prayers and then our breakfast. Only after this do we go out about our daily tasks. Naturally as we walk in the streets our feet get dusty for we wear sandals, so when we return home we take off our sandals and wash our feet before entering the house. We don’t bathe all over again, we simply wash our feet. If we go out ten times and come in ten times, all ten times we wash our feet, but we bathe only once and that is in the morning.

In this verse Jesus Christ is setting forth the great truth of remission of sins and forgiveness of sins. “He that is bathed”—the one who is saved has received remission of sins. His sins have been washed away. He that is saved does not need to be saved all over again, but he simply needs his sins forgiven.

One day’s activity is typical of one lifetime. As we bathe just once a day so in one lifetime we are saved and receive remission of sins, just once when we repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. But as often as we go out, break fellowship with our Father, we need forgiveness of sins. “He that is bathed needed but to wash his feet.” He has walked in sin and gotten dirty, therefore, he needs to “wash” (forgiveness of sins) his feet.

When he who has walked in sin confesses his sin, Jesus Christ is faithful and just to forgive him of all sin and cleanse him of all unrighteousness, thus the sinner “is clean every whit.”

The Alabaster Box and Ointment

Luke 7:36-38

And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee’s house, and sat down to meat.

And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that *Jesus* sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box of ointment,

And stood at his feet behind *him* weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe *them* with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed *them* with the ointment.

This woman knew that she was a sinner, and she knew that Jesus was eating at Simon’s house; so she went to see him and obtain forgiveness. This woman invited herself. Women do not usually go into where men are if they are uninvited; this woman went anyway to meet Jesus.

Why did she bring a gift of an alabaster box of ointment? Custom says when you meet a holy man you must carry something in your hand: flowers, fruit, money, anything. You cannot meet them with an empty hand. In the Old Testament, God says to take a pot of honey when visiting the prophet.⁹ In the East, a person would

⁹ 1 Kings 14:2, 3—And Jeroboam said to his wife, Arise, I pray thee, and disguise thyself, that thou be not known to be the wife of Jeroboam; and get thee to Shiloh: behold, there *is* Ahijah the prophet, which told me that *I should be* king over this people. And take with thee ten loaves, and cracknels, and a cruse of honey, and go to him: he shall tell thee what shall become of the child.

never go empty handed to visit a doctor, priest, sick person or pregnant woman. In this case, the woman was visiting her lord. When a man of God visits the home, he is offered a silver tray of flowers, fruit and nuts as he leaves. He chooses a few things from it. If money is given, it is laid at his feet in an envelope. Easterners love perfumes and this woman brought her costliest to Jesus. This woman paid a lot for this highly priced perfume. She could have bought something cheap. She didn't because her love was great for a master she had never seen. So, she gave much.

She stood at his feet behind him. How could the woman stand behind Jesus and wash his feet and kiss them? It is because Easterners do not sit in chairs like Westerners do. They sit on the floor; they sit on a carpet with their legs crossed and eat food with their fingers. The woman could stand by his side and reach his feet. A woman could not stand equal with men. The woman began weeping and washing Jesus' feet with tears. Remember, she was standing behind him but she could do this because he was seated on the floor.

How did she get enough tears to wash his feet? How long would it take for her to cry enough tears to wash his feet? Many people think she must have been at the feet of Jesus long enough to get enough tears to wash his feet. She could never accumulate enough by crying just once. Easterners keep "tear bottles" in their homes. Whenever a person cries, the tears are collected in a bottle. It is about six inches long and about an inch and a half wide. It is made so that liquid in it will not evaporate. Whenever they cry for something concerning God, for which they expect a reward, they collect the tears in the bottle and preserve them there. These are tears from weeping and praying. Those are the only tears that go into the bottle. Each member of the household has his own bottle. The bottle is closely protected because when

a person is buried, the tear bottle must be buried with him. It is a disgrace among some Easterners to be buried without the bottle. They believe that the bottle goes with them to heaven and they will receive a reward for each tear in the bottle. The Orientals will sacrifice these tear bottles for holy men whom they respect very much: “Since you’re here, holy man, I don’t need any rewards in heaven. You are my salvation.” When this much respect is evident, they will give up their tear bottles. This woman loved Jesus enough and was prepared to be buried in disgrace. She believed in him. She was willing to suffer the consequences.

Why did the woman use her hair to wipe Jesus’ feet? The long hair of the woman is the glory of her head. She brought her glory down in order to wash his feet. She was indicating to everyone there that her own glory was good enough only to wash Jesus’ feet. She showed extreme humility.

Then she kissed his feet. Eastern men and women are allowed to kiss each other on the forehead, crown of the head, and cheek, however a kiss on the feet implies confession of sin—even among men when one has wronged another. Any other kiss would be a display of respect or affection. Not a word needs to be said when the feet are kissed—both parties understand. Jesus knew the significance of kissing the feet and he said to her, “Thy sins are forgiven.”¹⁰

Psalm 133:1, 2

Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is* for brethren to dwell together in unity!

It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, *even* Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;

¹⁰ Luke 7:48—And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.

Every day in the Eastern countries, the Hindu women bathe three times a day prior to meals. They believe God dwells in their bodies, and for that reason they are responsible for keeping it clean. In addition to these three daily baths, on Friday the women bathe in a different way. All women in the family have oil bottles. Every Friday, a trained servant woman massages the head to soothe all of the hair. They used coconut oil, linseed oil, peanut oil and expensive olive oil. The oil is poured all over the body, and then after an hour or so of soaking, they take soap nut which comes from a tree in East, and the soap nut takes off the oil. The soap nut tree has a black nut with many seeds inside. After they are ripe and dry up, it is customary to grind them into powder. A little powder and water makes a lot of suds. Soap nuts help the roots of one's hair. They don't use soap here. They mix this with hot water on the head and it becomes soapy cleansing out the oil very quickly. Afterwards they put on some thin clothes, eat a nice meal and go to sleep for about two hours. When they get up, they are renewed. They awaken refreshed and soothed; their nervous system is relaxed. Saturday, the men do the same thing.

The Easterners take time to do these things. This is the custom. The "skirts of his garments," is a towel they wrap around their waist while they're being washed with oil.

So when you dwell together in unity with the brethren, it will be poised, restful and peaceful. It will be like this man who took the oil bath; resting peacefully with no hatred, no animosity, no nagging, no spitefulness; instead there is peace, calmness, quietness, dignity, poise, and power in our soul. So the unity of the brethren will affect us this same way. When the inside is intact, the outside is intact.—*See also: Travel and Hospitality—Washing of Feet.*

Begging for Healing

People who say that it is not always within the Lord's will to heal, use as their reference Paul's "thorn in the flesh." They say that the Lord gave Paul grace to deal with his sickness, and so for this reason they always add, "If it be Thy will," when they pray for healing. These people do not understand the Oriental idiom, "thorn in the flesh." In the East we always mean irritating or bothersome people when we use this expression, and indeed it is so used in the Bible.

An example is found in Numbers 33:55, where the Lord tells the Israelites to drive out the inhabitants of the land before them, otherwise they would be "pricks in your eyes and thorns in your sides." Joshua 23:13 and Judges 2:3 also contain this type of warning, using the words "thorns in your eyes," and "thorns in your sides."

Christians who want to pray for healing should realize this wonderful truth: that Paul was not sick at all. He said that he had persecutions and infirmities (weaknesses of the flesh) but he does not say that he was incurably sick. We do not have to pray "If by Thy will, Lord," for things that we are certain are within His will. Do we say, "Lord, save me, if it by Thy will"? Of course not! We know that God wants all men to be reconciled to Him. The Bible says that when we believe, we receive. We can even get help with that, because we can pray, "Lord, help Thou my unbelief!"

When you ask something of God, do not keep asking the same old thing, but thank God, as though you had received it, and you will get it. Jesus said:

Mark 11:24

Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive *them*, and ye shall have *them*.

When you don't get an answer to your prayer right away, don't give up, but wait patiently; keep on thanking God for what you are going to get. Then all of a sudden, it will drop in much more than you expected!

Let me share with you now another Oriental custom in regard to healing. This is concerning the many beggars which you see in certain places when you go to Palestine, Egypt or India. Americans think that all these beggars are poor people and that is the reason they are begging. But this is not so. In the Eastern philosophy, whether Hindu, Mohammedan or Jewish, if a man is incurable and the doctors have given up on him, then he becomes a beggar, seeking not money, but healing.

When you act as a beggar, then you have no more self-respect; you lose all your social standing and become very humble. Then God, through His mercy, may give you healing somehow, sometime, through some holy man. That is the teaching we have in the East.

The three places where beggars go are the highway side, the temple gate, or the banks of holy rivers. Thousands of people pass these three places daily. The beggars pray that in one of these places there might be a holy man passing whose shadow might fall on them, or that he might say a word or touch them and heal them of their incurable disease.

An example of a beggar by the highway side is the story of blind Bartimaeus, found in Mark 10:46-52.

Mark 10:46

And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging.

The fact that blind Bartimaeus was sitting on the highway side begging shows me that he was not begging for

money. The real beggars of the East that beg for food come to the door. They tap on the floor by the door, and the woman of the house comes out and gives them something to eat. But the beggars who line the highway side, and who sit at the temple gates, are generally seeking healing. What are the temple gates? The temple gates are both sides of the passage to the temple. You might see a hundred beggars lining each side of this passage. All who go to the temple must pass them, both going in and coming out of the temple.

Take the case of Peter and John going to the temple, as told in the third chapter of Acts. There they saw a lame man and he asked them for alms.

Acts 3:6

Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

Peter and John understood why this man was here; they could have given him a coin, but they did not. They used an old Eastern way of speaking when they said to him, “Silver and gold have I none.” They meant, “for all the silver and gold in the world you cannot buy a new pair of legs. So we don’t have that kind of help for you; we have the help of Jesus Christ of Nazareth in whose name you shall walk!”

If you read in Acts of the Apostles a little farther, you will see that a while after the healing of this beggar in the gate of the temple, the people brought their sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them, and they might get healing.

Acts 5:15

Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid *them* on beds and couches, that at

the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.

From this illustration of the Scriptures, you see how the Eastern mind works. It was the same at the time of Abraham, the time of Jesus, and in our time today. I have seen these things not only in my native land of India, but also during my travels through the Biblelands, and I can tell you they are true. Another place where the beggars go, who are seeking healing, is to the holy waters, generally holy rivers. Here, along the banks of the Ganges, the Euphrates, and the Tigris, hundreds of beggars line the banks waiting for the troubling of the waters. For thousands of years, the people of the East have believed that one of the ways of being healed is to wait on the banks of holy waters, and to get into the spot of water that is troubled. Very seldom does anyone ever get cured by this means, but it is all the hope that they have.

Praise be to God, we have more hope than that. We who are born again of God's spirit have Christ in us, the hope of glory. We are sons of God! So when we pray for healing, let us pray boldly, for we know He has promised to supply our needs out of His riches in glory. Then let us believe that we receive, and we shall do so.

Interestingly enough, even though I believed and understood the teachings on such things as healing, I failed to make use of them at times. It was not until the verse of Scripture was pointed out to me, "Go forth and preach the gospel and heal the sick," and a lady said to me, "Why is it, Bishop, that most of our ministers do the first part of the verse but ignore the last part?"

I am now ministering healing wherever I go to teach the Orientalisms. Some of my friends where I have taught before, who do not believe in healing, are going to be surprised; but if God says in His Word to preach AND

heal, that is what we must do! In fact, there is one place in the Scripture pertaining to healing which involves an Orientalism found in John.

John 5:4

For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.

You see, the Eastern people believe that certain sacred waters have healing properties and that is why we hear of so many people in India, for instance, bathing in the Ganges River. Many of them are hoping to receive healing. The Grotto at Lourdes is another example of waters being involved in healing. As in other spiritual matters, as they believe, so do they receive.

Expression of Emotion

Renting Clothes

Ezra 9:3

And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished.

When he rent his garment and mantle both, it meant the situation was absolutely hopeless. Very seldom does this happen. Plucking off the hairs is even worse. "Plucked out" should be "shaved off." When a person dies, to express affection and absolute sorrow, they shave off their heads. This is done only in the case of an immediate family member's death. The East does not believe in intermarriage, not because of the color or race, but because of culture. If they get some other blood, their children will be wild and of a different culture. When you lose culture, you lose your religion. Culture and

religion are one in the East. That is why God warned them not to marry any heathen. When Ezra heard that even the princes were doing it, he expressed such sorrow that he rent his mantle and shaved his head as though someone was dead. He was going to wait for God in that condition until his prayer was heard.

Sackcloth and Ashes

Psalm 102:9

For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping,

Ashes are symbolic of the forgiveness of sins and the protection of God, the merit of the sacrifice that has been made. Holy men may put ashes all over the body. Most people put them on the forehead only. To the Easterner, the ashes have the same power as blood does to the Westerner. You sit in dust to show God you are willing to go down and that you have gone down. That is why they pray sitting on the ground on deerskin. It is the lowest type of humility.

Both Hindus and Jews use ashes. Hindus make them out of cow dung. Jews make ashes out of the cow. The significance is the same—salvation through sacrifice. They put ashes on the body for protection. When sitting in ashes, a man is sitting on the sacrifice and relying on its significance. Some people eat ashes, signifying putting the soul and heart under the protection of ashes.

Ashes are put on after bathing. In the morning before breakfast, when one prays, he applies ashes on the forehead, the arm, and the chest. They are placing their body, soul and mind under protection of the ashes, which is salvation by sacrifice. It is the same thing with blood. They place themselves under the blood. Just as the Jews have the Passover because of the blood, so do the Indians. They pledge their heart, mind and spirit—every-

thing inside is placed under the protection. They don't place their bodies under this protection, only the spiritual aspect. If ashes are placed on the tongue, this means that you are protected both inside and outside. You are constantly devoted to God. I am always abiding with God and constantly devoted to God.

They not only put ashes on the forehead, but after prayer they eat a little to cleanse and purify within.¹¹ One translation says, "I did not cease to cleanse my insides." That means he weeps so much that he is clothed in his drink. It shows contrition.

"Mingled my drink with weeping," means constantly repenting of sin and faults. The tears roll down his cheeks and into the water he is drinking. Both these mean he never forsook God, always engrossed, devoted to God. Always looking to Him, being rooted and grounded. It's a walk.

David was saying that he was continually putting his soul under the protection of God. He leaned hard on God and deep in meditation on Him.

Matthew 11:21

Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

Sackcloth and ashes are a sign of repentance, mourning and fasting. Sackcloth can also be symbolic for seeking sympathy. Sackcloth is a rough material like burlap made of camel or goats hair. It is worn during a fast as a form of subjugating yourself to the will of God. Fasting itself is not enough but they also wear

¹¹ Isaiah 44:20—He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, *Is there not a lie in my right hand?*

something which will scratch the skin. Those who sew sackcloth have a menial job. Anyone in the family who wants to indicate mourning, sorrow or humiliation will put on sackcloth.¹² Like the wedding robe, there is always a sackcloth robe in each family. It is handed down from generation to generation. Sackcloth is worn from the waist down.

Job 16:15

I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin, and defiled my horn in the dust.

Job showed he had more humility and sorrow than anyone else by sewing his own sackcloth and having it cover his shoulders also. In this case, he was so down and out that sackcloth was the only thing he had. “Horn” means glory; he cast his glory down to the dust. A translation of that verse is, “I have sewed my own sackcloth and covered my shoulder, and have cast my glory in the dust.”

¹² 1 Kings 20:32—So they girded sackcloth on their loins, and *put* ropes on their heads, and came to the king of Israel, and said, Thy servant Benhadad saith, I pray thee, let me live. And he said, *Is* he yet alive? he *is* my brother.

SACRIFICES

Calves and Fire Walking

Calves used as sacrifices on an altar signify giving God praise.

Hosea 14:2

Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive *us* graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.

Therefore, in the Bible, “calves of our lips” means “praising God.” This expression equals making a sacrifice to God.

Hebrews 13:15

By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of *our* lips giving thanks to his name.

A calf is a sacrifice but when it is worshipped, it becomes an idol. Casting idols from molten brass, copper or silver is a very ancient practice, and the idols found near the temples in the East today may have been formed more than five hundred years ago. Molten images are made of brass, copper and silver. The Eastern people melt the ore and fashion an idol according to their choosing.

2 Kings 17:16, 17

And they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made them molten images, *even* two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal.

And they caused their sons and their daughters to

pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

In the East two brazen calves are often found before the temples as well as around gates and beside the holy waters. Each temple has a small pond called a molten sea, and the surrounding walls are made of brass. Calves are sacrificed with the belief that God will keep His people safe and secure. When the people of the East pray, they point to the calves and say, “Lord, the sacrifice which our forefathers made unto thee in the years gone by—we also make unto thee now. Please, Lord, forgive us.”

Idols are frequently erected in the midst of a grove. In the Bible a grove is usually a small plot of ground higher than the surrounding land, on which there are trees that grow quickly and provide shade. These trees that grow quickly are known in the Bible as “green bay” trees. The Eastern people believe that the green bay tree indicates God’s presence and is symbolic of God’s prosperity and righteousness. Once every six months, during the days of the full moon, women go to these groves to cook food and to call upon God, believing His presence is there in manifestation because the groves are green. The true God instructed His people that they were not to worship Him in the groves, but were to cut down the groves and high places, meaning “Don’t worship idols, but rid yourself of them by destruction.”—*See also: Plants and Trees—The Green Tree.*

In Jeremiah we read that the people baked cakes to the queen of heaven,¹ who is supposed to be one of the

¹ Jeremiah 7:18—The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead *their* dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger.

goddesses in the stars of the sky. Some stars are also called the host of heaven. According to the superstition propagated by the priests, the people will suffer a severe plague if they do not have a grand festival in honor of the queen of heaven. Thus many people in the East are subjugated by fear. One of the foremost idols of the groves in the Bible is Baal.

The practice of “fire walking” is not new, but as old as history and as devilish as Satan. Only a devil-possessed person could walk white-hot coals of fire without getting burned.

The Mohammedans, who are not supposed to be superstitious or indulge in base practices, have an unusual tradition. Once a year, at the time of the greatest religious festival, they build a special pit fourteen feet in diameter and four or five feet deep, with an elevated wall two feet high surrounding the pit. A few days before the feast they build a fire and keep spreading the red-hot coals throughout the pit. On the festival day people walk through the fire to prove that they do not get their feet burned. To find out if a man has committed a crime, they compel him to go through the fire. If he gets his feet burned, they say he is guilty.

God is not pleased with such ungodly practices, and His people are constantly warned not to participate in such devilish acts. God’s people are to be judged by Him and His standards, not according to any of man’s ideas. God is a spirit, and they that worship Him are to worship Him in spirit and not according to any image or idol. A spirit has no form or comeliness. The true God is the Father of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Sacrifices—Burnt Offerings

In the Book of Judges, the record of Jephthah and his

daughter has been widely misunderstood. Jephthah was fighting the people of Ammon.

Judges 11:30, 31

And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands,

Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD'S, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering.

Now this does not mean that the person will be killed and burned on the altar, as many have thought. God has never required that mankind bring human sacrifices.

A person who is dedicated to the Lord is sent to serve in the temple and they will never marry. It is like the nuns and priests which we see in the Roman Catholic Church today. The basis for this is found in Leviticus.

Leviticus 27:2

Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When a man shall make a singular vow, the persons *shall be* for the LORD by thy estimation.

Judges 11:32-34

So Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them; and the LORD delivered them into his hands.

And he smote them from Aroer, even till thou come to Minnith, *even* twenty cities, and unto the plain of the vineyards, with a very great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel.

And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with tim-

brels and with dances: and she *was his* only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter.

There had been a war between the Israelites and Ammonites at one time. Jephthah, the leader of the Israelites, went to God in the beginning of that war and vowed a vow to the Lord: "Lord, if you give me victory over the Ammonites, when I come home as a victorious man, anything that comes out of my house to greet me, that shall I give to the Lord." Then God gave him the victory. He returned home and his only child, his daughter, came out to meet him.

Judges 11:35

And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back.

Jephthah rent his mantle. A mantle is a piece of cloth, four to five feet long, with any color desired. It is folded in quarters and hung around the neck. The ends fall all the way down to the knees. The significance of a mantle is protection. If a mantle is thrown on a person, that person has been called to or for the ministry. This person is called and protected. Ruth went to Boaz and said, "spread thy skirt upon thy handmaiden (Ruth 3:9)." "Skirt" should be "mantle." This spreading is a call and a protection. Elijah threw his mantle on Elisha; Elisha immediately left his plowing and followed Elijah. Elisha was called to the ministry (1 Kings 19:19). When a Hindu child is twelve, and called to the Hindu ministry to preach, the priest throws a mantle on the child. If a man hears any bad news, he grabs his mantle, tears it in two pieces, and throws it away.—*See also: Apparel—The Mantle.*

When Jephthah saw his daughter, he rent his mantle because of the promise he had made to God concerning the burnt sacrifice. He had no other children and felt sorrow. The girl understood immediately.

Judges 11:36-38

And she said unto him, My father, *if* thou hast opened thy mouth unto the LORD, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the LORD hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, *even* of the children of Ammon.

And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows.

And he said, Go. And he sent her away *for* two months: and she went with her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains.

This does not mean she would be killed and used in the temple, because human sacrifice has always been forbidden. Jephthah gave her as a living sacrifice to serve God for the rest of her life. He gave her to the temple to serve there. This is a burnt offering—suffering humiliation, disgrace, insult to serve in the temple for life.

Jephthah was not going to kill his daughter and offer a burnt sacrifice. Once having served in the temple, the servant lived and died there, and never left. The father followed through with his pledge to God. The daughter wanted to see her father keep his promise, so she was willing to sacrifice all else. Jephthah could not go back on his vow to God, because the vow to God was salted. If something is said to God, it cannot be broken. The daughter was brought up to be obedient and treated her parents as unto God.

Any virgin who knew no man and was not married, when she decided to go to the temple and serve the Lord, she has to go for two months to the mountains with her girlfriends to bewail her virginity. In the mountains they have prayer meetings, consecration meetings, seeing and visiting relatives and friends, saying her “goodbyes” to the pleasures and things of the world, etc. This was a common occurrence when women were preparing to enter the service of the temple. They receive all their friends and relatives, and bewail the loss of their worldly life. Jephthah’s daughter was a princess; she would have had fine clothes and jewels and servants; she would have married and given Jephthah the joy of grandchildren and heirs to succeed to the throne. All this was now out of the question, since Jephthah had made the vow.

Judges 11:39, 40

And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her *according* to his vow which he had vowed: and she knew no man. And it was a custom in Israel,

That the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year.

When the virgin is brought to the door of the temple at the end of the two months, she is prepared to enter the service of the temple. Her hair is shaved off to signify that she is laying aside the glory of her head so that she may serve God. Her fashionable clothes are exchanged for the white robe which is the symbol of purity and sanctity. And so it was with Jephthah’s daughter. As a princess in this case, she took off all of her clothes and jewelry putting on a long white robe which covered her head and began to serve God from there on.—*See also: Apparel—Garments (The Veil)*.

This word “lament” is a misplaced word. Some of

you may have Bibles with a marginal note saying that this word should be “talk with.” It seems strange to me that the truth is in the margin and the lie is left in the text. When the women go to visit her in the temple, they would say, “How wonderful you are, we wish we were like you! You don’t have the sins or pleasures of the world to bother you. You, by choice, are separated from the things of this world. God must be loving and honoring you for the sacrifice you have made and the humiliation you go through.” Thereby, they comfort her by praising her for the decision she made.

There is another much misunderstood passage relating to this same subject. It is found in 1 Corinthians 7:36, which the King James Version renders:

1 Corinthians 7:36

But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of *her* age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry.

“Flower of her age” means maturity. Being “past the flower of her age” means that she is now a virgin. Supposing I have three daughters and none of them marry when they come to the flower of their age. We try not to keep them too long after that because people will gossip about them. Suppose two of my daughters get married and I have one that says, “I don’t want to get married, I want to serve God. I would like to remain at home and help mother and daddy. I don’t care to get married. I don’t want to go away from home.” After a while this daughter decides to get married. If at any time such a woman should change her mind wanting to marry and live in the world, the father will not allow it. The father tells her she has made a vow with the Lord and must be faithful to the vow. He does not permit her

to get married. The father must give the consent in the East for his daughter's marriage, regardless of her age.

If any man thinks that he is ashamed by the behavior of his virgin daughter because she has passed the marriage age, and he hath not given her in marriage and that he should give her, let him give her in marriage. In the Orient, they are very particular with their women. When they get married, they are sure the girl is a virgin. If any man is ashamed by the behavior of his daughter—she may not be misbehaving at all, but that is what the gossip is about; his virgin daughter who was dedicated to God. As Jephthah gave her as a living sacrifice, she served God, as well as suffered terrific humiliation and shame.

Again, this refers to the man who has vowed to the Lord that his virgin daughter shall serve in the temple; but in the instance that this daughter changes her mind about marrying, Paul is saying that it is now acceptable for her to do so. This is another example of the change in the order of things after the coming of Christ. In Judaism, the religion of works, the believers found salvation through observing the law. With the coming of Christ, these works are secondary, and the primary consideration is salvation through grace. Of course, Paul explains in a later verse, it would be better to keep the vow to God, but it is also acceptable for the virgin daughter to marry.

The George M. Lamsa translation has a more accurate translation of this verse. It reads:

1 Corinthians 7:36

If any man thinks that he is shamed by the behavior of his virgin daughter because she has passed the marriage age and he has not given her in marriage and that he should give her, let him do what he will and he does not sin. Let her be married.

All of this is in preparation for the time when we all should yield ourselves as a living sacrifice to God. We find this idea expressed by Paul in his letter to the Romans.

Romans 12:1, 2

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present [yield] your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

The Renewed Mind: The Living Sacrifice

At the age of twelve, Hindu children begin the practice of Yoga or union with God. They fast and pray, as well as look within to find God. They believe that the kingdom of God is within them. Breathing exercises are used; life or *prana* is breathed in through one nostril and evil things are breathed out of the other nostril. These techniques keep the mind from wandering during periods of prayer. Hindus believe that the mind is of the flesh, and consequently it is contrary to God. Thus they work continually to renew the mind toward Godly things.

Hindu children continue with this renewing of the mind from the age of twelve throughout their adult lives. Christians could benefit from these teachings. In fact there are several verses in Paul's letters that instruct Christians to gain control of their minds; these are largely overlooked by the Western world, because they are not understood.

The Hindus believe, and Scripture agrees, that the

things of the flesh are contrary to things of the spirit. The mind and all the rest of the senses are of the flesh. The mind is likely to be full of dread and fear; the spirit is full of love, peace, joy, longsuffering, and so forth. Therefore Yoga practice trains the mind to be in union with the spirit, and to bring it into subjection to the spirit. The mind tells you “it can’t be done”; the spirit says that with God all things are possible (Matthew 19:26²). The mind says, “you surely won’t get what you need”; the spirit says, “your Father knoweth what things you have need of and they will be supplied out of His riches in glory.” In this way, the negative and depressing thoughts of the mind are commanded out, and are replaced with the positive promises of God’s Word. The mind is an instrument in our hands. We must command it. Words are power; the words you say that go out into the air are powerful and they come back to you an hundred-fold. This is why we should guard our tongues, for we are convicted by every idle word. If you bless them that curse you (Luke 6:28³), you receive blessings in return.

Paul speaks of the struggle between flesh and spirit as “the war in my body, wretched man that I am.”

Romans 7:23, 24

But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

Paul also tells of the walk of the spirit in Romans 8.

² Matthew 19:26—But Jesus beheld *them*, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.

³ Luke 6:28—Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.

Romans 8:1, 4

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Christians need to understand this teaching of Paul's because so many Christians today "walk in the flesh"; they have experienced salvation, but they do not renew their minds. They do not "put on the mind of Christ" (Philippians 2:5⁴).

Remember when Jesus stilled the storms of the sea, he stretched forth his hand and said, "Peace, be still." The Hindus believe that if you can still the storms of your mind, that it is a greater miracle than stilling the sea. They say that the storms of the mind are greater than the storms of the sea. We must say to our minds, "Peace, be still!"

Yogis who chance to read the Christian Bible find great significance in the verse from the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 6:22

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

The "single eye" expresses the Yogi concept of concentration on God. They believe that there is a third eye in the center of the forehead which is a spiritual eye; this is used to concentrate and meditate upon God. "Thy whole body shall be full of light"—the Yogi understands it to mean spirit. The whole body becomes spirit, they say.

⁴ Philippians 2:5—Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

Although Hindus do worship God as Spirit, their religion is of works, as is Judaism and Buddhism. At the time of Christ's birth, these three powerful religions were available to the worshipper. Yet Jesus did not exhort the people to works; no, he had an entirely new and unique truth for the world. He did not say, "I have come that you might have a new or better religion." Jesus Christ said, rather:

John 10:10b

. . . I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

After we have received salvation and thus eternal life by accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, then we can enter into this more abundant life through the renewing of the mind.

PEOPLE

Women in the East

Rahab the Harlot

Joshua 2:1

And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and came into an harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there.

Jericho was walled around high with stones. The people were confident in their strong stone wall that nobody could break it. They had a lot less confidence in the God of Abraham. Their confidence was in the arm of flesh rather than in the living God. They thought that no power on earth could take the city of Jericho. God said to Joshua, "I'll give you that city without your touching that wall." God had told Joshua that He would give them the city of Jericho without any war, but rather by the shout in unison of Israel. So Joshua sent two men to see the land ahead. They scouted out the area.

The two spies lodged in Rahab the harlot's house. Rahab, the harlot, ran a public inn. Rahab was not a prostitute. A harlot can mean three different things: a prostitute, someone who worships something other than the true God, or an innkeeper.

Rahab was an innkeeper. Travelers could stay and eat in inns without paying anything. There are two parts to the inn. In one part, anyone can go to eat and sleep. In the other part, the ten virgins go to wait for the bridegroom whenever there is a wedding. The man or woman

who is in charge of the inn is the harlot. Why is the term “harlot” used? Thousands of years ago in India, travelers had to stay in the streets. The Indians wanted to alleviate the problem of tired, hungry travelers with nothing to eat and no place to stay, so they built inns for them on the roadsides and at the entrance of the town walls. There was a need for one person to be in charge of each inn to do the accounting, etc. In one village, no man stepped forward for the responsibility, so a woman did so. The elders of the gate asked if she knew the consequences: she would have to take away her veil and look at everyone face to face, and she would have to talk to anybody and everybody. The custom was that women could talk only to their husbands, fathers, brothers, children and grandchildren, and to no other men. A woman who removed her veil and talked to all men would be called a harlot for serving anybody and everybody. It had nothing to do with morals. She was taking a respectable position. Rahab could not have been a prostitute because they are kept three miles from any village, along with pigs. A harlot is also a person who serves not God alone, but also the Devil and the flesh—anyone and everyone. Rahab is listed among the believers in Hebrews 11. The king of Jericho sent for her also (Joshua 2:3). She was known and respected. The title “harlot” has become official. Even male innkeepers are called harlots.

Joshua 2:2-18

And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, Behold, there came men in hither to night of the children of Israel to search out the country.

And the king of Jericho sent unto Rahab, saying, Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thine house: for they be come to search out all the country.

And the woman took the two men, and hid them, and said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they *were*:

And it came to pass *about the time* of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out: whither the men went I wot not: pursue after them quickly; for ye shall overtake them.

But she had brought them up to the roof of the house, and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof.

And the men pursued after them the way to Jordan unto the fords: and as soon as they which pursued after them were gone out, they shut the gate.

And before they were laid down, she came up unto them upon the roof;

And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you.

For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that *were* on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed.

And as soon as we had heard *these things*, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he *is* God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.

Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token:

And *that* ye will save alive my father, and my

mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.

And the men answered her, Our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business. And it shall be, when the LORD hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee.

Then she let them down by a cord through the window: for her house *was* upon the town wall, and she dwelt upon the wall.

And she said unto them, Get you to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you; and hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers be returned: and afterward may ye go your way.

And the men said unto her, We *will be* blameless of this thine oath which thou hast made us swear.

Behold, *when* we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee.

Rahab told Joshua's spies that the God of Abraham was the true God. She did not put her belief in the stone walls like the rest of Jericho. She protected the two spies and lied to the king. They hid on the flat roof of her inn and she hid them in the flax stalks (or any other commodity which needs drying).

In the evening, Rahab went up to the roof to talk to the spies and ask for protection from the destruction of Jericho which would be wrought by God. The scarlet cord is the marker that was used so that the spies could protect Rahab and her family. She is mentioned in in Book of Hebrews among the "heroes of faith." She was a woman of responsibility in Jericho, and she knew their plans and committed treason by not reporting this to the

authorities. She stood by God rather than by the nation. She knew the stone walls could not save them. Loyalty to a nation is good and important, yet loyalty to God must be first (Matthew 6:33¹). She was saved because of her belief in God. Her scarlet cord was her salvation, like the lamb's blood on the door.

Widows

Lamentations 1:1, 2

How doth the city sit solitary, *that was* full of people! *how* is she become as a widow! she *that was* great among the nations, *and* princess among the provinces, *how* is she become tributary!

She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears *are* on her cheeks: among all her lovers she hath none to comfort *her*: all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they are become her enemies.

In Lamentations, the man of God was making comparison with the widow. Widows in the East are not looked up to, but rather looked down upon in society. An Eastern widow, by custom, is required to do the following things during her mourning period: she must shave off all her long beautiful hair which is her glory; she must take off all her beautiful and expensive saris and must wear only plain clothes (like a bed sheet); she must take off all her expensive rings from her fingers, ears, and nose; the silver cord around her neck (a tallick) is left at the grave; she sits in a solitary place. She is secluded from all social engagements. She becomes desolate and destitute because she will never marry again.

When the husband dies, the widow goes into mourning for twenty-one days until the final ceremony, and

¹ Matthew 6:33—But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

when that day comes, she shaves off her hair. From that time on they cover their head and don't dress properly. The style of dress that the widows wear in the East are barren, dead, and gloomy because they are supposed to look this way. They never let their hair grow again. If she wants to dress up again as she did before her husband died, society looks down upon her as a worldly person, not spiritual. She can't wear flowers or a mark on her forehead. She is a picture of destitution.

Widows don't eat much food. They usually eat one meal and they are supposed to be praying and starving for the sake of their husband till they go to heaven to meet him. She lives in the husband's home with servants, but she does not enjoy family customs and traditions including taking part in weddings. When widows go to a marriage celebration, they all gather together in a group apart from the other people. The widows are not permitted to go and do any sacramental cooking or preparing any ceremonial food for the temple. They are not supposed to touch the utensils of the Lord's house and they are not allowed to bless the bride and the bridegroom as everybody else can do. In the East when a couple gets married, they go to all the people in their families to receive a blessing before they go on their honeymoon. If the bride or bridegroom's mother is a widow they won't bow down to her because a widow's blessings are not valued. The idea is that God has forsaken her by taking away her husband. Now Jerusalem has to pay tribute to others where before it was the other way around.

Ruth

Ruth 1:1-14

Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.

And the name of the man *was* Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehemjudah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there.

And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons.

And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one *was* Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years.

And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.

Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread.

Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah.

And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me.

The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each *of you* in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept.

And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people.

And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? *are* there yet *any more* sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?

Turn again, my daughters, go *your way*; for I am

too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, *if* I should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons;

Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD is gone out against me.

And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her.

Naomi had gone to a foreign country with her husband during a time of famine. He died there along with her two sons who each left a widow. Naomi was then left with her two daughters-in-law. After some time, she set off again for her original country because the famine was over. She told her daughters-in-law to return to their own mothers' homes. One daughter-in-law said good-bye and went to her own country, but Ruth, even though she was not Jewish either, stayed with Naomi accepting her people and God as her own. Ruth committed herself to go with Naomi. It is Eastern custom that when husband dies, the wife stays in the father-in-law's house until he finds a new husband for her. Widows are never just left alone. According to Eastern practice, when a woman's husband dies, it is the father-in-law's responsibility to find another husband for her. Ruth was keeping the tradition of remaining faithful to her husband's family. Eastern people usually marry a kinsman, a blood relative. By keeping it in the family, they are assured that the husband and wife have had same culture, religious training, etc. No need for courting to work out differences. They have been taught marriage roles, so there is little problem there.

Ruth 2:1-3

And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a

mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name *was* Boaz.

And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after *him* in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter.

And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field *belonging* unto Boaz, who *was* of the kindred of Elimelech.

Boaz was Ruth's husband's blood relative. Ruth gleaned in his fields to sustain them. In the East, the harvesters leave some of the crop in the field for the poor people to gather (glean). There are more gleaners than there are reapers. ". . .her hap" means her portion or fortune.

Ruth 2:4

And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The LORD *be* with you. And they answered him, The LORD bless thee.

"The LORD bless thee." Notice the wonderful hospitality with which the reapers greet Boaz who is their master. How many farmhands in our country will greet their master in this way?

Ruth 2:5-8

Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel *is* this?

And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It *is* the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab: And she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house.

Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens:

Was Ruth the daughter of Boaz? Any older man in the East who meets the younger woman may call her daughter. Boaz is blood related only to Naomi, not to Ruth. If you meet a man's wife, you will call her sister and not daughter. When a man calls a woman "daughter" or "sister" he treats her as such. It turns away immorality. After you have called someone sister or daughter, you cannot make any advances toward her. On a similar note, when a man calls another man "brother" it means he forgives him of any wrong or insult. All past mistakes are gone.

Ruth 2:11-16

And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and *how* thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore.

The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.

Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens.

And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched *corn*, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left.

And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz com-

manded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not:

And let fall also *some* of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave *them*, that she may glean *them*, and rebuke her not.

All of the workers bring their own meal and eat with the master. There is no difference among them—they are all on the same level. The master makes sure everyone has enough to eat. Sometimes he gives them his share. When they travel together, the master will not accept a bed from the host if his laborers sleep on the floor; he sleeps with them. If he is given better food, he shares it with them. (Jesus said that wherever he would be, there his servant would be also. He makes us equal with him.) Ruth was given special favor here. The gleaners never eat with the reapers, but Ruth sat beside them and dipped her bread in the same dish with them, making her equal.

“. . .and left” of verse 14 should be “and saved what was left” for her mother-in-law.

Ruth 3:1

Then Naomi her mother in law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?

It was the deceased husband’s family’s responsibility to get a husband for the widow. “Shall I not seek rest for thee” means “shall I not arrange for a husband for thee.”

Ruth 3:2

And now *is* not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley to night in the threshingfloor.

The threshing floor was an open space and threshing was always done by moonlight. It was no secret place. Everything that took place on the threshing floor could

be easily seen. No woman was allowed on the floor because so many men were there. Somehow, Ruth got there without being noticed. She had no immoral purpose in mind. She was following the Oriental methods of claiming redemption.

Ruth 3:3, 4

Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor: *but* make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking.

And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do.

Naomi instructed Ruth in exactly what to do in order to marry Boaz. Easterners always marry distant relatives. In verse 4, “uncover feet” refers to lying down at someone’s feet in order to be redeemed. The feet were uncovered so that the person could feel someone lying there. It was a common practice in claiming the next-of-kin for marriage.

Ruth 3:5

And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me I will do.

This statement is made in reply to a husband’s goodbye to his wife when he left to prepare a place for them in his father’s house after a one-year honeymoon. Ruth knew that, and saying it now was positive thinking on her part.

Ruth 3:6, 7

And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother in law bade her.

And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the

heap of corn: and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her down.

“And when Boaz had eaten and drunk,” does not mean intoxicated. The Eastern people say grace before and after the meal. To say a man has eaten and drunk is to say he has finished his meal. They did not drink anything until after they had finished eating. Something is drunk at end of meal to complete the meal. Then nothing was eaten until the next meal. A “merry heart” is a grateful, thankful heart.

In the East people sleep covered from head to toe. Their face is covered so the sunlight or moonlight will not strike the eye (Psalm 121:6²). Lying at the feet of a person is a sign of complete and full surrender, but must touch the feet. This is why she uncovered his feet, so that he might redeem her, for he was a near kinsman. Ruth had no male member in her family to negotiate the marriage, so that is why she went and lay at the feet of Boaz. Redemption is a part of marriage for a widow. The Eastern widow has no status. She is in a lowly position. When she is married again, she is redeemed from that position.

Ruth 3:8, 9

And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid, and turned himself: and, behold, a woman lay at his feet.

And he said, Who *art* thou? And she answered, I *am* Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou *art* a near kinsman.

In verse 9, the “skirt” is the mantle. The men cover themselves at night with the mantle. During the day it is folded into four folds, worn from the neck and it falls

² Psalm 121:6—The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.

down on the knees. Throwing the mantle over someone was an assurance of redemption. Marriage was this redemption. She wanted assurance of redemption and protection through marriage. She did not ask for an agreement of words because this assurance was sufficient.

Ruth 3:12, 13

And now it is true that I *am thy* near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I.

Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, *that* if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well; let him do the kinsman's part: but if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, *as* the LORD liveth: lie down until the morning.

Boaz wanted to marry Ruth, but if there was a nearer kinsman, that man had the legal right to marry her. Boaz had to see if the man would relinquish his authority to marry Ruth.—*See also: Agriculture—The Threshing Floor; Travel and Hospitality; Apparel—The Mantle (Assurance of Redemption and Protection); Ceremonies and Rituals.*

The Woman at the Well

In the Book of John we find the common practice of worshipping in the mountain (John 4:20³). Jesus expounds to the woman of Samaria the spiritual significance of worship.

John 4:5-9

Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being

³ John 4:20—Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

wearied with *his* journey, sat thus on the well: *and* it was about the sixth hour.

There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.

(For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.)

Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.

A Samaritan woman was drawing water from Jacob's well. Jesus went and sat there on the wall around the well. Jesus asked for water; she said, "I'm a Samaritan; you're a Jew, and you ask me for water?" Samaritans had no dealings with the Jews, just like high-caste Hindus have no dealings with the low class people, the untouchables. The Samaritans were as a low caste to the Jews. Samaritans are the smallest population group; they worshipped in the mountains. They are like hillbillies. Jesus asked, "Give me some water." She didn't say, "I'm busy—what do you think I am, a slave?" Eastern hospitality is to give water to everybody.

John 4:10-15

Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?

Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?

Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.

Jesus said that the water he had and could give her would cause her to never thirst again. She said, "Give it to me!"

John 4:16-19

Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.

The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband:

For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.

The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.

Suddenly Jesus said, "Go and call thy husband." If Jesus knew she had no husband, why did he ask her to call thy husband? When Jesus sat at the well, the Samaritan woman thought that he was just another man. She first thought that she was just speaking to another Jew; she did not know then that it was the Christ. Jesus wanted to prove to her he was more than a mere Jew, that he was the Christ.

Jesus was a perfect Oriental in his personality because he grew up in that culture. If you want to prove that you are a holy man in the East, you must demonstrate your wisdom. In the East, when a man of God wants to impress a person, he tells them their whole life history. If you tell of future events, they won't believe,

you have to tell them past events. This is the Eastern way of prophets.

Jesus Christ knew the answer he would get when he asked her to go and find her husband. Jesus adopted the Oriental method of proving he was a man of God by telling the woman that she had no husband. Jesus told the woman her life story, her entire background. She wouldn't have believed him if he had merely said he was a prophet. Jesus Christ told the woman about her life in order to convince her that he was a prophet. That's why he asked her about her husband even though he knew she didn't have one.

Western preachers preach that the woman at the well is a bad, immoral woman. Westerners teach that the woman had five husbands and was now living in sin with a man. That's the way those who do not understand culture and custom talk about her according to the commentaries. There are other women whose characters have been blackened by Western private interpretation: in Joshua, Rahab the harlot; in Judges, Jael the wife of Haber.

Where does it say she's living with another man? People think that this woman had five husbands and now had a man living with her to whom she was not married—that she was a prostitute. If she had been, don't you think Jesus would have told her so? Jesus never mentioned sin.

If that woman had been living in sin, Jesus would have been the first to say it. Jesus said not one word to the woman about sin. He never compromised sin in other records in the gospels. Jesus never overlooked sin; he helped people to get out of their sin, like the woman taken in adultery. Jesus does not say the woman at the well is living in sin. Jesus agrees with her, confirming her honesty, “. . .and he whom thou now hast is not thy

husband.” If she were living with another man, Jesus would have said to her, “You are speaking lies.” But Jesus never said such a thing. We only presume so. She was not living in sin, for Jesus would have told her to repent of her sin.

Other people say that she was a prostitute because she came to the well at the heat of the day. They say she was living in sin and didn’t want the other women to see her. The Bible does not say that she was a prostitute.

The woman at the well was a good woman of dignity and character. Jacob’s well was a public well in the city. If the Samaritan woman were not respectable, if she had been a prostitute, she wouldn’t have been allowed to draw water from Jacob’s well, which was a respectable well.

Easterners mind their own business and others when they are wrong. In the East, they check people out to try and help them. In the West, people just bark and bite, but don’t talk to the person about it. Everyone checks everybody else out to make sure they’re walking the way they’re supposed to be, especially the children. There are very few juvenile crimes in India among the high caste, which has 300 million people in it. They nip it in the bud in India. They’re spiritually oriented, not materially oriented.

The second you suspect a woman to be a prostitute, you can go and check on her—go talk to her yourself. If you think she’s a prostitute, you reprove her and/or bring her to the elders. You would tell her she must avoid even the appearance of evil. If she doesn’t listen, you go back with two witnesses to confirm it; if she still persists in doing evil, you take her before the elders of the gate. The elders will tell her that if she continues to do so, they’ll pass sanctions against her. No one would help

her then; they won't sell to her, etc. They make it hard on her and run her out of the city. Had the woman at the well been a prostitute, she would have been living outside the city. Liquor shops, pigs, lepers, and prostitutes are kept away from the normal living places, about three miles outside of town. In the big cities, things are different. This is talking of village life. If a woman is found to be a prostitute, they will put her out of the city and tell all of the merchants not to do any business with her. She would be excommunicated from the community. Part of that excommunication would have prohibited her from using the well. When a person gave up the sin, then she could come back. In the East, a person is always corrected. They have less crime and disobedience due to this.

Just because this woman was at the well at noon does not mean that she was a prostitute. Going to the well in the heat of the day is not a valid excuse. Unmarried women go to the well at all times. The women in the East usually all go there together in the early morning in a group of maybe twenty or thirty to draw water. But if something comes up and they cannot go, then they will go by themselves when it is more convenient for them to do so at some other time during the day when they need water.

Is there something wrong with being married five times? She was going to get married. Courting only goes on among Samaritan tribes in the East. Only the Samaritans believed in courting; no other Easterners believed in it. This is why she was dating. High caste Hindu girls are not seen by boys after the age of twelve. They believe strongly in the sanctity of virginity. Hindus have only one wife, but other Indian groups and Moham-medans have more than one wife. In special instances they may have another wife. If his wife has leprosy, is unable to have children or incapable of being a wife

because of some disease; the man may request of his wife to marry another woman, especially chosen by his first wife, and she usually chooses her own sister. But this is a very extraordinary instance. Women are never permitted to have more than one husband.

John 4:20

Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

This Samaritan woman has been visiting with Jesus at Jacob's well about spiritual matters, and has become convinced that he is at least a prophet because he has been able to tell her things about herself which he had no way of knowing except by a supernatural way.

Now that the Samaritan woman understands that she is talking to a man of God, she wants to straighten out a question of theology, which has been bothering her. The Samaritans go up into a holy mountain to worship; the Judeans say that one must go to Jerusalem to worship. She wants to know, which is right?

John 4:21-26

Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.

Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth.

The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.

Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am *he*.

Here we see that Jesus is at last telling her who he is; he has talked with her enough until she is ready to understand and accept his statement, "I am he." He did not, you notice, rush up to her at the first and say, "Give me a drink because I am the Messiah."

John 4:27

And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?

The disciples went to the village of Sica (about three miles away) to buy bread. When they came back, they marveled because he talked to the woman. They marveled, you see, not because he was speaking to a woman of bad reputation, as some Bible scholars try to say, but because he was speaking to a woman contrary to the custom. Jesus talked with sinners all of the time. Had this woman been a sinner, it would not have surprised the disciples to see Jesus talk to her.

In the East, men cannot talk to women on the public thoroughfare. Even a husband can't talk to his wife; he must take her aside and whisper just a word to her. It is bad manners to talk to a woman on the street. The only way to talk to a woman on the street is to ask for water. They believe that if you give water to someone to drink, you will have a reward in heaven. If you ask a woman for water, you are giving her the privilege of serving God and getting a reward in heaven. (The woman can also ask the man to go and get some water.) A woman will go to the nearest water source and bring it to you. After asking for water, Jesus should not have continued to talk with her in the public thoroughfare.

John 4:28a

The woman then left her waterpot. . .

Here is a statement of tremendous significance. These pots are very valuable to the Eastern people. No Easterner ever leaves a pot at the well, whole or broken. If a woman is informed of her husband's death while she is at the well, she still does not leave her pot behind because leaving the pot means forsaking the human being, to the Easterner. If a woman goes to the well and someone runs after her and tells her that her husband is dying, she simply cannot leave her pot at the well. Even at the risk of death, the woman must bring the pot home.

You see, the waterpot of the household is a sacred object in the East. It has little monetary value, but is guarded carefully because of its sentimental and sacramental value. The waterpot costs only about 8-10¢ in coin; it is made of clay by the potter, baked in a kiln, and it becomes red. It holds about three gallons of water, and it is carried on the Eastern women's heads. Women carry water in these "pitchers" while the men carry water in goatskins. Orientals feel that the clay of the pot signifies the clay that is our body; the water within the pot corresponds to God's spirit within us. The human body is believed to be the vessel in which God is dwelling, spiritually. The earthen vessel is like unto the body and it is never left behind for any reason. It is symbolic of leaving her physical body behind her.

You would just never leave the pot at the well—no matter what. When the pot is broken, you still have to take every piece of the pot home. If you leave the pot at the well, you are ostracized in the community. To forsake a waterpot at the well is considered a disgrace and that woman would have to face it the rest of her life. In other words, she had forsaken God. If the pot breaks at the well, all bits and pieces that can be salvaged are collected and used for the good of mankind. Every bit is useable.

These broken pieces are referred to as potsherd. It is used for various things. The smaller pieces are carried home. The smallest pieces are used for scraping the sores or boils on someone's body. They believe that there is a healing chemical in it. Job used a potsherd (Job 2:8⁴). Medium sized pieces are left at the well and put near lakes and ponds to be used by strangers to drink from. People passing by dip the potsherd into the water and drink from the potsherd. Larger pieces are used to carry fire from house to house. If there are medium-sized pieces, they are used to carry coals of fire from house to house in the morning. Some of the people in the East live in mud houses. They do not have matchboxes. One woman of the community lights her fire first, and then everyone else gets their fire from her. A boy in the community is engaged to go to this woman's home in the morning and get a certain amount of coals of fire. The coals are put on the potsherd, and the boy carries the potsherd on his head. (He protects his head from the heat by placing a cloth there.) He carries the coals from house to house so that each house can be supplied with fire. This is the meaning of ". . . thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head," in Romans 12:20. These coals warm the head and heart as they are carried from house to house. So if you do good to one who has done you harm, you warm their heart.—*See also: Cities and Villages—Coals of Fire.*

The women of the village where this Samaritan woman lived would never, never make the mistake of leaving the waterpot behind them at the well to go someplace else. To do so would bring shame upon the household. It would bring severe ridicule upon them. It was not sociably acceptable. Yet, the Samaritan woman left her

⁴ Job 2:8—And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes.

waterpot. Why? Because she had found the Christ. Having found Christ, she was willing to leave the pot behind and hasten to tell others about it. She was ready to bear all the insults of society. She forgot all traditions and all man made systems. She forsook all for Christ. She didn't care what anybody said when she left the pot because she'd seen her lord face to face. When salvation and Christ is real to you, you will talk about it. God is only a religion to us today, not a way of life. She was unaffected by all the humiliation that might have resulted, and of her own will, she ran into the city.

We as Christians should be willing to leave behind our "waterpots" and go forth to tell others about Christ! How many times have we forsaken something to deliver the message of God to somebody else? We make excuses because we care more about what men think than what God's Word says. When we are centered in Christ, we no longer need to be concerned with the consequences of life. We believe in Christ, so Christ will take our consequences.

John 4:28-30

The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men,

Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?

Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.

This indicates that this Samaritan woman was of good virtue and was highly respected in her village. If she had not been, she would never have been able to approach the men of the city for they would not have listened to her or believed her when she told them to come and see a man who was the Christ. She was respectable, a great philosopher and wonderfully dignified woman. Any woman of character, any man of standing, if they bring a message can talk to anyone in the street. A

preacher can talk to a woman in the street. A philosopher can talk to a man in the street and vice versa. This is the only time you can talk in the street, other than drawing water at the well. Had she been a sinful woman, she couldn't even have gotten into the city nor would anyone have listened to her. Because of this one woman, we find that many of the Samaritans of the city believed that this was indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.

What a fine accomplishment! What a contribution this woman made to her community! Would to God that every person who has accepted Christ and has been transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit could do so as well!

John 4:31-35

In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat.

But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.

Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him *ought* to eat?

Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

Say not ye, There are yet four months, and *then* cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.

At the time there were yet four months until the harvest. When it is time for the harvest, the fields are white. If there were four months still until harvest, why are the fields already white? Jesus had been talking to the woman at the well while the disciples were buying food. The Samaritan woman left her pot and went to the city to tell the people whom she had met what he had said. These people were coming across the fields, now, in their white robes to see the Christ. The people were

flocking toward him to see him because the Samaritan woman had told them about Jesus. They were ripe for harvest. The harvest of souls, however, was at hand because the Eastern people in white robes were coming out of the city due to what the woman had said to them about Christ.—*See also: Prayer and Worship—The Holy Mountain Zion.*

Concubines

Judges 19:1-3

And it came to pass in those days, when *there was* no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite sojourning on the side of mount Ephraim, who took to him a concubine out of Bethlehemjudah.

And his concubine played the whore against him, and went away from him unto her father's house to Bethlehemjudah, and was there four whole months.

And her husband arose, and went after her, to speak friendly unto her, *and* to bring her again, having his servant with him, and a couple of asses: and she brought him into her father's house: and when the father of the damsel saw him, he rejoiced to meet him.

Having concubines is an old Eastern practice. Arabs can marry five or ten wives, but Hindus marry one wife and keep several other women also as concubines. If a woman is barren, she will persuade her husband to marry someone else (usually her sister), but she is still head of the house. That's the only way Hindus have more than one wife. Abraham and Jacob both had two wives. They were Semitic people. Hindus are not Semitic but Arian. Their law says one man, one woman. But if the woman is incapable of producing children, she will persuade her husband to take another wife and she usually chooses her own sister. There is a special permit under these

conditions. The first wife is the head and that is why a sister is chosen—so she will be subordinate. “Concubine” means kept woman, but she calls him “husband.”

Children and Childbearing

The Barren Woman

Job 24:21

He evil entreateth the barren *that* beareth not: and doeth not good to the widow.

This verse of Scripture deals with an important subject to all Eastern people, and it is referred to throughout the Bible many times. Let us begin with a literal translation of this verse: “The wicked one wrongs the barren wife; and to the widow no compassion shows.”

According to Eastern culture, a wife is looked down upon if she has no children. Also the childless widow, who has no future chance of bearing children, is thought of as being cursed of God. Widows seldom remarry in the East, unless there is an available mate within the family. The account of Ruth, the daughter-in-law of Naomi, is an example of such a case. The barren wife and childless widows are kept separated from the rest of the family during the times of weddings and other ceremonies because it is thought that their presence may bring curses.

Job 3:20, 21

Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter *in* soul;

Which long for death, but it *cometh* not; and dig for it more than for hid treasures;

This is the very condition in which childless widows and barren wives find themselves. Many times the childless widows will simply go away: give their property to

the temple and start walking. This is called a pilgrimage. They just walk, perhaps hundreds of miles, toward some holy city. They beg food along the way and lie down to sleep most anywhere, when they arrive at a holy place; they say a prayer and die. They are perfectly healthy, but there is nothing left to live for. They think that God has taken their husband as a curse to them, so they want to die. (Really only the devil could inflict such a cause or be so convincing in an accusation.) If they die in a holy place they believe they will go to heaven.

In contrast, those who have children are thought to be especially blessed.

Psalm 127:3, 4

Lo, children *are* an heritage of the LORD: *and* the fruit of the womb *is his* reward.

As arrows *are* in the hand of a mighty man; so *are* children of the youth.

Sara, the wife of Abraham, was barren, yet in her old age after the manner of women ceased to be with her, she gave birth to Isaac. Minoah's wife was barren, but by a promise of God she bare Samson. Elizabeth, the wife of Zacharias was barren, yet bare a son by promise, John. Her comment after she had conceived was:

Luke 1:25

Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on *me*, to take away my reproach among men.

In the Western culture, if a woman loses her husband, she very often will marry again. If she does not desire to marry again, there are many worthwhile things she can do and still remain needed and acceptable in the culture of the West. God does not wrong the barren wife, neither does He lack compassion on the childless widow.

God is Spirit, and loves and blesses the lives of all those who belong to Him.

A Man is Born

John 16:20, 21

Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.

A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.

Our Lord Jesus Christ always spoke in Eastern phraseology, “. . .for joy that a man is born into the world.” She is not joyful just because a *child* is born but because a *man* is born. The Eastern people are very keen on sons, not that they despise their daughters. Hannah prayed to the Lord to give her a son.

Eastern people pray that the first child may be a son because the son takes the place of the father in the East. If a man has no sons he adopts a son before he dies, one of his own caste, so that he may act as his son legally. That is why many more adoptions take place in the East because of this cultural habit.

When a woman goes into labor she has two problems—mental and physical. She worries because she is afraid the child is going to be a girl. If she has a girl, the relationship between her and her husband are strained. They think it is not a good omen to have girls all the time. Therefore, unless a boy is born God’s blessing is not on the family. If it is a girl they just carry a common message to the outside that it is a girl. But if it is a boy they put on a big celebration. They distribute rice to the whole town. They give goods and clothes to hun-

dreds of people. The whole community rejoices. If a girl is born the mid-wife often keeps it a secret till the mother is strong enough to take the shock for fear she might die.

It is a tremendous joy and blessing to an Oriental family to have a son. A man may give all of his wealth to God (the temple) to have one son. He may fast many days, walk miles and miles as an offering of thanksgiving for one son. He may even give much of his property, but not to give proceeds to the poor, because he as an Easterner has been trained to give to the temple. (That is why Jesus told the man to sell and give to the poor rather than to the temple.)—*See also: Ceremonies and Rituals—Child Birth.*

Weaning

1 Samuel 1:21, 22

And the man Elkanah, and all his house, went up to offer unto the LORD the yearly sacrifice, and his vow.

But Hannah went not up; for she said unto her husband, *I will not go up* until the child be weaned, and *then* I will bring him, that he may appear before the LORD, and there abide for ever.

Elkanah was the husband of Hannah. Hannah prayed to God for a child and God granted her a child. Elkanah was going to the yearly sacrifice to fulfill a vow. Each year the Hindus go to their holy place—city. Each year they take the whole family on this pilgrimage. They camp along the roadside. They're supposed to be pilgrims and strangers in this world. They're marching onto victory, glory. On the way there, they're supposed to suffer. They can get a train home if they like. Hannah said she would not go up to the temple until the child was weaned. She said, "After this, I'll take the child

and go to the temple and there abide forever.” How could she do this? How old was Samuel when he was weaned?

There are two meanings of weaning: the first meaning is when a child finishes drinking the mother’s milk; the second meaning is when the child has been taught the milk of the Word. Both must be accomplished.

In the East they do not feed the children bottled milk like in the West. If the mother does not have enough milk, they get another woman from the same tribe and she feeds him. They believe you must give mother’s milk as long as you can because that will make the children wiser and also stronger. Some of the boys and girls keep at it until five years of age, just occasionally. They are not weaned until they are three to five. In the East, “to wean” is not just to give milk, but to give the milk of the Word. This is why the children sleep with the mother until she teaches them the milk of the Word.

The child sleeps with the mother and she teaches him to praise God. The child is presented to God at the temple after the child is weaned. It is the mother’s responsibility to teach the Word to the children. The mother gives the promise when she is married that she will teach the child. She doesn’t send her child to Sunday School. She teaches the children the Word, their religion.

Matthew 21:16

. . . And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?

Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou has perfected faith. When the child is able to praise God, then he’s weaned. Some take four years, others six.

The boys in the East are brought up by the grandfather after they have been weaned. He’s taken to the temple and dedicated to God. Then his ears are bored—

he is earmarked to serve God—he is separate from the world. Only Hindus have this culture. You go and stay with your grandfather until you're fourteen to sixteen, depending on the kind of school your village has. The grandfather is a family priest—a priest of God. Anybody who didn't have a grandfather was sent to the temple to live with the priest. The priests give the same teaching as the grandfather gives. Children who have no grandfathers remain in the temple where the priest teaches them. They sleep there, they wash the feet of the priest, they learn how to burn incense and help the priest dress, and they wash the priests' robes and clean the temple. Only the sons do this, not the daughters. Hannah weaned Samuel at about five years old and then took him to the temple.

As soon as the boys are twelve years old, they may teach and be like an assistant pastor. In the Christian churches in the East, the young people sing in the choirs. Some of them wear robes and help the priest into his robing. They help to do other things also. This way he learns the job of the priest from beginning to end. Any boy who is willing to do this work for the priest and learn these things may go to live in the temple. The Christian Church adopted the same practice to some extent. Samuel was somewhere around five to seven years old. Samuel slept next to Eli in the temple. He was able to answer the questions. When God spoke to him, he thought it was Eli—he was old enough to know.—*See also: Education.*

Honor to Parents

Mark 7:9-13

And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.

For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death:

But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, *It is Corban*, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; *he shall be free*.

And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother;

Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.

There was a controversy between the Pharisees and Jesus Christ. Christ was standing for the Word of God. "Honor thy father and mother" means support your father and mother every day. "Cursing" does not mean swearing. The word "curseth" is better translated, "does not support." "Let him die the death," is better translated, "is as good as dead." The translation should be ". . .and, whoso does not support his father and mother, let him die the death."

To "die the death" is to be treated as good as dead. If the son doesn't stay and support his parents, the community looks at him as though he is dead. That means let him die the death. The children were trained in the East that they must take care of their father and mother when they got old. In the East, every son has to support their father and mother; it is their duty, their birthright. Sons must earn the money and support the parents. Even if the father has a million dollars, the son has to support the father. When the son earns his money after he is married, he still brings his money to his mother. They all live together. The mother is the boss over all her daughters-in-law. The son stays with the father and mother until they are dead and buried. If the husband dies, the woman is not left in the lurch. She is sup-

ported by the family still. The women are respected and have rights in their family.

The priests of the Pharisees came along and turned this teaching upside down. They told the children to support their own families, their wife and kids, rather than father and mother. They asked how long they planned on supporting their parents. Somebody came along and said, “You don’t want to be tied down by Mommy and Daddy for the rest of your life. You should lead your own life, you must save all of your own money.”

Then the priests instructed the son to avoid this support by saying, “corban.” This means a gift for God. “Corban” means “that which is dedicated to God.” It is expressive of deep affection and reverence. The person addressed is clean, worthy of a sacrifice to God and sincere. It also has another translation. Suppose the son had saved up \$50 for himself and the father comes and tells his son to give it to him for a doctor’s fee, the son answers: “I’d like to give it to you, but it is a gift to be given to God—corban.” This was a lie taught by a priest so the temple got the money and not the parents. After that their father won’t ask for their money. This is the way they evade supporting the father. This corban answer freed the son from his responsibility. The Pharisees, Sadducees and priests taught the commandments of men as the commandments of God. Jesus said, “You taught people your tradition, making the Word of God of none effect. It says, ‘Honor thy father and thy mother.’ You have instructed them to lie.” They with full knowledge rejected the commandment of God, (verse 9) to keep their own tradition. Never let Dad and Mom be without; give to them and God will give back to you, Christ told the Pharisees! They were telling the sons, just be religious; religiousness will take you to heaven. This is a lie.

Children in the Markets

Matthew 11:16, 17

But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows,

And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.

In the Eastern marketplaces there is a custom. There are benches there where boys of thirteen to fourteen years old, called children, come and sit on a bench. One boy has a flute in his hand made of a reed, and plays a song on it. First he plays a song of joy. The people respond to the song and sing along. If someone doesn't sing, those that do sing would go after those who didn't. They say, "Are you so involved in materialism that you don't have room in your heart for a spiritual thing?" All of a sudden, the child will change his song from a song of joy to a song of mourning. They used to sing a song of mourning when a man died, if he was a good man. The people again follow the tune and sing along.

Jesus Christ's song is, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28). The people are so busy, so involved in materialism, that they haven't time to respond. They are too engrossed with the world.

The Blessing of Children

Psalms 127:3-5

Lo, children *are* an heritage of the LORD: *and* the fruit of the womb *is his* reward.

As arrows *are* in the hand of a mighty man; so *are* children of the youth.

Happy *is* the man that hath his quiver full of them:

they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.

These are children born to young women who are maybe sixteen years old. These children are stronger, fresher blood. Orientals get married early because they believe their children will be stronger. This is the reason Easterners get married sooner than Westerners do. The children will have more vitality, be stronger, and be more powerful; they are freer from fear and giving their life for protecting their parents.

A “quiver” is a sheath designed to hold arrows. A quiver full of arrows means “happy is a man with plenty of sons, children.” They shall not be ashamed to stand in the gate to speak with the enemy if the enemy attacks them (and their parents). The gates are where the doors are shut in the evening and opened in the morning. This is the place where the courts are and the elders of the gate reside. If anyone wants to fight you, you go to the gate and face him.

Psalm 128:3

Thy wife *shall be* as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table.

The Eastern homes are built with a courtyard in the middle. There they plant fruit trees and vines. The vines creep up to the housetops and bear fruit. They do this because they believe that wherever the vines are, the presence of God is. It is symbolic of God’s presence and also of prosperity. Some vines do not bear much fruit and others do. As the vines by the side of the house, which are beautiful to look at, are prosperous, so your wife shall be prosperous bearing much fruit. So the good wife will be as prosperous to the family, just as the fruitful vine in the vineyard.

The children are like olive plants about the table. Olive plants bring forth fruit up to eighty years, before they become old. It begins to retire after that, bearing no more fruit. About that time, little sprouts come up from the roots, all around the tree, maybe twenty to thirty of them and strengthened the old. They begin to bear fruit; they hold up the parent tree, which has retired, by standing around on the roots strengthening it and producing fruit for the parent tree.

Our children must be so; the children in the East are round about the parents. When the parents can't support themselves, the children are like olive plants and support the parents. When the son in the East is old enough to work, the father no longer works. If the father worked, it would be a disgrace to the son. Sons never leave their parents before their father and mother are dead. The order of prominence and responsibility to an Easterner is: mother, father, wife, and God. The son would be stoned to death for not honoring (supporting) his parents. Before the olive plants get old, a lot of olives shoot up from the roots by themselves.

Inheritance

Job 42:13-15

He had also seven sons and three daughters.

And he called the name of the first, Jemima; and the name of the second, Kezia; and the name of the third, Kerenhappuch.

And in all the land were no women found *so* fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren.

Job gave his daughters inheritance among their brethren. In the East, the father had to divide his property among his sons (by law it was required, while he was alive). That's why in the "Prodigal Son" the son could

ask what he did. Just as the Prodigal Son, so we as children of God don't have to beg God to give us something. We *claim* what God has given us—it is our birthright. All things are yours, you are Christ's and Christ is God's. We need only claim our birthright—claim our inheritance from God. It's all here for us! (Deuteronomy 28:2;⁵ Matthew 6:33⁶) Look to God and claim your birthright and inheritance which was given to us by grace. We become heirs to all God's creation. Our Father knoweth what we have need of before we ask. We need not beg—CLAIM IT. The Prodigal Son said, "Give me," which was his legal right. We just need to take it!

The eldest son gets a little more of the inheritance than the rest of the men in the family because the rest of the family will be under him upon his Father's death. Only sons get inheritance. The women get nothing, however this was not so in the case of Job's daughters. Even after the giving of the inheritance, the mother and father are still the heads of the household until their death. No one lacks anything. The sons and their families will go and live with their father and support them. If the sons wanted to sell their land, they would need to go to their father and check first. The eldest son takes care of the family upon his father's death. He supports his sisters and family. He secures the dowry for his sisters and finds them husbands. Every year the girl comes home and stays in the father's home for three months. She and her husband don't do a bit of work. They are taken care of by the parents. When they go home, they take enough food for the next nine months. There aren't any poor widows among the Hindus. They

⁵ Deuteronomy 28:2—And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God.

⁶ Matthew 6:33—But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

are always provided for. Daughters don't get any property, but are sustained by their protector (father, son, etc.) Everything is taken care of—from food to money.

Family Ties

Proverbs 27:8

As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so *is* a man that wandereth from his place.

A man who travels from country to country (migrates) is considered to have no stability, no integrity. Eastern people, therefore, are trained to stay close to home and are much closer to their families than those from the West. Eastern people intermarry and are tight-knit with each other. The Western culture often lacks the family life or tie in the home life, “her nest.”

Stability and integrity is the Lord Jesus Christ. We who are born again, no matter where we travel, should abide in him. Our place of security, joy and freedom is in Christ. But if according to our own will we forsake Christ and wander away, then we have no integrity, no stability and no security.

Eunuchs

Eunuchs have no respect among the male population. They are always among women. Eunuchs look like men, but have no gender. Their ability to be a man is castrated away.

Matthew 19:12

For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from *their* mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive *it*, let him receive *it*.

Eunuchs are despised, treated like women, sleep with or around the women, with no manliness about them and classed as women. A chamberlain, who is also a eunuch, is the head of the eunuchs and keeper of the harems. Harems consist entirely of women. Women can only have a eunuch as a servant, if it is a male. Men were never hired, only eunuchs. Being neither gender, they were considered harmless.

Joshua 9:22, 23

And Joshua called for them, and he spake unto them, saying, Wherefore have ye beguiled us, saying, We *are* very far from you; when ye dwell among us?

Now therefore ye *are* cursed, and there shall none of you be freed from being bondmen, and hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God.

The enemies pretended to be friends of Israel for protection. They were discovered but the princes decided not to kill them. Instead, they were made “hewers of wood” and “drawers of water.” It is a very menial task and you can’t rise up from it. If a man is a hewer of wood or a drawer of water, then he has been made a eunuch. They received a terrible consequence for their sin. These people who deceived the king were made this for the rest of their lives. They humbled and humiliated them so they would never leave. For the crime they had committed, that was all they could do. These jobs are ones done by servants. Usually these servants are prisoners. These particular jobs are done by women. This is humiliation to do the work of a woman. This is similar to what happened to Samson who was grinding the millstone, which was also a woman’s job. This breaks a man’s pride; it humiliates him.—*See also: Business and Trade—Vocations (Hewers of Wood and Drawers of Water).*

Prophets

God always has spoken through His prophets to the people, warning the people who have gone from God, temporarily taken to the things of the world and missed the mark of blessing. Such people referred to as backsliding people are spoken of by God through the prophets. They are always asking the people to come home.

The second chapter in the Book of Kings is describing the translation of the prophet Elijah and the beginning of the ministry of Elisha, his successor.

2 Kings 2:1-3

And it came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.

And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Bethel. And Elisha said *unto him*, *As* the LORD liveth, and *as* thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Bethel.

And the sons of the prophets that *were* at Bethel came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he said, Yea, I know *it*; hold ye your peace.

At Bethel, there was a school and a temple. “Bethel” means house of God, place to pray. “Sons” according to Sanskrit Bible should read “disciples.” The disciples that were gathered at the school to be taught are the sons of the prophets—students of the prophets. Elisha was Elijah’s disciple.

2 Kings 2:11, 12

And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, *there appeared* a chariot of fire, and

horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

And Elisha saw *it*, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.

Elijah had just been taken up to heaven by a whirlwind. A teacher in the East is sometimes called “father” because of respect. To rent clothes, garments or mantle is all one and the same thing. A mantle is usually a piece of white cloth three or four yards long and eighteen to twenty inches wide. They fold it over and over until it is four to six inches wide yet still the same length. They wear it folded about the neck and let it hang down to the knees or even below. When this cloth or garment is folded it is technically called “a mantle” in the Bible.

People rent the mantle in two pieces at times of death, sorrow, distress or anger, showing thereby, that the authority is broken, gone. Thereby the Eastern people indicate to those around them as to what is going on inside of their hearts. To rend the clothes, garments or mantle is always a sign of some great calamity or happening.

The word Elijah means “God himself.” Elisha saw the ascension of Elijah so Elisha did what every Oriental of Bible times would do; he tore his mantle in two pieces and threw it away, indicating great sorrow of heart and the authority of Elijah gone.—*See also: Apparel—The Mantle.*

The She Bears

During my speaking engagements, I am often asked about certain Bible passages that are difficult to understand. One of these is found in 2 Kings, chapter 2. I want

to just indicate the true Oriental meaning of verses 23 and 24, which has caused the Western people to error much.

2 Kings 2:23, 24

And he went up from thence unto Bethel: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head.

And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the LORD. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.

I suppose Christians for centuries have shuddered at this apparent massacre, and wondered at Elisha cursing in the name of the Lord, and generally puzzled over these two difficult verses. It seems to me these are two of the most mixed-up verses in the Bible, and I will try to tell how I feel they should be understood.

First, the little children coming out of the city should not be understood as literal children, but as natives of the area. Many places in the Bible, people are spoken of as children, such as the “children of Israel,” “son of David,” and so forth. Usually we get the meaning without any trouble that the word “descendent” is meant, but here we have forgotten that particular meaning for the word “children,” and thus we are confused.

The words “little children” does not mean children in the sense that the Western culture interprets it, six or seven years of age. Grown-up people in the East are many times referred to affectionately as children, and more especially as “little children” when grown-ups show their stupidity. These were all adults who came out of the city after Elisha and said to him, “Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head.”

Next we have the people mocking Elisha, and saying, “Go up, thou bald head;. . .” They are saying “go up” because the men of God often went up into a mountain to pray, and these people are mocking Elisha for worshipping God. “Thou bald head” is an insult comparable to our saying “empty-headed fool.” In the East, it is a common saying, that if anyone is thought to have nothing in his head, he is called a bald head.

In the East to call a man a “bald-head” does not mean he hasn’t any hair, it means fool. To call a man this is a great insult and more especially so here because Elisha had been called of God to “fill the shoes” of Elijah. When you understand what had transpired you can’t miss the importance and greatness of this happening. Elijah the great prophet of God had just been taken away and here was a “little nobody” called Elisha who was going to try to fill the shoes of that great man of God. How foolish could a man get, a man like Elisha, to think that he could now go to Bethel, the House of God, and take up where Elijah had left off? To them it was conceit and folly on the part of Elisha, therefore, they said “Go up, bald-head, go up, but it won’t do you any good. You are a fool.”

These people were mocking Elisha, trying to make a fool of him, but God won’t have His called ones mocked. Why did Elisha just not ignore them? Elisha could have passed on without saying or doing a thing but that again would not be the Oriental way of life. First, he demonstrated the power of God. Secondly, in the East, it is the responsibility of each person to check wrongdoing. In Eastern society when men or women are acting up, being silly or making foolish remarks, it is an established principle and procedure that the older people or a religious man must correct them, because they believe that if they do not correct them that their sin will be

upon them for not correcting the parties concerned. So Elisha as a religious man could not let them go uncorrected.

Now it says that Elisha cursed these people in the name of the Lord. I cannot believe that this is correct, for God's people are not to curse at all, nor even swear by heaven or earth, or any similar thing. It seems to me that Elisha must have rebuked them in the name of the Lord, which would be more becoming to a man of God, and is more in keeping with the rest of the passage. The Authorized Version says, "And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the LORD." The word "cursed" does not mean what the West has given it to mean. It means "corrected" or "challenged." To the Western mind it means "condemnation" or something worse.

Elisha said and did the following as every true religious man would do, "Listen, you call me a fool, don't you dare to do that for you are hurting God for I am a man of God and will prove it to you. Do you see those bears coming? You better change your mind and way of acting." He challenged the mockers in the name of God and two she bears attacked them. The bears only scared them. They did not kill or eat the people. This act proved the authority of the man of God.

"And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them." This is an example of the Lord sending a sign to confirm the words of Elisha in rebuking the people. God's people have their words "confirmed with signs following" (Mark 16:20⁷). However, these two she-bears did not kill forty-two people, because she-bears do not attack and

⁷ Mark 16:20—And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with *them*, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

eat people anyway. The word “tare” here is a holdover from the old English, which would be expressed today, “tear after” or chase. In other words, God confirmed Elisha’s rebuke of the people by sending these she-bears to chase the people away who had been mocking a prophet of God.

The teaching of children today is the responsibility of adult teachers, whether they be the parents or other qualified instructors. Respect for a man of God is of prime importance in the teaching of little children. If they do not learn respect at a tender age, how can they have respect when they are older?

Have we as adults really learned and understood God’s Word so that we can respect Him? Do we recognize and realize His love toward us that we are fully able to respect Him? We have heard many times that we can see the evidence of God in all creation, but do we recognize and respect the spirit of God in others? Only as we learn to know these things for ourselves, are we able to teach others in this generation so that this Word of Life may become respected now and in generations to come.

Poured Water on the Hands

2 Kings 3:11

But Jehoshaphat said, *Is there* not here a prophet of the LORD, that we may enquire of the LORD by him? And one of the king of Israel’s servants answered and said, Here *is* Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah.

What does it mean that Elisha poured water on the hands of Elijah? Well, when a man is studying to be a priest in the East, there is an apprenticeship, which the student must serve under the supervision of one who is

already a priest. Elijah chose Elisha by throwing the mantle over his shoulder and so was responsible for his training.

In the East, prophets are trained in a different way than in the West. In America, a man goes to a seminary, and then he is ordained. In Eastern temples, this is not so. The man takes the person he wants to take his place, out of the temple to his home to train him. There, he gives him all kinds of menial work to knock the pride out of him, and teach him patience and humility. The final and most menial task is to pour water on the master's hands. In the East, people eat with their fingers. A servant or a young child in a school of prophets will come and bring water to pour on the hands. To carry someone's sandals or to pour water on his hands is very degrading work. The graduation from monastery training is to pour water on the master's hands showing all the pride has been knocked out and humility is perfected in him. All people are proud by nature. They refuse to believe that someone knows more than they do. When Elijah was eating, Elisha had to pour water on Elijah's hands. Elijah being a great prophet taught Elisha on all things from the smallest to the greatest.

CITIES AND VILLAGES

Cities of Refuge

2 Samuel 3:33

And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth?

This is an avenging of blood story. Abner killed someone in battle and that person's relative, Joab, went after Abner, who fled to Hebron, a city of refuge. Joab could not go into Hebron to get Abner, so he called him to the gate deceitfully. Joab got him to step outside of the city and then killed him, so Abner died like a fool. Abner had security and safety inside the city of refuge. But by coming out to the gate, he was killed—he had no more protection. We call upon the name of the Lord to be saved. Then we live, move and have our being in God, which is our city of refuge. When we take our eyes off Christ, we are in a foreign land. We are miserable in a foreign land which is whatever is not peace-bringing and joy-filled. We should stay our minds on our city of refuge and abide there.

There is an old tradition in the East which is condemned by law and by religion that “iniquity shall be from children to children” for several generations. For example, if John murdered James, the children of James will be looking for the children of John for many generations to avenge the blood of James. Suppose that one day John's offspring ran into James' offspring who held a knife and said, “I am the true avenger of my grandfather James whom your grandfather murdered.” John

has two alternatives for escape: First, he can flee from James to one of the six cities of refuge (Numbers 35:6¹) where he would be safe until the high priest of that city died. Or secondly, he can throw up his hands and ask pardon in the name of a well-known, and well-respected person. In India, for example, perhaps the well-respected would be Mahatma Ghandi. James would answer, “On the merit of Mahatma Ghandi, you are free. I have avenged the blood and my duty is done.” After that, James and John become friends.

Then James and John go to Ghandi’s house to tell him that John was saved by calling on the name of Ghandi. They set up a canopy for Ghandi to walk under and they put garland around his neck. The canopy is about four to five feet wide and six to seven feet long, supported by two posters in front and two in back. It is like a sheet. John walks in front of the canopy, beating a drum and proclaiming what had taken place and how he was saved. Everyone rejoices.

Psalm 20:5

We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up *our* banners: the LORD fulfil all thy petitions.

“Banners” is the wrong word because a banner is just a flag. It should be “canopies.” A banner would be much smaller. You must tell whether it is a banner or canopy by context. During a marriage ceremony, the couple walks under a white sheet canopy four or five feet long and about three or four feet wide, supported on posters by two people in the back and two in the front.

¹ Numbers 35:6—And among the cities which ye shall give unto the Levites *there shall be* six cities for refuge, which ye shall appoint for the manslayer, that he may flee thither: and to them ye shall add forty and two cities.

We have been saved by calling on the name of the Lord. We should proclaim it. In this age of grace we are saved by the name of Jesus Christ. We should set up a canopy and tell people how he saved us.

Coals of Fire

Proverbs 25:21, 22

If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:

For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee.

Before the time of matchboxes, one family in the village would strike one flint stone against another and get a spark. This would catch in some cotton wool. He starts the fire in his house and makes coals of fire out of the sparkle. The rest of the community doesn't have fires at all; neither do they have stones to start their own. Only one family had these. This person who starts the fire supplies the rest of the village with fire. He is called a village fire carrier. A thick cushion is placed on his head (either leather or rags). His head is protected by these. On top of this they put a potsherd or an empty bowl full of clay. The coals of fire go in the bowl and he carries it from house to house where each woman will take coals to start a fire. He balances the bowl on his head and doesn't need to use his hands. When he gets to a house, he will sit at the door. Someone in the house comes with an instrument and removes a coal or two to start their fire. This man supplies the whole village. (If it is a really big community, two or three boys carry the fire.) As he walks the fire will not burn his head but rather it will just warm his head. This fire on the man's head warms his body, warms him all over, and even warms his personality.

Romans 12:20, 21

Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

The spiritual application is if you “heap coals of fire on your enemy,” you will warm his heart. You will change his thinking. Do good unto him even though he doesn’t deserve it. Fire is symbolic of love. Therefore warm your enemies with your love. Melt his heart with the warmth of your love. Read 1 Corinthians 13—Love never fails. All else may fail, but love shall stand. It won’t burn him up; it will warm him.

God’s Light**Isaiah 50:11**

Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass *your-selves* about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks *that* ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.

To understand this verse, we have to picture the Eastern village in the morning. Village life must be understood in order to understand the customs. Cities change, but villages do not. Villagers tell time by the crowing of the cock in the morning. The villagers go by the crowings rather than by watches or clocks. During the day they tell time by watching their own shadow. The first cock crows in the village at about 4:00 a.m., the second at 4:30 a.m., the third at about 5:00 a.m. At the second crowing, the workers of the land get ready to go. Women get up at the second crowing. They bathe, sing, wash, read scriptures, and start cooking. When the

men get up, they also sing and praise God so that there is rejoicing heard throughout the village. Farmers don't live on a farm but rather in town. They live in the village and go back and forth to work the farm, taking all the implements and working animals with them. After the people rise up with the crowing of the cock, some of the men come to the center of the town and build a fire for the whole village. The first man who comes, builds a small fire with his bundle of sticks, then another man comes and adds his bundle to the fire, and so on; and they all warm themselves by this fire. Everyone who comes here sits around and warms his hands. Before he goes to work he puts a bundle of sticks on the fire because you can't warm yourself from the fire unless you contribute something for it. That is an Oriental tradition. Anyone who warms himself by the fire must contribute a bundle of sticks. It is not allowed to just take and not give.

There is a great spiritual truth in this. A pastor preaches and warms our hearts with the fire of his message, but, like the men and their sticks, we should not warm ourselves unless we have contributed our share. No man in the East dares to warm himself by the fire unless he brings his share of sticks, but in the Church sometimes we want to receive the blessings without contributing.

Paul followed this practice when he was shipwrecked, as we read in Acts 28. The natives of the island kindly built a fire for the men, and Paul then went and gathered a bundle of sticks to lie on the fire. He was observing this custom of "kindle a fire" referred to in the first part of Isaiah 50:11.

Next in this verse, "the sparks" are mentioned. You see, the farmers in the East live in the villages and must walk to their land in the morning in order to till the soil. Usually they walk barefoot and they stop by the fire to

warm themselves. The roads are not good. It might just be a path big enough for only one man at a time. When they are ready to walk to the fields, they need a light to guide their path so that they will not step on scorpions or snakes with their bare feet. In order to light their way, these men take a rope made of coconut bark and light the end of it at the fire in the center of the village. It is as thick as four fingers and about seven inches long. They blow on this burning rope to send out sparks ahead of themselves to light the way. They usually start out while it is still dark so they will be there by the time it is light enough to begin work. They take their equipment on their shoulders and lead the oxen, if they have any, to the field. They make the fire burn brightly at the end of this coconut rope by blowing on it, and in so doing, some sparks come off. Every time he wants a light, he blows, and then he can see what is on the road. They walk in the sparks until they reach the farm. That is an everyday task in the East. God is saying that people are walking in their self-made fire spark. We as God's people should walk in God's truth not in the sparks. That is where we get the "sparks" in our Scripture.

God is saying that if we walk in the light of these sparks, our own light, we "shall lie down in sorrow." Is this man condemned who is trying to keep from stepping on something dangerous by lighting his way to the field? No, not really. God is using this familiar illustration from the everyday life of the people to teach them a higher truth. He is saying that if we try to walk in the light of our own knowledge, instead of walking in God's light, we will lie down in sorrow. But if we walk in God's light, we have victory, joy and peace; we are more than conquerors.

God is illustrating how His people try to walk in the

feeble light of their own wisdom, which is foolishness. They try to use their own self-made wisdom and devices to save them from difficult situations. They are defeated and frustrated from walking in foolishness. God has given His people the light of His Word, which is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path (Psalm 119:105²). So we should walk in the light of God's truth, not in the sparks that we kindle. Our sparks are symbolic of man walking in sense knowledge. If we walk in our own feeble light, we lie down in sorrow, defeat, frustration, and failure. Walk in God's will, not in man's will. Pray, believe and step out.—*See also: Agriculture.*

² Psalm 119:105—Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

BUILDINGS AND DWELLINGS

Housetops

Acts 10:9

On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour:

The “sixth hour” is noon. Housetops are where people go to sleep at night, where they pray (because they want to get as close to God as they can) and where they go to watch any parades or see important people going by. Housetops in big cities like Bombay, Calcutta and Madras in India are similar to the western cities of the world. If you want to know India, you must go to a village in India. If you want to learn Palestine, go to a village in Palestine and not to Jerusalem. It is important to find out the Indian way of life. Most of the village houses have flat roofs. You go upstairs from outside in the village houses. There is no shade up there. Usually they have a cement floor. People dry rice or most anything up there.

There is a verse from Isaiah which has great significance for me:

Isaiah 22:1

The burden of the valley of vision. What aileth thee now, that thou art wholly gone up to the housetops?

Eastern people pray on the housetops. During the heat of the day, most people go up on the housetops to pray, at noontime. They must not wear shoes to pray; they take off their sandals. When they take them off, the ce-

ment floor burns their feet and their head has no covering. They believe in suffering while they are praying. They take off their shoes because any place where they call on God becomes holy ground.

The whole town goes up to the housetops to pray during a crisis. Easterners turn to God rather than to other people. Whenever there is any infectious disease coming near a city then the people will all go out to their housetops to pray for deliverance. They pray that it won't spread. There are no divisions among the people when this happens. The crippled, the old and the sick are all carried up on the roof also; not one soul is left behind so that God can see that the town has "wholly" gone up to the housetops! The people do not say, "Oh, well, Mayor Jones is a Methodist and we are Episcopalians, so we cannot pray with him!"

How well I remember in India when Gandhi called for prayer; hundreds of thousands of people turned out. There was no building anywhere that was large enough to hold the people. They had to meet at the seashore to pray because Gandhi called them to "wholly" come out to prayer.

Countries needs to "wholly" go up to the housetops to pray together with one accord and one purpose for God to deliver us from the dangers and threats which are around us. This is no time to worry about denominational or creedal differences. Let us turn to God for deliverance.

Housetops are like public property in a way, because there is a way to go up from the garden. The custom is that others may go on the housetops to look down at the street without asking the permission of the house owner.

Also, the family will sleep on the roof during most seasons, and there may be a little room built to hold the bedding. This is also used as a prophet's chamber. In 2

Kings 4:10¹ we read of the Shunammite woman who made a little chamber on the wall for Elisha to stay in when he passed that way. He could go up there and not disturb the rest of the family.

In the center of the housetop upstairs is a ventilator-type thing made of wood, two foot by two foot. This is closed up with tin, so when the rain comes it won't fall through this hole. If anyone wants to lift anything up there, they break this window; kick it in with their feet easily. To break the roof is to break just a few bamboo sticks across. You can put it back without much expense or time to yourself. Remember the record about the man sick of the palsy? His companions let him down through the roof so he could see Jesus and be healed by Him.

Mark 2:4

And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken *it* up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.

People read this Scripture and think that these people broke something to get through the roof, but it is not so. This place in the roof is made so that it can be taken apart and then placed back together again for people to go from the rooftop down into the house. "Broken up" in this case is like when Americans say that they are going to knock down a tent or some other equipment which comes apart and then is put back together.

There isn't much room between houses. The houses are so close together in the villages that you can walk from housetop to housetop without coming down—straight through the village. In times of danger, the

¹ 2 Kings 4:10—Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither.

people can get out of the village by running across the housetops without even coming down. That what is Jesus said, about the Day of Judgment, “Let him which is on the housetop not come down. . . . (Matthew 24:17)”. He does not need to come down at all; he can flee across the rooftops.

Jesus told the disciples, “What I tell you in darkness, *that* speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, *that* preach ye upon the housetops (Matthew 10:27).” Announcements and news pass from one house to another by way of the housetops. The families will come out at night and make their beds talking back and forth from one roof to another until going to sleep. Who needs radio and newspaper advertising when you can proclaim something from the roof tops?

Cottage and Lodge

Isaiah 1:8

And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.

Among the fruits and vegetables cultivated in the East are grapes, cucumbers, etc. When the fruit season begins, at the time when the cucumbers are small and tender, shelters are built in the lands. First, a cottage or lodge is built. “Cottage” should be shack or booth. It is made of bull rushes and bamboo sticks. “Lodge” should also be a shack or booth. The only difference between a cottage and a lodge is the height. A “lodge” is four sticks in the ground, with a few across the top. A lodge is like a small manger type idea; it is smaller than a cottage. A lodge is a small frail affair where a man can watch the cucumbers, sitting down, so that his head is covered and protected from the sun. Cucumbers grow on the ground, so he wants to see just the produce and

see that the foxes do not eat the produce. A cottage is similar yet higher for use in the vineyard. A cottage may be ten feet high; a lodge may be two or three feet high. The cottage is higher so that a man can stand up to watch if the foxes try to destroy the grapes.

Song of Solomon 2:15

Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines *have* tender grapes.

The little foxes only want the grapes, but they end up tearing out the roots from the ground. The man sits on hay in the hut and slings stones at intruding animals.

Back in the Book of Isaiah, “daughter of Zion” is Judah, God’s people; they are as lodges and cottages. A cottage must be high because the people stand on top of it when there is no rain, and when there is rain they sit under it. Its roof is temporary and is easily blown off. It is made of bull rushes, hay, or coconut leaves. A lodge is made of the same stuff only it is lower. A man watching cucumbers doesn’t have to be up high because cucumbers lay on the ground. They watch for animals night and day when the fruit is almost ripe.

These frail lodges take ten to thirty minutes to put up and cost very little money. The owner of these does not bother to take them down after growing season. They put up the cottages and lodges before harvesting season and when the harvest is over they abandon them. He leaves them as they are. They are not worth bothering about. When the rain, snow and wind come, the sticks begin to get blown all about; this is the picture of destitution. When a man rejects God, walks in his own way, he becomes destitute of faith and nobody wants to mess with him because he becomes despaired, worried, miserable, oppressed, and depressed. Judah represents this, because she has become like a lodge and cottage. It is a sorry sight because Judah forsook God.

During one of the three feasts that the Israelites kept, they were required to stay in booths.

Leviticus 23:42, 43

Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths:

That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I *am* the LORD your God.

Nehemiah 8:14, 16, 17

And they found written in the law which the LORD had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month:

So the people went forth, and brought *them*, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street of the water gate, and in the street of the gate of Ephraim.

And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths: for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness.

The children of Israel lived in these booths for seven days as a memorial of how they lived coming from Egypt in the wilderness.

Building the House

Mark 12:10

And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner:

In the East when they build the houses, they gather all the material first and then they send for the builder or contractor. The one who is having the building built argues with the contractor over the stones that the contractor rejects. The owner says they cost him money and time to bring them, because he thought it was a good stone. After much argument, the builder says he wants the stone there—throw it in the corner. Jesus Christ has become the chief cornerstone of the Church of God.

Living in the House

Matthew 5:13, 14

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

Eastern people use stone salt, which is different from our refined salt. A stone barrel, four to five feet high and a foot and a half wide, is filled with twenty to thirty pounds of salt, and that is kept in the kitchen, covered with a stone. When salt is desired, the slab stone is moved and they dip a spoon in, take what was needed and replace the stone slab. (This salt is rock salt, brown in color.) Among high-caste Hindu, every morning before they cook, they wash the floor, and water goes under the barrel. The salt at bottom of the barrel is pressed down from the top and is affected by dampness from the bottom, and thus it loses its “savor,” saltiness, over the course of time. This happens to about an inch of salt at the bottom. By pressure from above and from dampness beneath, the salt at the bottom loses saltiness. When there are only two to three inches of salt remaining in the barrel, it is tested for savor. It has been pressed down

for too long and has lost its savor. When a woman finds salt at the bottom of the barrel, which has lost its saltiness, she puts this salt in a tray and places it in the road where people walk. It is good for nothing, not even good enough to go on the dunghill.

If we lose our joy, then the people of the world will walk all over us, people will despise us, mock us; then we lose the mastery of the situation, and we are crumbled down with the rest of the people who have no joy. We are no longer conquerors.

Matthew 5:15, 16

Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

The light is a symbol of the presence of God. If the light goes out, the belief is that God has withdrawn from the home. If the light goes out, that means God has gone out. The Bible calls them “candles,” that’s a Western idea. When God says the candles will be put out (Proverbs 24:20²), it means God will withdraw His presence from the house.

Most of the Oriental homes of the poor people are square buildings with thirty or forty people living in the same building. A rich or “well-off” man will provide a house for his poorer relatives. Usually the relatives live together with about six or seven families in the same building. The houses are divided into rooms and several people may have a room in the same house. They have good cooking facilities but not as good as some in the

² Proverbs 24:20—For there shall be no reward to the evil *man*; the candle of the wicked shall be put out.

West. A courtyard is in the center of the house, and all the doors of the rooms open on to the courtyard. Pillars support the house and there is a lamp stand and lamp on each pillar in front of all the doors. The owner provides these lamps and then the renters provide lamps for their own rooms. The renters pay only a nominal fee for rent. The ordinary homes have a lamp. The oriental lamp is like a deep saucer, three inches in diameter, containing oil and a wick. They keep the lamp burning all the time, night and day. The wick in these lamps is made of cotton and called flax. When the oil burns out, the lamp lets off a smell. This is known as smoking flax. They think of the smell as the burning of flesh and it means that they are being angry, spiteful and upset. Sometimes when the oil is gone and the wick smells, the women get up and quench the wick to make it burn better instead of pouring on more oil. But the wick soon starts to burn again and unless she pours in more oil, she has to get up quite frequently. They call this way the easy solution; it's merely a temporary solution.

Every person has a lamp, which is put on a lamp stand made of wood. Butter and olive oil are used to light the lamps. Some of the people are so poor that they cannot afford to buy butter or olive oil for their lamps inside, so they sit out by the pillar eating and waiting until some other family comes and lights their lamp. If there are two families living close together and they have had a fight or some other disagreement, the one woman may decide that none of the light from her lamp should fall on these people. She may retaliate by covering their lamp with a shade (not a real bushel basket), or by setting something in front of the lamp, and thus prevent the light from falling on the other family. She may not, by law, remove the light; but she may keep the tenants from receiving the benefit of it. Cane baskets are prevalent in the East. It would allow only flickering light to come

through. Jesus was instructing the Jews to let the spiritual light that they had shine before all men. They had been keeping it shaded from the Gentiles. God wants the whole light to shine, not just a flickering light. This is what Jesus meant by hiding your light under a bushel.

The Temple

Nehemiah 8:5

And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up:

In the East, preaching is done from the pulpit. The minister climbs the steps to lecture, and stands in the pulpit to preach. When the Word of God is read, everyone stands up.

Nehemiah 9:3, 4

And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the LORD their God *one* fourth part of the day; and *another* fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the LORD their God.

Then stood up upon the stairs, of the Levites, Jeshua, and Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, *and* Chenani, and cried with a loud voice unto the LORD their God.

When announcements are given, the priest stands on the steps of the church altar. The steps to the altar are called “stairs.” The man who is going to preach stands with his back to the altar looking at the people.

Women in the Eastern churches sit on one side; the men sit on the other side, even if they are married. The Hindu temples have the men first, then the women, then the young men, and then the girls. They stand in the Hindu church; they feel they must stand in the house of God. Eastern churches and temples are built with a “Holy

of Holies.” The choir stands in one corner of the Holy of Holies. The priests sit to another side where there is a screen. Their congregation cannot see what is going on in there for a while. When they have it arranged, the sacraments, robing, etc., then the veil is drawn. It is always closed when the priest is busy preparing something for the people. The choirboys are chosen from the audience when they arrive, like a “pick-up” choir. The food, which is sacrificed to the Lord, was given to the priests. The priests and choir eat together of the sacrificial meal. Many boys about twelve years old discussed with the priest because they were in the choir. Only those in the choir could eat sacramental meal with the priest or discuss with him. This is where Jesus Christ began at twelve years old (when he was able to speak to the elders) to talk to the priests.

When Easterners go on journeys to the temple, they usually travel with quite a few families together. The leader of the group is very quiet, because every idle word and sin must be punished. This means the leader’s people are punished, and he as the head of the family must suffer. The priest is the head of all of the families in the East. He is responsible to God for all the members in the family. People usually traveled in companies in going to or from Jerusalem—men, women, young men, and young girls. They walked in groups divided according to age and/or gender. When a family goes on a pilgrimage the grandfather leads—all the boys are one company, all the girls are one company, all women in the same, and all men in another. All of the men go first, the women next, followed by the boys and girls. That is how Mary and Joseph could travel a day’s journey without knowing that Jesus was not with them. They supposed he was walking with the group of other young boys. Jesus was not disobedient to his parents. He was

obedient in every way. The only time the families get together for the journey is when they eat or sleep. On the pilgrimage, they sleep on the floor. They cannot visit people. They eat and cook what they can (this is where “pilgrim” and “strangers” comes from), and go on marching. The distance between men and women might be a mile. Yet, for meals and sleeping they are all together. After the pilgrimage Joseph and Mary discovered Jesus and they said they had been looking for him. When the family travels with the company, if anyone gets lost or gets away from the group, he will go to the temple. The others will go there to look for him.—*See also: Travel and Hospitality—Jesus at the Temple.*

Luke 2:46-49

And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.

And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.

And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?

“I must be about my Father's business” should be understood as, “Where else can I be? You can find me in the house of God.” The Eastern translation is: “. . . Don't you know that I would be in the house of God?” The temple is always a central meeting place if a group gets split up. Children are instructed that if they should get lost or separated, to go wait in the temple for the parents to pick them up.

*Keep Your Foot at the House of God***Ecclesiastes 5:1, 2**

Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter *any* thing before God: for God *is* in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.

When you go to the house of God, the steps signify the condition of your heart. The spiritual meaning is to take care of your thoughts when you go to the house of God. Keep your thoughts in harmony with the spirit. Bring them into subjection. Stay your mind on spiritual things so that you will “be more ready to hear” God. Eliminate bad thoughts and expect spiritual enlightenment. It tells how humble you are, how repentant of your sins you are, how glad you are, how obedient you are, how refined you are, etc. The Hindus can tell all these things by the way they walk in the temples. Don’t be haughty and proud.

The “sacrifice of fools” is words uttered and actions done when nothing is meant by them in heart. It is lip service, idle words. Anybody can go and buy a lamb and give a sacrifice and have not repentance, or anything inside. Any fool does that. Giving a lamb is an outward sign of inward repentance. It says don’t do like the fool does, but listen to God and then do what He says.

JUSTICE

In the Eastern countries, there are three kinds of justice available. There are the judges, the elders at the gate, and the daysman.

Judges

The people have very few quarrels in the East, and they don't have police stations in every village. Crimes are not committed to the extent as the West. There is no drinking, no gambling, no dances, no divorce, and very little juvenile delinquency. Easterners are very honest people and don't believe in going to the law to settle matters. That is why they seldom go to court. First, they try to settle a dispute among themselves, then they go to the temple, then the priest, and finally to court—reluctantly. The judges, who are federally appointed, are located throughout the land at widely separated locations. They handle major cases. This is the type of judge that Jesus referred to in the Gospel of Matthew.

Matthew 5:25

Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.

This refers to the fact that since the courts are far apart, one usually must travel many miles to reach them. Suppose that you and I had a disagreement about land encroachment. If we could not settle the matter in our village, we must go to the court, which is 300 miles away. When the summons comes, we all travel together:

you and I, our witnesses, and our lawyers. We put all our belongings on the same ox-cart and start the journey. We all go together in one large group, talking together, eating and sleeping together. But while we are on the way, perhaps the second day out, the witnesses have been talking among themselves. "It is disgraceful for Godly people to go to court, which results in fines and punishment. If we can settle this matter along the way, it would be a saving of both time and money, and more pleasing to God." So they talk it over and come to a compromise. They present this proposed settlement to you and me, and if we can agree, then all of us can turn around and go back home (except for the lawyers, who go ahead and tell the judge that the matter has been settled out of court.) Then a celebration with a banquet is made.

This is why Jesus says, "Agree with thine adversary quickly while on the way." Even if you lose a few dollars agree quickly.

Throughout the East religious people think it is shameful to go to court. Paul says in his first letter to the Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 6:1-5

Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?

Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?

Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life?

If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church.

I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a

wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?

Elders at the Gate

We have discussed the federally-appointed judges. Aside from these, there is also a local type of justice for each village, called “the Elders at the Gate”; sometimes called “the masters of assemblies.” The name comes from the Sanskrit word *panchayat*. These elders are elected every three years. The elders sit in an office at the gate and offenders of the law are brought before them. They sit at the gate in the mornings and hear all the quarrels of the people. They are the “government of the people, by the people and for the people” so described many centuries ago in India before Abraham Lincoln made this phrase a by-word on the lips of American school children. They sit in judgment on minor offenses that may arise. They sat at the gate of city and took care of all minor offenses: parents’ disobedient children, debtors, drunks, etc. They nip the evil in the bud. This was the most ancient system of law. The elders of the gate will pacify, sway, advise the people, plead to them; and change their hearts, reconciling them. A court won’t change your heart. They will put you in jail and embitter you. If someone goes before the political court and one is punished and sent to jail, it won’t solve anything and when he returns from jail, he will be mad and bitter. Instead man needs healing of heart. You cannot heal the wound of the heart by putting a man in jail. Punishment is no solution. But winning, converting the wrongdoers is the solution.

In Ecclesiastes 12:11 there is a phrase referring to this type of justice:

Ecclesiastes 12:11

The words of the wise *are* as goads, and as nails

fastened *by* the masters of assemblies, *which* are given from one shepherd.

“Words of the wise” always refers to the Word of God. Easterners say that there is only One who is all-wise. “Goads” are the nails fastened at the end of a stick, which the plowman uses to correct the oxen. If they go straight down the furrow, they are not touched, but if they stray from the right path, they are pricked with the goad.

The “nails” fastened by the masters of assemblies should be “spears.” The nails go with the goads in the translation; the objects fastened by the masters of assemblies are spears. When the place is built for the elders to sit in judgment, a line of upright spears, which are the traditional symbol of justice, surrounds the area. The shepherds bring these spears into the judgment place from the surrounding areas; no shepherd may bring more than one or two spears so that all of them will be represented in the place of justice.

This verse is saying that God’s Word acts as a correction to us, and His righteousness and justice are made available to us through one shepherd; Christ is the Good Shepherd through whom God’s righteousness comes to us.

When complaints are brought before the Elders at the Gate the offender’s name is placed at the top of a notice and his offense or the amount of his delinquent debt is written beneath, and this is placed at the gates of the village for all who pass through to read. Thousands of people go there to read the notices. No matter how honorable a man was before, he is considered totally dishonorable when his name is placed on the board as a debtor. His entire family is rejected and insulted. He cannot even find work. Perhaps someone will come along and see that he is a good man in a mess and will pay off the balance of the debt. Then the man is fully

discharged. When the debt has been repaid, or the wrong somehow made right, the page is folded up double so that it is now hidden from the eyes of the public. The elders of the gate take the notice and fold it so that no one can read the debt, then hang it back on the board so that everyone can see that this man is no longer in any condemnation because he is fully paid. Someone set him free. He may ask the elders for the notice to keep. The notice was doubled (folded) when the debt was paid. This explains the puzzling phrase in Isaiah 40:2,¹ “. . .for she hath received of the LORD’s hand double for all her sins.” This is not a double measure, as some have thought, but folded double so that it is hidden. The sins are forgiven as the notice at the gates of the village is hidden when folded double.—*See also: Business and Trade—Bankruptcy.*

Daysman

The third type of justice available in the East is the daysman. We see a reference to him mentioned in the Book of Job.

Job 9:32, 33

For *he is* not a man, as I *am*, *that* I should answer him, *and* we should come together in judgment.

Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, *that* might lay his hand upon us both.

Job is speaking, in verse 32, of God when he says, “. . .*he is* not a man, as *I am*.” We know that God is Spirit.² Job is reaffirming here that since God is Spirit

¹ Isaiah 40:2—Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD’S hand double for all her sins.

² John 4:24—God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth.

and Job is a man, they cannot appear before a judge for judgment in this matter. “If God had been a man as I am, we can come together in judgment” means if He was a man, I could bring Him down before the elders of the gate to be judged as to why He did so. God is not a man that they could go before the elders at the gate or have a daysman between them, to put his hand on their shoulders and reconcile them together. You remember that Job is here answering his “miserable comforters,” the friends who came to commiserate with him concerning the loss of all that he had: children, cattle; everything but his wife. The Scripture says that these friends sat down and said not a word for seven days and seven nights.

The daysman is neither elected nor appointed as were the others discussed, but he rises up from the among the people as a wise man, well versed in the Scriptures, who acts to reconcile the wrongdoer to the wronged. So, in each village there is a daysman and his work in the village is to bring all the people there together as one people. He springs up in each village by his own goodness, greatness, kindness, and godliness. People begin to recognize him as the daysman.

He doesn't believe in punishing the wrongdoer as the courts and elders do. He is not interested in the law of the land, but in the love of the people. He is concerned that the court punishes the wrongdoer, but does not heal the wound of the heart. He believes the wound of the heart must be healed. Love heals through persuasion, graciousness, and kindness. The daysman is a reconciler. Usually, he is a wealthy man, spiritually, financially, educationally, intellectually—in every way. He is a highly respected and beloved man. He won't ask anyone's name, or sect, or caste; he is not interested. He is only interested in human beings and love. He believes that love

conquers. Love alone can heal. This is his basic teaching and philosophy. He speaks with grace.

The daysman is called “Mahatma” which means great soul. You have heard of Mahatma Gandhi, who became well known because he was active in politics, but there are many Mahatmas in India of whom you have not heard, acting as a daysman.

People take a matter to the law only if the matter cannot be settled among themselves. They would rather go to the daysman because he does not fine or punish, but instead, he heals the heart. A daysman is very hospitable. The daysman brings peace; punishment does not make peace.

For example, two families will take disputes to the daysman. He offers them food and hospitality. The person who did the wrong sits on his right-hand side and the other sits on the left side. The daysman seats himself at a table and spreads out several books of Scripture before them. The daysman has all kinds of religious books on the table: The Vedas, the Bhagavad-Gita, the Talmud, the Bible, and the Upanishads, etc. He picks up the appropriate Holy Book for them based on their religion. He puts his arms around them both and asks very lovingly what happened once again. Law is not love. The daysman will talk and show scriptures to each one until they can see that they are both in the wrong. He will convince both of them, separately with much love. The fact that this holy man shows so much love to each party melts their hearts. By the time he’s finished, he has both crying as he touches their hearts. He also gets them to kiss each other’s feet—a sign in the East of confessing sin and willingness to get right. This custom is to kiss one’s feet until you have forgiven him and vice versa.

That’s not enough. You must not remember what has

happened. All you shall remember is the love between you, not the quarrel or the forgiveness, nothing but love. Become new friends. The daysman will bring some food for the two to eat. It will contain salt and as they eat they will make the covenant of salt with each other. Start afresh. Both will leave as friends. If the dispute is over a debt, he will remind the debtor to pay his friend. The friend may not have it, so the daysman pays in his place. This pleases both parties. This process may take two to three hours.

This, then, is what the daysman does. Some of you may have a translation of the Bible, which renders the word daysman as “umpire.” Do you see now what a shallow and inadequate description this is for the “Mahatma,” the great soul that the daysman is?

In the time of Job, there was no daysman between man and God. As in verse 32 with Job “. . . *he is* not a man, as *I am*. . . .” God is not a man that they could go before the elders at the gate or have a daysman between them, to put his hand on their shoulders and reconcile them together. Job was looking for such a daysman—at that time there was no such mediator between God and Job or man and God. But since that time, God was gracious and merciful to send a daysman in the person of Jesus Christ. Christ is the Day Spring, the Day Star, and the daysman for us all, that we may be reconciled to God.

There is no other name given among man whereby man might be saved, one name above all—Jesus Christ, our Lord. Spiritually Jesus Christ can put his arm around God and the sinner and say, “Father, I paid the price for his sins, paid his debt, and on the basis of my blood he is reconciled to you.” Christ paid the penalty for our sins, the blood which he shed. So that blood takes care of all our sin. He advocates for us. So then the man ac-

cepts Jesus Christ as his personal savior and gets born again, becomes a son of God, not on his own merits but on the merits of the daysman who pays the debt for the man. There is nothing more to pay. Jesus Christ never stops looking after us, nothing is impossible—a living daysman, powerful and victorious!

EDUCATION

The education of a child in the East is quite different from that of a Western child. When the child is a baby, he is “salted and swaddled,” the ancient rite of dedication for newborn children. A Hindu mother often says to the child, “You were salted to pray seven times a day; you were swaddled not to be crooked.” These mothers truly believe the saying,

Proverbs 22:6

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

At the age of five, some Hindu boys are taken to the temple for dedication to God, according to their caste. The ceremony includes piercing the lobe of the ear with a hot needle; the child is now “earmarked” to serve God in the role to which his caste is assigned by tradition.

Now the boy is given to the grandfather of the family for religious training. The grandfather acts as the family priest and part of his duties are to teach the young children. From my own experience, each night another grandson and I went to bed with Grandfather, one on each side, and we were taught before we went to sleep. The next morning when we woke up, about five o'clock, we were required to repeat the lesson. There was a cane on Grandfather's pillow for use in case we did not remember the lesson (I remember the cane *very* well). After the lessons, Grandfather bathed us, and as we washed, we sang a song from the Vedas which entreats God to wash away our sins while we are washing the

body. Next we sat cross-legged on the carpet, said our prayers, and had breakfast.

This custom of teaching children in bed is mentioned in Luke 11:7, when the friend comes at midnight asking the loan of three loaves for the unexpected guest.

Luke 11:5-7

And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves;

For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?

And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.

Most Western people would say, "Why do you want, at midnight, three loaves for one man?" These pancakes are not like Western loaves and the custom is to present three to a guest. "My children are in bed with me." Most boys until seventeen years of age sleep with the grandfather in the same bed; all the girls sleep with the grandmother until they are seventeen years old. The Eastern custom is for the grandfather to teach about religion and about God to the grandson in the night. When he goes to bed, the grandfather tells him about God. At 5:30 a.m., they are awakened and taught to sing praises to God just as I was as a young boy with my grandfather.

In the East, there is someone with the children all the time to teach them. This is why they are all so religious. Westerners dump their children once a week in Sunday school, where the instructor knows very little. That's all the religion Western children receive. Western children run wild everywhere because the parents know so little about religion. Also, the Bible is never touched. They see all of the bad picture shows; they pick up guns that

probably were given to them by their parents. (Easterners give nothing harmful or evil to their children.) Child rearing is different in the two areas—even today. In America it is said, “Oh, freedom, give them freedom to express themselves.” When he will express himself in a bad way, there is no father to correct him; in the East, the grandfather is always with the children. There is not a juvenile crime in India among 250 million people. In the United States, children are not corrected. Therefore, prisons are built and judges ask the state to correct them by paying taxes instead of correcting them.

The children sleep with their grandparents. In verse 7 when the grandfather wakes up, so do the children. It is difficult to get them back to sleep again. The children are taught to concentrate and pray in the East. This gives them plenty of time to do many things. They meditate rather than talk. How can Westerners expect peace and poise within themselves when they do not have a connection with God.

Isaiah 26:3

Thou wilt keep *him* in perfect peace, *whose* mind *is* stayed *on thee*: because he trusteth in thee.

Meditation on God gives a man a sweetness, a joy, and he becomes powerful and has an ability to face the enemy. Spiritual power comes from plugging into the spirit of God. We must stay our minds to have peace. Westerners have not been trained to concentrate on God and the things of God. This is shown as they talk, chew gum, etc., throughout much of a church service. The grandfather teaches children how to keep their minds stayed on God while they are lying down at night and at early morning.

The grandfather also accompanies the Hindu children to school, watching carefully that they do not misbehave along the way. In India, any adult may correct or

punish any child in the street who is misbehaving. In fact, the parents will come and thank the person who does so.

From kindergarten through the third grade, Hindu children sit on the sand to learn their lessons. The teacher sits on a chair so that the children truly “sit at the feet” of the teacher. The purpose is to teach humility and to begin to show the child how to write the word “God” (Dev or Deva) in the sand with his finger. This is the centuries-old method of contemplation and waiting upon God. Judges and elders always used this device while praying and asking for divine guidance. In the Bible we find Jesus doing this when confronted with the case of the woman who was taken in adultery (John 8:6-8¹). His perfect answer, gained while waiting upon God and writing in the sand with his finger: “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.”

Children are also taught to revere the teacher, along with the priest, as being akin to God. When the teacher comes to the home of a pupil, his feet are washed, and he is given the best chair and the best food is served him. A tray of fruit and flowers is prepared and offered to his hand as he leaves, and an envelope with a gift of money is put at his feet. The meaning of this is: the wealth of the earth is suitable to give to his hand, but filthy lucre is only fit to be laid at his feet. This custom is mentioned in Acts 4.

Acts 4:34, 35

Neither was there any among them that lacked: for

¹ John 8:6b-8—. . .But Jesus stooped down, and with *his* finger wrote on the ground, *as though he heard them not*.

So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.

as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

And laid *them* down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

Age twelve is another significant time for the Hindu child. At this age he is initiated into sacred rites at the temple. The priest puts a mantle over the boy's head and whispers a special prayer. Hindus believe that they are "twice born" at this time, but it is not the same type of experience that Christians have when they receive salvation. At the age of twelve, some Hindu children are so well versed in their religion that they are able to intelligently discuss it with others, and even teach others. The Bible tells of Jesus doing this.

It is at age twelve that Hindu children begin the practice of Yoga, or union with God. They fast and pray, and look within to find God. They believe that the kingdom of God is within them. Breathing exercises are used; life or *prana* is breathed in through one nostril and evil things are breathed out the other nostril. These techniques are designed to keep the mind from wandering during periods of prayer.

This is the sort of training which I received as a Hindu boy in India. As a religion, Hinduism is probably as good as any and better than most. After all this wonderful training, I was still not at peace with myself. I was spiritually bankrupt; I had no peace in my soul. All of my religion was outward action and my faith was pinned to works.

Jesus Christ came into the world at a time when three powerful religions were available to the worshiper: Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. If religion had been enough, God would not have sent His only begotten son

to us. Jesus did not say, “I have come to give you another religion!” He said:

John 10:10b

. . . I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly.

Christ is the Truth and the Life, and the truth will set us free. “Religion” never set anyone free; only Christ is able, and him crucified.—*See also: People—Children and Childbearing (Weaning)*.

BUSINESS AND TRADE

Vocations

Stewards

Luke 16:1-8

And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.

And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.

Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.

I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.

So he called every one of his lord's debtors *unto him*, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord?

And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.

Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write four-score.

And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this

world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

The stewards in the East are quite different than the stewards in the West because stewards in the East are not paid for the job and there is no time limit for the job. A steward in Bible days was not a servant. He had full charge over all the servants and the household as well. He acted for his master in all matters. He was not paid a salary; the steward lives off of the people. He gets food, clothes and pocket money. He may or may not be a relative. Only a good man is chosen as a steward who is known beforehand, especially a man of a good caste, similar caste to them; they are very particular about that. They make a covenant of salt with him. Because of this salt covenant, he could have done anything with his authority in the household. The steward spends money, buys the clothes for the children, handles the purse for the boss, the servants are under him, etc. The steward becomes a part of the family. It was considered the highest of honors to be selected as a steward. He was given the master's signet ring which means power of attorney to put the master's official seal on legal papers: to buy and sell, engage and fire servants, allot money to the master's wife, appear in court in behalf of the master. In other words, the steward stands next to the master himself in all matters. He can forgive debts. It is therefore, of great importance that a steward be skillful, discreet, wise and honest with much love.

The steward in the record of Luke was such a one. He acted even as a benefactor, which was entirely in his province to do. Through the years he had kept record, but not required from the hands of two of the poor creditors all that was due his master. Stewards had this right.

Very seldom are Eastern stewards kicked out of this position. They stay a lifetime. In this case, there must

have been a lot of spitefulness against him or jealousy. The “unjust steward” should be “*alleged* unjust steward.” When the steward lessened some of the debtors’ bills, he was making provision for himself in case he lost his job. These debtors would help him later when he needed it. He thought some false witnesses might come against him and he would be fired. There was nothing wrong with his altering the accounts because he had full right to run the household in whatever manner he thought was best. He had a right to reduce the debts. He could have wiped out the debt. Instead he only reduced it. He didn’t squander anything on himself. He did it all for his employer. He had no set salary or working hours.

He became a member of the family if he was not already, and ate with them. Oil and wheat, symbolically, go together to make bread in the East. Without oil you can’t make bread because they always use it. This steward had right to provide for himself; a little oil, a little wheat. His employer checked the books and saw that he need not have done anything at all. The steward had done wisely—he worked within the law. This man did not steal any of his master’s money or jewelry, and hold it up for himself; he was an honest man. But he was caught through jealousy. Any man can save up anything from food. It is not a crime to steal food in India. He didn’t steal any money, only food. He wanted it for his stomach. He was allegedly unjust because he was falsifying the family accounts. He was only doing it in food. The steward made a provision to take care of himself until he got another job in case he was fired. He made provision for oil and wheat so he could have bread to eat. For if in the event the future would be bad for his master or himself, those to whom they had served as benefactors would then become their benefactors in return. It is an Eastern practice even to this day. So he was forgiven, because it is not wrong as long as it is in

food. He was not unjust. That is why his employer commended him.

Whatever we have is God's and we are the stewards of it. We should be faithful to make it profit for God.

Servants with Equality

Ruth 2:14

And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched *corn*, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left.

In the East, the servants eat at the table with their master, unless there are guests. The master also does not eat until the guests are finished. All of the workers bring their own meal and eat with the master. There is no difference among them. They are all on the same level. The master makes sure everyone has enough to eat. Sometimes he gives them his share. When they travel together, the master will not accept a bed from the host if his laborers sleep on the floor. He sleeps with them. If a master and his many servants are traveling and they only have one room provided for them, the master and all his servants sleep in the same room. If he is given better food, he shares it with them. If his host gives him a dish of fruit, the master divides it among himself and his servants. When traveling, he treats his servants as equals. (Jesus said that wherever he would be, there his servant would be also.¹ He makes us equal with him.) Ruth was given special favor here. The gleaners never eat with the reapers. But Ruth sat beside them and dipped

¹ John 12:26—If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will *my* Father honour.

her bread in the same dish with them, making her equal. The words “and left” should be “and saved what was left” for her mother-in-law.—*See also: Covenant of Salt.*

Servants of War in Subjugation

When an enemy is captured in war, then the captor will have his captive lie down on the ground and he will put his foot on his neck. This means that the captive is completely subjugated to the captor.

Genesis 49:8

Judah, thou *art he* whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand *shall be* in the neck of thine enemies; thy father’s children shall bow down before thee.

“. . .thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies” is a figure of speech used before by other people, besides what John the Baptist wrote. It means that if you have taken a king in a war and have him as a prisoner and ask him to lie down, the man who captured him puts his foot on his neck. This signifies that the king is now a complete subjugated man. There is no way out—absolute subjugation. This man is your slave.

Joshua 10:24, 25

And it came to pass, when they brought out those kings unto Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said unto the captains of the men of war which went with him, Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings. And they came near, and put their feet upon the necks of them.

And Joshua said unto them, Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the LORD do to all your enemies against whom ye fight.

To put the feet on the necks of the kings means absolute destruction, submission. If you put your feet on

someone who is already down, it means that is the end of you. You shall rise no more. Those who God destroys rise no more. As Christians, we gave ourselves joyously, fully surrendered, to the Lord Jesus Christ. We maintain our freedom of will and surrender ourselves to the will of the Lord and maintain our own freedom in spirit.

Hewers of Wood and Drawers of Water

Enemies pretended to be friends of Israel for protection. They were discovered. The princes decided not to kill them. Instead, they were made “hewers of wood” and “drawers of water.”

Joshua 9:20, 21

This we will do to them; we will even let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath which we swore unto them.

And the princes said unto them, Let them live; but let them be hewers of wood and drawers of water unto all the congregation; as the princes had promised them.

These jobs are ones done by servants. Usually these servants are prisoners. These particular jobs are done by women. This is humiliating to do the work of a woman. Then to initiate their new life as a servant, they are taken to the man who conquered them in war and he puts his foot on their necks and symbolically is saying, “You are subjugated, you are under my feet.”

Isaiah 49:23

And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with *their* face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.

“Your enemies shall come and lick off the dust of thy feet,” means they will submit to you and remain in submission for the rest of their life. This is a figure of speech known as an *idiom*, not literal. This is similar to what happened to Samson who was grinding the millstone, in which was also a woman’s job. This breaks a man’s pride; it humiliates him.

The princes allowed the imposters to continue to live, as they had promised. Hewers of wood and drawers of water are old practices of the East. Eastern women don’t do hard work as in the United States. They don’t wash clothes, chop wood, etc. However, they do draw water. If they cannot draw the water, they have servants do it. Hewers of wood are people who burn the logs of wood for cooking. Men hew the wood; men servants. Women servants draw the water. Sometimes men are asked to draw the water. Women in the East can only have female servants—no men around them. Women can only have a eunuch as a servant, if it is a male. So anyone who is a hewer of wood and a drawer of water must be a eunuch. If a man is a hewer of wood, drawer of water, then he has been made a eunuch. They received a terrible consequence for their sin.—*See Also: Eunuchs.*

Potters

The potter in the East makes his pottery by putting clay upon a wheel. The potter takes a stick and he gives the wheel a push and the wheel keeps turning. The hub is in the center and the wheel lays flat and as the wheel is turning he keeps molding the clay. If there is a little stone in the clay and he finds it, he throws it out. Sometimes when the pot is finished, if he sees stones in it, he throws the whole thing away before it is burned in the kiln. The clay is always well prepared before it is molded.

2 Timothy 2:20, 21

But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.

If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, *and* prepared unto every good work.

Every home has three jars or vessels for water. The first jar is called the "vessel of honor." This is used to give water to strangers and visitors only, for this vessel is always filled with the best water that is cool and nice.

When you enter an Eastern home your feet are washed at the door before you enter the home, but they wash the hands in the second vessel of the three with the water that is in that vessel. The second vessel is called the "vessel of mercy."

Romans 9:22, 23

What if God, willing to shew *his* wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:

And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,

Usually the third vessel in line is not filled with water. It is the vessel which has the distinct markings of pottery of that district engraved upon it. For instance, if you brought something from Cuba or from Florida it would represent that area. Suppose you do not have a chosen vessel and a friend comes to visit you at your home, you go to the potter and get one. Before he gives it to you, he taps it to see that it has no cracks. Then he washes it, and after he is sure it is a perfect representation of the pottery of that area he will give it to you. That is why it is called a "chosen vessel."

Acts 9:15

But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

Romans 9:22 tells about “vessels of wrath.” These vessels are not kept with the three vessels just described. These vessels are used for castaway things, much as we use a waste paper basket.

The potter knows that he must have perfect clay if he is to have a perfect vessel. Stones are a big hindrance in the making of pottery. A potter forms a vessel, he sees no stones or blemishes in it, he fires it in the kiln, it comes out of the kiln and it is cooled, he taps it with his knuckles; then suppose it shows a weakness. If it is a big crack he may toss it out. If it is only a small crack, sometimes it is so small you cannot see it, but he hears it when he knocks on it; he puts this pot aside in the potter’s place of business. So the broken vessels are set aside. He takes these vessels he puts aside, especially, the ones with the larger cracks, and he fills them with junk. He tosses all kinds of waste into them. People used these broken vessels to store junk at home, or to empty dirt, mud and such. They are only good enough to hold junk. That is why the Psalmist says, “. . . I am like a broken vessel.”² David felt that he was like where all the despised and junk was thrown, and was only good enough to hold junk. I am a good for nothing man, a despised person, a contaminated person; this is taken from the custom of the broken vessels in the East and how they were treated.

Suppose a vessel had a real small crack, this is what the potter does. There is an insect in the East that sits on the oxen. It is a parasite; it sucks the blood of the

² Psalm 31:12

oxen. The potter collects and picks these insects off the oxen and kills them, catching the blood. Then he breaks some of the “no good pots” into powder and mixes this powder with the blood of the insect. He brushes it on the place where he can hear there is a crack. After he has brushed it on he puts it back into the fire and it will come out a usable vessel, so perfectly repaired that only the most skilled can tell it ever had to be repaired.

As a believer you are not a vessel of wrath but a chosen vessel of God, one of honor and mercy filled with His goodness so that you may be poured out for the blessings of others.

Fishermen

Luke 5:1-11

And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret,

And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing *their* nets.

And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.

Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.

And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.

And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.

And they beckoned unto *their* partners, which were

in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.

When Simon Peter saw *it*, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken:

And so *was* also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.

Fishermen in the East live on the seashore in little mud huts that wash away when the storms come. They move their hut from place to place on the seashore. They live from hand to mouth. If they don't catch fish, then they have nothing to eat. When they catch fish, the wife will take it into the market and sell it to buy rice and other food. They have no food laid up. Once a person washes his net in the morning, he will not use it until that night. These men caught nothing all night, so they were washing their nets. Once they have washed their nets, even if all the angels came and told them to try again, they would not because it was a bad sign for them. It was against culture and tradition. When Jesus spoke to the fishermen, they broke all tradition and obeyed his voice. Their nets were filled. Likewise, we should not come to God with our tradition, but rather obey the Word and our nets will be filled. It is impossible for God to bless us when we do not do what He says.

The Eastern fishermen are very poor. They have no land or possessions. Their only property is the net. They

have no furniture, etc. They cook in mud pots. The nets cost only about ten to fifteen dollars, but when they forsook their nets (verse 11) to follow Jesus, it was more than forsaking a million dollars because it was all that they had. There is a great sentimental value to the nets because they are handed down from father to son for many generations. The net is their capital on which they have lived for generations.—*See also: Business and Trade—Money.*

Publicans

Luke 5:27-31

And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me.

And he left all, rose up, and followed him.

And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them.

But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?

And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick.

The publicans are tax collectors in the East. This is a very disgraceful position in the East. No man will eat with a tax collector because they are cruel. They beat the people, take away their property and treat people very disgracefully. They hate a publican worse than an un-touchable as far as eating is concerned.—*See also: Plants and Trees—Sycamore Tree—(Zacchaeus).*

Merchants

Matthew 21:12, 13

And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast

out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves,

And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.

Jesus Christ did not drive the people out of the temple because they were making too much money. They were not desecrating the temple by selling there. It is not talking about exploitation and desecration here. The people sold these things as a service to God. The people selling in the temple sold at the porch of the temple. Before the porch is a small pond of water, not too deep, 30 x 30 (or 30' in diameter). Water is pumped in and out of here at desired times. Its purpose is for washing the people's feet. It is referred to as a "brassen sea" because around the pond is a brass plated wall (2 Kings 25:13, 1 Chronicles 18:8, Jeremiah 52:17³). After their feet are washed, the people come to the porch and buy whatever they need.

What were the things sold in the temple? Lambs, doves, incense, frankincense, balm, mandrakes, fruits, flowers and so on. There were money changers to take their money so that they could put the proper amount in the temple offering. All of these are in the porch and not in the sanctuary. Lambs are sold because every male child dedicated at the temple must give a lamb for sacrifice. Doves are there in case you can't afford a lamb. Then you were to give two turtle doves. Mary gave two doves when she took Jesus to the temple. Balm of Gilead is grease extracted from a nut for which there is no English word. This grease is supposed to cure all chronic

³ Jeremiah 52:17—Also the pillars of brass that *were* in the house of the LORD, and the bases, and the brassen sea that *was* in the house of the LORD, the Chaldeans brake, and carried all the brass of them to Babylon.

disorders and most ills (Jeremiah 46:11⁴). The people get it from the priests. Our balm is Jesus Christ. A mandrake is a kind of carrot that grows with barley. Women believe if they have no children that they are supposed to eat this plant and conceive. An example is Rachel in the Book of Genesis. In other words, the things sold in the temple are used in the service of God. Every time they go, they must offer an offering unto their God. (They go five times a day.) Everything was sold in service to God. Money changers were there in service to God. All selling was at cost price. All these customs began in India. People came to the Western world from here.

The Hindus were immigrants to India 5,000 years ago. They came from Persia and Media, otherwise called Arians, so they conquered India eventually and became “the bosses” of India. They took the Vedic religion with them and built temples in India. The oldest temple in world is St. Thomas. People never sell in the main sanctuary of the temple; they sell in the porch area of the temple, the outer court. They wouldn’t go inside of the temple and sell because of their respect for the temple. Those that sell there are not stationary. They may be there at one hour of prayer and not at another time. These people don’t sell to make a living.

The money changers were there to take the money and give proper change. These people were not employed to do these jobs, and did not stay all day to do the job. They had ordinary jobs, not making a living in the temple. All things sold at the temple are sold at cost. For instance, the bank teller has an hour lunch break and can eat in ten minutes. He spends the remainder of his time by going to the market and buying something and

⁴ Jeremiah 46:11—Go up into Gilead, and take balm, O virgin, the daughter of Egypt: in vain shalt thou use many medicines; *for* thou shalt not be cured.

taking that to the temple and selling it at cost to those who did not have the time to buy. The money he receives for the things he sells goes to the temple. The banker does not come every day for a certain amount of time. He comes when he has free time. Eastern businessmen are very dishonest; yet, they are honest in the temple. Sometimes even the rajahs (king) come to sell in the temple. Kings surely do not need money. Crooks and liars do not carry on dishonestly in the selling what they may do in the outer court of the temple. They sell lambs, doves, fruits, flowers, incense, balm, mandrakes. The people sell in the temple only for an hour or so, and then someone else may come. It is not sold for profit.

Animals are never sold in the temple, but on the porch. All sellers had to get a permit. This permit was given in understanding that: first, they would sell at cost; and secondly, they should never go inside the main sanctuary. If they violated the permit, their license would be revoked and they would never have their permit reinstated. Therefore, if the money changers had been making money or desecrating the temple, they would have been expelled from the temple or the temple officials would have thrown them in jail.

These men thought they would go to heaven on their own good works or merit, by serving in the temple. People in the East are instructed that they were to sacrifice nothing that they did not pay for (no free thing was sacrificed). Eastern people would rarely cheat in the temple while doing what they considered a service to God. Sacrifices were ordained of God, so they were doing a service to God. Yet these people were making merchandise of the things of the spirit. Spiritual things are attained by way of the spirit, not via material. These people were using the material system in order to attain life. Jesus Christ said, "My house of prayer, you have made it a den of thieves." Jesus was the way, the truth

and the life, yet those men forsook Christ (John 10:1⁵). The temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus in 70 A.D. Titus was the Roman governor. A prophecy of Jesus stated that not one stone should be left on top of the other.

If Jesus Christ had interfered in the affairs of the temple authorities, they would have fought him when he drove the people out. He did not interfere in the affairs of the temple. It is the duty of the temple authorities to check on people who exploit or desecrate. Had Jesus gotten involved in the temple business, they would have fought him. When Jesus drove those people out, they didn't fight him because he didn't drive them out for the reasons you think.

They sold these articles for the purpose of gaining eternal life, salvation. They wanted to gain righteousness on merits of their good works. They engaged themselves in service to God. Jesus told them no one could come unto God except by him: I am the way, the truth and the life. Jesus said he was the door. If any man entereth another way, he is a thief and a robber. Jesus is the door to heaven. These people rejected the very way to heaven by rejecting Christ. At the same time, they were trying to get there by some other way—the way of earning salvation and righteousness by their own good works. These were spiritual thieves and robbers.

Man tries to gain salvation by his way, instead of God's way. Man tries for political peace instead of peace in their souls. Peace comes only God's way through Jesus Christ, not through pacts with other countries. People in the East salute you with peace; they put three fingers together and touch their forehead, mouth and

⁵ John 10:1—Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

heart. “In my mind, in my heart and in my mouth, I wish you peace.” This is hypocrisy. Jesus said my peace I give you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you. These men are trying to give something they don’t have themselves. They try only to keep external peace; they never know the reality of the peace of God.

Tanners

Acts 9:43

And it came to pass, that he [Peter] tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

A tanner is a person who smoothed skins and hides. That is his main work. It is a despised business. One of the branches of the untouchables is a tanner. He is the lowest of the untouchables. In all the castes of India, the man who deals with leather is the lowest. Even the other untouchables will have nothing to do with men who make shoes or tan the leather. These men are supposed to be as murderers who killed the ox to get the skin. Even if he handles the skin, he is looked upon as a murderer by the Hindus and Jews. The people don’t even want the tanners to touch them. If the tanner has to, he can do work on you provided you wash your feet when you get home. They get some water and say a prayer then pour it on their head and body and they are sanctified. The Word calls this the waters of separation (sanctification). His skins (hides) are all outside his house. Staying with them is a miracle of miracles for Peter. To Peter, as a Jew, it would have been unthinkable for him to stay with a tanner, but as a Christian, that prejudice no longer existed. He was a new creation and was transformed by the renewing of his mind.

We must deal with every weak point of our life and renew that area with the strength of God’s Word. We

have received the grace of God to make us acceptable to God who overlooks our bad points. Therefore, who are we to think that grace should be withheld from anyone else for anything that they might do or be? If God does not pass judgment on a person, who are we to do so?—*See also: Apparel—Garments (Footwear).*

The Shepherds

In both the East and the West, the figure of Christ as the Great Shepherd of the sheep is the most precious and appreciated way of describing our Savior. However, I have found in my travels in the Western countries that the people do not fully understand the shepherd's way of life, and therefore miss some of the meanings from the Bible verses that tell of the shepherd and the sheep.

Of course the Easterners have other types of animals that they keep: donkeys, cows, oxen, goats, buffalo, and the like, but none of these animals require the special care that the sheep do. The other animals are very self-sufficient and are taken to pasture by neighborhood boys; when they are brought back at night, they are released at the edge of the village, and find their way home by themselves. This could never be done with sheep for they are like small children; the shepherd calls each one by name, and talks to him like a child.

We have the comparison of the sheep and the goats which Jesus uses in Matthew 25:32-46.

Matthew 25:32b-33

. . .and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats:

And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

Goats are not helpless and trusting like the sheep, but are very independent. The goat looks out after the flock

of goats. When a goat grazes, he takes a few bites then looks up to check for danger. Goats are cautious and take care of themselves. The sheep look down when they graze and trust the shepherd to protect them and provide for them in every way.

The sheep are kept divided into three groups: the males of the first year, the females of the first year, and the rest of the flock. The immediate family of the owner shepherds the first two groups of sheep, because they need special care close to home. This special care is required especially in Judean families because a male lamb of the first year was offered at the Passover and must be without spot or blemish. If these lambs were not guarded carefully, they might become bruised and therefore would not be acceptable as an offering. I believe that these three groups of sheep are the reason for the three questions and answers between Jesus and Peter which we find in John 21:15-17.⁶ Jesus says, “Feed my lambs. . . feed my sheep. . . feed my sheep.” There were three kinds of flocks, which Jesus was leaving to the care of Peter. The idea that some commentaries try to put forth, that Jesus asked Peter three times to test whether he would deny him again, is just guess work and imagination.

⁶ John 21:15-17—So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

He saith to him again the second time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

He saith unto him the third time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

Psalm 23:1

The LORD *is* my shepherd; I shall not want.

The shepherds love and protect their sheep. They love their sheep very much and take care of them carefully. The shepherd provides for the sheep. They will not let them be hungry. They do not want. They protect their sheep from animals and thieves. If a sheep should get hurt (breaks a leg, etc.), the shepherd carries the sheep on his shoulder and keeps talking to the sheep. He always attends to its wants.

Psalm 23:2

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

The sheep do not have green pastures all the time, only sometimes. They specially cultivate a green pasture to preserve some sheep. The shepherd knows where the green grass is. He leads the sheep to that place. Only the shepherd can lead the sheep to green pastures. Sometimes he must go for miles before finding grass. He knows where these pastures are and the sheep do not.

Sheep will not drink from flowing water; this is why the 23rd Psalm speaks of “still waters.” If the shepherd cannot find a place where the waters are still, he must scoop out a pit in the sand for some water to run into, so that the sheep will drink unafraid. Eastern sheep will not drink from running water, so the shepherd puts stones in the stream, to stop the water from running so fast. The shepherds dig a little pit in the sand where you get the water quickly, about four feet in diameter and about two feet deep. This makes a quiet pond where the sheep can drink. This is called still water.

Psalm 23:3

He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

When they return to the sheepfold, sometimes the shep-

herd must lead his sheep across a little stream of water of three or four feet wide, which they do not wish to cross. The sheep will not walk in the water. So the shepherd will lift one across and then the others will follow (like people following the crowd). Sheep will follow one another blindly even when it is dangerous, and this is why the Scripture says, “All . . . like sheep have gone astray (Isaiah 53:6a).”

Psalms 23:4

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou *art* with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

When the shepherd takes the sheep out to the pasture in the morning, he takes along his food for the day, his staff and crook, and some smooth stones in his belt. The stones are used in a sling by the shepherd to alert the sheep of impending danger. The sheep does not notice where he is going while grazing except to look a few inches away for better grass. When the shepherd notices that a sheep is wandering away, he calls to him by name. The shepherd will say to the sheep, “John, John, I’m going to hit you, I’m sorry. Your safety depends on your abiding in the fold. Your eyes are on better grass only—not on lions and tigers that might attack you. You might break your neck—so come back, John or I’m going to hit you.” If the sheep does not hear, the shepherd will sling a stone close by the mouth of the sheep without hitting the animal. Safety is with the flock. The shepherd slings the stone, after several remembrances, and aims it so as not to hit the sheep at all, but pass right in front to the sheep’s mouth. The sheep will respond to this disturbance and will then hear the shepherd and come back to the flock. The shepherd says, “Next time I’ll hit you; this time I let you go.” When we go out and look for “better grass” and forget Christ and don’t stay in the fold—the stones pass on us. The smooth stone al-

ways warns us to come back before we get hurt. Come back to Christ.

The rod is also called a crook. It is a longer rod with a curve at the end and with a sharp blade which the shepherd can use to reach up and get leaves from certain trees to feed the sheep with, in case there is no grass anywhere. All the other grazing animals may be starving, but the shepherd will not let the sheep starve. The rod provides food. The rod also symbolizes authority. You can see bishops of the Eastern and Roman churches carrying this crook and blessing the people with it (I wonder if they understand that this is the symbol of the shepherd). The English word, “pastor” means shepherd.

The staff which the shepherd carries is a sort of club about eighteen inches long made of wood as thick as ones wrist, which hangs on his belt to be handy in case he must defend the sheep against animals or thieves. The staff is for protection to defend himself and the sheep.

The crook provides the food. The staff defends you, but only when you abide in the fold.

When a sheep is hurt and the shepherd has to carry it on his shoulder, he keeps talking to the sheep to comfort him. The shepherd will say, “You are in this condition because you would not listen to me. I did not make it so, you did because you disobeyed me.”

The sheep are always looking for a patch of better grass and can wander two or three miles looking for better grass. They never take their eyes from the ground, like some people who are always looking for a better standard of living.

Psalm 23:5a

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: . . .

The shepherd also provides the sheep with food. When there is no green grass to eat at all, the shepherd pro-

vides green branches for them to eat. There are certain leaves which sheep love. So the shepherd uses his crook (rod) to bring down leaves.

When the whole world is starving, our God shall feed us. When the world produces nothing, when nothing grows, no matter how many depressions the world presents; our shepherd's crook stands for authority. He'll feed us from heaven. He did it for Israel, and He will for us as long as we abide in the fold. The rest will starve. He prepares a "table" for them even when enemies about are starving. Their enemies are lions, bears, etc. They are starving because they do not have anyone to provide for them. When there is nothing around at all for us, our shepherd still provides for us.

Psalm 23:5b

. . .thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Sometimes, in spite of all the care of the shepherd, a sheep will wander away and fall getting his leg broken. The shepherd always looks until he finds the sheep and carries him on his shoulders back to the sheepfold. He leads all the sheep into the fold through an opening or passage (there is no gate, only this opening) and puts away his rod, staff, and sling. Then he puts down the sheep with the broken leg to take care of him. When the shepherd returns to the fold with the injured sheep, the first thing that he will do is pour oil in his wound and bandage it up.

When the sheep reach the sheepfold in the evening, each sheep has a wooden bucket of his own. It is filled with water till it overflows. He doesn't pour for measurement. When we give, God pours. Provision is made abundantly. We must learn to give as a shepherd. We should give freely and abundantly. We are the sheep of His pasture. We belong to His fold. We are secure.

Psalm 23:6

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

After the sheep are cared for, and the shepherd has eaten, then he lies down in the passageway of the sheepfold. He does not trust an ordinary door. Someone could open it during the night, so he actually becomes the door to guard and protect the sheep. He does not trust a hired man to be in the passageway; only himself does he trust to keep his precious sheep safe through the night. The shepherds risk their life for the sake of their sheep.

Jesus Christ is the door of our life and we are the sheep of His pasture. Jesus said he was the door, if any man enters another way, he is a thief and robber.

John 10:1-16

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.

And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.

This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them.

Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.

All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.

I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly.

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.

The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.

I am the good shepherd, and know my *sheep*, and am known of mine.

As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.

And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd.

A good shepherd gives his life for his sheep, and that is what Christ did for mankind, he is our door—the door to everlasting life. He calls the sheep to come out and they do. They follow him as he goes before them. They will only follow the shepherd's voice, not a stranger's. They only accept the authority of Jesus Christ, just as we should accept no other voice other than the Word.

Inn Keepers

Thousands of years ago, there was an inn built in India for travelers who could not afford to pay. At the time there was no man to take charge of it. An inn has two portions: one is a place where virgins wait for the bridegroom to come (he must come through city gate), the other is for travelers to lodge for the night. When no

man would accept the responsibility, women stepped forth to accept it.

Joshua 2:1

And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and came into an harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there.

The innkeepers are called “harlots” whether men or women because when they first started, they couldn't find men to be in charge of the inns and a woman came along and said it would be a good business. It was required that the women remove their veils so they could keep a good account of the people and the business. Then they were called “harlot” because they looked at everyone and talked to everyone, which was against their culture. They served everyone instead of serving only family. Harlot means “one who talks to anybody and everybody”—in contrast to their tradition. Even a male innkeeper is called “harlot.”

Joshua sent his men to this well-respected woman who kept an inn. So the woman took the job. The woman took them up on the flat roof and hid them. She was not disloyal because she had faith. She covered them with flax on the roof and no one could tell they were there. They shut the gate about six o'clock or as soon as it gets dark.

When the Word says don't be a harlot, it means serve only Christ, don't serve everybody.—*See also: Women in the East.*

The Marketplace

Buy Without Money

In the Eastern markets, compound walls are built to

surround the market to protect it. The market is opened on certain days. As the gates are opened there are a few young old boys sitting there. One is playing a flute made of reed pipe while the boys sing to the tune. Those buying and selling in the market will respond to this boy's song, too. He will play a song of joy, then a song of mourning.—*See also: People—Children in the Markets.*

Just inside the first door of the compound is the market proper. At the beginning is a woman cooking, and selling bread (pancakes), and frying and selling fish. Two boys work with her with open trays. They carry fish and bread on this open tray throughout the market to vend the product. They use a feather to drive the flies away from the food. "Baker's lad, Baker's lad" is what the boys shout.

The other items for sale in the market are just like in the United States. The proprietor sits down and does not approach the customer at all. Then he bickers with his customer about the price of his merchandise. He starts his price very high. The customer shows every little flaw in the item. Customer begins to walk away and the proprietor begs him to come back. The proprietor begins swearing in the name of his God, of his temple, of his whatever, that his price is twenty-five cents. This is why Jesus says what he does in Matthew 5:34-37.⁷ They swore by Jerusalem, their head, or by the earth. Jesus said, "Have one price (yea, yea; nay, nay)." Quakers, for this reason, initiated the one price system. The cus-

⁷ Matthew 5:34-37—But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:
Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.

Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.

But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

toomer talks negatively to get the price down, but when he departs, he brags. Every seller shouts out about his product.

Water is very scarce, so a man is there selling water in goatskin bottles. So there is a water stall, a stall of the calves too.

Isaiah 55:1, 2

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

Wherefore do ye spend money for *that which is* not bread? and your labour for *that which* satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye *that which is* good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

The milk of the Bible is buttermilk, with salt included. It is used for the covenant of salt to seal contracts in the marketplace. These beverage vendors are in a line at the marketplace. Water is sold in the East during the summer because fresh water cannot be obtained by poorer people. This wine comes right from the wine press and is drunken just like orange juice; it is like grape juice. The merchants come to the market to make a profit. Each is calling out, "Ho everyone that thirsteth, come here to the waters, at so much per gallon." People buy as much as they want, then they take it home.

Sometimes he changes his call to, "Come buy without money, without price." In the East, on the anniversary of a marriage or of a birthday, people do not expect gifts. Instead the people give gifts away; others expect from them. A man considers his birthday a blessing from the Lord and gives to others as a thank offering as showing gratitude unto the Lord by making others happy. For it is believed that if the man can give others a happy heart, then God is happy, too. God prospers anyone who fol-

lows the law of prosperity. Whatsoever a man sows, that he shall reap also.

The man whose birthday it is, goes to the market. He cannot afford suits of clothes for everyone but he can afford to buy water. It is believed, in the East, that if a man can quench another's thirst, you make God glad quicker than anything. The man cries out, "Ho, everyone that thirsteth! Come ye to the waters, but without money and without price." It doesn't cost the people anything because someone paid the price for them. It does not mean that they are giving it away for it has been purchased by the man who has had a birthday. The Eastern people realize that some person is celebrating when they hear this cry. They will go to get their cans filled with water, wine and milk and the man who paid the price is there and they will bow and thank him. The man buys thirty gallons of water for his birthday, as well as wine and milk. The birthday man then stays at the stall and watches the vendor that he takes no additional monies for the water. He is still "buying."

Jesus Christ came to quench the thirst of man. He paid the price so that man could have peace, forgiveness of sin and salvation. God accepted it once and for all. Today all we need to do is go to God, open our mouths wide and He will fill it.

Dishonest Business Practices

Proverbs 6:12, 13

A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a forward mouth.

He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers;

The word "eyes" should be singular. It is bad manners to wink at all according to Eastern culture. "Feet" should be foot, also singular. How can you speak with

your feet? There in the market the people usually write with the foot, wink with the eye and also teach with the fingers. The shopkeepers, businessmen tell their assistants the price to sell things for in a business language not understood by laymen. If he wants to tell the truth to his friends, his friends look at his foot when the man to whom he is talking is telling a different thing than what he is saying. He writes with his foot. They write certain code letters with their foot. Suppose they are talking about the price of a cow. The man who is selling the cow sits down because Eastern shopkeepers always sit down. The man who has come to buy stands up. The man will offer a certain price and the other will write with his foot and ask his partner if it is all right. They will be talking and be putting two fingers down or two fingers up and only those who know how to handle or read the fingers know the truth. All three of these things are done by very bad business people.

Money

Tithing

Proverbs 3:9, 10

Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:

So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.

When the harvest is gathered, they eat some right then and there on the harvest threshing floor, and then take out one-tenth that belongs to the Lord. Tithing is not only among the Jews but also Arabs, Indians, etc. Tithing is provided for the benefit of the people; as you give, God will honor and increase. The priest does not have to ask the man to give the one-tenth. He brings it automatically because he has been taught from a child

how to give. They teach you that if you seek the kingdom of God first, God will multiply and provide an overflowing abundance for you—it's a law. Give and it shall be given to you. As you believe, you will prosper. Christianity is a way of life, not a once a week religion. Giving must be a part of your life. It is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35).

Taxes and Fishing for Money

Matthew 17:24-27

And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute *money* came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute?

He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?

Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free.

Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.

The temple tax was being collected. Jesus sent Peter to catch a fish and obtain money from its mouth. The River Ganges and the River Krishna are holy rivers in India. There are many holy rivers there. The people put an offering for the Lord into the rivers where they bathe, especially into the holy rivers. When the people go to these, they drop in money for an offering or a gold souvenir when they make a vow. When people get together for prayer, they will lay a prayer shawl on the ground and when they finish praying, they will make an offer-

ing. For them, prayer and offering go together—one cannot pray without offering and vice versa. They would also throw in necklaces, earrings, nose rings, etc. People make a vow to God and when God answers their prayer, they will take what they have vowed and cast it into the water. They do not want anyone to know how much they give, so they drop it in the water. This is a custom.

There is a fish in Eastern waters called a Musht. It is very, very tricky and hard to catch. You may fish for twenty years and not get one. You may go to a priest and ask him to bless you, and then you might catch three or four right away. There is a bag under its mouth and the fish gathers up and swallows anything that glitters in the water. It is stored in the bag. Peter and Jesus both knew about this fish. Jesus told Peter to cast a hook and the fish which would come first would be one with money. Ordinarily, a man could fish for years and never catch one of these fish. The temple tax was one-half shekel for every man, rich or poor. The amount of money in the fish's mouth was enough to pay the tax for both Jesus and Peter, one shekel.

Answers to prayer come by action on the Word, not just sitting. Walking according to God's will brings desired results. The downfall of the Christian church is not putting God first. It is no miracle that the fish had money in its mouth. It is a miracle to find one right away.

Interest

Deuteronomy 23:19, 20

Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of any thing that is lent upon usury:

Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury; but

unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all that thou settest thine hand to in the land whither thou goest to possess it.

When you lend something to your brother, you should not charge interest. If he borrows a thousand dollars from his brother, he should not charge interest. When he does it for property, a deed is drawn up but the interest cannot be mentioned in it because it is unlawful. When the man pays the money, he doesn't pay the interest because they always refuse to take it. They have a box in their homes called the lost treasury in which they put the interest. This goes to the temple. "Brother" does not mean your blood brother in this case, but the brother of your tribe.

Deuteronomy 24:10-13

When thou dost lend thy brother any thing, thou shalt not go into his house to fetch his pledge.

Thou shalt stand abroad, and the man to whom thou dost lend shall bring out the pledge abroad unto thee.

And if the man *be* poor, thou shalt not sleep with his pledge:

In any case thou shalt deliver him the pledge again when the sun goeth down, that he may sleep in his own raiment, and bless thee: and it shall be righteousness unto thee before the LORD thy God.

It is dishonoring to go into a man's house to collect because then the lender is acting as a master and not treating the borrower as an equal. Consideration is far more important than money. The poor people in India often have only one loin cloth around their waist and another cloth around the neck. This is used for a covering at night. The lender should not keep a poor man's raiment as a pledge overnight. It must be returned even

if money is not repaid. In the age of grace we give without asking a pledge.

Bankruptcy

Isaiah 40:1, 2

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins.

This does not mean twice as much. In the East a person going bankrupt goes to the court and files a list of his creditors and how much he owes to each. Then the court declares him bankrupt. The elders post this list at the gates of the city where every person can see it. This makes other people afraid to be in bankruptcy. In America only three are involved in such a situation: the creditor, the judge, and the person going bankrupt. In the East, all the country knows when a person is bankrupt. Then everyone knows that he is a dishonorable man. Much talk is made against him and his family. It is even hard for his children to marry. This disgrace is not lifted until he pays "dollar for dollar." Legally he is okay if he pays something like 25¢ to the dollar but he is not morally okay still. His payments are recorded at the gate.

Someone could pay off his debt for him. It's as good as his own payment. A benefactor might see this debt notice at the gate and go to settle with his creditors, full payment. This benefactor pays the court, receives the receipt, and hands it to the elders of the gate. Then the elders fold the debt notice over, doubled, and then all that was against the man is closed in. No more condemnation. They write his name on the outside and tack the list back up on the wall; that is being doubled.—*See also: Justice—Elders at the Gate.*

APPAREL

Garments

Easterners wear long loose pants, a shirt and top, a vest over that and then a coat.

Mark 5:27, 28

When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment.

For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole.

In verse 27, the “garment” should be “borders of his garment.” The borders of a garment are always embroidered blue. Blue symbolizes spirituality. Almost all the Jews have them, but the priests and religious men have them especially. Some of the people look at it and by looking at it they remember how the Lord blessed and healed them before (Numbers 15:38-40¹). When they touch it, they are supposed to get some kind of virtue from the person. However it is not from the person at all, but from faith in God.

In verse 28, “clothes” should be the “hem of his robe.”

¹ Numbers 15:38-40—Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue:

And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring:

That ye may remember, and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God.

The garment is a robe. First he wears clothing like under-clothing, on top of it he puts a pair of pants; next a shirt, which goes inside the pants. The pants are narrow like breeches. On top of the shirt he puts a vest, and on top of the vest he wears a robe that goes down to the ankles. It buttons all the way. On top of the robe goes a coat. On their heads they put ropes. The rope is made of camel or sheep hair and is about as thick as three fingers. With the rope on, you can be sure the people have come to surrender and not to fight you. In some parts they wear many shirts because they hide money in the third or fourth shirt. The Bible says don't take more than one coat. This should be, "Don't take more than one shirt." Anybody who has a lot of shirts, when the thieves come they will examine all the shirts for the money that is inside. The shirts button but have no collar. The shirts are mostly white, but some have colors in them. Most of the time they wear white but sometimes in the evening, when they dress up, they wear black and other colors. The vest or vesture is significant of authority and tradition. Very few people wear the vesture. They wear it for an insignia. (The soldiers cast lots for Jesus' vest because his authority could not be divided. The rest of his garments were divided.²) In Palestine, Egypt, Arabia and Mesopotamia, the coat on the outside goes down to the knees. If any man wants your coat, you can give it to him and still have something left.

Cloak and Coat

In the East, a coat and cloak go together. The cloak is a long, loose, outer garment. You put on a cloak and then

² Matthew 27:35—And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.

you put on a coat on top of it. No man goes out without a coat. They do not walk with only a cloak; they will be ashamed.

Matthew 5:40, 41

And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have *thy* cloke also.

And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

The cloak is a very costly garment and no man goes out without one. People sued or taken under suspicion will be demanded to give the coat. The coat is used as a bail bond for a criminal. If a man is suspected of something by the law, even though they may think he is innocent, they may ask to hold his coat until they prove his innocence. If the man trusts the law and is really innocent, he will not mind. Jesus said if this happens, give the cloak also. If a person is not guilty, he has no reason to be afraid.

Jesus instructed his followers that if any man should ask them for their coat they were to give their robe also. According to Bible customs when you get rid of your coat and robe you still are not naked although in the Bible it is called naked (Job 24:10³). You still have your “underclothes,” but it is an indication of giving your all. For in the East many times a man has no other possession than what he wears.

Coat of Many Colors

Genesis 37:3

Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he *was* the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of *many* colours.

³ Job 24:10—They cause *him* to go naked without clothing, and they take away the sheaf *from* the hungry;

Joseph's "coat of many colors" was really a "coat of heirship." If a father is dying, he calls his first son who will take his place after his death. All the children gather together around the father's bed, and he puts on the first-born son the robe of heirship. It is a white robe with long sleeves. He also puts the household keys on the first-born son's shoulder. The number of keys, maybe fifty, depends on how many doors, locked boxes, etc., are in the house. They hang on a string, half on each end, and they are draped across the shoulder of the son. Then the father blesses him. It is the same type of robe that Jacob gave Joseph. It was not a "coat of many colors" but a white robe. This is why his brothers were jealous of him. The brothers of Joseph were jealous because of what the coat meant, not because it was a better looking coat. Jacob loved Rachel not Leah. Joseph was Jacob's first son by his true love, Rachel. This is why he received the coat of heirship. Jacob was worried about his death; Joseph was in Egypt. The reason Jacob worried is that when a father died, his oldest son must be nearby him to close the father's eyes. It is a most affectionate ceremony. God reassured Jacob that he would go to Egypt so that Joseph could lay his hand upon his eye.—*See also: Ceremonies and Rituals—Death and Burial.*

Girdle

Acts 21:11

And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver *him* into the hands of the Gentiles.

Eastern people wear flowing robes. They put on a girdle, so that all the clothes are tied together, thus making

them ready to walk and run. Without the girdle, running is impossible.

Luke 12:35

Let your loins be girded about, and *your* lights burning;

Loins girded means they wear a girdle to support their loose robes. They wear the girdle so when you run or walk it will not hinder you. “Gird up thy loins” means “get ready to go (nothing should hinder you) anytime.”

Ephesians 6:14

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

The truth is our girdle and it keeps anything from hindering our walk with God. It is the Word. We can walk straight without hindrance because of the truth.

Footwear

Joshua 5:15

And the captain of the LORD’S host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest *is* holy. And Joshua did so.

In the East, shoes are removed for temple worship and for prayer. Why? When a man prays, the land he stands on is holy ground, because God is present there when they call upon Him in prayer. The Hindus do not wear shoes in the houses because they think of the house as a place where God dwells. That is why one part of the house is dedicated to the Lord all the time. (A light is burning there all the time, night and day.) Where God is, you must not wear shoes. In some places, people walk in church without shoes. You must leave your shoes out-

side. People do not go in the house with their shoes on either. The shoes and sandals and also the dogs, must be kept outside. Therefore, when you walk inside you wash your feet and walk inside with clean feet. When you go out, you put the shoes on, but first you wash your feet and step on the carpet. The carpet never gets dirty because you never walk on it with your shoes. Shoes are to the people like dogs to the Judeans, because they are made of leather. The tanner makes shoes, and must be located outside of the city because they are looked on as nominal people. This is why Simon Peter stayed with the tanner. He couldn't have done this before being born again. Shoemakers are looked down upon because leather comes from dead animals. In order to get their materials tanners must kill, which makes the Easterners think that tanners are murderers. So the tanner is aiding and abetting those who murder the animals. When we pray, we must stand on what God has given us. Shoes are not a plague.—*See also: Travel and Hospitality—Washing of Feet; Business and Trade—Vocations (Tanners).*

The Veil

1 Corinthians 11:3-7

But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman *is* the man; and the head of Christ *is* God.

Every man praying or prophesying, having *his* head covered, dishonoureth his head.

But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with *her* head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven.

For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.

For a man indeed ought not to cover *his* head, foras-

much as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.

When a woman makes up her mind to join the temple to serve there, she must live there. When the Hindu girl takes up work in the temple, she takes two months for vacation before that day for the bewailing of her virginity before she joins the temple. After two months she comes home and her parents bring her to the temple. The day she initially goes to serve, at the temple entrance, she shaves off her long hair. Most Eastern women have long hair. The glory of a woman's head is her hair. Therefore, she makes a vow to take off her glory and lay it at the feet of God. She shaves it once a month after this. This is Oriental culture. Roman Catholic nuns in a certain order, if you take their veil off, you will see their bald head. This is of Hindu origin.

She wears a white robe and removes all of her fancy clothing and jewelry. Now that she has no covering of hair, she covers her baldhead with a veil when praying or prophesying. If a woman has hair on her head, she doesn't need anything on top. Because these women in the temple shave their heads, they need a veil to cover their heads. A veil is a cloth put on the head—a part of the sari. This is put on when they pray and prophecy and not before. Yet a covering is not needed if hair is on her head. Hair is the natural covering. But if her head is shaved, she cannot pray without covering because she shaved off her God-given covering.

The veil they wear in the East is a big sheet that covers the whole head; it hangs from head to foot, with a small opening through which a woman can see. Most Eastern women wear this when they go out. When she does wear this, the Eastern woman is considered protected. The veil is a symbol of God's protection, security, safety. When a woman is traveling somewhere alone, wearing the veil

—no thief will attack her. She can travel alone with any amount of money and she would be safe. If she were attacked with the veil, it is the Eastern belief that they are attacking God. So, if one wanted to attack a veiled woman, he would first remove the veil. Thieves in the East attack men only. (The men, therefore, wear two shirts to hide their money. Otherwise, they give valuables or money to the woman with a veil. Eastern customs are based on the Eastern religions and vice versa.)

The veil on the woman's head indicates she is under the power and authority of her husband. Angels will support and defend her wherever she is when she is veiled. The angel will protect her. Christ in you is your protection.—*See also: Sacrifices—Burnt Offerings.*

The Mantle

A mantle is usually a piece of white cloth three or four yards long and eighteen to twenty inches wide. They fold it over and over until it is four to six inches wide yet still the same length. They wear it folded about the neck and let it hang down to the knees or even below. When this cloth or garment is folded it is technically called a mantle in the Bible.

The mantle is always a sign of authority and power. In the East it is called “the mantle of authority” worn by priests. No priest would think of preaching or administering the sacraments unless he had on the “mantle of authority” which in the Christian Church is called the stole.

Many times in the East the mantle is unfolded and worn on the body like a shawl, or a shirt or it may even be called a sheet. The poorest use the mantle to cover with during the night. The Eastern people dress with their underclothing and then with a long piece of clothing that hangs from the shoulders to the ankles called

the robe or cloke. Over this they wear a garment that hangs from the shoulders to the knees only and this is called the coat. Then over this they still wear or hang the mantle.

A mantle is used in various settings: to call one to the ministry, for protection (when a person accepts the call), authority, assurance of redemption, sorrow and anger (to open the mantle and tear it into two pieces, rending it).—*See also: People—Prophets.*

Called to the Ministry

When a man of God calls a person to the ministry, he unfolds the mantle and throws it. He does not have to say, “Will you please come?”

1 Kings 19:19

So he [Elijah] departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who *was* plowing *with* twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him.

Elijah threw his mantle on Elisha as he plowed and called him to the ministry. The mantle is a sign of authority. The Eastern custom was for a priest to throw his mantle upon another, and then under the mantle whisper prayers into his ear.

Thus, to be born again, commissioned with authority, a mantle is rent (torn in two pieces). God said do not rent your garments, but your hearts. This mantle called Elisha to the ministry. He left his oxen and went to bid his father and mother farewell. The mantle also is a sign of protection for the priest or man of God.

Assurance of Redemption and Protection

Ruth 3:9

And he said, Who *art* thou? And she answered, I *am*

Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou *art* a near kinsman.

In verse 9, the “skirt” is the mantle, used to cover at night. Covering the mantle over someone was an assurance of redemption. Marriage was this redemption. Ruth did not ask for an agreement of words because this assurance was sufficient. She wanted assurance of redemption and protection through marriage.

Naomi’s husband should have negotiated the marriage. He was dead, so Ruth was instructed to go and surrender, prostrate herself at Boaz’ feet so he would cover her with his mantle—this was his assurance that he would marry her. Usually women are not permitted in the threshing floor at all. This was a special case.—*See also: People—Ruth.*

Renting of the Mantle

2 Kings 5:8

And it was *so*, when Elisha the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.

The words “rent his clothes” is tearing of it. They rent only one article of clothing—the mantle. Rending of it is an outward sign of inward anger or sorrow. It is not the clothes they rent, always the mantle.

To rend the clothes, garments or mantle is always a sign of some great calamity or happening. This rending of clothes is also described in the translation of Elijah and the beginning of the ministry of Elisha, his successor. Elijah had just been taken up to heaven by a whirlwind.

2 Kings 2:12

And Elisha saw *it*, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.

To rent clothes, garments or mantle is all one and the same thing. People rent the mantle in two pieces at times of death, sorrow, distress or anger, showing thereby, that the authority is broken, gone. Thereby the Eastern people indicate to those round about them as to what is going on inside of their hearts. Elisha saw the ascension of Elijah; the word Elijah means “God himself” so Elisha did what every Oriental of Bible times would do, tore his mantle in two pieces and threw it away, indicating great sorrow of heart and the authority of Elijah gone. —*See also: Ceremonies and Rituals—Expressions of Emotion.*

Jewelry**Matthew 5:42**

Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

In East, if you borrow jewels for a pilgrimage or wedding or some religious ceremony and something happens so that you are unable to return them (such as it is lost or stolen), the owner from whom you borrowed them pleasantly and understandingly will say it is alright, thinking it was for a good cause.

*Ten Pieces of Silver***Luke 15:8, 9**

Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find *it*?

And when she hath found *it*, she calleth *her* friends and *her* neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.

The ten pieces of silver are part of a dowry the bridegroom gives to the bride at the time of their marriage. Each piece is about the size of an American quarter. It is not money; it is a gift which is very precious. On one side of the piece of silver is the husband's coat of arms, the family coat of arms. On the other side is the year in which it was made. If you melted it and sold it in America, you would get about fourteen cents for it. Women wear them on their heads. They have little hooks at the top and they hook them right into their hair. The women wear five on one side of the forehead and five on the other side. They are worn only on very precious and special occasions. In the East, women get a lot of jewelry at the time of marriage, etc.; all the jewelry is her property. She has all the legal rights to it; the husband has none. He can't take it away from her, with the exception of one. The husband has claim to only one jewel and that jewel is called "the ten pieces of silver." She must hand over the ten pieces of silver to her husband's family if her husband should die. It goes back to the husband's family.

If you lose one of the ten pieces of silver, you must get out of the house until you find it, because you will be expelled by your husband, not divorced. He won't be mad at you, but you have disgraced him and his house because the ten pieces of silver have a tremendous sentimental value, no economical value. The losing of it means the withdrawal of God's favor; that is why the woman is put out of the house if she does not find it. It is looked upon as a curse for one to lose a piece of this silver. The husband has no spitefulness for her, neither do the parents; but the girl will have no sympathy

from her husband. It hardly ever happens that a woman loses one of the ten coins or pieces of silver. If she does lose it, there is no amount of money that could redeem it. Even if the ten pieces of silver were only worth fourteen cents, a million dollars given by the wife's family to the husband would not rectify matters. When she finds it, it becomes the concern of the whole town; for they knew that if she had not found it, she would have to endure the consequences of being expelled and being looked upon and dishonored in the entire city. But since she has found it, she is safe, and she calls in the whole city and they rejoice with her that she has found it.—*See Also: Ceremonies and Rituals—Marriage (Ten Pieces of Silver).*

FOOD AND EATING

Foods

Bread, Fish, Egg

Luke 11:11-13

If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if *he ask* a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?

Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

Eastern bread is shaped like a pancake as big as a plate. It is made of wheat. Three are always put on the plate of a guest, but he can eat only one, unless he is a very hard-working man. In that case, he may eat two. (There is a record in the Word of a man who went to his neighbor at midnight and asked his neighbor to lend him *three* loaves of bread for his guest.¹ He thought according to his culture.) The women roll out the dough and lay it in butter in a pan. Everything is cooked in butter. This thin bread is called “chapatti.” It must be turned quickly or it will cook on only one side and burn.

¹ Luke 11:5—And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves;

(Ephraim was referred to as a cake not turned.² He was cooked on one side only, “one-sided,” no good for anything.) As soon as the bread is done, it is placed on a slab stone which looks very much like the bread itself. The bread is piled up and another slab stone is placed on top of the stack, to hold them together. The stone starts out white; it becomes oily and greasy and looks like the bread which is brown in color. Now these stones are the same size and color as the bread. It could easily be mistaken for chapatti. Now what Jesus said makes more sense. If your son would ask for bread, would you give him one of these stones instead?—*See also: Education.*

Most poor Indians live in one-room mud huts. They keep their fried fish hanging in baskets in the ceiling so that animals cannot reach it. When the people want some fish to eat, they reach up into the basket, but sometimes pick up a snake instead. Snakes love to eat the fish. Also, when a net is cast into the water for fish, many times snakes will be drawn up with it. There are several serpents in the water which look like fish and you won't know the difference until you look carefully.

There are two kinds of scorpions, white and black. The shape of the body of the white scorpion is like an egg. When crushed, it is white and yellow inside like an egg. These comparisons are feasible when they are explained.

Leaven

Matthew 13:33

Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom

² Hosea 7:8—Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned.

of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

Leaven in the East is different from leaven (yeast) in the West. It does not cause the bread to rise, but gives it a different taste. Eastern bread is flat. Thin dough (a little thicker than water) is made from wheat flour and poured into a clay pot. A linen cloth is tied over the mouth of the pot and it is set in the sun (and brought in each evening) for eleven days. During that time, the dough becomes leavened. When regular dough for the bread is prepared, a few spoons of this leaven are mixed with it.

The word “hid” should be “mixed.” The dough is then rolled out like pancakes and cooked on both sides. The Word of God is pure bread from Him. If we add anything to it, it is corrupted. Man’s wisdom is like leaven. For communion and all offerings in the East, bread made only of wheat flour and water is used along with freshly squeezed grape juice (just before communion). Nothing is added to either the juice or the bread—uncorrupted.

Corn

Matthew 12:1, 2

At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat.

But when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day.

Did they ask permission of the owners of the corn-field or did they just pluck it? They just plucked it. You would be arrested in America, but not so in the East. In

Deuteronomy 23:25³ it says, you can pluck the ears of corn without any permission whatsoever because you are a guest to them. But, if you put some ears in your pocket, then you are a thief. The culture in the East is their way of life, not just a Sunday religion. These Pharisees didn't even own the cornfield—they were just looking for trouble, sticking their nose into someone else's business. Plucking was lawful—rubbing the corn in your hand on the Sabbath was work. They had to rub the corn in their hands to get the grain of the husk—work. This is Eastern corn, it's like a bush, not like the cornstalk in America.

Despised Foods

2 Kings 6:25

And there was a great famine in Samaria: and, behold, they besieged it, until an ass's head was *sold* for fourscore *pieces* of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five *pieces* of silver.

There are certain despised foods in the East which include asses head, doves dung, barley cakes and wild figs.

Asses head is a kind of root which grows in the hedges. This is not “asses' head” at all; no more so than a hot dog is a dog. This is eaten during the famine time. When there is no famine, it is eaten by the pigs. The famine was so acute in Samaria that they sold asses heads for so much—and so was dove's dung. “Doves dung” is really a type of pea or bean which they feed the doves.

Barley cakes are despised because only cows eat them. Anything the animals eat and the people would eat they despise. To call a man “barley cake” is to say he is “a

³ Deuteronomy 23:25—When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour's standing corn.

good for nothing” man. To call a man barley cake is to disgrace him—insulting. The Midianites used to call Gideon a barley cake (Judges 7:13⁴). The barley cake defeated the proud Midianites. God hath chosen the foolish and base things of the world to confound the wise. God chooses “nobodies” and makes them “somebodies” by the power of God and then puts them on top of the world to speak to them.

Wild figs are despised because only pigs and cows eat them. Because they are eaten by these animals, the people are afraid to eat them for fear of being ostracized by their society. Even if a man has had nothing to eat for two weeks, he wouldn’t want to be seen under the sycamine tree, for fear people would think that he was gathering the fruit. The people conclude that this man lowers himself lower than the pigs when he eats of the fruit. No respectable man wants to be seen under the wild fig tree or on it for fear people will think that he is gathering the fruit. If a man climbed a sycamine tree, the people would insult him more. They would say among themselves, “Poor old Smith must have gone bankrupt overnight. His poverty is so great that he has lost all self-respect and dignity, to be climbing up in a sycamine tree to gather the fruit.”—*See also Trees and Plants—The Sycamine Tree.*

Eating

Seating at Dinner Tables

Luke 14:7-11

And he put forth a parable to those which were bid-

⁴ Judges 7:13—And when Gideon was come, behold, *there was* a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along.

den, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them,

When thou art bidden of any *man* to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him;

And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room.

But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee.

For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

The word “room” should be “seat.” If invited to dinner in the East, seats are assigned. They don’t have table and chairs in the East; they sit on cushions. By dignity and office of society, people know where they should sit. Nevertheless, many or some people take a seat of higher recognition, knowing their place. They want to be equal to somebody else. The host does not eat with everybody else, but he is there to start the dinner. He looks at everybody to make sure that everyone is in their proper seat. When the guests are seated for the meal, if anyone takes a seat higher than he is supposed to, then all the guests will complain and the host will ask him to take his proper place down lower, and he then goes down with shame. If a person who should take a higher seat takes a lower seat, then the host goes and bows down to him and says, “Mr. So and So, will you please come up higher.” Then the host and the guest walk together slowly to his seat. When the host is leading him to his higher seat, all the guests rise up, perhaps even a hundred, they all bow their heads and salute him until the man reaches

his seat. The men will salute the man by touching their fingers to their forehead, mouth and heart as a sign of the man's humility. It means, I respect you with my mind, mouth and heart. The host also does this as the guest is seated. This is a sign of respect. When the guest is seated, the master bows to him again.

*The Dinner Invitation
and the Three Excuses*

Everything in the East has to do with religion. Religion and culture are one in the same. In the East, the people are always conscious of seeking the kingdom of God first.

Luke 14:15-24

And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.

Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many:

And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready.

And they all with one *consent* began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.

And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.

And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.

And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.

And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel *them* to come in, that my house may be filled.

For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

In the East, you must be asked to eat three times. First, a written invitation is sent to ask them to come to dinner. Then nearer the date of the dinner, a reminder is sent. Then on the day of the meal, a servant is sent to everyone invited. He will say, "Come, for all things are ready." Entering the house, the guests will meet a servant who washes their feet. Then after entering the door, they are sprinkled with perfume in the first room and the host comes and greets each guest with a holy kiss. Then they are escorted to the sitting room. Every member of the receiving family must each invite the guests and give a different reason why the guest should stay and eat. This practice is called "constraining." The guest must wait until all have given their reasons. The guest must offer objections at first, but there are only three legitimate excuses: bought a piece of ground and must go see it; bought a yoke of oxen and must prove him; and have taken a wife.

A man may buy a piece of land and then wait until the rains come before he goes out to work it. In this case maybe he bought the ground ten weeks ago. The first rain that comes is "the former rain." Then they plow. The next is called "the latter rain." This comes about two or three months after the first rain. When the former rain comes, this man must plow the land. Before he works it he will consecrate the ground. If he is going to plow the land tomorrow, the previous evening he goes to the land and says, "Lord, I am going to till this land,

I am going to sow this land, and bless it and increase it.” He has a whole prayer. This takes place the evening before the land is used. The owner takes a group of people with him to the land, builds an altar of bricks there and has a consecration meeting. He cannot touch the ground unless he has sought the kingdom of God first. That is what the man was planning to do. It would have been materialistic for him to place going to dinner above performing the dedication.

The same practice is true with newly acquired oxen. “Proving” can mean two things: either looking them over to see how good or bad an ox is before purchasing it; or after bringing the oxen home, before using them for the purpose for which they were bought, dedicating them to God. Here it means to dedicate the oxen. In the East, the people will always bargain and argue about the price before buying (Proverbs 20:14⁵). The buyer will say, “It is bad, it is bad.” He will do this in order to reduce the price and once the price is reduced, he will boast of the great deal that he made. Once the rain comes for plowing, the oxen must be put to work the next day. In the evening, the oxen which have been bought, but not used yet, are taken to the land where they will be used, and an altar is set up, and they call upon God to protect the animals. It is seeking God first. Therefore, he dedicates them the night before by going to the land they will till, sets up an altar, burns incense, breaks coconuts, and dedicates them: “Lord bless these oxen which I have bought. Keep them from hoof and mouth disease, and all other diseases, that they and I might serve you.” He was putting God first. Easterners were salted to do the will of God first.

“I have married a wife, therefore I cannot come.”

⁵ Proverbs 20:14—*It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth.*

When a marriage is performed, the man and woman have never seen each other before. He was honest; he was married and a newly married couple, by law, must have a twelve month honeymoon period. They close the shop and do nothing but eat in relatives' homes together. They cannot even accept a dinner invitation during their honeymoon. They travel between each of their parents' homes so that no money is needed by them. The parents support the bride and groom.

This supper is a parable. It was a "feast of the gospel." All those people were invited to be saved. Although these are very valid sincere and godly, religious excuses, Jesus says that none of them shall taste of his supper. Why? Because they are traditions. The gospel here teaches that we must forsake our man-made traditions and systems. Come to Jesus Christ and receive all of the blessings we need when we have light; we need not follow traditions. If we are saved and not centered on Christ, we are serving two gods. Our eye must be single so our whole body can be light. Their excuses for not coming were good and valid, but not good enough to save them. When they heard the gospel, they should have abandoned their religious culture and all the laws that they followed. Christ alone can satisfy and sustain us. Religion is good, but it is man-made and does not have the truth to bring people to salvation. When Jesus Christ came, he fulfilled the old law and made the new birth available. He came to give life.—*See Also: Ceremonies and Rituals—Marriage; Agriculture.*

Significance of Eating with Others

Matthew 26:20-23

Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve.

And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.

And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?

And he answered and said, He that dippeth *his* hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.

The disciples were all eating together at the same table and Jesus told them that one of them would betray him. Here they are asking him, “Lord, is it I? Lord, is it I?” Jesus, instead of answering them, says, “He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.”

In the East, some two or three people eat together out of the same dish. They sit and eat with their fingers. They sit, talk, make plans and then they will eat. There is salt in the food. The eating with the salt will ratify what has been discussed and settled in the meal. They do this as the settlement of a disagreement. The common bowl has a salted food, they all admit their faults (James 5:16⁶) and blame themselves. Then they renew their friendship. Eating from the same dish and eating the same food brings about an oneness, affection and tender-heartedness. It also is a type of covenant of salt: forgetting the old things (the salt burns them up) and eating it together as a family-type affection, obedience and loyalty helps love to grow in their minds. Once a man eats from the dish, the oriental etiquette is not to betray. Old things are passed away. Agreements are confirmed by eating together. Then sharing the covenant of salt, which means they will never betray you or let you down, even after twenty years! Yet Judas had been plot-

⁶ James 5:16—Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

ting against Jesus even while he ate at the table with him.—*See also: Ceremonies and Rituals—Covenant of Salt.*

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Washing of Feet

Genesis 19:2

And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night.

This is based on the customs of greeting people into an Eastern home. No guest can be accepted as a guest in the Orient unless his feet are washed first.

The defilement of dust gets on the feet whenever a person goes out. (They feared being contaminated by dust where lepers had walked.) A rich man has a servant at the door to wash guests' feet in a tub of water. The guest removes his shoes and throws them at the servant who places them by the tub. He then washes the guest's feet and dries them with a towel. It is a great honor for a guest. To cast the shoes out upon someone is to imply they are subjugated.

Psalm 60:8

Moab *is* my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe: Philistia, triumph thou because of me.

There were three kinds of servants in the East: high servants, poor relatives and slave servants. The lowest is the slave servant, and they wash the feet of the guests. Moab and Edom were defeated people, and they are likened unto the servants who wash the feet and catch the sandals at the house of a man. Moabites and Edo-

mites were conquered in a war and subjugated, enslaved by David. They were children from Lot and his daughters; they were disapproved and despised because of their ancestry. David defeated them in battle and made them slaves to wash feet and to pick up sandals. Defeated ones were called “wash pots.”

Wash pots are kept on the porches of the houses. On the porch, there is a servant who receives your sandals. Then he washes your feet and you can then walk into the house. A person is only a good and acceptable guest when he has been washed and sprinkled; once this is done the host will keep the guest in his protection as long as the guest stays in the house.—*See also: Ceremonies and Rituals—Ceremonial Washing.*

Jesus at the Temple

Luke 2:41-44

Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover.

And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.

And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not *of it*.

But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among *their* kinsfolk and acquaintance.

Why did Mary and Joseph not miss Jesus for a whole day's travel? Why had they not looked for him before? In the East, people travel on pilgrimages in large groups (companies). When they go on journeys to the temple, they usually travel with quite a few families together. All the girls travel in one group, all the boys in another, all the older in another, all the middle-aged in another.

Old men go first, then other groups on down the line. The only time the families get together is when they eat or sleep. They must eat on the road. If they are passing some other relatives house, they may not go eat with them. They have to cook on the road and sleep near the road. When the family travels with the company, if anyone gets lost or gets away from the group, he will go to the temple. The others will go there to look for him.—*See also: Building and Dwellings—The Temple.*

Sending the Seventy

Luke 10:1-4

After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come. Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly *is* great, but the labourers *are* few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.

Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.

Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes: and salute no man by the way.

Jesus was sending these men out carrying no extras. He was saying to them that God would be their sufficiency and provide. In the East, holy men are gladly cared for by everyone—even if they are strangers.

Purse has to do with money. Scrip is rolled up bedding. Easterners believe they must not sleep in another's bed so they carry their own bed with them. Everybody in the East carries their own bedding, even if you visit your own family. The bedding consists of a feather quilt and a couple of sheets, pillows and a rug all rolled up together, strapped together and carried on their back.

They will spread this on the mattress in the other people's homes.

Shoes are sandals. Easterners wear sandals for two reasons: the climate is very warm; and every time a person goes outside or inside, he washes his feet. When Eastern people go on a trip, they will take an extra pair of sandals with them in their bedding. Jesus was telling the seventy not to take an extra pair for dress up with them. Dress in India differs with how Westerners were brought up. Some people conduct business in a loin cloth. Easterners wear old sandals when traveling and carry an extra pair of good sandals to wear when they approach the city. Jesus was telling them not to carry extra.

“Salute no man by the way.” Did Christ teach them not to be courteous? No. There are two types of salutations in the East: greetings (like “Good morning,” etc.) and solicitation. In this verse, the latter meaning is used. Jesus did not want them begging for help from people by the way. Whenever a holy man smiles at someone while he is on the road, that person will come and help him. People in the family of God are to share with one another. If a believer needs help, he should ask another believer. But people “by the way” are people of the world and should not be turned to for help. Jesus did not want his disciples to solicit from someone by the way. Don't scrounge on others. We must not depend on the arm of the flesh, but to rely on the strength of God.

Luke 10:5, 6

And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house.

And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again.

When you bring a blessing on a home, the inhabitants will bless you. In the East, a person would stand outside the home and sing this blessing and the people

would come out and invite the singer in and bless him abundantly. Holy men were highly respected. It was “seeking the kingdom of God first” to give priority to these men and bless them first and foremost in every aspect.

Luke 10:7, 8

And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.

And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you:

In the East, there is a little park in the center of the villages. There is a well, a few trees, a wall around it, and a few seats of brick for travelers. It is located in the street, but it is not a street (Judges 19:20¹). It is the village common. About 6:00 p.m., the travelers congregate there. The high caste Hindus believe that they must not eat without treating a guest, so they go to the village common to find a traveler to bring home with them for dinner. Treating a guest is like treating an angel; a guest might be an angel unawares (Hebrews 13:2²). He must be fed first. It is seeking first the kingdom of God to them. The basis for Eastern hospitality is that giving to a stranger or anyone is giving to God.

After dinner the stranger is constrained to stay on and on, day after day, meal after meal (Judges 19:1-9³). A

¹ Judges 19:20—And the old man said, Peace be with thee; howsoever let all thy wants lie upon me; only lodge not in the street.

² Hebrews 13:2—Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

³ Judges 19:4-7—And his father in law, the damsel’s father, retained him; and he abode with him three days: so they did eat and drink, and lodged there.

And it came to pass on the fourth day, when they arose early in the morning, that he rose up to depart: and the damsel’s father said unto

traveler can live off of hospitality. Jesus was saying for them not to continue accepting hospitality or they would have no time to preach.

The Good Samaritan

Luke 10:33-35

But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion *on him*,

And went to *him*, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave *them* to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

In the inns in the East, the travelers do not have to pay for room and board because the inns are supported by the village. The two pence actually means “some money.” The Good Samaritan was not paying for the stay of himself or the injured man he had found on the road, but the money was for something extra. This was additional money to cover any expenses which the man had. God “picked us up off the road” also. He healed us and cared for us, as He continues to do, and He is always giving us “something extra.” Every believer is treated specially.

his son in law, Comfort thine heart with a morsel of bread, and afterward go your way.

And they sat down, and did eat and drink both of them together: for the damsel’s father had said unto the man, Be content, I pray thee, and tarry all night, and let thine heart be merry.

And when the man rose up to depart, his father in law urged him: therefore he lodged there again.

Protecting Guests

Lot in Sodom

Genesis 19:1-3

And there came two angels [messengers] to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing *them* rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground;

And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night.

And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat.

A person could live in the East without working, simply by going from house to house and accepting the hospitality of the people.

In every village there is a park in the center of town marked out for the traveling stranger. This is the village common (Job 31:17, 32⁴). In each town or village there is a village commonplace, called the "street" in the Bible. It should not be called "the street," but rather the village common. Anyone can go and stay there. There are a few trees, a few seats, and a shelter for the traveler. Suppose we are in an oriental town while traveling. About 6:00 p.m. it gets suddenly dark in the East and it becomes too dark to travel. Orientals usually do not eat

⁴ Job 31:17, 32—Or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof;

The stranger did not lodge in the street: *but* I opened my doors to the traveller.

alone; they must have a guest who is not a family member. Before they start eating they will go out to the village common and see if someone is there to eat with them. The Easterners go out of their way to urge people to come to their home because if they serve this person, they are serving God. The villagers beg the travelers to come with them—persuade them, constrain them. So questions are asked—in the East, one’s need is his recommendation. They will say, “If you find favor with thy servant, if you count me worthy, will you please come and abide under my roof.” If a guest comes to an Eastern home, they consider it that God has come.

“My lord” is used in verse 2 because strangers are addressed as lord in the East. “. . . turn in, I pray you”—here is an invitation; “then they said ‘Nay’”—and then a refusal.

Genesis 19:4-8

But before they lay down, the men of the city, *even* the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter:

And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where *are* the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them.

And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him,

And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly. Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as *is* good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof.

In East, the host will protect those guests at all costs while they are under their roofs. In this instance, Lot offered his own daughters to the men from town before he would give up his guests.

*Jael and Sisera***Judges 4:18-21**

And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him, Turn in, my lord, turn in to me; fear not. And when he had turned in unto her into the tent, she covered him with a mantle.

And he said unto her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink; for I am thirsty. And she opened a bottle of milk, and gave him drink, and covered him.

Again he said unto her, Stand in the door of the tent, and it shall be, when any man doth come and enquire of thee, and say, Is there any man here? that thou shalt say, No.

Then Jael Heber's wife took a nail of the tent, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground: for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died.

There was a war at one time between the Israelites and the Canaanites in which the Israelites defeated the Canaanites. The captain of the army of the Canaanites was Sisera, and he ran when he saw defeat. He came to a tent where Jael lived and (1) she gave him refuge. He asked for water and (2) she gave him milk. (3) She also covered him with a mantle. These three actions of hers were very significant. Jael belonged to a neutral party, so Sisera was safe there. In the tents, there is one part for men and one part for women, divided with a tarpaulin. Men could never enter the women's side and vice versa. Only family could visit back and forth. Even military or lawmen could not go into a women's apartment. Sisera was a stranger to Jael, so why should she help him? It is believed that to give a man refuge who is running for his life is doing the work of God. Other-

wise, it would have been against her culture to speak to the man.

She put him in the men's side of tent and covered him with a mantle. A mantle is a three to four foot long cloth, folded in four parts and worn around the neck. The mantle represents authority, or protection, or when it is torn in two, it signifies an outward sign of inward grief or anger. Authority may be transferred by transferring the mantle from one to another. Jael invited Sisera in. Whenever a guest comes under the shadow of one's roof, he is treated as if he were God or an angel. The host would rather die than allow any harm to come to the guest. He may be "no one" but when serving him, one is serving God. Receiving a guest is a religious thing and even the government would not interfere with it.

When Jael gave Sisera milk (buttermilk) in which there is salt, she took a covenant of salt with him, which is inviolable. She gave him three assurances of protection: (1) invited him in, (2) covered him with mantle, and (3) took the covenant of salt with him. Being an Eastern man, he should have understood the significance of these three things. He then asked her to tell a lie. In their philosophy is an unwritten law: one can tell a lie to save someone's life, but one can never tell a lie to profit or save oneself.

She was offering to Sisera God's assurance for protection. She would lay down her life for him (indicated by her standing in the doorway for him), rather than betray him. Later on, she comes inside from standing in the doorway and found him fast asleep. Sisera had three assurances, but he snuck into the woman's apartment. He did not stay where he was put. Any man can come into a man's side of the tent. So Sisera began thinking, "maybe they will chase her away and come into the tent—although she means well, she could not defend me if

men walked in. But if I get into a woman's tent, no men, no power, no army can come in. I will be safer here." So his unbelief in the three "securities" or assurances, led him to break the law of tent dwellers and womanhood, and her integrity drew him into her apartment of the tent. His unbelief killed him. The woman found him in her apartment and carried out her part of the contract. She took a nail of the tent and drove this nail through his temple and he died. Why?

If a person makes the covenant of salt with another person and one of the two breaks this covenant, the punishment is death. The reason that she drove a nail through his head was because he moved over into *her* side of the tent (verse 22). He broke the covenant of salt by doubting her protection, so he deserved only death. She was dealing with his unbelief by driving tent nail through his head. She had no animosity, she was not his enemy. She covered him with the mantle, exchanged the covenant of salt and she called him inside.

Because we do not trust in God, we try to make our own securities. Because of our unbelief, we forsake the sufficiency give to us in God. We do not believe because we do not understand. Knowing God is different from knowing *about* God. We must understand our security, freedom, heritage and rejoice in God for the rest of our lives.

ASSORTED IDIOMS

“Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani”

Matthew 27:46, 47

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Some of them that stood there, when they heard *that*, said, This *man* calleth for Elias.

This verse has caused Western translators, theologians and lay people much difficulty. The confusion lies in the translation. However, instead of looking there we have looked for manifold sense knowledge reasons to prove God left Christ to die alone, in spite of all the other biblical truths at our disposal, such as “I and the Father are one,” “God was in Christ,” and “for this cause came I unto this hour.”

Jesus spoke Northern Aramaic, which in the King James Version is called Hebrew. The original Aramaic words are: *Eli, Eli, lmana shbakthani* meaning, “My God, my God, for this [cause or purpose] was I spared or kept.” The Greek words in translation as given are “*Eli, Eli, lama* (there is no word like “lama” in Aramaic—should be, *lmana*.) *sabachthani* (there is no word like *sabachthani* in Aramaic—should be, *shbakthani*.)” The words in the original are: “*Eli, Eli, lmana shbakthani*.” This is to say, “It is my destiny to die this kind of death.” It does not mean what the King James translators give, nor is there anything in the tone of the words to indicate an appeal for help, as implied by expositors.

The Jews simply thought he was calling on Elijah, for *Elia* is the Aramaic for Elijah.

The Aramaic word, *Shbakthani* stems from the root word, *shbak* meaning to spare, keep, reserve, allow, permit, or let me live. The context and use determines its meaning. In 1 Kings 19:18 the word “reserved”¹ is this same word as is also Romans 11:4.

Psalm 22:1 in the Aramaic is rendered, “let me live,”² in the sense of “spared me” instead of “forsaken me.” When suffering or in deep agony and distress the Eastern and Oriental people wonder why they live, and so they ask God why he has spared them or let them live, and why He has not taken them as He did their fathers. In Psalm 22 the writer wonders why they have been spared and let live to go through so many trials and struggles and why God has not speedily vindicated them of their enemies.

The Aramaic words for “forsaken me”³ are *taatani* and *nashantani*, meaning also to forget. Had Jesus meant that he was forsaken of God he would have used the word, *taatani* or *nashantani* and the people near the cross would have understood what he was saying, and the Jews would have gloated saying, “We told you so, he is a sinner, see God has forsaken him.” But, when he said, “For this I was spared,” the sense knowledge people at the cross including the Jews and soldiers could not understand what he was saying, for was he not dying as a thief and murderer on an accursed cross at an accursed place, the Skull.

¹ Reserved—Check also 1 Samuel 14:36; Isaiah 10:3; 14:1; Matthew 6:12; John 11:48; Luke 18:16; Psalm 22:1 (Eastern version).

² Let me live—Check 1 Kings 19:4; Job 7:15; 10:1.

³ Forsaken me—Check Psalms 13:1; 42:9; 43:2; 44:9; 60:1; 78:7-11; Genesis 41:51 (Eastern Version).

If God had forsaken Jesus, how could He have conversed with God?

When Jesus was dying upon the cross the Jews reviled him because in their estimation he was dying as one who had blasphemed God. Instead of replying to the insults of the infuriated mob Jesus exclaimed what any Eastern leader dying innocently might exclaim today: “My God, my God, for this I was kept and spared. This is my hour, this is the purpose for which I came. Let the people say and think what they will, but my death has much more meaning than they know.”

The Aramaic word, *Imana* means, “for what purpose.” It is never a question but always used as an exclamation of wonder and awe over the accomplishment of the thing at hand.

These words of Jesus were addressed to God, but notice the mighty effect they must have had on the action of his disciples for whom the bottom had dropped out of everything. They had always hoped Jesus would be the redeemer of Israel but he was dying an accursed and despised death. His statement reminded them once again what he had told them before but they understood not—knowing not that he must die and rise again the third day, (Mark 9:31; Luke 18:34; John 16:32⁴), that this was his true destiny, the Messiah had to suffer at the hands of the enemies of God, but that he knew God was with him for victory and deliverance.

⁴ Mark 9:31—For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.
 Luke 18:34—And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.

John 16:32—Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.

It may be of interest to you to know that to this day the Assyrian Church teaches that God was continually with Jesus on the cross and in the grave because God could not be separated from him.

Had God forsaken Jesus then the Scriptures would fall apart and his mission would have been a failure. Pagan gods may forget their duty to their people and even fall asleep (1 Kings 18:29⁵), but not the true God. Human fathers do not forsake those they love in their hour of death or greatest need. Would the heavenly Father do less? God forbid and forgive us of our error.

The last words Jesus said on the cross were, “Father into thy hands I commend my spirit.” If God had forsaken him how could Jesus have committed his spirit to God if they were not on speaking terms? Jesus was not questioning God’s wisdom but with loving purpose moving forward in the great redemption with uttermost confidence and the assurance of resurrection victory, for your redemption and mine.

The Oriental people believe that the manner of a man’s death is predetermined and predestinated to the end that when death comes God is closer to them than at any other time.

Jesus taught that God was a loving Father, whose watchful care and presence covered even the flowers of the field and the birds of the air. He was a Father who at no time was absent or afar off from His children. He would never leave them nor forsake them to His arch-enemy.

Jesus would have contradicted all his teachings and examples had God not been with him in the hour of his

⁵ 1 Kings 18:29—And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the *time* of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, that *there was* neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

greatest trial and suffering. God was never closer to Jesus than in his hour of greatest agony. Jesus had angels in multitude at his command. The whole panorama is the story of the nearness of God in Christ Jesus laying down his life without any one taking it from him, because of his great and infinite love.

Woe to the Women that Sew Pillows

Ezekiel 13:18-23

And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe to the *women* that sew pillows to all armholes, and make kerchiefs upon the head of every stature to hunt souls! Will ye hunt the souls of my people, and will ye save the souls alive *that come* unto you?

And will ye pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hear *your* lies?

Wherefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I *am* against your pillows, wherewith ye there hunt the souls to make *them* fly, and I will tear them from your arms, and will let the souls go, *even* the souls that ye hunt to make *them* fly.

Your kerchiefs also will I tear, and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand to be hunted; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.

Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life:

Therefore ye shall see no more vanity, nor divine divinations: for I will deliver my people out of your hand: and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.

The Orientalisms in these verses are most interesting and enlightening. Women possessed of familiar spirits, practicing the pretended art of divination, use as a fetish or amulets many different articles, to try to deceive and win the people from the true God. Here they “sewed pillows to armholes” and placed anointed “kerchiefs” on the heads of people for the price of a handful of barley or a piece of bread.

The Orientalism is this: Among the wild tribes, there are women who are specialists in pillow making. The pillows are about two inches square and one-half inch thick, covered with linen. (We might call them pads.) Inside of these pillows are some kind of sacred roots which are from Tibet or the Himalayas, which are considered as having magical healing powers. These pillows have little straps on each end so that they can be tied under the arm pits or in front of the elbow.

The woman with the familiar spirit or spirits comes and tells you your physical malady and informs you as to what is going to happen to you. She requests you buy this pillow from her in order to be delivered and saved. Frequently they put their pillows on their arms and all over the person whom they believe is going to die. They sleep this way for a week or more. They go about giving out special types of food, saying if the dying one will eat it they will live. They do the same thing in regard to hand kerchiefs which they tie over their heads. For instance, if a house is possessed with a devil, maybe it happened fifty years ago, they say, “tie this handkerchief around your head and the devils won’t hurt you.” Also, for prosperity there is a certain pillow which they try to “palm off” on people. These poor tribes charge a

small fee for these pillows, because they are usually for the very poor people; a handful of barley or a piece of bread perhaps. Verse 20, “fly” means to go from place to place.

Treasures in Heaven

In the East, they do not have banks and safes like the West do, so they bury their gold, silver and other things of value in the earth. They constantly worry for fear someone will dig and find their valuables. Only the person who buries them knows where they are. The father usually tells his son where to find them before he dies. The thieves in the East do not have much trouble breaking into the clay brick homes. The walls are not that good. They use clay trunks (Job 27:16⁶), which moths and rust can get into.

Matthew 6:19-21

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Many western theologians interpret this, that this has to do with money. “Treasures” are not gold and silver. If you give money to a good cause, you will get it all back when you go to heaven; God will reward you. Well, giving to the work of Christ is our rightful duty anyway, whether we get it back or not. It is our re-

⁶ Job 27:16—Though he heap up silver as the dust, and prepare raiment as the clay;

sponsibility; and yet it is also a joy to give. It is a joy to support the ministry of God's Word, not expecting anything in return. It is a privilege. It first brings us joy, so it is good to give.

The word "treasures" means thoughts or thinking. Let not your thoughts be centered in the material things. That's what it means. Don't be engrossed in materialism or in the flesh. Let not your thoughts be engrossed night and day in how much you can get, and how much you can make. Don't be concerned and engrossed in that.

If you do, then the verse says, "moth and rust doth corrupt." Now, if it is a thought, then how can moth and rust corrupt? "Moth and rust" simply means fear and worry. "Moth and rust" doesn't mean that there is a real moth eating up the gold and silver. If you are centered in materialism, fear and worry will corrupt you, and they will make you unhappy.

"Where thieves do not break through and steal." "Thieves" mean doubts; doubts do not break through. If you are centered in materialism all of the time, doubts will cause anxiety. They defeat and frustrate.

"Treasure" is not money in this context. "For where your treasure is"—where your thinking is—there will your heart be, also. If I have a million dollars in my bank, my heart will not be there all the time. Many people think it's the money. It is not saying where your money is, there your heart is also. Rather, where your thinking is, there your heart is. You know that's true.

Matthew 6:22

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

Was Christ saying something new here in this figure? No. He was using the figure of speech because he un-

derstood it, people understood it. Now had he been an American, he would have been using those figures of speech. That's why the Bible is an Orientalism book from cover to cover.

“The light of the body is the eye.” It's not this eye with which we see. You can't see much with this eye anyway. You can only see the front portion, not at the back. So, it's not the physical eye. “The light of the body is the eye”—“eye” is thinking, again. “The light of the body” means the light of life is your thinking. If you think positively, you will get positive results, happy results. If you think constructively, you will find constructive results. So, as you think; the “eye” is thinking, the light. “Body” is “life.” The light of life is the “eye,” it is the thinking.

“If therefore thine eye be single,” that means if your thinking is spiritual. If you spiritualize your thoughts or if your thinking is spiritual, thine whole body shall be full of light, beautiful. Do you want to live full of light, no darkness at all? Then let your thinking be spiritual, constructive. Spiritual means based on the Word of God. Now, if your thinking is spiritual, then your whole life, the future—some of you may live a hundred years—the rest of your life, you will walk in the light provided what you are thinking. That thinking is the light, that thinking is the eye. You are centered on Christ. This is referring to singleness of heart, which means to be centered in only one person, Christ Jesus. Be engrossed in him. Man cannot put one eye on Christ, and one on mammon. Don't walk by sight, but by spirit.

Matthew 6:23, 24

But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great *is* that darkness!

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate

the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

“Evil” means your thoughts. If your thinking is of the flesh, the Bible says the flesh is contrary to the spirit. (Flesh means the five senses: seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting.) If your thoughts are centered in the flesh, all materialistic all of the time, then the whole body is full of darkness, your whole life. The light has come into the world; men love darkness rather than the light. You cannot center your thoughts in spirit and at the same time the flesh. You cannot serve God and mammon. Either your thoughts are centered in spirit, in God, all together 100 percent, or your thoughts are centered in the flesh all together, and reap the results accordingly.

Matthew 6:25-34

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, *shall he* not much more *clothe* you, O ye of little faith?

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day *is* the evil thereof.

We should not be encumbered with the things of this world. Our sufficiency is in God. To “take no thought” means don’t be anxious. It doesn’t mean don’t think about.

“Consider the lilies of the field.” Jesus said this, but it was not a new saying to the Eastern people. Lilies of the field can be seen growing everywhere, they grow wild. The lilies of the field grow by absorbing the sun, air and moisture. These three things are an inheritance for the lilies. The lilies do not have to work for them. We have an inheritance for all of our physical and spiritual needs also.

Eastern people are spiritual people. Easterners think that 98% of a man’s nature is spiritual, 2% is physical (food, clothes, roof over his head). We should feed our spiritual side first in the morning by prayer, devotion, meditation and concentration. “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

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