

“Ho, Everyone that Thirsteth”

From speaking of the sufferings of Messiah (Isa. 53) and the glory of the kingdom to follow (Isa. 54), the prophet Isaiah sets forth an invitation to those who hunger and thirst, to partake of a spiritual feast of sumptuous things:

“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 ...” (Isa. 55:1).

It is evident that this thirsting and the satisfying thereof speaks of something more significant than the natural desire for water and its physical nourishment. David in the Psalms also speaks of this:

“as the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. *My soul thirsteth for God*, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?” (Psa. 42:1-2).

“O Yahweh, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: *my soul thirsteth for thee*, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is ...” (Psa. 63:1).

There is, then, a particular category of men who desire to partake of the benefits of Messiah’s kingdom: only those who hunger and thirst after spiritual things. The natural man has no interest in spiritual nourishment, and does not know his state of deprivation of those things. This is the Laodicean attitude: “... thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Rev. 3:17). By contrast, the man of the spirit seeks first the kingdom of God, and His Righteousness with a strong longing, comparable with the innate desire for food and water. Just as natural food and water is essential to sustain a mortal existence, even so the bread of life, and the water of the Word is essential to sustain the “new man” which is fashioned after the image of his Maker. It truly is a blessing to receive these spiritual blessings: in Samuel’s day, we are told, there was a scarcity of the Word (1 Sam. 3:1), and Amos describes how that in his day, there was a spiritual famine:

“Behold, the days come, saith Adonai Yahweh, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of Yahweh: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of Yahweh, and shall not find it” (Amos 8:11-12)

In our day, like Samuels, there is no open vision. The only source of moral guidance and knowledge of the Almighty is contained within the pages of Scripture alone. True, Creation itself testifies to the greatness of its Maker, but it does not describe His Moral attributes, or His Purpose for the earth. In one sense, there is a dearth of the Word in our day, in that there are few who uphold it’s teachings in spirit and in truth: it’s meanings and teachings are hidden before all, save for that small remnant who earnestly seek after the narrow way which leads to eternal life. But paradoxically, in another sense there is an abundance of the Word in that Bibles are readily available in

most countries of the world. This contrasts greatly with the situation in the not too distant past, before mass printing came into being. Being rare in those days, it was treasured more, and men were willing to lay down their lives to ensure that it was translated into the vernacular language. In our day, there is no shortage of Bibles, yet its message is hidden from the masses, through their indolence and refusal to open its pages, and study its contents. Only those who thirst after righteousness will take the trouble to familiarize themselves with it, and become wise unto the salvation it offers.

Our Master spoke of the blessedness of this latter class of men: “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: **for they shall be filled**” (Mat. 5:6). There is no limit to the nourishing effect of the Oracles of God, when understood and believed. Here is the promise to the faithful: “they shall be filled” with the righteousness which they seek. To quote again from the words of Christ to the woman of Samaria:

“whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (Jno. 4:13-14).

Here, the source of spiritual water is identified. Jesus himself is the fountainhead of the Water of Life, able to permanently quench the thirst of his brethren with living waters. His word is nourishing and healing. He proclaimed himself to be “the bread of life”, saying that “he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst” (Jno. 6:35, Cp Jno. 7:37). Only in Jesus can we find true sustenance, and true satisfaction for all of our needs.

“He that hath no money”

James informs us that God has “chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him” (Jas. 2:5). The appeal of the Spirit though Isaiah is to those who are lacking in material things:

“... he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price ...” (Isa. 55:1).

In spiritual concerns, the lack of finance is no hindrance to salvation. The Waters of Salvation cannot be purchased by natural means: it is just not possible to buy these waters in the same way that natural commodities might be obtained. Simon the sorcerer found this out, attempting to buy the Holy Spirit gifts – So Peter rebuked him: “Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money ...” (Acts 8:20). There is a tendency in our day to regard men of means as being ‘successful’ and somehow better than the poor who lack daily provisions. This is the short-sighted view of the flesh, for our salvation can be obtained by grace alone, and not of our own means, as it is written: “by Grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8).

But there is another sense in which the spiritual waters must be bought. Not with money, as in a natural transaction, but there is something else that we must give in order to obtain it. Notice the words of Isaiah 55: “Come ye, **buy**, and eat; yea come, **buy** wine and milk without money, and without price: (Isa. 55:1). There is a buying involved, but which is not to do with the giving of money.

Matthew chapter 13 describes the Word in terms of a treasure, or a pearl that is found:

“the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls. Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it” (Mat. 13:44-46).

Notice that here, something must be given in order to obtain the treasure, or the pearl: “all that he hath”. Here is the principle: we can only partake of the spiritual benefits, if we are willing to give our all to obtain them. In the words of Paul, we must be willing to present ourselves as “a living sacrifice,” laying down our entire lives in service to our Master.

There are a number of allusions to Isaiah 55 in John chapter 6, where Messiah identifies himself as being the “bread of life”. In this chapter, we read of how the multitudes had followed our Lord into the wilderness to be taught by him. However, they lacked physical sustenance, and so Jesus provided for their needs by feeding the thousands with 5 barley loaves and 2 small fishes. The bread was multiplied in their partaking of it, ensuring that all were satisfied from their hunger. Jesus then taught the spiritual principles being displayed in these things: Just as they had received food without paying for it, so the bread of life was freely available as a gift:

“Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man *shall give* unto you” (Jno. 6:27).

“Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst” (Jno. 6:35).

Again, there is a contrast with the provision of Manna; physical bread provided to sustain the nation of Israel in their wilderness wanderings:

“Verily, verily I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world” (Jno. 6:32-33).

And again:

“... so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.” (Jno. 6:57-58)

There is a limit to the nourishment that natural food can give: even when Divinely provided, like the Manna from heaven. But to feed upon the Lord Jesus Christ is to eat of bread which sustains life for ever.

BREAD THAT SATISFIETH NOT

By contrast to the Bread of Life, the natural bread offered by the world cannot satisfy the searcher of Truth. Speaking of this, Bro CC Walker writes:

“The word of truth says, “Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear and *your soul shall live.*” The perverted word in the mouth of the clergy says your “soul” (meaning thereby a phantom unknown to the scriptures” *doth* live whether you incline your ear and “hearken diligently” or not. It *must* live eternally. “O the value of one ‘immortal soul.’ Countless worlds cannot be placed in the balance with it”! And so forth, in the style which is only too familiar.

Does this “satisfy”? Some of them say (without much favour or certainty) that it does. But in truth it “satisfieth not,” as many can truly testify who have tried it. See them over a dead body or a grave, and their sorrow (or rejoicing) is that of ignorance and hopelessness. The sham gospel sends a phantom to heaven apart from resurrection and judgment, in the face of the plainest testimonies that both are indispensable before eternal life can be entered, and that heaven is forbidden to men, and that the Lord Jesus is returning to cause the righteous to inherit the earth for ever, and further that these things relate not to a ghost or phantom, but to men and women of angelic bodily nature such as the Lord possesses, and such as he revealed to his disciples after his resurrection”

(The Ministry of the Prophets, page 666).

The prophet exhorts us to “buy wine and milk without price”, and this is picked up by Peter, in describing the blessedness of those babes who are nourished by the milk of the Word: “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious ...” (1 Pet. 2:2-3). The Word is able to provide for all our needs. To begin with, it contains milk for the nurture of spiritually newborn babes, and it also provides solid food for those who grow into mature adults. For those who hunger and thirst, it is satisfying, and is eagerly devoured in order to obtain the benefits thereof:

PARTAKING OF CHRIST

We meet together each week to partake of the emblems of bread and wine: a spiritual food and drink, which edifies us as we consider the sacrifice represented by them. We come to the emblems thirsting with a thirst that the world cannot know. As we saw earlier, the Laodicean apostasy is ignorant of its impoverished state, as it is insensitive to the Truth of Scripture. We however, come to Christ for full satisfaction, even as he taught: “Whoso eateth of my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me” (Jno. 6:54-57). Regardless as to our position in society, or our possession of this world’s goods, we come to Christ laying down our lives in service before him, buying meat and drink without money and without price, to find eternal salvation at the last.

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