

In search of...



Truth & Right

Volume 08 Issue 30

July 28, 2013

In the Midst

As I was recently contemplating a familiar account to most of us in Genesis 2, I found an extremely interesting point with regards to the creation. When God created the Garden of Eden for Adam and Eve, he placed both the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil "in the midst of the garden" (Genesis 2:9; 3:3). Thus, while they certainly had access to the tree of life, they had equal access to that which God commanded, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But

of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:16-17). If I were Adam and Eve, I would have preferred that God placed that tree with forbidden fruit out of the way. For the sake of temptation, would it not have been easier if the tree were possibly off in the shadows, or in a corner that would be difficult to access? No, God placed the tree "in the midst of the garden," which shows that it was just as

accessible as all the other trees.

This fact reinforces an important truth—the opportunity to face temptation is all around us! Sin is accessible! Our Catholic and Buddhist friends have the mistaken idea that we can hole ourselves up in monasteries, convents or other such things to escape the pressures of temptation. Yet, such is not the case! No matter where we are, temptation can be in our midst. If Jesus could face temptation while in a wilderness (cf. Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13), then I know that temptation is “in the midst.” Thus, we are to pray as Jesus taught, “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” (Matthew 6:13). The good news is not that we are able to escape the presence of temptation, but that once tempted, we are able to overcome. “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Yet, notice with me something else. Moses instructed the Israelites prior to his passing and their conquest of Canaan that the cities of refuge, which God mercifully allowed the Israelites to have,

were to be “in the midst of thy land” (Deuteronomy 19:2). As Moses would go on to describe, they would have six various cities scattered throughout the land for the innocent offender to flee in case of accidental death, whereby they would obtain mercy. Upon identification of these cities (Joshua 20:7-9) on a Bible map, one can see that these cities were indeed placed “in the midst” of the land of Palestine. A fuller understanding of these with the new covenant shows that they were a type or shadow of the church of our Lord. Thus, the offer God makes to you and me concerning mercy that we desperately need reveals the principle that by such being “in the midst,” his offer of mercy is equally accessible to everyone!

In what many have called “The Psalm of the Cross” due to the nature of its Messianic prophecies, David beautifully stated, “I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee” (Psalm 22:22). In his classic work, “The Treasury of David,” Charles Spurgeon commented on this latter expression, “Not in a little household gathering merely does our Lord resolve to proclaim his Father’s love, but in the great assemblies of his saints, and in the general assembly and church of the firstborn. This the Lord Jesus is

always doing by his representatives, who are the heralds of salvation, and labor to praise God...Jesus himself leads the song, and is both presenter and preacher in his church" (Volume I, pp. 373-74). Of course, the Hebrew writer quotes this passage and shows the presence of our Lord Jesus in the assembly, and encourages the discouraged by showing that he is not ashamed to refer to us as brethren (Hebrews 2:11-12; cf. John 20:17; Romans 8:14-17). Thus, could it not be that the expression, "in the midst of the church," among other things, correlates with his open acknowledgement and lack of shame in those of us who are blessed to be Christians?

Finally, we note that God will make it possible for the proclamation of his great name to be "in the midst" of the whole world. For example, God revealed to Moses, "And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go" (Exodus 3:20). Indeed, as we see the plagues unfold through the account, we learn that God was using these plagues as a form of judgment against the polytheistic gods of the Egyptians (Exodus 12:12). Nevertheless, the events surrounding these plagues of judgment became so well

known, that God utilized these for the purpose of revealing himself, not just to Egypt, but to the whole world! "...to the end thou mayest know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth" (Exodus 8:22).

For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth. For now I will stretch out my hand that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth. And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth [Exodus 9:14-16].

Thus, as we even see in the example of Rahab in Joshua 2:10, the news of such events did travel far and wide. God will be sure that he is known "in the midst" of the world, which he accomplishes today through his evangelists (cf. Matthew 28:18-20).

We surely can glean some powerful thoughts from just three little words—"in the midst."

Sam Willcut

This bulletin is published by the
WELLSBURG CHURCH OF CHRIST



92 Rose Cottage Ln.
Wellsburg, WV 26070
304-737-1422

<http://www.truthandright.org>

**LIKE US ON FACEBOOK under
Wellsburg church of Christ!**

Jesus Tempted

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

- Jesus was led up into the wilderness to be tempted (Matt. 4:1)
- After fasting forty days and nights... (vs. 2)
- Jesus was hungry (vs. 2)
- Satan said, "command these stones to become bread" (vs. 3)
- "...by bread alone, but by every word... of God" (vs. 4)
- The devil then took him to the pinnacle of the temple (vs. 5)
- Now Satan tried to say "It is written" (vs. 6)
- "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test" (vs. 7)
- The devil took him to a very high mountain (vs. 8)
- He said he'd give them to Jesus if He would worship him (vs. 9)
- "...the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve." (vs. 10)
- Then the devil left, and angels came and served Him (vs. 11)