

Milk & Honey

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Spiritual Food and Encouragement for Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ

Aprons of Leaves

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...and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. Gen. 3:7

There is a great debate raging today over what is called "Lordship Salvation." The debate centers around the question, "Does a person need to accept Jesus Christ as Lord when he accepts Him as Savior, or is that a subsequent decision dealing more with sanctification than salvation?"

We might begin by asking the question, "Is it possible to accept Jesus Christ as Savior only, while not coming under His Lordship as well?" The question being asked is not, "Does the person need to make Christ Lord of all areas of their practical Christian walk at the time of his conversion in order to be saved?" It is rather, "Can we separate these two aspects of Christ in our lives." Can He be selected from a spiritual menu as Savior, while putting off the selection of Him as Lord until a later date, or perhaps not at all?

Personally, I do not think so. Do we select Him as our High Priest separately from being our Savior? Our Advocate? Our Lord? Are they not all part and parcel of "accepting Christ?" Is not the saved individual "redeemed" —purchased with the blood of Christ? The apostle Peter is exhorting holiness when he writes, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." (1 Pet. 1:13-23) The apostle Paul writing on separation states, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Cor. 6:19-20) If one is redeemed by the blood of Christ, Christ is His Master and Lord. Whether the individual is in the good of this truth is another question.

However, while these questions deal with the Lordship of Christ, I wonder if Lordship is the primary question. I believe the primary question has to do with "life." Can there be spiritual life which is never manifested? Even a person in a coma exhibits some form of life! If we come across an

individual without any breath and pulse, we do not hesitate to declare him to be dead. Can a person accept Christ as personal Savior and manifest no evidence of eternal life? Can there be life without fruit? Fruit is not a question of service and Lordship, but a question of "life" — eternal life. Fruit is outward evidence of inward life, just as the rising and falling of the chest when breathing and the beating pulse when the heart is functioning are evidences of physical life.

Adam and Eve made themselves aprons of leaves, which provided some coverage, but not in the presence of God. They may have had leaves, but leaves alone without fruit are never an expression of inward reality in the Scriptures. In fact, Christ condemned the fig tree with only leaves, a picture of Israel with its outward forms, but no inward life. "And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only." (Matt. 21:19) Christ saw leaves only as "pretense" without reality.

The apostle John gives us some clear vital signs of life in his first epistle. In his Gospel he tells us how to obtain eternal life. (John 3:16) In his first Epistle he tells us how to know we have it. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." (1 John 5:13) The first sign of being a child of God is given in chapter 2, verse 29. "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him." The logic used by John is that if you know the Father you will be able to recognize His children from their common features. Those who habitually practice righteousness are born of Him.

The second sign is in contrast to the first. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." (1 John 3:9) The result of the presence of the new nature is the absence of the practice of sin. "Therefore the person who is born of God cannot continue practicing sin, he is not able to habitually sin, because out of God he has been born." (Wuest). John adds in the next verse, "whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God."

The third vital sign is given in verse 14 of the same chapter. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Lenski translates it, "We

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Homeless

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He was Homeless. It is hard for most of us to imagine being homeless. The idea of being homeless never crosses our minds, until we see that person living in a cardboard box, or that family living in a station wagon, or those people under an overpass warming themselves by a fire. When we see them we might have pity or we might think of them "losers." Rather than a "loser," I believe Jesus would rather we see them as "lost." If anyone in life has ever lost, it is he who has lost his home. Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost. Some people live in castles, some find rest among the catacombs, but even there some find comfort and protection from the harsh elements of the world. Jesus said, "the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have their nest, but the Son of Man has no where to lay His head." The writer of Hebrews says that He was "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Few know what it is to feel the infirmity of being "homeless." Most of us have some door to close at night. Most have a hearth. Most have a place to go. Almost as if to teach us that this world is not our home, the Lord Jesus was (at least for three and a half years) homeless. Many people are homeless in this world. Jesus identified with them. And no more than He knew, that this world is not our home..

He was born in a stable. He and His parents were refugees in Egypt. He was an itinerant preacher that slept under the canopy of heaven, when He didn't have a home to go to. There are lessons even in this "homelessness" of our Lord.

Jesus went where He was welcome. Once again His homelessness was a test for us more than it was a trial for Him. From the first foolish innkeeper at Bethlehem, to doorman at the church at Laodicea, woe to the person or group that has no room for Jesus. That the Son of God should have to sleep in our streets is an indictment against us. And that a whole generation missed Him when he stood on their doorstep is a shameful breach of law of love and kindness. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."

The next time we turn the key to our well constructed homes (which, by the way, would make Herod the Great green with jealousy) let us think of the Homeless Son of God who was not welcome in this world. Isaiah called Him "rejected."

"Where dwellest thou?" Asked two of John's disciples. Jesus answered "Come and see." Think of what "hospitality" is to the homeless. Generally, today our hospitality is to those who need it least. There was a time when there were no such things as hotels. Travelers found "hostels" or inns where they could take shelter and maybe find a bite to

eat. Such a place is described in the story of the Good Samaritan. In that parable, the religious crowd (priest and Levite) were of no help to the wounded soul on the Jericho road. They either ignored him or gave him a wide berth. The Samaritan did what he could and brought him to shelter. A homeless person needs shelter. While the church still has "homeless shelters," few are involved in this messy ministry. Even fewer would even think to open up their own home to a stranger. The homeless also need love. They need to see our love, but more than that, they need to know God's love.

The second thing we might learn from Christ's self-imposed homelessness (as an traveling minister) was that life is a pilgrimage. We are all on our way to eternity. We are just passing through this world unto a "world to come" (Lk. 18:30). We all need stopping off places along the way.

We sometimes think of Christ as "that homeless stranger." It might be better to say that He was "houseless." When the Lord Jesus spoke of home, He spoke of the Father's house. It is one thing to be houseless and another to be homeless. The Christian can never be homeless, even if he finds himself far from home. Some have found themselves houseless, because of war, or fire, or earthquakes, floods, tornados and hurricanes. Under such circumstances, the believer remembers that "this world is not my home, I just—a—passing through," as the song goes. If you have never been "houseless" praise God, but look around at the many not as fortunate and remember the Good Samaritan.

If you are not "houseless" or "homeless" should not that house be dedicated to God. Joshua said "as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." Consider how blessed a home might be if it is dedicated to God. Think of how blessed it might become when the Lord Jesus is welcomed in. The New Testament is filled with homes that held precious memories of being visited by such a Special Guest. If He were not "homeless," perhaps He would not have gone into so many homes, or sat at so many tables. He was homeless in order to give us an opportunity to welcome Him. Consider that happy home in Cana where He changed the water into wine. Consider the home in Bethany where Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were blessed by His presence. Consider what would have happened (or not happened) on the road to Emmaus if those disciples had not "constrained him, saying, Abide with us" (Lk. 24:29). In Hebrews 2:9 we learn that some have "entertained angels unaware." The Lord instructed his disciples to look for the spirit of holy hospitality as they ministered (Lk. 10:5). Hospitality is a spiritual gift. The gift of hospitality is not so much the ability to "entertain," but the ability to make someone "feel welcome."

A house is not a home. When the Lord spoke about the house in Mat. 7:24 He was not speaking about curtains or

