

"Healthy Scribes"  
January 2008 - Monthly Comment

"Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old" (Mt. 13:52).

For the sake of accuracy, Jesus is using the term "scribe" here for his disciples. We pick that up in verse 36, when His disciples asked Jesus to give them some further clarification on one of the many parables He spoke to them in Matthew 13. After clarifying their question, Jesus asks them do they now..." understand all these things" and they replied, "Yes" (Mt. 13:51).

Years ago I read a statement by Pastor James Ryle in the March 1994 edition of Charisma magazine. The statement reads:  
"Healthy things grow. Growing things change. Changing things challenge us. Challenge causes us to trust God. Trust leads to obedience. Obedience makes us healthy and healthy things grow."

The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews makes a generalized statement to it's readership that "...by this time they ought to be teachers..." but for non-specific reasons, the author states they needed "...someone to teach them again the first principles of the oracles of God; and they have come to need milk and not solid food" (Hebrews 5:12).

Here's the concept! Disciples are never ending, never arriving at perfected learners in the things of the "Kingdom." A healthy, growing, changing, challenged, trusting, obedient disciple is a healthy and growing one – because healthy people do mature. Like a healthy child, there are abilities that are deemed normal activities and behaviors of a properly maturing infant, child, adolescent, teen, adult, etc.

So it is for a healthy disciple. Disciples are learners. We are all learners at many levels of growth. Some have just become followers of Jesus and as is appropriate, little is expected from them. Babies, infants, and young children require enormous assistance, love, and security from their parents. As they mature into other stages "chores" are assigned as acceptable points of responsible growth.

It should not be thought, nor is it, different concerning healthy growth for disciples instructed in the kingdom of God. Healthy disciples start changing and that brings about challenge, trust, and obedience on their own. New things are constantly being added to the old things already learned. Those things are called his or hers "treasure." Healthy disciples have a growing treasury of things concerning the Kingdom. It is responsible and expected conduct for growing disciples (all we ever will be by the way in this life) to steward this treasure.

That means like a "householder," disciples (scribes), should constantly be "bringing out of our treasure" new and old things that we know to be true about the Kingdom of God.

Accepted practice of older brothers and sisters in the family is to help younger siblings learn the ropes. As they learn new things, they instruct those younger than them as well as remind them of the old things already taught. The point is two-fold here: Healthy disciples should always be learning and adding new Kingdom realities to their walk with Christ and then "bringing them out of their treasure" to share with others. Being a disciple is not optional Christianity.

Maybe this New Year might find you inquiring of the Lord how you may "bring out of your treasure new and old things" as a Kingdom householder and healthy scribe/disciple in the service of the King,

In His Service in 2008,  
Mike

"Leaving Behind"  
Weekly Comment – January 6, 2008

"Today in the month of Abib, you are leaving" (Ex. 13:4).

The month of Abib was the month God set the great Exodus in motion. From this miraculous event, God reckoned the Jewish calendar. This month, from this moment in time onward, was to be "...the first month of the year to you" (Exodus 12:2).

The month of Abib corresponds roughly to our March/April. So the Jewish spiritual New Year began in the spring time, not the winter like it does for us. The original first month and first New Year for the Jews was marked by the first inaugural Passover Feast. Blood from innocent, flawless lambs was applied to the entry ways of every Jewish home. The destroyer was to Passover Egypt that first night and when he saw the blood of the Lamb on a house, the firstborn in each home would be saved. No blood and the firstborn would die! (Ex. 12:12-13). This event so broke the back of Pharaoh that he finally relented and let all the Jews leave Egypt.

The verse at the top of this comment has a devotional significance and application to us in our New Year, even though it isn't at the same time as the Jewish New Year. It is significant to us because this Passover was a perpetual ordinance to be practiced throughout their generations (Ex. 12:14). Because on this day "...I have brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt" (12:17). Every year Jews are to celebrate "leaving." For the Jews, that meant "Egypt," a land of bondage. For us the New Year can celebrate a "leaving" some other kind of bondage, sin, or dominating habit. In other words -- today in the month of January, you are "leaving" something behind. Could this actually be where New Year resolutions had its conception? I don't know, but it's a nice thought anyway.

What are you "leaving" this New Year?

Mike

"Believing Is Seeing"  
Weekly Comment – January 13, 2008

"For the bread of God is He who comes down from Heaven and gives life to the world" (John 6:33).

Have you ever been in a conversation where you know exactly what you are saying and how you are saying it, but the party to whom you speak is clueless? That is what is happening here with what Jesus is communicating to the Jews.

In brief, the Jews were telling Jesus that Moses performed a sign of his authority by giving the people manna from Heaven. "What sign will you perform then that we can see and believe you?" (John 6:30). In other words Jesus – beat that!

These very Jews had already seen 5,000 people miraculously fed by Jesus (6:10). Matthew tells us there was many more fed that day (Mt. 14:21). They had also suspected some other supernatural sign because Jesus had arrived on the other side of the lake but He had not left with His disciples and He had no other ride (John 6:22, 24-25).

Now what sign will you do Jesus so that we can believe in you? Well hear this people, Jesus said: "...Moses did not give you THE bread from Heaven, but My Father gives you THE true

bread from Heaven...He who comes down from Heaven and gives life to the world" (John 6:32-33).

During Moses day it is true that a supply of manna was going to the people, but they hungered again and again. God wants to give you a Bread to eat which will so satisfy you that you will never hunger again (John 6:35) They wanted that Bread He offered and that is when He said I am the Bread of Life (John 6:36).

But they did not believe Him because they were focused on the physical, not the spiritual. The principle being that when our belief is riveted on the things that are seen, we will not see the things that aren't seen. And if you really look closely at John 6, if our belief isn't on Jesus, we will miss the signs in the physical as well.

Believing is seeing!

Mike

"Love the Lord"  
Weekly Comment – January 20, 2008

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength" (Deut. 6:5).

This verse forms the substance of the purpose of God toward man. LOVE THE LORD! Love is a relationship word. You cannot legislate a relationship. You cannot force someone to love you; you cannot manipulate love. We try though, don't we?

But love is a choice! It has to be that way. A husband/wife cannot demand love from their spouse or whatever they do receive, will come short of love that is chosen.

All God has ever wanted from His beloved creature man, is love. God wants His creation to love Him. I suspect something like we want our children to love us. Initially the Lord urges His people to love Him with their whole heart, soul and strength. When Jesus comes on the scene, He adds a step - "mind!" Love the Lord with all your heart, soul, MIND, and strength (Mark 10:30).

That's interesting! Most of us realize that we are not to add or take anything away from God's Word, but it's ok when He adds to His own Word – and He adds "mind." Love the Lord with "all your mind" in addition to all the other components.

The word "mind" here is a word that literally means a "thinking through." Believers are not to have a mindless "love" for the Lord, but rather a thoughtful love, based on contemplative, reflective, cognitive thoughts. So our love for the Lord is to be one of feelings and meditative thought.

Love the Lord,

Mike

TRANSFORMATION  
Weekly Comment – January 27, 2008

Romans 12:1-2

I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present 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 you may prove what is that good and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

In the Greek word translated as “be not conformed” an interesting meaning is present. The word can be translated as “do not live according to the style or manner of this present age, but live AS IF the new age (with Christ) had already arrived.”

This understanding that we should be living today as if the return of Christ had already occurred speaks strongly of the victorious life we can live NOW in Christ.

The renewing of our minds changing our thought processes and attitudes to come into agreement with God’s Word is the key to that victorious living.

The challenge to me and to all of us is to allow the Holy Spirit freedom to do that inner work that brings about the change in our way of thinking and attitudes. When that occurs then we “may prove what is that good and acceptable, and perfect will of God.”

Let us all commit ourselves to being transformed into the image and likeness of Christ. It is an ongoing process that will bring great joy and fulfillment to our walk with Jesus.

God Bless

Ken Wise