

PROVISIONS FOR BRETHREN TO DWELL TOGETHER IN UNITY

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Stassel's spiritual commentary based on Psalm 133, using Old Testament symbolism of precious ointment and its ingredients to explore how believers achieve unity and spiritual anointing through various virtues and spiritual qualities.

22 Chapters

Table of Contents

1. 02. Preface
2. 03. The Precious Ointment
3. 04. Myrrh
4. 05. Cinnamon, Calamus and Cassia
5. 06. Oil Olive
6. 07. The Precious Ointment Upon The Head And Running Down
7. 08. The Dew Of Heaven
8. 09. Formation of the Dew
9. 10. Formation of Rain, Ice and Hoar Frost
10. 11. Conditions Adverse to Dew Formation
11. 12. Lessons from the Dew
12. 13. First Mention of Dew in Scripture
13. 14. The Manna on the Dew
14. 15. My Speech Shall Distill As the Dew
15. 16. Josephs Blessing
16. 17. Lessons from Gideon
17. 18. Nebuchadnezzar
18. 19. Three Negative References
19. 20. Closing Comments About The Lives Of Joseph And Our Lord
20. 21. Separation and Unity
21. 22. The Dew
22. 23. Understanding Psa_133:1; Psa_133:3 b

02. Preface

Preface Psalms 133:1-3 begins with an exclamation:

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" The psalm ends with a promise:

"... For there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." The beginning and ending of the psalm are familiar to us. The beginning is something we hope for. The end is earnestly desired. But the center of this psalm holds the key for understanding the provisions for the practical enjoyment of both the exclamation and the promise. Without an understanding of the provisions and conditions for the blessing of brethren dwelling together, we cannot experience the blessedness of this promise. In our time there are many attempts to create or develop unities. Ecumenical efforts try to show unity. Many people, with a great show that looks so wonderful, enthusiastically participate in such events. The outward appearance and experience awes and excites them, but a closer look at the associations and practices of the participants cause some, who out of a pure heart want to be faithful to their Lord, to refuse to enter into such associations.

Smaller unities may also be developed based on friendships, family, business or other relationships. In many of such unities, scriptural principles are compromised for the sake of the unity. These compromises often cause the breakdown of the unity as the consciences of the members of that unity are affected and expressed. In both large and small unities, those who are not free to continue as part of that unity are often excluded in unpleasant ways. The exclusion may come from one side or the other, but either way, the results are usually disastrous to the unity. But Psalms 133:1-3 holds the key to understanding what true unity is. Verse 2 begins with:

"It is likethe precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments."

Verse 3 continues:

"As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion..."

Let's take a look at the precious ointment and the path it took running down over the head and garments of Aaron, the high priest. Let's also look at the dew and find it to be the "dew of heaven" to refresh and challenge our hearts. We will find treasures well worth our contemplation. May it be our mutual desire that we whom our Lord calls His brethren may dwell together in unity while we await His coming for us! If this is to be so, we must understand the provisions in order to maintain the principles we learn from the subject before us.

03. The Precious Ointment

The Precious Ointment

If we are to understand what Psalms 133:1-3 has in store for us regarding brethren dwelling together in unity, it may be well to begin, as does the Psalm, with the Precious Ointment. The Psalmist says:

"Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the Precious Ointment..."

Exodus 30:22-33 records the Lord's instructions to Moses for its composition and use. The five ingredients were of the best quality and required considerable expenditures of time and money to prepare. The formula was exact and was not to be compromised. Exact weights and volumes were specified. They were to be compounded after the art of the apothecary. The tabernacle and all the items in it were to be anointed with this precious ointment for consecration to the Lord. Aaron and his sons were to be anointed and consecrated to minister to the Lord in the priest's office. Never was it to be poured on man's flesh, and it was never to be duplicated. The Precious Ointment was for the Lord! The five principal (best) ingredients were:

Pure Myrrh. This is a fragrant gum gathered from the leaves of the cistus (or rock rose). Myrrh is distilled as tears that harden on the leaves and form into a bitter aromatic resin. These may be gathered and melted to form a clear liquid, and separated from any impurities that may have been gathered with it. Only the pure (liquid JND) myrrh was to be used.

Cinnamon. The bark of the cinnamon tree is removed from the tree, dried and powdered.

Calamus. The calamus odoratus is a reed that grows in India, Arabia and Lebanon. The reeds are gathered, dried and pounded to form a valuable ingredient for rich perfumes.

Cassia. This is prepared by gathering, drying and pounding the bark of an aromatic plant resembling cinnamon.

Oil Olive. Olive oil is prepared from olives and is used as the carrier for the above spices. It is a type of the Holy Spirit, containing all the rich fragrances that speak of Christ. It carries these fragrances of Christ over all who are anointed and to those who are nearby. From the descriptions of the above ingredients, it is easy to see that each required much care and work to produce it. Careless or casual individuals did not prepare them. Only the best could be used for this Precious Ointment or Holy Anointing Oil.

References to These Ingredients in Scripture:

04. Myrrh

Myrrh

Two words are used for Myrrh in the Old Testament. We will use Strong's Concordance and its numbering system to identify the words. The first one, used in many translations, is found in Genesis 37:25; Genesis 43:11. This word is 3910 that is a form of 3874 which means, "to wrap." One example of 3874 is in 1 Samuel 21:9 where David received the sword of Goliath which had been wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod.

Strong's 3910

Joseph's brothers sold him to a company of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead en route to Egypt. They were carrying spices, balm and myrrh. Some of the brothers tried to placate their consciences, choosing to sell him instead of slaying him. They would profit from the twenty pieces of silver. The communication sent to their father in the form of a robe dipped in blood prompted their father to conclude that an evil beast had devoured him. Meanwhile Joseph had gone "wrapped" with the myrrh and spices of the Ishmaelites to Egypt. Was it his fragrance that attracted Potiphar to purchase him?

Between Genesis 37:1-36; Genesis 41:1-57 we see great testing. Joseph had many trials in Egypt, but the Lord was with him and prospered him. He was pure, honest and faithful — a real servant. During the various difficult experiences with their deep personal exercises, the Lord was preparing him for greater things. Finally he was exalted as lord in Egypt next to Pharaoh and was the saviour of that whole inhabited part of the world.

Judah, who had suggested the sale, was brought to shame. Years of prosperity ended and a great famine began. Hunger brought the brothers to Egypt where they were recognized — even if unknown to them. After conversations with Joseph and a three-day imprisonment, their consciences deeply bothered them, causing them to associate past actions against Joseph with their present distress. Not knowing they were talking to their brother, they voiced their distress. Upon hearing their confessions, Joseph turned from them to weep privately. He then commanded to fill their sacks, return their money and hold Simeon until they returned with their younger brother, Benjamin. After further deep exercises and hunger, with no other solution possible, they returned again to Egypt. But something special was taken with them this time — myrrh.

It would not have been a fitting for Joseph's brothers to bring myrrh on their first visit. Hunger and a desire for the "good life" may have been motives. But the experiences in Egypt, their father's distress and deepening hunger - with no way out - forced them to return. On this return their father requested that they carry a little honey, spices, myrrh, nuts and almonds along with double money, and he allowed them to take their brother Benjamin to meet the great ruler in Egypt. Father had been hoping for the safe return of all with Simeon, Benjamin and some food. With Benjamin, the myrrh and other things, they stood before Joseph. On this trip, after some more deep experiences, they were reunited with Joseph. They still couldn't dwell with him in unity, but there was progress

in establishing new and far better relationships.

Strong's 4666

We will now look at a word (Strong's 4666) that is used twice in the New Testament (NT). We will find two important references to myrrh in connection with our Lord Jesus. In Matthew 2:11 we find wise men coming from the east looking for Him. When they came into the house they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshipped Him. When they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh. These men were wise to seek the Lord Jesus, find Him, worship Him and present to Him things that expressed their appreciation of who He was! The next reference is John 19:38-42.

"After this came Joseph of Arimathea... also Nicodemus... and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes about an hundred pound weight, and took the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews was to bury." The shepherds found the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. Wise men had brought gold, frankincense and myrrh to our Lord when He was a young child. After His death on the cross, Joseph of Arimathea with Nicodemus left His body in the tomb, wrapped in linen clothes with myrrh and aloes. In between were the deep experiences He passed through.

Joseph's life and deep experiences with his brethren and his trials in Egypt were shadows of our Lord's deep experiences. Joseph had been wrapped with the myrrh on the road going to Egypt. He had such a fragrant life — fragrant to both God and men! But the great pain and suffering of our Lord produced a fragrance that is unique above all others!

Wise men (also women and children) can still bring myrrh to Him as we contemplate His life and death. Our Lord also feels deeply our trials and difficulties. It is important for us to go through them with Him. Communion with Him through all the deep experiences of life will produce a sweet fragrance of Him. We will soon reign with Him in His appointed time and place, but it is here in this world where we can associate with Him and gather our myrrh for Him. As it is presented to Him, we along with others may enjoy the aroma! We may then be a sweet savour of Christ (2 Corinthians 2:15) as followers of God. We will also enjoy His aroma as dear children, walking in love, as Christ has loved us and has given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour (Ephesians 5:1-2). What provisions for unifying conditions!

Strong's 4753

Now we move on to the other most common Old Testament word for myrrh—Strong's 4753. It means distilling in drops and comes from Strong's 4843, which is translated as bitter, moved with choler, grieved, provoke and vex. An example of 4843 is in Genesis 49:23. Moses blesses the tribe of Joseph with the words:

"The archers have sorely grieved him..." The first use of Strong's 4753 is in Exodus 30:1-38 as the first ingredient of the Precious Ointment. All the deep feelings and affection of Him for His people - and those of His people for Him - are imbedded in this word. We shall see some of this as we trace it through the Scriptures. The next reference is in Esther 2:12. Esther lost her father and mother early in life and had been raised by her uncle Mordecai. Now she was taken from him for a year of purification before being presented to the king. The first six months of purification was to be with

the oil of myrrh. Those were very difficult experiences for her. Isolation from Mordecai and the rigours of being immersed in the purification process with the bitter oil of myrrh would produce a marked change in her. Looking back she could see mainly sorrows. It would be better to look ahead to better and more useful days. The oil of myrrh would separate her from the past and prepare her for the future. For us, too, better days lie ahead - the best days - eternity with our Lord! But first, the bitter days of preparation.

Psalms 45:1-2; Psalms 45:7-8 show us progression in appreciation of the King.

"My heart is inditing a good matter; I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into Thy lips: therefore God has blessed Thee for ever...Thou hast loved righteousness and hatest wickedness: therefore Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows. All Thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces whereby they have made Thee glad."

Contemplation of the King draws out the affections of the heart. Regardless of the difficulties, the heart is occupied with Him. What a great occupation! This will bring us into agreement with others who are also occupied with Him. How unifying this is!

Sadly, there is a false use of myrrh and cinnamon. In Proverbs 7:7-27 we learn of the ways of the flattering seductress. Verse 17 lists the fragrances. How sad that the fragrances which should be reserved for most noble things are degraded. How much of that is found today! That which should be only for our Lord is used to lure away souls to the detriment of the deceived. The world with its allurements has divided our hearts, seeking to lure us away from Him. May we be so occupied with Him that nothing will be able to distract us! The Song of Solomon contains the most references to the myrrh. This should not surprise us since it is a book that deals with the deep affections between a bridegroom and bride. In their communion in Song of Solomon 1:1-17 the bride says in verse 13:

"A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts."

It was her great delight to be with him and to hold him close in her embrace and affections. This communion continues in chapter 3 where she says in verse 6:

"Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the powders of the merchant?"

Then in chapter 4 the bridegroom speaks, saying in verse 6:

"Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense." Could it be that the "mountain of myrrh" would speak of our Lord's sufferings? How great His sufferings! What a mountain that is! He says that He will be at that mountain and His bride is invited to join Him there. Should we disappoint Him? Let's come every Lord's Day with others to meet Him there to contemplate Him in His sufferings. Let's come often in our hearts to enjoy His company in private! He is there; we can always find Him! But He goes on to speak of the "hill of frankincense." Could this speak of what we, like the wise men, would bring along with the gold and myrrh? We cannot bring very much to Him. But He calls it a hill! It is significant! He invites us to meet Him with what we have to bring. We do not have a description of what frankincense is

— who can describe worship that comes from our heart(s)? Wise men brought it! Is it not worship that He will appreciate and commend as we meet Him there with our offerings for Him? In Chapter 5:1 we find the Bridegroom in His garden (she was called a garden in 4:12!) with His bride and friends. He had gathered His myrrh! He had provided the honeycomb with the honey, the wine and the milk, and all were invited to eat and drink abundantly. What a place of happy unity with Him in the midst, and all enjoying His provisions! Would that this was always so! But, sadly, the chapter continues. The bride had gone home, bathed and had gone to bed. But He came and called. She made excuses. He put his hand in through the hole in the door and her heart moved for Him. When she went to the door the handles dripped with the myrrh, the sweet smelling myrrh. With her hand also dripping with myrrh, she opens the door to find Him gone. What a disappointment! But her heart had been deeply affected and there would be no satisfaction without Him. So she goes looking for Him. Even with the myrrh on her hands, she did not think of the Mountain of Myrrh or the Hill of Frankincense, so she went about the streets. That was not a good place for her. The watchmen found her and smote her. Others would ask her about her Beloved, so she began to describe Him in most elegant terms from head to toe. (Most descriptions of Him are from head to toe, with those of man from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. See Isaiah 1:6 and 2 Samuel 14:25.) Occupation with Him brought her back into communion with Him and on into happy fellowship with Him and His friends. Brethren dwelling together in unity!

Strong's 4669 Mark 15:23 says:

"And they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh; but He received it not."

After His trial before Pilate, our Lord had been scourged and sent to be crucified. He had been crowned with a crown of thorns, mocked with the purple robe and brought to Golgotha. At Golgotha He had been offered wine mingled with myrrh. He would not receive it. This was not an act of worship, but of scorn. He was very thirsty and His body dehydrated, but He would not receive that. In no way would He allow anything to detract from the full weight of the pain He must endure as the Sin-bearer.

Strong's 4667 The final uses of the word myrrh come in Revelation 1:11; Revelation 2:8. The name Smyrna is a Greek word for myrrh. Smyrna was a suffering assembly. They were encouraged by the message from the One who became dead and is alive. Many had been martyred; others had suffered terrible things. So the word from the One who had died and rose again was their comfort. They had been faithful unto death. Now, they could look beyond death to Him who overcame. What a path of faithfulness to their Lord! Walking in that path with Him and other faithful ones is the path of unity. But it is to be a path in total separation to Him and from the world and those who walk in worldly ways.

Lessons from the Myrrh

Myrrh is associated with the deep feelings arising from heart-wrenching experiences in the difficult things in life. God often allows us to pass through such difficult times. Difficult times are meant to make us pure, fragrant and useful for Him in service to others. We will see more of this as we continue our subject.

05. Cinnamon, Calamus and Cassia

Cinnamon, Calamus and Cassia

These ingredients of the Precious Ointment are not as often mentioned in Scripture, as is the myrrh. All are mentioned in Exodus 30:23 as ingredients of the holy anointing oil. All are from the plant or bark of the plant that is dried and pulverized. This is a painful process and completely changes the appearance and usefulness of the material.

Cinnamon is the second ingredient in the holy anointing oil. It is also mentioned in the negative way referred to with myrrh (see above in Proverbs 7:17); and as one of the products, along with calamus, of the Bride's garden in Song of Solomon 4:14. The one reference in the New Testament is in Revelation 18:11-13 where it is one of the items of merchandise that no one will buy after the judgment of Babylon.

Calamus is the third ingredient of the holy anointing oil. It is mentioned in Ezekiel 27:19 as a product in the market before Tyre's beauty was removed.

Cassia is the fourth ingredient specified in the precious ointment, and it is mentioned along with myrrh in Psalms 45:8 as one of the fragrances of the King's garments. See comments above under myrrh.

06. Oil Olive

Oil Olive

Pure olive oil was used as the fuel for the oil lamps in the tabernacle (Exodus 27:20). It was the source of energy for the light. In Exodus 30:24 it is the carrying agent for the fragrances of myrrh, cinnamon, calamus and cassia. It is easy to see how the oil is a type of the Holy Spirit who is our spiritual source of energy as He takes the things of Christ and makes them good to us. He also carries all the fragrances of Christ for our spiritual enjoyment as He causes them to flow down to and on us.

All believers are one in Christ, but if we are to enjoy that unity we must be in a proper condition for that Precious Ointment to flow down over us. We must neither grieve nor quench the Holy Spirit if we are to properly enjoy His work.

07. The Precious Ointment Upon The Head And Running Down

The Precious Ointment Upon The Head And Running Down Psalms 133:1 is an exclamation!

"Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" To explain what this means the psalmist goes on to say in verse 2:

"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."

We have seen the Precious Ointment as a holy composition of spices carried in olive oil. The myrrh is associated with the deep feelings arising from heart-wrenching experiences in the difficult things of life. The cinnamon, calamus and cassia are all products from the bark of a tree or from a plant that were ground to a very fine powder. This painful process produces rich fragrances. All speak of the sufferings of our Lord and to a lesser degree of our deep experiences with Him in life's pathway. The olive oil, a type of the Holy Spirit, is the carrier and energy for the suspension, flow and release of the precious fragrances of Christ. In an attempt to understand how this illustrates brethren dwelling together in unity, we will trace the flow of that Precious Ointment down over Aaron's head, beard and garments. Since we wish to follow the flow of the Precious Ointment, we must start at the top of Aaron's head. Exodus 28:1-43 gives the instructions for the garments of the priests.

Topmost on the forehead of the high priest was the holy crown (Exodus 28:36). It was composed of a plate of pure gold engraved like the engravings of a signet with the words: "HOLINESS TO THE LORD." Pure gold is a type of the intrinsic holiness and divinity of God. The high priest who wore that crown was to be acting under the control of the One whom that crown represented. It was to be always on his forehead. He had responsibility for the holy things of God. The words "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" could never be covered or erased. They were permanently on display. Everything offered and done in the presence of the high priest was to be in line with the Lord's holy requirements and order. The holy crown was put on a blue lace. Blue is the colour of the sky and speaks of heavenly things. Our Lord Jesus Christ came down from heaven to bring God's thoughts and plans to us. He was that lace of blue! The holy crown and the lace of blue were to be set at the forefront of the mitre or bonnet of the high priest. The mitre was to be made of fine linen (v. 39). The fine linen was pure and white with no blemishes in it. Aaron's head was to be enclosed in this pure white mitre. All that transpired in his thoughts was to be in the pure character of what that mitre represented. When the Precious Ointment was poured on the head as in Psalms 133:2, how did the flow begin? The first point of contact was with the holy crown. The holy anointing oil with all its ingredients representing the fragrances of Christ first came upon this holy crown. All is holy and precious here. There was neither defilement nor inconsistency. It then flowed down over the lace of blue. Thoughts of heaven! Thoughts of the One who came from heaven to reveal God's thoughts and plans to us! That Precious Ointment flowed over Him as the lace of blue and over the pure white mitre. Our Great High Priest has only pure thoughts. He knew no sin; He did no sin, and there was no sin in Him.

How wonderful was the flow of the Precious Ointment before it ever reached Aaron's beard! How important this is in brethren dwelling together in unity! From the first sin in the Garden of Eden, there has been blame and seeds of disunity. Our Lord came to make us one in Himself. If we are to enjoy the unity He has provided, we must be in the proper conditions for it to be realized. There is nothing of man's doing in this unity. Our Lord is the source. The Holy Spirit - carrying all His fragrances - alone can provide the energy for this unity as this Precious Ointment flows over us.

Aaron must have had a full beard. The beard had grown from within Aaron as he served as high priest. That which came from within him and could be seen by others must come under the effect of that Precious Ointment. Exodus 30:32 gave clear and unmistakable instruction that the holy anointing oil was never to be poured on man's flesh. Even Aaron's beard as it grew while he served the Lord and His people must be sanctified and consecrated by this Precious Ointment if there was to be proper unity among the people of God. The Precious Ointment kept flowing down. As it flowed, it would fall on the two onyx stones on the shoulders of the ephod. See Exodus 28:6-14. The ephod was made of gold, blue, purple, scarlet and fine linen. Gold is a type of the divine righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. Blue speaks of heavenly things. Purple stands for royalty. Scarlet points us to the One who said: "But I am a worm and no man." He shed His blood to take away the sin of the world. All the scarlet things were dyed from the pigment from the dead red maggot worm. The fine linen speaks of His righteousness given to His saints for their garments. The white onyx stones each had six of the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel engraved in them. The names were engraved permanently, in the same manner, as was the inscription "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" in the holy crown. They were set in sockets of gold in the shoulders of the ephod. There they were borne before the Lord and maintained in strength as typified by the shoulders of the high priest. A girdle made of the same materials held the ephod in place. The Precious Ointment would then flow down to the breastplate (vv. 15-29). In the breastplate was found the Urim and Thummim which stand for the "lights and perfections" of Christ. These were used to determine the Lord's will in difficult situations. See Ezra 2:63 and Nehemiah 7:65. On the front of the breastplate were the twelve precious stones, each bearing the name of one of the tribes of the children of Israel. These were affectionately borne on Aaron's heart in precise order (of four rows with three stones each) over the Urim and Thummim (lights and perfections) of the Lord. What a display of unity as the Precious Ointment flowed over them!

Over all these vestments was the robe of blue. The hole in the top with its special binding allowed it to be put on over the high priest's head. At the base on the hem were golden bells alternating with blue, purple and scarlet pomegranates. The pomegranates represent fruitfulness, and the golden bells would make harmonious sounds as the high priest moved about doing his duties. The Precious Ointment contained all the fragrances associated with our Lord's deep innermost feelings, as well as our deep feelings as we have gone with Him through the most difficult times of our lives. The gathering, cutting, drying and pulverizing times have been so painful, yet they have yielded the sweetest fragrances. These, carried in the olive oil, a type of the Holy Spirit, form the Precious Ointment. This Precious Ointment is such a valuable source of blessing for us as we consider our Lord, our true High Priest, and how all speaks of Him, His person and His work. For us to really be in the good of brethren dwelling in unity, we must be in the good of our position in Christ. We must have appreciated His sufferings and have been willing to suffer with Him. The Precious Ointment poured over His head (with all His holy, heavenly and pure thoughts) running

down over His beard (once plucked out, but through which His face now shines) reaches to us. We find ourselves borne upon His shoulders and upon His heart with all His strength and affections. What a place to be with all the rest of His own! What a place to dwell together in unity!

But, sadly, we have often been taken up with other things and the practical enjoyment of the unity has been marred. We have been occupied with things of this world. The politics and social affairs of this world have shaped our thinking and affected our actions. The Word of God has lost its place in our minds and heart-affections. The pleasures and affairs of this world have taken our time and energies. We have become associated with worldly people and things, and when we try to assimilate them into the Christian circles, confusion results. There seems to be a lack of spiritual power to distinguish between the things of our Lord and those of the world. We may try to resolve issues by applying worldly techniques to spiritual matters, but the result is usually frustration. Scriptures may be improperly applied or received because of the cold condition of our hearts. These things tend to divide brethren.

It is comforting to know that there is a way to return. But the way is not in any of the proud ways we may have been following. It is in humbling ourselves before our Lord and each other. We must separate ourselves unto Him and that may well necessitate separation from what we may have considered "nice" people and things. The deep experiences with our Lord and each other, with hearts willing to depend on Him, can lead us to appreciate the Precious Ointment. Then when conditions are right, it will flow down over us as we consciously see our place in our Great High Priest. Here we will find good and precious times of brethren dwelling together in unity.

08. The Dew Of Heaven

The Dew Of Heaven

"Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity... as the dew of Hermon and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore" (Psalms 133:1; Psalms 133:3).

Dew, when promised in Scripture, is an assurance of God's blessing to man on earth. When withheld, it is a form of judgment. If we wish to understand the conditions of the blessings of brethren dwelling together in unity, it will be helpful to appreciate the characteristics of dew.

Jehovah asked Job many hard questions in Job 38:1-41; Job 39:1-30; Job 40:1-24; Job 41:1-34. Among them were questions about the rain and the dew, the hoary (white) frost and the ice. See Job 38:25-30. Some of those questions were:

Hath the rain a father? Who hath begotten the drops of the dew?

Out of whose womb came the ice? The hoary frost of heaven, Who hath gendered it?

These are not normal questions for us. But they are questions well worth considering since Jehovah asked them. They can be answered as we understand how the dew is formed.

09. Formation of the Dew

Formation of the Dew The formation of the dew of heaven begins the day before the dew appears. It begins with the sun shining brightly during the day. When the sun shines on the earth it sends tremendous quantities of energy to the earth. That energy warms things on earth. Our cars and many other things get warm-even hot in the sunshine. This heat is produced by the absorption of energy from the sun. As the energy pours forth on the earth, something else happens to prevent us from burning up. Water evaporates, absorbing most of this energy. Each liter of water absorbs about 620 calories (actually kilogram calories, but we call them calories for our diets!) to change it from liquid (at room temperature) to vapor. Billions of liters of water evaporate each day. Remember, we only need some 2,000 calories each day to live! Imagine how much energy is absorbed to keep us comfortable here. What a wonderful and wise Creator, who has so designed this intricate system!

There is a balance between the amount of liquid and evaporated water on the earth. There is a limit on the amount of water that can be held in the air — with warm air being able to hold more than cold air. During the day when the sun shines brightly, the air warms and is able to hold substantial amounts of evaporated water.

After sunset, the energy that came from the sun in the daytime leaves the earth by radiation. (Actually there is radiation away from the earth during the day as well, but the rate of supply from the sun overrides the amount leaving.) This produces what the weatherman calls "radiational cooling." As air cools it can hold less water and the saturation point is called the "dew point." When the dew point is reached in the cooling process the excess evaporated water held in the air condenses and forms dew. Dew will form on any item that is sufficiently cooler than the surrounding air, and it generally forms on the objects from which the sun's energy had been stored and just released. These cool objects are the points of attraction for the dew formation. This is a very gentle and delicate process and is the way God "begets each drop of the dew."

10. Formation of Rain, Ice and Hoar Frost

Formation of Rain, Ice and Hoar Frost

Most of the extraction of the evaporated water from the air takes place under more drastic conditions. We will not consider the technical aspects of the formation of rain except to say that there are tremendous energies involved. Liquid water contains less energy than evaporated water, so in the process of changing the evaporated water back to liquid, this energy must be used somewhere. This energy transfer produces wind, lightning, hail, etc. This is God's way of fulfilling Ecclesiastes 1:7 which tells us:

"All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again."

God is the "Father of every raindrop." The energy for each drop has come from Him. He has provided that energy and controlled its release to form each drop to accomplish His grand design!

How can we explain ice coming from a womb? A womb is a nice warm place. Each of us was formed in one! Can ice come from such a place? If so, how? How is the ice formed? Ice contains much less energy than liquid water. As energy leaves, things get colder. Water freezes at 0 degrees Celsius (32 degrees Fahrenheit). But we must remember where the energy came from in order that it might leave. It came from the sun. God sent it to us. He sends it and he prepared the way for it to leave. All is in His control. All is for the display of His love and care for us. The ice has come from His "womb"! (See Strong's 990. "Womb" may also be translated "bosom" or "body.")

Then, there is the hoary (white) frost of heaven that those of us who live in cold climates find on our car windows on some cold mornings. We may despise it as we clear it from our windows or shiver while we wait for the defroster to work. But it really is a blessing from the Lord, so that we do not freeze to death as energy leaves the earth. Frost is frozen drops of dew. God has gendered each of those cold crystals that sparkle in the sunshine! He has sent them for us to enjoy!

Water is, therefore, God's great "shock absorber" in that it absorbs and holds tremendous quantities of energy during the heating cycle, then gives back that energy as things cool. We would literally burn up during the day and freeze solid during the night if it were not for the "shock absorber" that is constantly storing and releasing energy.

11. Conditions Adverse to Dew Formation

Conditions Adverse to Dew Formation

Now, let's return to thoughts of the dew. Did you notice that there is much dew on some mornings and little or none on others? Why? There are several reasons.

Dew is absent or minimal after a cloudy day the day before. The sun had been shining just like all other days, but the clouds between the sun and the earth had dissipated and absorbed the rays of energy. The flow of energy had been disrupted. The energy was not able to fall directly on the objects on the earth. They remained cool that day. When the night came there was not much energy to radiate back. They could not cool down sufficiently at night to be attractive to dew formation. So there was no dew on them that night.

Dew is also absent or minimal after a cloudy night. The sun may have shown brightly the day before and warmed things nicely during the day, but evening and night clouds have interfered with the release of the radiating energy. It could not escape. Much of it was bounced back or absorbed by the suspended liquid drops of the clouds in the air above, hence, no dew.

Wind conditions also affect the dew. During a windy day the air rushing by objects on earth keeps them cool by taking much of the energy with it. Energy is robbed by the wind. Wind keeps things agitated. At night the wind takes the radiating energy and warms the objects that release the energy. The quiet delicate process of dew formation is interrupted. There is little or no dew after a windy day or a windy night.

12. Lessons from the Dew

Lessons from the Dew

Harmony among brethren is a delicate thing. Elijah did not hear the Lord in the great and strong wind, the earthquake or the fire, but in the still, small voice (1 Kings 19:11-12). The blessing of the dew of heaven is to be received and enjoyed in very peaceful conditions.

First, we must be in the proper condition to receive divine energy from our Lord who is the Sun of righteousness (Malachi 4:2). There should be no clouds between Him and us. Just as the clouds are near the earth, the problem with our clouds will be that we allow things to veil Him from us. His energy is always available and His desire is to warm our hearts with His love. May we not allow "clouds" between Him and us in our personal lives!

Then, we must live without reproach in this world. This will mean that we live lives much different than many about us. There should be no "clouds" that hinder the divine flow of energy from us. We live in a very dark world, but that is precisely the place for the heaviest dew to form. We are children of light and are to let our lights so shine before men that they may glorify our Lord. God wants us to be an "unclouded" conductor of His energy to all the needy about us. No dew is formed unless the energy received is radiated back. If we only take in the divine blessings, there will be no dew. Having our hearts warmed is not enough. We must radiate that love to others who desperately need it. They are all about us in the darkness. Opportunities abound, but we must leave our comfort zones and go into the cold, dark night, radiating the love of God. Serving our Lord by serving others allows the dew of heaven to form on us. Brethren working together to reach the lost and dying find themselves in a wonderfully uniting process.

Just as water is God's great "shock absorber," so God desires us to be part of His great plan for this world. The whole world is under His judgment, and His wrath abides on each lost person (John 3:36). The energy of His wrath is far more than that of the sun! But our Lord Jesus Christ came and "absorbed" the energy of that wrath on the cross for all who have believed on Him. His work there is sufficient to meet the need of all. His supply of "living water" is sufficient for us as we labour for and with Him, and it is sufficient for every person who will seek it. We are privileged to enjoy as much of the energy of His love as we wish, but for us to experience the blessing of the dew of heaven we must radiate this energy out into the cold, dark world. Someone radiated it to us (and, thankfully, many still do), so we should be part of the process of radiating to others. Jesus stood and cried:

"If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly should flow rivers of living water" (John 7:37-38).

He desires us to be part of this wonderful process of reaching the thirsty souls. But the dew of heaven is formed in quietness. It is so well recorded in Isaiah 30:15, "In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength." May we not be like those of Isaiah's time who refused and went their own way in their own strength to their confusion and destruction.

May we rather be like the little girl who while playing with her toys, looked up at her mother sitting nearby. She sat there quietly a few moments, then left her toys and climbed up in her mother's lap. Mother asked what she wanted. She replied:

"Nothing, I just want to sit here and look at you and love you!"

Oh, that we may leave our "toys" and just sit in contemplation of our Lord and quietly enjoy His love! Let's just let Him love us and then love Him in return. This - with His Word before us and our hearts overflowing back to Him in worship - is the ideal set of conditions for the formation of the dew of heaven in our lives. As we quietly sit in His presence to enjoy His thoughts and absorb His energy, we will feel His heart throb, and then (perhaps even unconsciously) radiate His love quietly to our brethren and the many lost ones about us. How wonderfully unifying this is!

Dew, in Scripture, when promised speaks of the blessings of God for man on earth. It is not mentioned in the New Testament because a heavenly people are in view. It will not be needed in heaven. But it is such a provision of blessing as we travel this desolate wilderness enroute!

13. First Mention of Dew in Scripture

First Mention of Dew in Scripture

Isaac in blessing his sons promised both of them that God would give them of the dew of heaven and the fatness of the earth (Genesis 27:28; Genesis 27:39). But both were not given the same blessing. For Jacob, the dew of heaven came before the fatness of the earth, but the blessings were reversed for Esau. What difference would this make?

Jacob was to be the father of God's earthly people. They were to have a special relationship with their God. God would provide for them in special ways. The dew of heaven would be one of these special blessings. These blessings would come from God Himself, so it was called "the dew of heaven." While they were obedient and followed their God, the dew would be in plentiful supply. The fatness of the earth would follow with their earthly blessings.

Poor Esau was promised these blessings in reverse order. Earthly things would be first for him. Look at his descendents and relatives today. The fatness of the earth has generally been their lot. Where are all the oil wells being fought over today? Esau's descendents have been blessed with the fatness of the earth, but how miserable has been their lot with all their wars and fighting. The dew of heaven has also fallen upon them, but they have hardly noticed.

Unfortunately, Israel has little appreciated the dew of heaven. In spite of God's many blessings to them, there seems to be little appreciation shown to Him. They seem to keep trying to enter into their blessings on their own. They will keep trying, but will not succeed on their own. The time is coming when they shall be in utter defeat. But that is not the end of the story for them. When all seems most hopeless and they in their despair turn to the Lord with all their hearts, He will put a new heart in them. He will then bring them into the blessings He has been holding in store for them. Only then will they come into and appreciate the blessings of the dew of heaven.

14. The Manna on the Dew

The Manna on the Dew

"In the morning the dew lay round about the host. And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, 'It is manna'..." (Exodus 16:13 b to 15 and following). For forty years God fed His people with manna! What a marvelous provision! Who could have imagined such a thing! Their food came with the dew of heaven! Where did they find this wonderful food? Not in the camp. Why not? Remember, God had given them a pillar of cloud which stood between them and the Egyptians in Exodus 14:19-20. It was to be their shade throughout their desert journey. At night it was a pillar of fire. This pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night was a wonderful comfort to them in providing shade by day, plus heat and light by night. But their food was not to be found under it. The conditions under the cloud and pillar of fire were not favourable for the dew of heaven. The sun could not pour forth its energy there. But all around the cloud the conditions were unimpeded. There the earth could take the full force of the sun during the day and the energy was free to go back during the night. These were the ideal conditions for the formation of the dew of heaven. And this was the place where God provided the food for His people. His people could not provide their own food. They must go out from themselves to His appointed place. But it was not far away — just outside and "round about the camp." Each morning, except the Sabbath, they were to gather their food. But they must do so before the sun got hot and it disappeared for that day.

How full of lessons is this for us as we seek to dwell together as brethren in unity! Our place is to dwell together in unity under His cloud and pillar of fire. He has called us to a most wonderful place in the family of God. Oh, that we appreciate, ever more and more, what has been done for us to redeem us from the world (Egypt) and to provide so sumptuously for us on our way to heaven! Israel had been physically separated from the worldly influences of Egypt. In the wilderness there was a place for them (provided by their God) to dwell together in unity. There was no lack of food, with manna every morning and quails every evening. We too live in a wilderness and there is a place for us to be separated to our Lord and from the world. Our food is not from ourselves. We are to "go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach" (Hebrews 13:13).

He, our Living Bread, will provide our food there. This food brought into our dwellings and feasted upon will unite us in Him! Are we willing to leave our nice warm and comfortable places and go out "round about the camp" to individually gather our "manna" for ourselves and for our families? We do not need to get wet with the dew, but we must be there just after the dew goes up. We must not be far removed from what God has done the day before and during the night. Divine energy has come and gone, but precious food has been left behind for us to gather. There is a time prescribed by the Lord for us to gather our "manna." Our Lord Jesus, our bread who came down from heaven (John 6:1-71), is not only God's food but ours as well. Are we spending that necessary time gathering from Him each morning? Are we feeding on Him with our families throughout the day?

Any lack here will be a source of complaining, starting in our families and spreading throughout the company of believers.

Sadly, the children of Israel still carried the things of Egypt in their hearts, and their murmurings caused much disunity among them. And are not the things we bring from this world the sources of our disunity? Sadly, it is so!

15. My Speech Shall Distill As the Dew

My Speech Shall Distill As the Dew

These were among the final words of Moses, the man of God, and are recorded for us in Deuteronomy 32:2. Moses had been such a wonderful servant of God! He was one with whom God could speak face to face.

He had come to learn his own heart, the heart of the people, and more importantly, God's heart. How often he pleaded with God for His people. Now, at the end of his life, he composed (led by the Spirit of God) a song for God's people. The song they sang on the banks of the Red Sea seems to have been largely forgotten. Now they were about to go into the Promised Land and Moses was about to leave them. Strong warnings were in order for the murmuring and disobedient company. What could be the best way to present these warnings? He composed the song! But he did not begin with the warnings: he began with an invitation to heaven and earth to hear the words of his mouth! The words that he used were not ordinary words — they were pure words of instruction (doctrine) that would fall as rain (maybe heavy at times), but they were also gentle words. His speech would

"distill as the dew and as the small rain upon the tender herb and as showers upon the grass because he would publish the name of the Lord, and ascribe greatness unto our God."

He would teach the people to sing that

"He is the Rock, His word is perfect: for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He." The people had been following Moses, but Joshua would be their new leader. Leaders could fail. Moses had. His failure had painful consequences. He had once spoken badly and called God's people "rebels" (Numbers 22:10). He had not set apart God before the eyes of the people, and he had been denied the privilege of bringing God's people into the Promised Land. Even the meekest man in all the earth (Numbers 12:3) had used hard words, but now at the end of his life his speech could distill as the dew. What might this mean? The distillation process normally takes place in a closed environment where the product to be distilled is put into a container and heated to evaporate it. Above the boiling liquid will be a cool condenser to catch the fumes and turn them back to liquid. This distillate is then channelled into a clean container. The impurities are left behind in the boiling container. Usually the evaporated liquid is invisible and only becomes visible again after condensation. This process requires being in the heat and cold with energy given and taken away. Moses had experienced this both physically and spiritually as he led sheep and then God's people.

These experiences made Moses a wiser and more useful leader. Twice Moses had been forty days alone with God at Mount Sinai. He had been out of the sight of the people. Now he was old and would soon be gone. But he had learned to publish the name of the Lord and to ascribe greatness to his God. He could recount God's ways with His people, reminding them of His blessings. He could then challenge them. This was done with a song they would learn. It then

could be rehearsed in their minds and sung by their lips. No longer could they see his shining face, but the distilled pure words would linger on — and they still do today! Are not God's ways with us much like His ways with Moses? Few of us would have desired Moses' difficult job of leading God's people. Moses' forty years of learning in the best schools in Egypt were followed by forty years of special training, leading sheep and raising his family. At eighty he was called to contend with Pharaoh for the deliverance of the children of Israel. Then there were all the experiences of the wilderness where Moses had been in the "heat" and in the "cold."

Sometimes we feel like we have been in similar circumstances. Often we feel like "water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again" (2 Samuel 14:14). Man cannot gather the water up again, but God can and does. He does it by evaporation! He may choose to "evaporate us," making us invisible as He works in our lives, so He can "condense us" in His time, way and place. While that "process" may not be a comfortable one, it may well be His way of richest blessing for us. Let's be willing to be in His hands! Let's allow Him to apply the heat and the cold in His own way for our good. This is often His way to purify us, and what seems so painful to us is His way of removing us from what would defile us. The psalmist in Psalms 119:1-176 found this to be so in his life. He said:

"Before I was afflicted, I went astray: but now I have kept Thy word (v. 67). It was good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes (v. 71). I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me (v. 75). I am afflicted very much; quicken me, O Lord according to Thy word (v. 107)."

These afflictions deliver us from our own ways to prepare us for true unity.

16. Josephs Blessing

Joseph's Blessing

Both Jacob and Moses ascribe special blessings to Joseph, the one who was separate from his brethren (Genesis 49:26) or separated from his brethren (Deuteronomy 33:19).

While the dew is not specifically mentioned in Genesis 49:1-33, the conditions are right for it to be included in the blessings Jacob gave. Included in the blessing was:

"...the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb... they shall be on the head of Joseph and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren." The dew is specifically mentioned in Deuteronomy 33:13-16 and following. Part of the blessing of Moses was:

"And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the Lord be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath, and for the precious things brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon, and for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills, and for the precious things of the earth and fullness thereof and for the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush: let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren."

Joseph's life had been very difficult but greatly blessed of the Lord. Now, there was a special blessing left for his descendents. Joseph had been rejected by his brethren and sold into Egypt. The early years in Egypt were also very difficult. He was plunged deep into the fires of affliction. He had been out of sight - "evaporated" - from his home and family. He had been an "unknown" in Egypt. But he had never been out of sight or unknown to God. These difficult experiences were stepping stones in his preparation for greater service. His dreams would be fulfilled through deep personal tragedies. He could become visible to his family again in another place and be the source of blessing to them and the whole world. But how can we reconcile the fact of Joseph's twice emphasized separation from his brethren with our consideration of unity in Psalms 133:1-3?

Separation hadn't been the choice of Joseph or his father. Joseph and his father Jacob had a very close relationship and they shared their concern for Joseph's brothers. Unfortunately, the brothers were involved with improper things, and Joseph in faithfulness to his father had to report to him their evil ways. These reports, along with his dreams and father's favouritism, caused his brethren to hate him. In spite of Joseph's care and concern for his brethren, they plotted and found a way to get rid of him. The message sent home to father in the form of a coat dipped in blood prompted Jacob to believe some wild beast had killed his son.

It was not possible for brethren to dwell together in unity with such different lifestyles and goals. But Joseph's brothers wished to go their own ways even though they were not united in their willful ways. As we read their history we see many problems between them. But they were quite united in wanting to get rid of Joseph. His honesty and uprightness, along with his dreams and special place

of affection with father, seemed to be too much for them. So the exclusion comes from their side.

Similar things happen today. Many dear brethren wish to go on a wider pathway and feel free to associate with other "good people" or "fine Christians" or causes. Many seem to be enthusiastically involved with all kinds of "Christian activities" and see no problems with such associations. After all, they say, "We'll all be together in heaven." Other brethren see improper things going on in and with these associations and feel convicted before their Lord about them. So there are separations, some initiated by both "sides" of the issues. Choices must be made. Sometimes they are forced.

Joseph had been forced into separation. But he did not wish it to continue indefinitely. Before he became visible to his brethren again, it was necessary for their consciences to be properly exercised, but he would provide for all their needs. Their money was not important to him. It was the condition of hearts that mattered most. After he was revealed to his brethren, he did all in his power to restore the unity, but it seems that his brethren never trusted him fully. He wept over their unwillingness to be fully reconciled. But the blessing came on the top of the head of him who was separated from his brethren. Separation to our Lord must come first. As we follow Him and call on Him out of a pure heart, we will find others who also do so. In the degree in which we follow our Lord with a pure heart, we can enjoy the fellowship of others likewise doing so. It is so that all true believers will be in heaven, but the wrong associations and attitudes of this scene will be then judged and removed. We will enjoy that perfect unity then!

17. Lessons from Gideon

Lessons from Gideon The Lord had told Gideon that he was to save Israel out of the hand of the Midianites (Judges 6:1-40). Gideon seems to have been timid and did not want to proceed on his own. He had been told to destroy the altar of Baal and build an altar to the Lord and offer his father's second bullock on that altar. He was obedient, but with ten of his servants did the job at night. In Gideon's desire to know assuredly that God was to use him to save Israel, he asks God to do some very difficult things for him. As I look at what he asked, these do not seem to me to be requests of a doubter, but of a serious seeker of the mind of God.

First he said:

"Behold, I will put a fleece on the floor; and if there be dew on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that Thou wilt save Israel by mine hand as Thou hast said."

Gideon was an outdoorsman. He knew that dew formed on some things, but not others and that there was more or less dew on various objects.

Things with high heat capacity collect more dew. For example, an automobile has a high heat capacity and as we all know when sitting in the sun can get very hot inside because its surface gets hot. Woolen garments (especially light coloured ones) do not get hot — in fact they are insulators. Now, when Gideon asks something of God, why not make the request difficult? After all, God is able to do what seems impossible to us. Gideon knew that in his own strength he could not deliver Israel. Deliverance had to come from God. So, too, must his assurance come from God. God was very willing to show Gideon that He could do the difficult things requested.

Gideon arose early the next morning, looking for God's answer. He gathered the fleece together and it was full of water, but there was no dew anywhere else. To see how abundantly God answered, he wrung the water out of the fleece and found a bowl full of water! This was a wonderful answer. Those of us who have left garments outside overnight may have found them damp in the morning, but there was not a bowl full of water in them from the dew. And if they were damp, there was much more dew on other things!

Gideon desired additional assurance and asked for the opposite set of circumstances for the next morning. He wanted to prove with the fleece that God could keep the fleece dry and that there would be dew on all the ground. God answered exactly as Gideon requested. So Gideon went on to prepare a company for the battle.

Why is this story recorded for us? In addition to the interesting story, there are lessons for us. God certainly does want His own to be assured that He is leading them. But I believe He gave this lesson to be a beautiful type of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Remember, we have said that the dew is a type of the blessing of God for His people on earth. When our Lord Jesus came, was it not dry all around? He came as a root out of dry ground (Isaiah 53:2), but the blessing of God was on Him! God could say from heaven that He was His well

beloved Son and that God was well pleased with Him. Wherever He went, He carried blessings from God. He demonstrated this with His miracles and gracious words and deeds. He was the "dew of heaven!" His pathway led him through this world and on to the cross. There He was made a curse when He took our sins upon Himself. There the dew was wrung from Him. He cried out: "I thirst." But now the dew is on all the ground. That ground which was cursed by sin can now receive the blessing of God! Everyone can now receive the "dew of heaven!" The good news of the gospel is available to all. Those who accept it come into the blessing of God. The blessing is for us now here on earth and will continue throughout the ages of eternity!

Why did Gideon find a bowl full of water in the fleece? May I suggest that God would give him just what he needed for that moment? Did he need a drink? Did he need water for cleansing? Whatever his need was, there was just enough for him. Gideon had his bowl full that morning! We may come often to Him and we can always find our bowl full to meet our need!

18. Nebuchadnezzar

Nebuchadnezzar The dew of heaven did not only affect the Israelites, but the nations were also influenced by it. Nebuchadnezzar was a great king in Babylon. We have in Daniel the Aramaic term for the dew of heaven.

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Asariah had been faithful servants in his kingdom. After their time of prayer, Daniel had revealed a forgotten dream to the king and provided the interpretation. But the king continued on in pride. Daniel's friends passed through the furnace after walking in it with a fourth person (the Son of God, Daniel 3:25). In spite of brief acknowledgments that the God of the Hebrew servants was the true God, Nebuchadnezzar continued on in his pride. So God sent him another dream, which only Daniel could interpret. When Daniel heard the dream he was very astonished and wished the interpretation of the dream for the enemies of the king. After twelve months of further prideful living, the interpretation came to pass.

King Nebuchadnezzar lost his mind and was driven from among men. His kingdom departed from him and he lived with the wild beasts of the earth. He ate grass like the oxen and his body was wet with the dew of heaven until he would know that the Most High ruled in the kingdom of men and gave power to whomsoever He would. Seven years later he lifted up his eyes to heaven and recognized who God was. His understanding returned to him and he blessed the Most High, praising and honouring Him whose dominion was an everlasting dominion with His kingdom passing from generation to generation. He was restored to his position as king. Then he could

"praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth and His ways judgment; and that those who walk in pride He is able to abase" (Daniel 4:37).

Pride is a dreadful thing. Nebuchadnezzar's pride was his downfall. God dealt drastically with him. It was not possible for him to continue to lead the kingdom. There could be no unity in the kingdom with such a proud man at the top. Pride and self-seeking are great destroyers of unity among brethren. But experiences alone with God, under the effects of the dew of heaven, changed this king. Being warmed by the sun and chilled in the night so that he could be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven years in the school of God had its effect. Luxury and ease are not good for us. Hardship and privation alone with the Lord are much better for us. We live in Laodicean times and say (especially with our attitudes and actions) that we are rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing. Instead, we are the wretched and the miserable, poor, and blind and naked. Nebuchadnezzar became a changed man. Our difficult times alone with God can also change us! Let's not despise the dew of heaven and its lessons for us!

19. Three Negative References

Three Negative References

We have said that whenever the dew was promised it represented the blessing of God for men on earth. We will observe that when it is withheld, a curse was pronounced. The first negative example comes in 2 Samuel 1:21. David laments the death of Saul and Jonathan. He says:

"Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings; for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil."

Saul had considered David his enemy, but David never reciprocated the thought. David had been very content to dwell with Saul to help him and the people of Israel in any way possible. But Saul's jealousy and pride caused him to despise David and treat him badly. David tried to overcome evil with good. Saul and Jonathan were killed, and David pronounced a curse on the place of their death. He lamented for Saul and Jonathan. The second negative example is found in 1 Kings 17:1.

"And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word."

Ahab was an evil king and led the people of Israel in evil ways. There would be three and one half years of famine with no dew or rain. Disobedience to God brings His people into sad conditions. Even king Ahab and his servant were divided, going separate ways looking for food for animals. God's faithful ones were secretly cared for, but the vast majority of the children of Israel were left to fare however they could. What a lack of practical unity among brethren!

Haggai 1:10 is the third negative example. The people of Israel had been occupied with building their own houses. The Lord's house had been neglected. In God's judgment, He says:

"Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from the dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit."

Self-seeking is a dangerous thing. This is not conducive to brethren dwelling in unity. The Lord's word to us by Haggai is: "Consider your ways." Do not the same words speak volumes to the hearts of any exercised before our Lord?

20. Closing Comments About The Lives Of Joseph And Our Lord

Closing Comments About The Lives Of Joseph And Our Lord

Myrrh

Joseph experienced deeply both the bitterness of the myrrh and the blessings of the dew of heaven. Both of these precious sets of lessons are developed in his life in the school of God with his brethren and in the world of his time. He knew what it was to be rejected by his brethren, to overcome evil with good, but to still not be fully trusted. In all he is a wonderful type of our Lord and is a rich role model for each of us to follow.

We have already noticed Joseph's relationship with his father and his brethren before their separation. In spite of known and felt animosity, Joseph would be faithful in doing his father's bidding, and he was ready and willing to go to seek the welfare of his brethren. He is like our blessed Lord who "came unto His own, but His own received Him not" (John 1:11).

Both were rejected and sold. They could not walk together with their brethren. There could be no unity because of the different ways and lifestyles. Both were hated for their upright lives; that produced hatred in the hearts of their brethren. The rejections of both came from those whom they loved so dearly and for whom they desired the very best. Both lived upright lives in spite of the false accusations and continued to seek the welfare of their brethren and were willing to forgive, even without forgiveness being requested. Evil was overcome with good. Blessings were rendered in place of mockery and cursing.

Joseph was stripped of his beautiful robe and "wrapped" in the "myrrh train" that took him to Egypt (Genesis 37:25-27). He felt so very deeply the rejection of his brethren. Later, his brethren admitted their guilt concerning their brother, in that they saw the anguish of his soul when he besought them, but they would not hear (42:21). He deeply felt the bitterness of the myrrh, but he carried the fragrance to others. God was with him and made all that he did to prosper (39:3). While he deeply felt the afflictions, he kept them inside (rolling them on his God), so that on the outside he could be so useful to and trusted by others in the new strange land. Even in the new land, there were severe testings, but he remained faithful to his God and to those whom he served. We read of no attempt to return evil to any. Our blessed Lord veiled His glory, entering this world under the poorest of circumstances. We find Him wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. He was unknown by most during the first thirty years of His life. When He did make Himself known to His brethren the vast majority rejected Him. His good deeds were ascribed to evil powers. Very few (but how precious they were to Him) brought myrrh to Him as noted above. The Psalms and Prophets are full of expressions of the anguish of His heart. The Song of Songs describe His appreciation of the myrrh with its bitterness and fragrance. Yet He willingly asked for forgiveness for His enemies and even today is still willingly receiving all who have grievously sinned against Him when they come in repentance to Him, asking for His mercy. On the cross He exhausted the wrath of God for sins. Two of His own wrapped His body in linen, with myrrh and aloes, and laid

Him in the new tomb. But He rose from the dead and is now ascended to the right hand of the Father. Now there is wonderful blessing for all who accept Him as Saviour. The day is coming when Israel will come to the end of herself. After the soon-coming terrible persecution befalls her, she will in absolute desperation call on Him whom she has long rejected. She will then be restored to Him. The bitterness of His myrrh will be replaced by its fragrance!

21. Separation and Unity

Separation and Unity

How can we reconcile separation and unity? True unity is not possible without separation. Separation has two aspects: separation to God and separation from the world. The order must first be separation to God before there can be effective separation from the world. The saints in Thessalonica turned to God from idols (1 Thessalonians 1:9).

Joseph and his brothers were brothers before and after the separation. Family ties were not changed. But practical relationship ties were greatly affected when the brothers lived ungodly lives and sold him to the Ishmaelites. It was impossible for Joseph and his brethren to walk together in their diverging pathways. His personal integrity and devotion to his father prevented that. As painful as it was, he could not remain united with them in their evil ways. Excuses would not work. Evil could not be justified. But he was not the one to forcibly break the tie to his brothers. Rather, his brothers were convicted by his uprightness in contrast to their ways, so they rejected and sold him. Our Lord's own, too, rejected Him. Our Lord was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners (Hebrews 7:26). He was wholly separated to God. While He was the "Friend of sinners," He was never a partaker of any of their evil ways. When they refused to come to Him and rejected Him, they found themselves separated from Him. In their animosity they would cry: "Away with Him!"

Joseph is a type of our Lord. Both were separated first to God. It was this separation that preceded the other. Now, any real unity for followers of God must be on the basis of separation to God first. Of necessity, this will force the world to exclude us. The principle was first demonstrated by

"Cain who was of the wicked one, who slew his brother because his works were evil and Abel's righteous" (1 John 3:12). The world will hate us for the same reasons if we are faithful to our Lord (v. 13). But it is not only from the world that hatred can be manifested. In James 4:4 we learn that friendship with the world is enmity with God and that whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. The company we keep affects us as believers. Just Lot "vexed his righteous soul with the filthy conversation of the wicked" (2 Peter 2:8).

Believers are affected by contacts in this world. And this affects relationships with other believers. A carnal believer may well be uncomfortable with one who really in sincerity wishes to follow the Lord. Lot chose what he thought was the best for himself. It is not to be unexpected that such a carnal one will act in unbecoming ways, as did Lot, Joseph's brothers and others.

Both Jacob and Moses were inspired to pronounce a special blessing upon Joseph's descendents because of his faithfulness, and also to emphasize his separation from his brethren.

Jacob calls "Joseph a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well whose branches run over the wall" (Genesis 49:22-26).

He was like the godly man in Psalms 1:1-6. He carried blessing wherever he went — even outside the "wall" of Israel to the Egyptians and others.

"Archers had sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him." He had been the object of most cruel hatred. "But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:) Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts and of the womb: The blessings of thy father hath prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren." His devotion to his God made him fit for the blessings of God on the crown of his head — like the Precious Ointment poured later on the crown of Aaron the high priest.

Moses' words of Joseph are recorded in Deuteronomy 33:13-17.

"And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the Lord be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath, and for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon, and for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills, and for the precious things of the earth and the fullness thereof, and for the good will of him that dwelt in the bush: let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren. His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth: and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim and they are the thousands of Manasseh."

22. The Dew

The Dew

Joseph had taken the heat and the cold. Both the sun and moon had shone on him. He had been able to receive and pass on the precious things of heaven from each. He had received divine energy from his God and radiated that energy back to family and stranger, to prisoner and Pharaoh. He could reveal the precious things of heaven that were hidden from others. There had been no "clouds" between him and his God or those about him. He never seemed in a hurry. He went on quietly and patiently taking both heat and cold - good times and bad - as from his Lord. Regardless of how his brethren (and others) meant things, he could say:

"God meant it for good, to bring to pass as it is this day, to save much people alive."

Joseph was the key to unity in every place where God placed him — wherever he was the recognized godly leader and finally lord over all Egypt (Genesis 45:8-9). Godly leaders like Joseph are needed today. While they are very few, our Lord has provided those needed. But leaders are not leaders without followers. As we all follow the Author and Finisher of our faith, we will recognize those leaders He has set up. Moses, the meekest man in all the earth, was such a great leader. Let's not look for flamboyant leaders with great charm, or those who claim authority, but rather for those who are quietly following our Lord, teaching His word and watching "over our souls as those who must give account to Him" (Hebrews 13:7; Hebrews 13:17 JND).

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead, our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Hebrews 13:20-21). The day is coming when our Lord will be recognized as Lord of lords and King of kings, and all will be in true unity and harmony. It is not so yet in this world. But these conditions can already be present in the hearts of those who give Him His place of authority in their lives.

23. Understanding Psa_133:1; Psa_133:3 b

Understanding Psalms 133:1; Psalms 133:3b The precious ointment, its flow down over the high priest, and the dew of heaven on Hermon (lofty) and the mountains of Zion (sunny) give us practical instructions for proper conditions for His richest blessings to be poured out on His brethren to dwell together in true unity now and forever. Our Lord has made all who trust Him as Saviour brethren. We have come from many nationalities and cultures. But the word for brethren in verse 1 provides for wonderful unity in spite of such diverse backgrounds. We have come from the various backgrounds to our Saviour and Lord, and it is He who has made us one in Himself. As we focus on Him and His glory, we all will learn His ways and will be conformed to His likeness (2 Corinthians 3:18). The word dwell has the thought of sitting down quietly and remaining together. Thoughts in the word include being settled, abiding together as in a marriage. This implies a continuous and permanent relationship that begins here in this world and continues throughout eternity! The term "together in unity" implies being united (or joined) into one unit. In John 17:1-26 our Lord prayed for this unity to be maintained between (or among) His own. (God maintains this unity even though man has failed in displaying outward unity.) He was leaving His own in a world that had been and would continue to be at enmity to Him. He desired that we would be kept from this world and its ways. As His own would be separated from the world they would be hated. He prayed for us in this world and asked for us to be kept from the evil one and that we would be sanctified (set apart) by the truth (God's Word). Individuals who follow the ways of this world will bring problems that affect the practical unity of God's people. Leaders are especially charged to be faithful in this. See 2 Timothy 2:15; 2 Timothy 3:14; Titus 1:9; Titus 2:1-2; Titus 2:7-8. As we walk together in unity we will be well pleasing to our Lord and answer to His desire for us. We will then be a testimony to the world that we are His!

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" May we even now be in the good of both the exclamation and the promise —

"for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."

L A Stassel

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