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05 Apr 09

Dearly beloved, this Friday (10 April), we will commemorate the passion of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. There will be a combined English-Mandarin Good Friday Service (10 April 2009) at 8:15pm. The Lord's Supper will be served. Please come and worship our Lord for His sufferings and sacrifice on the cross for our sins.

Next Lord's Day (12 April 2009), before day-break, there will be a combined Easter Sunrise Service at Jurong Hill at 6:30am. Over the years, the Jurong Town Corporation has been kind enough to allow us the use of Jurong Hill as the venue for our Sunrise Service. However, JTC has informed us that this will be the last time that we can use Jurong Hill. For that reason, this Easter Sunrise Service will be a memorable one.

The Sunrise Service will be followed by breakfast in church, and our usual 10am English Easter Worship Service and later in the day, the Mandarin Worship Service. Please pray for the preaching of God's Word, and invite a friend to these worship services.

God's Names: *Jehovah-Jireh*

Jehovah-Jireh is one of several compound names of God. As we have noted, Jehovah describes God as the eternal and self-existent One. The hyphenated Jehovah is a further revelation of God's character.

Historical Context

At the ripe old age of 100, Abraham was finally given the opportunity to cradle the son that God had promised him. Abraham, the man of faith, had no doubt that Isaac was God's gift. It was not easy for Abraham to wait for the son that God had promised him. Now God was going to test Abraham's faith a second time: by asking him to give Isaac up – "*And He said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of*" (Gen. 22:2).

Interestingly, the first reference to "love" in the Bible is in Genesis 22:2, and it is a love that demands a sacrifice, as all true love should be. For Abraham, it was the sacrifice of his beloved son. I am sure that Abraham would be more than willing to take the place of Isaac. But the test was to prove Abraham's love for God. Did he love God more than his son? God's intention was not to have Abraham's son, it was to have Abraham's heart.

Such is the faith of Abraham that there was no hint of objection from him. He did as he was told. When Abraham came near the place of worship, he said to his servants, "*Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you*" (Gen. 22:5). Abraham expected Isaac to rise from the dead. He believed that he would go and return with Isaac.

When Isaac asked, "*Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?*" (Gen. 22:7). Abraham, said, "*My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering*" (Gen. 22:8). The faith that caused Abraham not to stagger at God's promise would now be tested to the very end. As preparations were made for the sacrifice, there was no lamb in sight. It was only at the very last moment, as Abraham raised his hand to drive a knife into his beloved son that the angel of the LORD called out to Abraham, "*Lay not thine hand upon the lad,*

neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from Me” (Gen. 22:12).

Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw a ram that was caught in the bush. He offered the animal for a burnt offering as a substitute for his son. *“And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah- Jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen” (Gen. 22:14).*

Meaning of Jireh

The name *Jireh* is simply a transliteration of the Hebrew word. The word appears over a thousand times in the Old Testament, and it is translated as “see,” “appear,” “look,” “behold,” and “provide.” In Genesis 22, the word appears four times and is translated as “saw” (22:2), “provide” (22:8), “looked” (22:13), “seen” (22:14). The root meaning of the word means “to see.”

Most Christians would translate *Jehovah-Jireh* as “the LORD who provides.” The interesting question is: why is *Jehovah-Jireh* rendered “the LORD who provides” instead of “the LORD who sees”? What is the relationship between “seeing” and “providing”?

Seeing and providing is linked in the sense that God is both omniscient and omnipotent. God knows all things. He knows the beginning from the end. He knows Abraham’s love; the test of Isaac’s sacrifice was for Abraham’s benefit and not God’s, it was to affirm in Abraham’s heart his love for God.

God’s omniscience includes His ability to foresee. However, God is not a bystander in the affairs of men. He sees and He provides. He sees that sinners need forgiveness for their sins. He makes the provision for that need. In the context of Genesis 22, God saw Abraham’s need; He also knew Abraham’s love; and God provided for Abraham’s need as Abraham himself told Isaac in faith – *“My son, God will provide [raah] himself a lamb for a burnt offering” (Gen. 22:8).* The same word is translated as “seen” in verse 14.

Significance of Jireh

The name *Jehovah-Jireh* was given to commemorate a great deliverance. It identified the place where God’s grace was manifested. The mount would stand as a testimony to God’s faithfulness. More significantly, that truth was permanently engraved upon Abraham’s heart and mind. From that day onward, Abraham knew that the LORD would provide. As one commentator says, “Abraham should no more love his beloved son as his flesh and blood, but solely and only as the gracious gift and possession of God, as a good entrusted to him by God; which he was ready to render back to Him at any moment.”

The best commendation of and blessing upon Abraham must come from the LORD Himself. He called out to Abraham a second time, *“By Myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed My voice” (Gen. 22:16-18).* The word “saith” means more than just the speaking of words; it has the connotation of making an oath. In essence, the LORD promised to bless Abraham and his seed, and through him, the rest of the world.

The LORD Has Provided

“In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen” (Gen. 22:14); the mount which Abraham named *Jehovah-Jireh*. It was upon this mount that the temple would be built (2 Chron. 3:1). Moriah would be the centre of Israel’s worship. It would be the place where countless numbers of animal were sacrificed. These animal sacrifices, however, were just a shadow of the one perfect sacrifice. The blood of goats and bulls cannot take away the sins of man. Isaiah said, *“the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small*

dust of the balance . . . and Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering” (Isa. 40:16).

The LORD who sees the need of sinful men must provide for that perfect sacrifice on Moriah. And He did. Moriah is Calvary, and the perfect Lamb of God is His only begotten Son. God made Christ to be sin for us so that “*we might be made the righteousness of God in Him*” (2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 8:32; 1 John 4:9).

As Christians, we devalue the name *Jehovah-Jireh* when we glibly use it to describe only God’s provision for our physical needs. There is far more valuable truth to the name because man has a far greater need than food for his body. On Moriah, God told Abraham to prove his love by sacrificing his beloved son. Abraham’s sorrow must have been unimaginable. But God would never ask Abraham to give up what He Himself would not sacrifice. On Calvary, God prove His love for man by sacrificing His Son.

On Moriah, Isaac asked, “Where is the lamb?” (Gen. 22:7). And the LORD provided a substitute for Abraham. On Calvary, there was no substitute for Jesus – He was the substitute. Jesus is “*the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*” (John 1:29). Dear reader, if you have not come to Jesus for His cleansing blood, do not delay. “*In the mount of the LORD, it shall be seen*” (Gen. 22:14). In the mount of the LORD, He also provided. “*God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*” (John 3:16).

12 Apr 09

Today we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. We know that the resurrection holds up the greatest hope for all humanity. The Apostle Paul puts this blessed truth first negatively. "But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then *is* our preaching vain, and your faith *is* also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith *is* vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Cor 15:13-19).

Then he puts it positively. "But now is Christ risen from the dead, *and* become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man *came* death, by man *came* also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor 15:20-22). The Apostle John quoting from our Lord Jesus is even more succinct, "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14:19).

The despairing Christian

However, on the first resurrection morning, this hope was not evident; it began as a day of defeat and despair. When Mary and the women went to the grave that first resurrection morning, they were not expecting good news. John 20:11 tells us that "Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping" (John 20:11). She was crying because the body of our Lord Jesus was not there.

Mary thought that this was the end; that without the body, there was nothing else to remember Jesus. The empty tomb would merely serve as a reminder of a heartless theft. In verse 2, she said that "they had taken away the Lord." She was probably referring to the enemies – the Pharisees and the Romans. They had won. Their conspiracy had succeeded. Three days ago, they had crucified Jesus. Now they had taken His body. Mary thought that it was the end because to her the empty tomb was a symbol of total defeat and indignity.

Mary thought that this was the end of her service for the Lord. When He was alive, she ministered to Him out of her substance (Luke 8:3). With Him dead, she could no longer minister to Him out of her substance, but she could at least honour Him by taking care of the dead body. She came with spices to anoint His body. But with the body now missing, and the sepulchre empty, these things would be meaningless.

Mary thought that this was the end of her relationship with our Lord Jesus. After her conversion, she followed Jesus. She was at Calvary, at the foot of the cross when Jesus was crucified. She was among the first to come to the sepulchre. However, with Jesus' death, she could no longer converse with Him. And now with the empty tomb and His body missing, she could not even pretend to have a monologue with Him.

Mary Magdalene was at the tomb weeping in utter despair and sorrow because she thought that the body of our Lord was stolen. That Mary standing outside the tomb and weeping is the picture of the believer who lives in the midst of the resurrection victory of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and yet fails to recognise it.

Sometimes we are just like Mary. We look at our lives and our circumstances and our adversities, and we look at the things that are missing; the things that are not there. Like Mary, we are in danger of misreading the purposes and workings of God in our lives. We are in danger of applying what we see with our eyes to what we think about our Lord Jesus. We see emptiness as defeat. We see the missing things and interpret them as losses.

The dead saviour

When Mary came to the tomb, she was expecting to see a Jesus without life. She expected to see a dead Jesus. And when she found that the tomb was empty and the body was missing, the first thing that she thought of was that they had taken away the body of Jesus.

And sometimes Christians look at Christ the same way. We have preconceived notions about our Lord Jesus. We have preconceived notions about what our lives should be like. We expect God to bless us materially. We do not expect disappointments and discouragements.

And when our life experiences do not match up to our preconceived notions, just like Mary, we blame others. What Mary did not know was that Jesus was alive forevermore. We know that our Saviour has risen from the dead. We know that Christ had risen from the dead. We know that “in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Rom 8:37). We know that God has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:57).

And while we may live with the knowledge of a risen Saviour, the question is: do our lives manifest that resurrection victory. Is the reality of the resurrection evident in our lives? Or are we like Mary, standing outside the empty tomb and weeping?

If Christians are like Mary who stood outside the empty tomb and wept, then we would be like Mary Magdalene who was in the presence of a miracle and yet did not know it.

The revelation of the Saviour

Mary came to the tomb, and she expected to find our Lord Jesus, but she saw an empty tomb and found no body. The angels appeared to her and said, “Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? (John 20:13-15).

What a wonderful revelation! Our Lord Jesus did not despise Mary even though she did not know about the resurrection. Our risen Saviour came to her even though she was looking for a dead body. Our Lord Jesus came to her at the tomb even though Mary was there for all the wrong reasons. In the same way, our Lord Jesus comes to the humble and contrite in heart. The Psalmist says, “The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit” (Psalm 34:18).

Our Lord Jesus said to Mary, “Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God” (John 20:17).

What a blessed hope! Mary was no longer the woman who was oppressed by demons. She was no longer the sinner who bore the guilt of sin! She was no longer the sorrowful servant who thought all was lost, but she was now a child of the Heavenly Father.

This is the promise that God gives to every one who comes to Him through His beloved Son. The Bible tells us that when we believe on the Lord Jesus, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (Rom 8:16-17).

19 Apr 09

We praise God for a wonderful sunrise service on top of Jurong Hill. The weather was perfect. There was a record turnout of some 330 people. On behalf of the session, I want to thank those who woke up in the wee hours of the morning to set up the microphones, lay the cables. May our Lord bless your labour of love. This could very well be the last time that we will be using Jurong Hill as a venue for the sunrise service. However, I would encourage all of you to pray for God to intervene so that we may continue to hold our annual sunrise service to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank God also for the good response to the Bible Camp. I would encourage you to sign up for the Bible camp. Today is the closing day. I have been in contact with Pastor Ian Goligher, and he is excited about the camp. He will be coming here with his wife, Beulah. Those who have sat under the ministry of Pastor Goligher would no doubt remember his exposition of the Word. The speaker for the Mandarin Bible Camp is also a dynamic preacher. I am sure there will be a great blessing from the camp. As I have said before, if you want to go but are hesitating because of financial constraints, please see any of the session members or the camp committee members. Please continue to pray for the camp committee, the camp speakers, and for God's blessings upon the Bible camp.

There are also some other prayer requests for you to remember: Today, the Reverend James Chan is also leading a team of 20 over people to attend the 57th anniversary of the Kelapa Sawit Bible-Presbyterian Church. Please pray for them. Elders Foong Kon Yu, Charles Phua and I are currently in Colombo worshipping with the brethren of Calvary Reformed Presbyterian Chapel. Please pray for God's wisdom and guidance as we minister to the chapel.

Jehovah-Rapha

Jehovah-Rapha is the second of several compound names of *Jehovah*. One Bible scholar noted "there is a wonderful and significant order in those compound names of Jehovah as they appear in the Scriptures.... In these names there is a progressive revelation of Jehovah meeting every need as it arises in the experience of His redeemed people – saving, sustaining, strengthening, sanctifying, and so on; and not only for the redeemed of that day but for God's saints in all ages."

The name *Jehovah-Rapha* was revealed by God Himself soon after He had delivered the Israelites from Egypt. Moses had led them to the edge of the Red Sea. In front of them was the waters; behind them, the mighty Egyptian army in hot pursuit. Moses, as instructed by God, "*stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.*" (Exod 14:21-22). When every Israelite had crossed to the other side, Moses stretched forth his hand again, and the waters returned, and the Pharaoh's army perished.

It was a miraculous deliverance, and one would have thought that the witness of this mighty act of God would have strengthened the faith of the Israelites. Sadly, this was not so. Three days after they crossed the Red Sea, the Israelites faced their first "bread and water" issue – "*they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water*" (Exod 15:22). Thirsty and tired, their hopes were lifted when they saw the first supply of water in three days' of journey. But "*when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah*" (Exod 15:23).

In their anxiety, they forgot the LORD and His works; instead they murmured against His servant. Moses cried out to the Lord for help, and the LORD showed him a way to make the bitter waters sweet – "*If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD [Jehovah] that healeth [Rapha] thee*" (Exod 15:26).

The word “*rapha*” appears over 60 times in the Old Testament, and it is translated as “heal” (Gen 20:17; Lev 13:18), “repair” (1 Kings 18:30), “make whole” (Job 5:18; Jer 19:11). The healing refers to physical as well as spiritual healing. And just as out of Abraham’s trying experience on Moriah, God revealed Himself as *Jehovah-Jireh* (The LORD who sees and provides); likewise out of Israel’s bitter experience at Marah, God revealed Himself as *Jehovah-Rapha* (The LORD who heals).

Man’s Sickness

Diseases and sickness are part and parcel of a man’s life. Our Lord Jesus said that as the day of His coming draw nears, “*nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places*” (Matt 24:7). Pestilences are diseases. This is the harsh reality of a sinful world.

In the mid-1300’s, a black cloud of death hung over Europe as the bubonic plague ravaged the entire continent. A ship had returned from the Far East bringing with it the deadly disease. Over five years, one third of Europe’s population (about 25 million) perished.

Even in our day, despite the advances made in medical and health sciences, the whole world still lives under the threat of pandemics, such as the bird-flu, SARS, Aids. Statistics show that there are some 40 million people in the world infected with HIV/AIDS.

Needless to say, man needs healing. He needs a physician that would not cure the old diseases but also contain the new ones. However, as much as man needs physical healing, he is in even greater needs of spiritual healing. The marks of spiritual sickness are worse than that of physical sickness. Isaiah describes spiritual sickness this way: “*The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment*” (Isa 1:5-6).

The effects of spiritual sickness are even worse; it separates man from God. Its consequences are the most severe – “*The soul that sinneth, it shall die*” (Ezek 18:4).

God’s Healing in the Bible

Man is sick, but the LORD heals (*Jehovah-Rapha*). At Marah, the bitter waters were healed, made sweet by the LORD. God also healed physical illnesses. He healed Miriam of her leprosy (Num 12:13). He also extended the life of Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:5-6). God used Elisha to heal Naaman of his leprosy (2 Kings 5).

God also healed spiritual sickness – “*Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases*” (Psalm 103:2-3). Jeremiah preached a similar message, urging the people of Judah to repent because God had promised, “*I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds*” (Jer 30:17).

In the New Testament, our Lord Jesus began His ministry by quoting Isaiah 61:1 – “*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me; because the LORD hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound*” (Isa 61:1). And one of the features of our Lord’s ministry was healing – “*And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.*” (Matt 4:23).

However, it must be pointed out that physical healing was only incidental to our Lord’s ministry. They only served to authenticate His Person. Our Lord told the Pharisees: “*The works which the Father hath given Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father hath sent Me*” (John 5:36, see also John 14:11).

When John the Baptist had his doubts about the identity of our Lord Jesus, He sent word back to John through his disciples, *“Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them”* (Matt 11:4-5).

The real purpose of our Lord’s coming is the saving of souls. On certain occasions, Jesus healed with these words, *“Thy sins be forgiven thee”* (Matt 9:5). He also compared physical sickness to sins, and physical healing to salvation: *“They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance”* (Matt 9:12-13).

Sin is a universal disease that affects every heart, but there is salvation in Christ Jesus. But those who reject Christ, be warned – *“They mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, till there was no remedy.”* (2 Chron 36:16). But to those who call upon the LORD, He promised, *“Unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings”* (Mal 4:2).

Christ our Saviour

Physical healing was easy for our Lord Jesus. Many a time, Jesus healed by just the speaking of a word. Spiritual restoration requires far more; Jesus saves by the giving of His life (Mark 10:45). The prophet Isaiah says: *“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed”* (Isa 53:5).

In Exodus 15:25, Moses was asked to cast a tree into the waters at Marah, and they were made sweet. We do not know if the tree added sweetness to or removed bitterness from the waters. But at Calvary, we know that our blessed Saviour took the sins of mankind upon Himself, removed the bitterness of sins and the sting of death – *“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Cor 15:55-57). Praise be to *Jehovah-Rapha* who is able to heal and save unto the uttermost. Amen!

26 Apr 09

Our Lord Jesus says, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39). The Apostle Paul says, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). Peter says, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2). He adds, “Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).

Just as rice is the staple of the Asian family, so the Bible is the staple of the redeemed home. God willing, on 1 May 2009 (Friday), we will be having a Bible Study and Preaching Workshop. The workshop is opened to all who are interested in leading a Bible Study group. You will be introduced to some of the tools and techniques of preparing and presenting a lesson. The seminar will run from 9:00am to 3:00pm. Please sign up at the notice board.

Jehovah-Nissi (I)

With every challenge and trial faced by the children of Israel, God further revealed Himself to His chosen people. At the wells of Marah, the LORD revealed Himself as Jehovah-Rophe, the LORD who heals (Exod 15:26). After a few weeks’ journey into the wilderness, the children of Israel again murmured against Moses and Aaron over bread-butter issues (Exod 16:2); they said, “*Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger*” (Exod 16:3). God, in His mercy and goodness, rained bread from heaven (Exod 16:4).

Farther down the road, when the Israelites reached Rephidim, they found that there was no water (Exod 17:1). As expected, they turned their unhappiness to Moses (Exod 17:2-3). In response to Moses’ intercession, God provided water out of a rock (Exod 17:6).

The Amalekites

However at Rephidim, there was a greater challenge waiting for the Israelites – the Amalekites. They were descendents of Amalek, a grandson of Esau (Gen 36:12). That would mean that the Amalekites were close cousins of the Israelites. The Israelites perhaps expected a kinder reception from the Amalekites; instead the Amalekites attacked Israel at Rephidim (Exod 17:8).

The enmity between the groups of people was sealed that day because of the treacherous and cowardly manner in which the Amalekites attacked the Israelites. Some forty years later, Moses would remind the people of this Amalekite attack – “*Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; How he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God*” (Deut 25:17-18). The Amalekites attacked Israel from the rear, targeting the weak, old and infirmed. God said that this devious strategy ought never to be forgotten. Moses was thus instructed, “*Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven*” (Exod 17:14).

Years later, when Saul was king of Israel, God gave specific instruction to him that every Amalekite was to be killed and their possessions destroyed (1 Sam 15:3). The failure of Saul to fully obey the Word of God led to his defeat and death. After Saul was mortally wounded in battle at Mount Gilboa, he asked a young man to end his life. Ironically, the young man who killed Saul was an Amalekite (2 Sam 1:8). The Amalekites were not completely destroyed until the time of Hezekiah (1 Chron 4:43).

Israel’s First Battle

The military advantage of the battle clearly was with the Amalekites. They were powerful, well armed, and experienced warriors. Their opponents, on the other hand, were a group of freed slaves who were ill-equipped, untrained, ill-disciplined, ill-organised and with no prior experience of warfare. The advantage of the Israelites was that God was fighting for them.

Two other factors stood out in favour for the children of Israel. First, Joshua. He was originally named Hoshea, the son of Nun from the tribe of Ephraim. Moses changed his name to Jehoshua (Joshua), which means “Jehovah is salvation.” Joshua was a man of courage and indomitable spirit. He was also a man of faith. Joshua would later become a brilliant military commander and Moses’ successor.

The other factor that was in Israel’s favour was Moses. As Joshua battled the Amalekites in the valley at Rephidim, Moses went up the hill to wrestle in prayer. *“It came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses’ hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.”* (Exod 17:11-13).

The battle was as much a spiritual as it was a military battle. As long as Moses held his hands up, Israel had the advantage. When his hands were tired, and Moses lowered them, the Amalekites had the upper hand. The final victory of Israel over the Amalekites was because Aaron and Hur supported Moses and held his hands high.

Intercession and Victory at Rephidim

The sight of Moses standing on the hill with his hands lifted high is generally seen as a picture of prayer and intercession. But there is something more; Moses was holding the rod of God in his hand (Exod 17:9). This was the rod that Moses brought with him when he was summoned by God (Exod 4:2). This was also the rod with which Moses would perform signs and miracles (Exod 4:17). By smiting the rod on the Nile, its waters turned to blood. By stretching the rod over the streams, the frogs were called into the land of Egypt. By smiting the dust with the rod, Egypt was infested with lice. When Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven the LORD sent thunder and hail upon the land of Egypt. By the same act, the locusts were brought in by the east wind.

With Pharaoh’s army behind, and the Red Sea ahead of them, God told Moses to lift up the rod, *“stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea”* (Exod 14:16).

The rod was a symbol of God’s power. It was also the banner of God. It is therefore significant that when Moses’ hands were lifted, Israel prevailed. When his hands were lowered, the enemy prevailed. This is a vivid illustration to Joshua and the soldiers that their victory depended on God. No matter what the odds, as long as the banner of God was lifted high, victory is assured.

And it must be that in the midst of battle, the soldiers would keep a constant lookout on the hill where Moses was. Perhaps this was what the Psalmist had in mind when he wrote, *“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth”* (Psalm 121:1-2). It was not the hill that could send the reinforcements or provide a vantage point for the Israelites, it was the help that came from the LORD.

Likewise, in our daily spiritual battles, we must keep looking to the finished work of Christ on Calvary – *“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God”* (Heb 12:1-2). Praise the Lord, Christ has won the victory for us.

03 May 09

Praise God for the wonderful response to the Church Camp. To date, the target set by the Camp Committee has been met. Now the next thing to do is to prepare our hearts and mind to meet God in the study of His Word. Please pray for the Rev Ian Goligher as he ministers to us. Please also continue to pray for the camp committee as they plan and organize the logistics of the camp.

Today, we also rejoice with our brethren from Evangel BP Church (EBPC), in Kuala Lumpur on the occasion of their third anniversary. EBPC is the baby of the BP Churches started by Eld (Dr) Lim Yew Cheng. Under his leadership the church has grown over the last three years. And we pray that the Lord will continue to bless the work for His glory. Rev James Chan ministers at EBPC once a month. Eld Foong Kon Yu is there as our representative for this joyous occasion.

Please pray for Rebecca and I as we leave for Vancouver on 6th May 2009, and God willing, we will return on 28 May 2009. The purpose of our trip is to conduct a wedding as well as to fill the pulpit for that period of time. Please pray that God will continue to bless the ministry in Vancouver and for a residential pastor.

JEHOVAH-NISSI (II)

Under the banner of God and with the intercession of Moses, the Israelites battled the Amalekites and won. *“Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword”* (Exod 17:13). But the war was not completely won. Moses said that *“the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation”* (Exod 17:16).

A Spiritual Battle

Israel's battle with the Amalekites is a picture of our spiritual warfare. The Amalekites represent the forces of this sinful world that are diametrically opposed to God. The way of the world is broad, and the gate is wide, but it leads to destruction. The way of the LORD is narrow and the gate is strait, but it leads to life everlasting (Matt 7:13-14). The wisdom of this world is sensual and devilish. The wisdom of God, on the other hand, is *“pure...peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy”* (James 3:15-18). The Apostle Paul says that believers are *“are not in darkness...Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness”* (1 Thess 5:4-5).

As such, Paul talks about a constant spiritual battle waging in the lives of Christians (Rom 7:23). Believers must be discerning to know that behind every conflict in our lives has a spiritual dimension. Every battle is essentially spiritual. *“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places”* (Eph 6:12).

A Battle to Fight

In the journey of the Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land, there were some battles that were beyond the strength of the people. At the Red Sea, when the Israelites were terrified by the pursuing armies of Pharaoh, Moses told the people, *“Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD”* (Exod 14:13). Likewise, salvation is a battle that only the LORD can fight. He did and won (1 Cor 15:55-57).

When they faced the Amalekites, Moses told Joshua, *“Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek”* (Exod 17:9). The Israelites were no longer to stand still.

In the same way, when a person is saved from his sins, he has the responsibility to live the new life. The redeemed person is told: *“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God”* (Rom 6:13). The believer is to resist the devil (James 4:7), exercise godliness (1 Tim 4:7), contend for the faith (Jude 3), fight the good fight of faith (1 Tim 6:12).

In this battle, we are told to *“put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil”* (Eph 6:11). Paul himself gave the testimony of his battle, *“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith”* (2 Tim 4:7).

Strength for the Battle

From Israel’s war against Amalek, we learn the victory of the children of Israel on the battlefield was the result of Moses’ prayer on the mount. While Joshua fought in the valley, Moses went up the hill with the rod of God in his hand (Exod 17:9). The rod was a symbol of God’s power and presence. As long as the rod of God was lifted up, the Israelites advanced. When Moses’ arms were weak and the rod was let down, the Israelites were pushed back. The Israelites quickly saw the relationship between their victory and God’s presence and power. Without the latter, there would not be the former. Their hands *“were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob”* (Gen 49:24).

Without God’s presence and power, there can be no victory. After the Israelites were condemned by God to wander for forty years in the wilderness for their unbelief, they regretted. The next morning, they rose up early and decided to enter Canaan, but Moses told them, *“Go not up, for the LORD is not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies”* (Num 14:42). Being stubborn and rebellious, the Israelites marched to war without God and they were soundly defeated.

No spiritual battle can be won by our own strength and resolve. Just as Moses went up the hill with the rod of God in his hands, so too must we go before the throne of grace, and seek His grace for our daily lives. As the words of Martin Luther’s famous hymn remind us:

Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing;

Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God’s own choosing:

Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He;

Lord Sabaoth, His Name, from age to age the same,

And He must win the battle.

Victory in the Battle

With God’s presence and power, victory is assured in any battle. In the Old Testament, the priests were responsible to bless the people before they went to war with these words, *“Hear, O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies: let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them; For the LORD your God is He that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.”* (Deut. 20:3-4). With the LORD by our side, the victory is assured.

The rod of Moses was only a symbol. Isaiah prophesied a greater rod: *“There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD”* (Isa 11:1-2). This rod from the stem of Jesse is our Lord Jesus. He has overcome the world (John 16:33). He is the One who has given us the victory over sin and death (1 Cor

15:57). And in Him, we too will be victorious. *“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?”* (1 John 5:4-5), and *“we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us”* (Rom 8:37).

The spiritual battle is real. God has provided the strength. And the victory is assured. Therefore, let us *“be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might”* (Eph 6:10).

10 May 09

Advance Notice: Calvary Missions Conference. The Calvary Missions Fellowship (CMF) will be organizing a Missions Conference on 13 June (Saturday) at 7:30pm. It has been a while since we last have a Missions conference. From the recently concluded annual congregational meeting, you would have noticed that we devote a huge amount of resources to local and foreign missions. Many of you have participated in and given to missions. All of you have prayed and are continuing to pray for the work of missions. The objectives of the Missions Conference are:

- First, it is to inform you of the purpose of CMF. What are its objectives? Who are the people running the CMF? What are the principles and policies?
- Second, it is to provide an opportunity for you to meet face to face with the missionaries for whom you have been praying.

So please come on 13 June for the Missions Conference to praise God for giving us the opportunity to be part of the worldwide missions and to encourage our missionaries. God willing, we will try to make this an annual event taking advantage of the missionaries who are here for our annual Bible Camp.

JEHOVAH-M'KADDESH

The name *Jehovah M'Kaddesh* means “Jehovah who sanctifies.” It is found in Leviticus 20:8, “*And ye shall keep my statutes, and do them: I am the LORD which sanctify you.*” (Lev 20:8). The English title of *Leviticus* is derived from the Septuagint, which means “things pertaining to the Levites.” The Levites were called to be priests. They were specially set apart from the rest of Israel to minister to the LORD. *Leviticus* is a manual for the priests. In *Leviticus*, God gave Israel the various instructions for worship – the different kinds of offerings, the duties and responsibilities of the priesthood, and other ceremonial and civil laws.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, *Leviticus* is simply known as “He called” taken from the opening words of the book. The title is appropriate because its emphasis is on the theme of God’s call to holiness. *Leviticus* directs the life of a people who had been called out of and delivered from Egypt. The deliverance had been accomplished, and it now remained for the people to live a new life, one that would be set apart for God. Likewise, as God’s redeemed, every Christian must “*walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called*” (Eph 4:1). This connection between one’s salvation and sanctification is vital, and it is seen in the repeated use of the name *Jehovah M'Kaddesh* in *Leviticus* (Lev 20:7-8; 21:8, 15, 23; 22:9, 16).

The Meaning of “Sanctify”

The word “sanctify” simply means “to be separated,” or “to set apart.” It is also translated as “to consecrate,” “to hallow,” and “holy.” Sanctification can be applied to

- Things: the various furniture used in the tabernacle (Exod 40).
- Special days and seasons: Sabbath (Exod 20:8); holy convocations, the Day of Atonement, the year of jubilee (Exod 20:8; Lev 23; 25).
- Places: the ground where Moses stood (Exod 3:5); the Tabernacle (Exod 29:44), Temple (Ps 5:2; 11:4); Jerusalem (Isa 52:1); the dwelling place of God is itself called a sanctuary (Exod 25:8).
- People: the first born of the family (Exod 13:2); the high priest (Exod 28); Jeremiah was set apart before his birth (Jer 1:5).

The Holiness of God

From Holy Scriptures, it is clear that a thing/person/place/time is sanctified because of its association with a holy God. The Sabbath was holy because God rested in it. The Temple was holy because it was the dwelling place of God. Israel was considered holy because God had sanctified her (Exod 31:13).

Jehovah is apart from and above all His creation. *“Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the LORD He is God; there is none else beside Him”* (Deut 4:35), and that also includes His holiness. In Isaiah’s vision, he saw the seraphims calling out, *“Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory”* (Isa 6:3). Hannah prayed, *“There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside Thee: neither is there any rock like our God”* (1 Sam 2:2).

The holiness of God sets Him apart from the heathen deities and idols. Jehovah declares, *“Thou shalt have no other gods before me”* (Exod 20:3). The Israelites also recognized the uniqueness of Jehovah’s holiness. After the LORD had delivered them from the pursuing Egyptians, they sang, *“Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?”* (Exod 15:11).

Thus, holiness is the most fundamental attribute of God. God is love. God is truth. God is all-powerful. Above all else, Jehovah wanted to be known as the God who is holy. *“For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy”* (Lev 11:44). Holiness of God is the attribute by which all other attributes of God are bound. God is love, but love without holiness would degenerate into lust. God is all-powerful, but power without holiness would turn into cruelty. God is just but justice without holiness would become vengeance. God is sovereign, but sovereignty without holiness would degenerate into tyranny. It is the holiness of God that makes God who He is and what He does as perfect.

The LORD is holy. This is the first truth that we must know about Jehovah. The Israelites learned this truth visibly when God spoke to them from Mount Sinai. The LORD told Moses to tell the people to sanctify themselves, and He would meet with them on the third day. *“And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled”* (Exod 19:16). Likewise, the holiness of God demands that we tremble as we come into His presence, not out of terrifying fear but because of reverential awe, as the Prophet Isaiah declares, *“Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.”* (Isa 8:13).

17 May 09

Thank you for remembering us in your prayers. Rebecca and I arrived safely in Vancouver after some 24 hours of travel time including 5 hours of transit in Hong Kong. The congregation of Vancouver is still vibrant and actively serving God. Praise God that the leaders have really stepped to fill in the gap. Unlike what God had told Ezekiel, "I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none" (Ezek 22:30), the Vancouverites have been doing their best making up the hedge. So please continue to pray for them as they search for a new resident pastor to lead them.

JEHOVAH-M'KADDESH

Jehovah M'Kaddesh means "Jehovah who sanctifies." The LORD is a holy God. Holiness is God's character; it is also His expectation of those who draw near to Him. "*I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified*" (Lev 10:3). The LORD states categorically, "*For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy*" (Lev 11:44).

The Nature of Holiness

God made man in His own image – perfect. When Adam and Eve sinned against God, they marred that image. That holy seed was corrupted by sin. But God gave His Son so that sinful man could be restored, to "*put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*" (Eph 4:24).

You are called holy: God's command of holiness then becomes the redeemed's utmost desire. The Apostle Peter says that believers are "*partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust*" (2 Peter 1:4).

Believers are described as a "*chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people*" because we have been called "*out of darkness into his marvellous light*" (1 Pet 2:9).

Throughout the history of Israel, God continually warned the people that they were not to intermingle with the unbelievers. They were to not give their sons and daughters in marriage to unbelievers (Deut 7:3-4). The Israelites were not to make any covenants with unbelievers (Exod 34:14-15). This is not to be interpreted as racism or some form of racial phobia. Rather, the Israelites are to be separated from the unbelievers and be holy as God's instrument and testimony. The Israelites were to be distinctly different from the rest of mankind in holiness.

Likewise the Bible admonishes the Christian not to be "*unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?...Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate*" (2 Cor 6:14-17).

You are called to be holy: The Christian is holy not only because of his position in Christ, but also because of his active participation in the holiness of the LORD. It is only natural that a holy God also demands that those who have been called are to be holy. The LORD told the Israelites, "*Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy*" (Lev 19:2). "*Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God*" (Lev 20:7).

Likewise for the Christian, the Word of God commands us to be holy. "*But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am*

holy” (1 Pet 1:15-16). Besides the direct imperatives from God, it is also natural that we who have been saved by a holy God, called a holy nation, should have the holiness of God as our supreme desire.

But the wisdom of God is that He does not force us to be holy. The LORD who calls and commands also equips us with the power to be holy. He has given us every incentive to be holy, but we must exercise His provision and power.

The Pursuit of Holiness

In this world of instant self-gratification and unrestrained hedonism, the world places its emphasis on the pursuit of pleasure. The LORD, however, calls us to be holy, and the Christian is to pursue holiness. Holiness is a pursuit; it is a life-long process, not a one-time event. Each day, we are called to separate ourselves from that which would hinder our walk with God.

What does it mean to be holy? Holiness is not just the absence of evil, but also the presence of good. To be holy is not just to abstain from doing evil, but to be active in promoting good. Speaking to the children of Israel, the LORD told them, *“After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do: neither shall ye walk in their ordinances [abstention from evil]. Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein [active in doing good]: I am the LORD your God”* (Lev 18:3-4).

How does a man become holy and sanctified? Certainly, he is not holy on basis of his own merits. A person is holy because he is called and elected by God. *“According as He [God] hath chosen us in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love”* (Eph 1:4). A man is made holy by virtue of Christ’s holiness – His sinlessness and perfect obedience. Every believer is *“sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all”* (Heb 10:10). On the merits of Christ’s holiness, believers are called a holy nation (1 Pet 2:9).

Thus, it is to the position of holiness that the redeemed is called, and it is to the practice of holiness that the redeemed is committed to live. The Bible tells us that *“every man that hath this hope in [Christ] purifieth himself, even as He is pure”* (1 John 3:3). It is the will of God that every believer be sanctified (1 Thess 4:3).

What the LORD has called us to be and do, He will also equip. In the pursuit of holiness, God has provided two means by which believers are to be sanctified. First, the believer is sanctified through the Holy Scriptures. In His high priestly prayer, our Lord Jesus prayed, *“They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Thy truth: thy word is truth.... And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth”* (John 17:16-19). Second, the believer has the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and to the extent that the believer walks in the Spirit, he will be sanctified. *“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit”* (Gal 5:25); and if we walk in the Spirit, we *“shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh”* (Gal 5:16).

Beloved, do not be fooled into thinking that because you are a church-goer, practical holiness is unimportant. God chastens us so that *“we might be partakers of His holiness”* (Heb 12:10). Why? Because without holiness *“no man shall see the Lord”* (Heb 12:14). May the God of peace sanctify you wholly ...your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess 5:23).

24 May 09

Thank you for remembering Rebecca and I in your prayers. God willing, this coming Thursday, we will be flying back to Singapore at 2:00am (Canadian time). So far, it has been a fruitful trip for us as we were able to visit with some of the older members and worshippers of Vancouver BP Church. Several of them were not able to come to church because of illness.

It is also a delight to see some of the children who grew up through the Awana now ministering to other younger ones. Please continue to pray for the leadership of VBPC as they search for a resident pastor.

JEHOVAH SHALOM

Shalom is one Hebrew word that is known to most people. It is often translated as “peace” although the meaning of the word goes deeper than that. The name *Jehovah Shalom* first appeared in the Book of Judges. “*Then Gideon built an altar there unto the LORD, and called it Jehovah-Shalom: unto this day it is yet in Ophrah of the Abiezrites*” (Jud 6:24).

Historical Background

Jehovah-Shalom, this name of God was given to the Israelites at a time when the nation was under a morass of political malaise and spiritual apostasy. The LORD had delivered them from the oppression of Egypt, and under the leadership of Moses, the Israelites were brought to the Promised Land. Along the way, the LORD has provided for them. He was *Jehovah-Rapha* who sweetened the waters at Mara. He was *Jehovah-Nissi* who defeated the Amalekites. And He was *Jehovah- M’Kaddesh* who set them apart for His own.

After forty years of wandering the wilderness, the Israelites, led by Joshua, finally crossed the Jordan and set foot on the land that God had promised them. God’s instructions for possessing the land were very clear: “*When ye are passed over Jordan into the land of Canaan; Then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures, and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places . . . But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell. Moreover it shall come to pass, that I shall do unto you, as I thought to do unto them*” (Num 33:51-56).

Before his death, Moses reminded the people of God’s warnings: “*When the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: Neither shalt thou make marriages with them . . . But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire*” (Deut 7:2-5).

Failure to obey God’s commands would bring about trouble from the Canaanites as well as judgment from God. Joshua warned them: “*If ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you: Know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you*” (Josh 23:12-13).

Despite these repeated warnings, the Israelites failed to completely drive out the inhabitants of the land (Jud 1:19, 21, 27-33). The people soon learned that disobedience to God had its consequences. The angel of the LORD visited the Israelites with these solemn warning: “*I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you*” (Jud 2:3).

This would indeed be the story of Israel for the next three centuries. The people of the land would continually be a thorn in the sides of the Israelites. The period of the judges was a time marked by Israel's disobedience, its defeat at the hands of their enemies, and God's deliverance through His ordained judges. This cycle would repeat itself. With every instance of disobedience, there was an increasing intensity in its misery suffered by the Israelites at the hands of their enemies.

Physically, the Israelites were deprived. They laboured, but they could not reap the fruit of their labour. They built, but they were driven from their homes to seek safety in the caves. Spiritually, they were defiant. They continued to do "evil in the sight of the Lord."

Call of Gideon

It was under such tragic and oppressed circumstances that the LORD called Gideon. His hometown was overrun by the Midianites, a marauding horde of bandits that came upon Israel like a pack of locusts, devoured whatever there was, leaving not even scraps. They "*destroyed the increase of the earth . . . and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it. And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites*" (Jud 6:4-6).

Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to hide the scraps from the Midianites when the LORD called him, "*The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour . . . Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites*" (Jud 6:12-14).

However, Gideon recognized that he was the youngest son of a poor family from the tribe of Manasseh. To confirm God's calling, Gideon asked for a sign. The LORD told Gideon to prepare an offering of a kid and unleavened bread. "*Then the angel of the LORD put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes*" (Jud 6:21).

It was then that Gideon realized that he had seen the LORD. And in faith, he built an altar unto the LORD and called it *Jehovah-Shalom* – The LORD of Peace.

31 May 09

Thank you for your prayers during our period of absence in Singapore. Praise God for a blessed ministry in Vancouver BP Church (VBPC). The church came together to celebrate the wedding of Derek and Joyce Soo. Theirs is the third wedding that I officiated in VBPC. It was very encouraging to see the whole church coming together to prepare for the wedding from church decorations to catering for the reception. Everything at the reception was homemade, even Rebecca was roped in to bake 200 quiches.

It is also very heartening to see that the spirit of the people is still strong. Needless to say, it has been a difficult year and a half for the church without a resident pastor, and it will continue to be difficult. So please pray for them as they search for a pastor. Please also pray for Sister Wei Ping as she begins the pre-school in September 2009. The school is called Mustard Seed Pre-School.

Please remember me as I am ministering at Sharon BP Church this morning, and at Life BP Church in the evening.

Jehovah-shalom

Shalom is a Hebrew word that is known to Christians. It is often translated as “peace” but it has various shades of meaning.

The Meanings of *Shalom*

- Wholeness. *Shalom* is also translated as “whole.” Moses told the Israelites that after they crossed the Jordan and entered the Promised Land, they were to build an altar of the LORD with “*whole [shalom] stones*” (Deut 27:6).
- Finished. The word is also used to express the completion of a thing. Solomon “*finished*” the temple (1 Kings 9:25). In interpreting the handwriting on the wall, Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar that MENE meant “*God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it*” (Dan 5:26).
- Full. *Shalom* is also translated as “full.” The LORD told Abram that the children of Israel would be delivered in the fourth generation “*for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full*” (Gen 15:16).
- Make Good/Restitution/Paying of Vows. *Shalom* is also used to express the making up a loss. “*The owner of the pit shall make it good, and give money unto the owner of them; and the dead beast shall be his*” (Exod 21:34; 22:5-6). The same idea is also used in the paying of vows. “*Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High*” (Psalm 50:14).
- Well-being. *Shalom* is also translated to mean a person’s “well being.” When Jacob came to Haran, he enquired about Laban, asking if he was well [*shalom*] (Gen 29:6). The same question was asked by Joseph concerning his father – “*And [Joseph] asked them of their welfare [shalom], and said, Is your father well [shalom], the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive? And they answered, Thy servant our father is in good health [shalom], he is yet alive. And they bowed down their heads, and made obeisance*” (Gen 43:27-28).
- Perfect. *Shalom* is translated “perfect” for some twenty times. David prayed to the LORD that He would give Solomon “a perfect heart” (2 Chron 29:19). This was also Solomon’s exhortation at the inauguration of the temple, “*Let your heart therefore be perfect with the LORD our God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day*” (1 Kings 8:61).

All these meanings come together to lend weight to the most popular translation of *shalom* – peace. *Shalom* is translated “peace” over 170 times. Peace involves restitution for the wrong that had been committed.

Second, it involves the payment of offence to be made in full. And finally, peace is the total well being of a person.

The Source of *Shalom*

The fullness of peace is found in the LORD. The Messiah is known as the Prince of Peace. Throughout the Old Testament, the LORD is known as the source of peace. Through the prophet Jeremiah, the LORD gave this assurance to Judah, *“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end”* (Jer 29:11). Through Isaiah, the LORD exhorted, *“O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea”* (Isa 48:18).

In Leviticus, God promised, *“If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; Then I will give you rain in due season . . . And I will give peace in the land”* (Lev 26:3-6). David says that *“The LORD will bless his people with peace”* (Psalm 29:11). The LORD as the source of peace is also seen in the benediction of Aaron and his sons. They were commanded to bless the people with these words, *“The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace”* (Num 6:24-26).

The Presence of *Shalom*

Jehovah is the source of *shalom*. In the historical context of the time of the judges, the children of Israel had turned against the LORD. They *“did evil in the sight of the LORD”* (Jud 6:1) and instead being the source of peace, the LORD delivered them in the hand of the oppressors. Because of her disobedience, Israel was oppressed by the Midianites. The land of plenty became the land of poverty. The LORD who is the source of peace became the Judge who is the source of punishment.

It was during these times of oppression that the LORD came to Gideon. Before there can be peace in Israel, there must first be the presence of the LORD. Hence, the LORD came to Gideon saying, *“The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.”* (Jud 6:12). Gideon did not know what to make of this visit, nor of his appointment as Israel’s deliverer. But after his offering had been consumed, Gideon realized that this was no common visitor but the angel of the LORD, who pronounced this blessed assurance, *“Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die”* (Jud 6:23). The assurance of God’s presence was also the promise of peace.

The Price of *Shalom*

In the presence of the holy God, the sinfulness of man is exacerbated. Gideon cried out in fear, *“Alas, O Lord GOD! for because I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face”* (Jud 6:22). When Isaiah saw the vision of the LORD, he too cried out, *“Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts”* (Isa 6:5).

Man knows that in his own merits, he cannot be whole, or well, or make good, or claim to be perfect, or have peace with God. Man’s standing before God must be preceded by a sacrifice of blood. Gideon offered a goat (Jud 6:19). The blood of the animal was the price for peace. But the Holy Scripture tells us that the blood of animals is but a shadow of the real thing to come. *“It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins”* (Heb 10:4). True and lasting peace must come from the Lamb of God for *“we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all . . . this man [Christ Jesus], after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God . . . For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified”* (Heb 10:10-14).

07 Jun 09

In one week's time, we will gather at Putrajaya Marriott Hotel in Malaysia for our annual Bible Conference. I think it is high time to change the name from "camp" to "conference." The word "camp" means living in tents, cooking over charcoal stoves, and spraying of insect repellents to keep away the nasty mosquitoes. I am sure you will agree that Putrajaya Marriott where we will be spending is far more luxurious than camp. In any case, let us pray that God will bless the time that we will be having together. There are several items we ought to be praying for:

- Journeying mercies for the Reverend Ian Goligher and his wife Beulah; they will be arriving on 11th June.
- Journeying mercies for other guests: Deacon Thayananth and Rathi from Colombo, Sri Lanka; Preacher Yang Degang and Xiu Rong from China; Mrs Phan from Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam.
- God's blessings upon Pastor Goligher's ministry in our midst.
- Pray for journeying mercies as we head up to Malaysia.
- Pray for the organising committee under the leadership of Dn Su Chun Wei and Dn Kevin Leong.
- Pray for safety and health during the entire camp.
- Pray for ourselves that our hearts will be prepared to meet with God through the preaching of His Word.
- Pray for any unsaved friends who may be at the camp.

This coming Saturday (13 June) is also an important date for our church. The Calvary Missions Fellowship (CMF) will be organizing a missions conference. We are taking advantage of the missionaries who are here for the Bible Camp to give us an opportunity to know them. Many of them we know by name because we pray for them every Tuesday evening, but on Saturday, you will be able to see them face to face. The programme begins at 6pm with an exhibition of the various missions stations. Then it is followed by a time of testimonies of God's blessings and reports by the various missionaries. Elder Foong, the chairman of the CMF will also be telling you more about the work of missions in our church. So, please come and be blessed.

Jehovah-Shalom

Gideon was terrified when he realized that the person he encountered by the winepress was no ordinary being, but the angel of the LORD – a theophany – a manifestation of the LORD. Gideon feared for his life because he believed that anyone who had seen the face of God would die (Exod 33:20). However, the angel of the LORD gave this assurance – *"Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die"* (Jud 6:23). Based upon these words, Gideon built an altar and called it *Jehovah-Shalom*.

Christ Jesus is the Shalom

This name will be personified in our Lord Jesus Christ. By His own words, our Lord Jesus declares Himself to the source of peace. By His deeds, He proved that He was indeed the *shalom* that was the full and complete restitution for the sins of mankind, and through whom, sinners are made whole spiritually.

The Prophecy of *Shalom*: Through the prophet Isaiah, the LORD gave this promise concerning the Messiah, *“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace”* (Isa 9:6).

The children of Israel were looking with great anticipation for this Prince of Peace. But little did they realize that The Messiah would come not to deliver them from the fetters of foreign oppression but to set them free from the bondage of sin. He came to *“preach good tidings unto the meek . . . to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound”* (Isa 61:1-2).

Even before the birth of our Lord Jesus, Zecharias – the husband of Elisabeth and father of John the Baptist – described the Messiah as the *“dayspring from on high”* whose purpose was *“to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace”* (Luke 1:78-79).

The Proclamation of *Shalom*: The promise of *shalom* was announced by the angels at the birth of our Lord Jesus. The multitude of angels made that joyous proclamation to the shepherds. *“Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men”* (Luke 2:10-14).

The Promise of *Shalom*: Throughout our Lord’s ministry, He preached and promised peace. To those who are burdened with heavy loads, He gives this invitation, *“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls”* (Matt 11:28-29).

To His followers who were disheartened by the prospect of His departure, our Lord Jesus assured them, *“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid”* (John 14:27).

Shortly before His crucifixion, Jesus warned the disciples of the impending persecution that they would face in the world, but He also promised them victory and peace, *“Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world”* (John 16:32-33).

The Fulfillment of *Shalom*: Peace has a price. In the history of the world, men and women fought wars, and some gave their lives for the cause of peace. Ironic but true. In the spiritual realm, men have also devised ways and means to make peace with God. In some religions, the devotees are required to perform sacrificial rites; in others, they have to observe physical deprivation (fasting) or even mutilation (such as flagellation).

The Christian faith is radically different. In Christianity, it is not the sinner who is trying to make peace with God; rather it is God who makes peace with the sinner. That peace comes with a price. That *shalom* is accomplished on the middle cross that stood on Golgotha. When the Roman soldiers nailed our Lord to that cruel cross, the device of death became the instrument of peace. Consider these Bible passages on the peace that was fulfilled in the Person of our Lord Jesus:

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: (Rom. 5:1).

“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them . . . For He [God the Father] hath made Him [God the Son] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him [Christ Jesus]” (2 Cor 5:19-21).

Christ Jesus *“having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself. . . . And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled” (Col 1:20-21).*

By nature and by deed, every man is a sinner separated from God. But Jesus *“is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us And that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross” (Eph 2:14-16).*

The Presence of *Shalom*: *Shalom* with God brings about the *shalom* of God. Peace is one aspect of the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22). Our Lord Jesus promised peace to His disciples (John 16:33). Believers have the peace of God ruling in their hearts (Col 3:15). The Apostle Paul exhorts us: *“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:6-7).*

The peace of God is one that transcends all human explanations. The peace that Jesus gives is not the absence of trouble, but it is the confidence that He is there with you always. It was this peace that gave Paul and Silas reason to sing even when they were beaten and thrown in prison. It was this peace that gave the martyrs cause to praise God and pray for their enemies even as they await their cruel end. It was this peace that gave Horatio Spafford, grieving over the loss of his family, the faith to pen these words –

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,

When sorrows like sea billows roll, Whatever my lot,

Thou hast taught me to say, It is well, It is well with my soul.

And it is this peace of God that will see every redeemed person through every desert of despair, every sea of sorrow, and even through the valley of the shadow of death.

14 Jun 09

Tomorrow, we begin our annual Bible camp. We thank God for bringing into our midst His servants to minister to us. And over the next few days, we pray that our hearts will be challenged by the ministry of God's Word. Let me also remind all campers that no matter where we go, we are ambassadors for our Lord Jesus Christ not just in the confession from our lips, but also from the profession of our lives. Please show courtesy and charity to all, especially to those who serve us.

Jehovah-Tsidkenu (I)

Jehovah-Tsidkenu means the "LORD our Righteousness." The title was revealed to the prophet Jeremiah, "*Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS*" (Jer 23:5-6).

Historical Background

The revelation of *Jehovah-Tsidkenu* was revealed to Judah at a time when the nation was caught up in apostasy and backsliding. Under Josiah, Judah experienced great spiritual revival and moral reforms, but the good works of Josiah were undone by his successors. His sons – Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah – were the last three kings of Judah. Under their reigns, Judah went from bad to worse. The land was filled with violence and oppression. Judah, once the envy of their heathen neighbours, was despised and mocked. Spiritually, the people continued to defy the LORD and provoked Him. In response, the LORD gave this warning, "*If ye will not hearken to Me, to walk in My law, which I have set before you . . . then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth*" (Jer 26:4-6).

Jeremiah prophesied that the LORD would use Babylon to defeat Judah. At the same time, the LORD also held out this hope for Judah: He would raise "*a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper . . . His name shall be called Jehovah-Tsidkenu*" (23:6). Interestingly, the name bore remarkable significance to the meaning of Zedekiah, Judah's last king. Zedekiah means "God is my justice." He was initially named Mattaniah (2 Kings 24:17).

The Meaning of Righteousness

The word *tsidkenu* is derived from *tsedek*, meaning righteousness. It has several meanings. In Leviticus 19:36, it refers to God's standards of judgment – "*Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have: I am the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt*" (Lev 19:36).

It is also used to describe the standard by which the judges are to be measured – "*And I charged your judges at that time, saying, Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him*" (Deut 1:16).

Job demanded that his life be judged according to this standard of righteousness – "*If I have walked with vanity, or if my foot hath hastened to deceit; let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity*" (Job 31:5-6).

Man's Problems

In the area of righteousness, man has two problems: his lack of it, and God's demand of perfect righteousness.

The picture of a balance or weighing scale may convey the wrong idea that if a man does more good than evil, the scales would tip in his favour, and thus he deserves to be saved. This is not the biblical view. We ought, rather, to look at the scales and balances as one that measure shortcomings. In the United States, the National Bureau of Standards is the federal agency that sets the standards for all weights and measures. If a shopper buys a pound of flour, and if he later found that by NBS measurements, he had only 14 ounces; then he had been shortchanged. His “pound” of flour had fallen short of the required weight.

Likewise, God is the one who sets the standard of righteousness. When a sinner measures his righteousness on the divine scales, he has to admit that he would fall short of God’s requirements. A fraction of an omer short of an ephah would render the weight unjust. A fraction of a span short of a cubit would render the measure unjust. If any man keeps the whole law, and “*yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all*” (James 2:10). The problem with Job was not, as he seems to claim, that he was weighed on an unjust balance. God is perfectly just. The problem with Job – as with every man – was that when he was put on God’s balance, he came out short, as would every man.

When a man’s righteousness is juxtaposed with God’s, the contrast is day and night. The Psalmist says that “*the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether*” (Psalm 19:9). His righteousness “is an everlasting righteousness” (Psalm 119:142). His whole realm is founded upon righteousness (Psalm 89:14).

Man, on the other hand, is lacking in righteousness. “*They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one*” (Psalm 14:3). “*There is none righteous, no, not one*” (Rom 3:10). The prophet Isaiah says that man’s righteousness are as “*filthy rags*” (Isa 64:6).

The second problem with man’s lack of righteousness is that God expects and demands perfect righteousness, and the holy God cannot overlook this lack of righteousness. The LORD told Israel that while He was merciful, gracious and forgiving, He “*will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation*” (Exod 34:6-7).

Every sinner comes short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23), and the wages of sin is death – “*the soul that sinneth, it shall die*” (Ezek 18:20). How then can sinners find themselves in the presence of the holy God and be accepted by Him. The solution is to be found in God. Only the LORD can provide the righteousness that He demanded, hence His Name – *Jehovah-Tsidkenu* – the LORD our Righteousness.

21 Jun 09

We kicked off the week of Bible Camp with our Missions Conference. We praise God for the wonderful turnout. I would like to thank the Calvary Missions Fellowship (CMF), especially Dn James How and Dn Jeffrey Soh for organizing the missions conference. Praise God also for the various missionaries who attended the event. And I pray that as church, we will continue to be active in the work of missions.

We also thank God for a blessed Bible Camp, for the spiritual blessings that we have received from the preaching of God's Word. The Bible Camp is a huge endeavour on the part of the church not just in terms of financial commitment, but also in terms of the energy and time that the organizing committee has put into it. The Camp Committee under the leadership of Dn Su Chun Wei and Dn Kevin Leong has done a wonderful job, and we thank them for their labour of love.

Jehovah-Tsidkenu (II)

We continue this morning with our consideration on the Names of God. The Name we have been studying is *Jehovah-Tsidkenu*, the "*LORD our Righteousness*." By this name, we note two things: man's lack of righteousness (Rom 3:10; Ps 14:3; Isa 64:6), and God's demands for perfect righteousness (James 2:10; Ps 19:9; 89:14; 119:142). The best of man has failed to God's standards – "*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*" (Rom 3:23).

Our Lord Jesus told the disciples, "*except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven*" (Matt 5:20). That statement must have come as a shock to the people, "How could we ever hope to exceed the righteousness of the super-pious Pharisees? If the Pharisees were unrighteous, how then can we be righteous?" How can sinners ever hope to be acquitted of his unrighteousness and be accepted by God?

God's Solution

The solution to this problem must come from outside of man. It must come from the One who sets that standard of righteousness. Only God can provide a righteousness that meets His own standards. "*Surely, shall One say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to Him shall men come; and all that are incensed against Him shall be ashamed. In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory*" (Isa 45:24-25). Who is this blessed One?

Jeremiah was asked by God to run through the streets of Jerusalem to find this one righteous man. If such a man could be found, God would pardon the people (Jer 5:1). Needless to say, there was none among the sons of man that was righteous. Nevertheless, God pardoned the people, meaning to say that there was One whose righteousness was accepted by God. The prophet Isaiah spoke of such a Person, "*Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief: when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall **My Righteous Servant** justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities*" (Isa 53:10-11).

This righteous Servant is also the "*LORD our Righteousness*" (Jer 23:6). So while the sinner stands before the righteous God condemned and without any hope in himself, the LORD comes in and becomes his righteousness.

Jesus is our Righteousness

This righteousness of God is reckoned to us in the Person and through the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is our *Jehovah-Tsidkenu*. The Psalmist says, "*For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; His countenance doth behold the upright*" (Ps 11:7). The writer of Hebrews affirmed this blessed truth (Heb

1:9). Our Lord Jesus is our Advocate before God. Only He is qualified because while He was born under the law, He was not cursed by it so that He was able to redeem those who were under the law (Gal 4:5).

Our Lord who is all righteous availed His righteousness to us. *“For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”* (2 Cor 5:21). The Apostle Peter adds, *“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just [righteous] for the unjust [unrighteous], that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit”* (1 Pet 3:18).

What we could not do and are unable to do for ourselves, Christ did it for us. Our Lord Jesus Christ became *“the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth”* (Rom 10:4). As Christians, we can echo the words of the Apostle Paul that are found in Christ *“not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith”* (Phil 3:9).

Practically, it means that by virtue of our Lord’s righteousness, those who know and believe in Him also partake of *“the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings”* (Phil 3:10).

It also means that the redeemed is made righteous and should live righteously. Our Lord has set our feet on the path of righteousness according to His sovereign will; it behooves us to continue our walk in that path. We are to *“put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness”* (Eph 4:24). We are freed from the fetters of sin to be *“servants of righteousness”* (Rom 6:18). We are to be *“blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world”* (Phil 2:15).

Robert McCheyne, whose Gospel ministry, though brief, had touched the lives of many people, wrote in poem entitled: *Jehovah-Tsidkenu*

When free grace awoke me

By light from on high.

Then legal fears shook me,

I trembled to die;

No refuge, no safety,

In self could I see,

Jehovah-Tsidkenu

My Saviour must be.

28 Jun 09

Praise God for a blessed camp. I am sure all who went would agree that it was time and money well-spent. It is always good for God's people to set aside time for events such as Bible Camps. If the testimonies on the last night of Camp were a measure of success and God's blessings, Camp 2009 was a resounding success. The spontaneity of those who came forward was heart-warming, never mind if some of them fumbled through what they wanted to say. I must thank those who have worked very hard to organize the Camp – Dn Su Chun Wei, Dn Kevin Leong, Dn Mark Tay and their team of dedicated members.

One more reminder: the camp is not and should not be the end of a spiritual feasting. God's intent is never for His people to cram themselves with 16 or so messages within one week, and not feed themselves spiritually for the next two to three months. The part of the prayer that says, "Give us this day our daily bread," applies also to the spiritual realm. We must continue to feed daily on the Word of God. I pray that this Camp will mark a new beginning in your spiritual walk with God – a closer and more intimate, as well as a sweeter and fulfilling one.

Jehovah Shammah

Jehovah Shammah means "the LORD is there" (Ezek 48:35). They are the closing words to the prophecy of Ezekiel. The various names of our LORD reveal the various aspects of His Person – His creative power (*Elohim*), His covenant relationship with Israel (*Jehovah*), His greatness (*El-Shaddai*), His provision (*Jehovah-Jireh*), His restoring grace (*Jehovah-Rophe*), His victory (*Jehovah-Nissi*), His sanctification (*Jehovah-M'Kaddesh*), His peace (*Jehovah-Shalom*), and His righteousness (*Jehovah-Tsidkenu*). Through these names, the LORD provides everything that is needed for man to be reconciled to God. The only thing remaining is to wait for the time to meet the LORD Who is there – *Jehovah Shammah*.

Historical Context

Jehovah Shammah was given to the people of God when they were at a low point of their history. Spiritually bankrupt because of their backsliding and militarily impotent against a rising world power, Jerusalem was invaded by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 BC. The best of her citizens were taken captive; Ezekiel was one of them. The final Babylonian invasion some eleven years later would result in the destruction of Solomon's Temple, the pride of the Jews, and the final sign that the LORD had turned them over to their own sins.

However, Jehovah is a covenant God. He would not break the promise that He had made to the people of Israel. "*My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips. Once have I sworn by My holiness that I will not lie unto David*" (Psalm 89:34-35). Jehovah who punished His people for their sins would also restore them. "*I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them, as at the first. And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against Me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against Me*" (Jer 33:7-8).

Ezekiel added his voice to this message of hope when he prophesied concerning the restoration of the land with the name – *Jehovah Shammah* – the LORD is there.

Significance of the Name

Jehovah was not an aloof God. From the very beginning, the LORD expressed the desire to be among His chosen people. He dwelt in their midst. The tabernacle in the wilderness was built for this reason, "*I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the LORD their God*" (Exod 29:45-46).

The LORD repeatedly assured the people that He would be with them: Abraham (Gen 26:24), Jacob (Gen 28:15; 31:3), Moses (Exod 3:12). The tabernacle and the temple were visible symbols of God's presence with His people. As soon as these structures were completed, the LORD filled them with His holy presence (Exod 40:34-38; 2 Chron 7:1-3). However, in the course of Israel's history, both the tabernacle at Shiloh and the temple in Jerusalem were destroyed. Because of the people's disobedience, the LORD said, "*Then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth*" (Jer 26:6).

Some Bible scholars believe that Ezekiel's prophecy (chapter 48) refers to the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem with the restoration of the sacrificial system. By that, they claim that *Jehovah Shammah* is realized. However, the fact that Ezekiel was asked to bring this vision back to the people in Israel implies that there is a greater significance than just the rebuilding of the temple. *Jehovah Shammah* is realized not in a building, but a Person.

It must also be pointed out that even in the Old Testament, the LORD had no intention to be confined to the walls of a temple. His desire was to dwell in man's heart. The LORD asked, "*The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? . . . to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word*" (Isa 66:1-2).

"For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isa 57:15).

The Person of *Jehovah Shammah*

The tabernacle and the temple were merely visible symbols of God's presence. The real presence is the Messiah which is fulfilled in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ at His birth – "*Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us*" (Matt 1:23; Isa 7:14). Our Lord Jesus is the Word – "*made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth*" (John 1:14). He is *Jehovah Shammah*, and He dwells in our midst.

When our Lord Jesus was crucified and buried, the disciples thought that it was the end of our Lord's presence. But He rose from the grave victorious, and He promised His abiding presence with the Church – "*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations . . . lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*" (Matt 28:19-20). *Jehovah Shammah* was fulfilled in our Lord Jesus after His resurrection.

Jehovah Shammah is also fulfilled in the Person of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul asks, "*Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*" (1 Cor 3:16). Later, Paul reminds the believers, "*Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people*" (2 Cor 6:16).

However, there is yet a final and glorious fulfillment of *Jehovah Shammah*. Our Lord Jesus promised the disciples, "*In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also*" (John 14:2-3). That was our Lord's prayer, "*Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold My glory*" (John 17:24a).

The Apostle John was given the vision of eternal throne of God – "*I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men,*

and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God” (Rev 21:1-3). Jehovah Shammah – the LORD is there. Dear reader, will you be there with Him?

Lovingly in Christ,

Pastor Isaac

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