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04 Jan 09

It is time to seek the Lord

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But if you stop and think about it, there is really nothing unique about the first day of a new year. It is just a day arbitrarily chosen to mark the start of a new year. It is just every other day. And the first day of the new year is as good as any other day for Christians to consider the solemn fact that with every passing day and year, we are nearer the day when we will see our Saviour. As Isaac Watts writes in the hymn, *O God, Our Help in Ages Past*, that

*Time, like an ever rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away;
They fly, forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the opening day.
Like flowery fields the nations stand
Pleased with the morning light;
The flowers beneath the mower's hand
Lie withering ere 'tis night.*

The solemn fact that we have to consider is that time rolls on relentlessly, and this new year could very well be the final one for some. The world celebrates the coming of every new year with feasting and festivities as if to declare that it has survived another year; that it has made it through. And the world heaved a collective sigh of relief. In 2008, a sigh of relief was probably justified. However, that does not give any reprieve from the rolling tide of time.

The Psalmist asks, "*Remember how short my time is: wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?*" (Ps 89:47). Barzillai, David's general, asked, "*How long have I to live...?*" (2 Sam 19:34). The wise will number the days and redeem the time.

The theme for our church this year is: it is time to seek the LORD; taken from Hosea 10:12 – "*Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.*" The following verse reads, "*Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity;*

ye have eaten the fruit of lies: because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men” (Hos 10:13).

This is not a parable on the type of ground, like the one in the Gospels (Matt 13:3-9, 18-23). Rather Hosea uses a familiar metaphor to make comparison between the one who sows righteousness and the one who sows wickedness. There is only one ground. What comes out of that ground depends on what is sown into it. Likewise, we have only one life. What we do with our lives matters. There are two different kinds of sowing, and each has its corresponding outcome. Likewise, the decisions we make in life and how we make them, the basis for our making them will also have different outcomes.

trust in yourself and mighty men

“Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies: because **thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men**” (Hos 10:13). This verse gives us one way of decision making. It is to trust your own judgment. You determine what is right and wrong. Related to this is the way is to trust the multitude of mighty men; to trust in the opinion of the majority and the mighty.

However, because it is “thy way” and that of “the multitude of thy mighty men,” it is also not God’s way. By trusting in the ways of men, we forsake the way of God; we reject His truth; we ignore His precepts, and we live our lives our own way; and we serve God with our own strength. It is serving God with the arm of flesh.

The word “trust” has the connotation of a deliberate act of choosing to put his confidence in man and not in God. To trust in thy way is a conscious decision. It is deliberate self-reliance. It is calculated self-sufficiency. It is to choose man over God. There is a consequence that comes with that fleshly sowing. The Bible tells us that we would reap what we sow. *“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Gal 6:7-8).*

In fact, we always reap more than what we sow. The seeds of wickedness sown will reap fruits of greater wickedness. *“For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind” (Hos 8:7a).* If we sow the seeds of wickedness, Hosea says that we will reap iniquity and the fruits of lies (Hos 10:13). But if we sow the seeds of righteousness, the Lord will rain righteousness upon us (Hos 10:12).

it is time to seek the lord

The alternative to trusting in thy way is to seek the Lord, and to sow seeds of righteousness. Weeds grow with no preparation. In order for the ground to produce good fruit there must be some preparation done. Hosea tells us that we must break up the fallow ground. Fallow ground is not barren ground. It is not infertile. It is unprepared.

Fallow ground is uncultivated ground. Weeds can grow in fallow ground, but not good fruit.

How do you break up the fallow ground? By removing the weeds. By breaking up and turning the soil. How do we break up the fallow ground of our hearts? By throwing out the bad. By turning out that which stands in the way of our spiritual growth. By reprioritising our lives. By refining and purifying. By outing of the old man and putting on the new. By not walking in the flesh but walking in the Spirit. By provoking unto love and good works. By growing in grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. To sow righteousness and to break up the fallow ground also requires persistence. We are to do till the Lord comes. We are to do it diligently.

The question is when should we begin to seek the Lord? The answer – it is time to seek the LORD. When is the time? The time is NOW! “*Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near*” (Isaiah 55:6). There is a sense of urgency. Now is the time. Now is all that we have. I pray that you can say that in 2009, it will be Christ for you, and that it will be Christ for you now and everyday henceforth.

May our Lord grant to us the desire to seek Him, and the sense of urgency so that we may know that now is the time to seek Him.

11 Jan 09
Euthanasia (Part 1)

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18 Jan 09

At every Chinese New Year, the traditional Chinese will greet one another with a delightful phrase such as “恭喜发财—congratulation, you are rich”; “万事如意—Everything as you wish” or “年年有馀—have surpluses every year” etc. During the New Year, everybody looks forward to a new prospect in life; hoping to rid off the bad fortune of the past year and receive something new and good in the New Year such as “福—blessing” “禄—happiness” and “寿—long life”. When the “鼠—rats” came in at the beginning of last year, superstitious Chinese were very hopeful that the rat which was fast and responsive will bring them some quick return of luck and fortune. For a while it appeared to be so. Business was good and there was an upturn of share market. Everybody was fast to move into investment, and shares were snatched up quickly. There were plenty of jobs and living standard rose accordingly. Unfortunately, all the excitements did not last. Before the end of the year, great change took place unexpectedly. The American economy suddenly collapsed and many banks went bankrupt. This led to a chain effect which upset the economy of the whole world. Companies began to shut down and millions of people were affected by unemployment or pay-cuts. Many face uncertainty in their immediate future. Now, this year comes the “牛—ox”. Oxen are known to be strong and hard working animals. Cows can also provide milk for food. The superstitious Chinese hope that it will turn the economy around and give them a better life. Unfortunately, the forecast of the economy is contrary to this. The government kept on reminding us to work hard and be thrifty. Many workers have already been laid off, and there will be more to come. What an awful “牛” this is! What must we do as believers under such tight situation? The Psalmist says: “They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever” (Ps 125:1-2). The one who protects us is not the rat nor the ox. It is the Lord of Host. So, we must trust and serve Him even in the time of hardship. The Bible says: “Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God” (Phil 4:6). This does not mean that we can ignore the government’s warning. The Bible also says: “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers, For there is no power but of God: and the powers that be are ordained of God” (Rom 13:1). Let us therefore work hard and use our money wisely.

Oxen are created by God for the benefit of men and not men for the benefit of the oxen. “And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and everything that creepeth upon the earth after his kind” (Gen 1:25). The majority of Chinese in China are peasants. Farming is their livelihood. The oxen can plough their land and grind their crops and are therefore precious in their eyes. Western people like to eat beef and drink milk. They make shoes and many useful goods out of leather. In the Old Testament time the number of cattle owned by a person was an indication of his wealth. Thus “And Abram (Abraham) was very rich in cattle, in silver and in gold” (Gen 13:2). For Job: “His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen...” (Job 1:3). These were wealth given by God. Unfortunately, ignorant Chinese people worship these creatures as their “财神or 财牛—

god of wealth or ox of wealth.” Instead of worshipping the God that gives them their wealth, they worship the animal instead. Today, in our technologically advanced cities, people seldom see cattle as they see them in the farm. What they see everyday are layers of paper which they keep in their wallet or cards in which is hidden a secret bar code. These they worship more than the God who gives them these things.

In the Old Testament time animals such as oxen were offered as sacrifices for the remission of sin. “If the priest that is anointed do sin according to the sin of the people; then let him bring for his sin, which he hath sinned, a young bullock without blemish unto the Lord for a sin offering” (Lev 4:3). This was to show people the seriousness of sin. It also served as an example of the sacrifice which our Lord Jesus had made for us in dying for our sins on the cross of Calvary. The Bible tells us: “For the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23). In fact, the blood of the bullock can never take away sin as the Bible says: “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins” (Heb 10:4). This was done in the Old Testament time only as a reminder to the people of their sins and their need of a Saviour. “But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance of sins” (Heb 10:3). Today, we no longer sacrifice animal such as an ox because our Lord Jesus Christ had already offered up that perfect sacrifice “once for all” (Heb 10:10). Believers should therefore examine themselves often and come to the Lord in repentance so that our sins can be forgiven. New Year is a time of thanksgiving to the Lord and a time of forgiving one another as the Lord has forgiven us.

Worshipping the “牛—Ox” or any other image is an abomination to the Lord. Remember the first Commandment which says: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exod 20:3). Ever since the Creation, the devil schemed up all kinds of devices to lure men away from worshipping God. One of these tricks is to create images for men to worship. One of these is the ox. When Moses was in Mount Sinai, the people, not having seen him, made for themselves a molten calf and worshipped and made sacrifices unto it (Exod 32:8). This provoked the anger of God “and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men” (Exod 32:28). “They made a calf in Horeb and worshipped the molten image. Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass” (Ps 106:19-20). Today, the Buddhists and the Hindus likewise made unto themselves golden calves and set them up in temples for devotees to worship. The more devout ones even eat cow dung as a sign of respect. Today many people instead of going to church to worship the true living God, follow the Hindus to do yoga meditation and pay their homage to their idols. “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things. Therefore God also give them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves” (Rom 1:22-24).

The danger of “恭喜发财” or “Gong Xi Fa Cai”. Today, the “ox of wealth or the greedy cow财牛” does not live in the farm, nor in the temple, but live in the hearts of men. This invisible ox or cow is far more dangerous than any ox or cow that the eyes can see. Unfortunately, to have this ox or cow is the desire of many of us who live in this material world. Why do we greet each other “恭喜发财”? Because all of us like to be

rich. Sadly, many a time this is the source of many crimes and sorrows in our society. Everyday we read in the newspaper about thefts, robberies, kidnapping, fights, murders, piracies as well as misappropriation of funds. Are not these the work of the “ox or the greedy cow” in our hearts? The Bible says: “But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: while some coveted after, they have pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (I Tim 6:9-10). Believers must avoid this concept of “Gong Xi Fa Cai” in our hearts. The Bible reminds us: “But godliness with contentment is great gain” (I Tim 6:6).

“财牛—greedy cow” or “疯牛—Mad Cow.” Few years ago, there emerged a “mad cow disease” in England. This frightened the whole European Union, so much so that they demanded England to slaughter all the cattle in England. In order to prevent this virus from spreading to human beings England reluctantly destroyed tens of thousands of expensive cattle. Similarly, when one chicken is discovered to have birds’ flu, all the chicken in the same farm have to be culled. In the fifteenth century, when a person died of plague, the whole town was burned down including all the people living in there. This is how a disease can be thoroughly eradicated. What about our sin? The sin of greed or covetousness? It is such a deadly disease that can send all of us to hell and yet many of us take it as nothing. The Bible says: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom 5:12). Many people regard sin as simply a “human weakness.” Others say that it is an enjoyment of life and yet others say that it is essential for a meaningful living. Remember what our Lord says: “For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark. And know not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (Matt 24:38-39). It was easy to eradicate the “mad cow disease” but so difficult to eradicate the “greedy cow” disease in our hearts. In a short while the Singapore Integrated Resort will be ready. Pubs, theatres, night clubs and casinos will be ready at hand for everyone to enter and “enjoy.” For many businessmen it will be a “肥牛—fat cow” but for us children of God, it is a “疯牛—mad cow” or a death trap. May the Lord protect us from the danger of this “greedy or mad cow disease” in this coming year.

25 Jan 09

On behalf of the church session, I wish you and your family a blessed and godly Chinese New Year. May our Lord bless you with good health and strength. May His peace and love fill your hearts and your homes. And may He grant to you a fervent desire for His Word and faithful devotion for His work.

The Chinese New Year is also known as the Spring Festival. It is the most important Chinese festival. It marks the beginning of a new year – the first day of the first month of the Chinese lunar calendar. It is a time of family reunion. It is also a time of thanksgiving.

As Christians, we give thanks not because of what we have in our hands; we give thanks because of who we are in Christ. We give thanks to God not just because He has blessed us materially, but more importantly God “*hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ*” (Eph 1:3).

Thank God for hearing our prayers

For this reason, David begins Psalm 65 with these words: “*Praise waiteth for Thee, O God, in Sion: and unto Thee shall the vow be performed*” (Ps 65:1). David begins his thanksgiving with a call to worship.

Verse 2 gives us the reason for David’s eagerness to worship and praise God. “*O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come*” (Ps 65:2). God had answered David’s prayer. Although we do not know the exact nature of David’s prayer, we do know that it was a deliverance of sorts.

Praise God that He hears and answers prayer. The Apostle Peter exhorts us to cast all our cares upon Him for He cares for us (1 Pet 5:7). David did not place confidence in his position as king of Israel. His confidence rests solely on the LORD whose promises stand sure. Like David, we must make God our hope and stay.

So let me encourage you to be fervent in prayer, trusting in God’s strength, resting on His grace, and walking in His will. There is a radical difference between the one who does not trust in God and the one who does. In verse 3, David says “*iniquities prevail against me.*” He was like a drowning man clutching at straws. In verse 4, he says, “*Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple*” (Ps 65:4). What a world of difference prayers make.

Thank God for SUSTaining us

The Christian is not meant to be a lonely one. David thought he was alone in his troubles, but God was there. The Lord answered his prayers. The Christian life is also not one in which a person is left to resort to his own resources and strength. Again, we cannot escape the picture of a loving God who has the power to sustain us (Ps 65:5-7).

The greatness of God is seen in the display of His power to answer prayer (v. 5). Dear Christian, if we were to travel to the ends of the earth, if we were found in the farthest seas, if we would pray, God would hear and answer. Our God answered Joseph in Potiphar's prison. He answered Elijah on Mount Carmel. He answered Jonah when he was in the belly of the big fish. Wherever you are now in your present circumstances of life – God hears and answers your prayers.

The greatness of God is also seen in His power to still the chaos. Our Lord, *“stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people”* (Ps 65:7). We live in a world of confusion and turmoil. The last year ended with a financial meltdown, the effects of which are just beginning to be felt. We started the new year with a war in the Middle East and an uncertain world economy. At the personal level, there may be some amongst us whose lives have been turned upside down because of sickness, financial problems, marital disputes, wayward children, and so on. Whatever the troubles, take heart, we have a God who has the power to still the noise and waves.

Mark 6 records for us an interesting incident. Our Lord had just finished feeding the 5,000 with five loaves and two fishes. Then He had sent the disciples to go ahead to sail to Bethsaida while He went alone to the mountain to pray. Then *“when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land. And **He saw them toiling in rowing**; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them”* (Mark 6:47-48). And our Lord Jesus came to the disciples with these words, *“Be of good cheer, it is I; be not afraid. And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased”* (Mark 6:50).

When the disciples were in the boat struggling against the waves, they thought that they were alone, but our Lord Jesus saw them toiling (Mark 6:48). In this new year, you may be distressed and discouraged, and you think you are alone; that God has turned a blind eye to your problems. The blessed truth is that just as the Lord saw the disciples toiling, He sees you in your struggles. Our Lord who values the sparrows, assures us, *“Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows”* (Matt 10:31).

Thank God for SUPPLYing our needs

David writes, *“Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: Thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: Thou settlest the furrows thereof: Thou makest it soft with showers: Thou blessest the springing thereof. Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness; and Thy paths drop fatness. They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness: and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing”* (Ps 65:9-13).

This is farmer's language. We may not be as dependent on the weather as a farmer. But without a doubt, our life, our health are gifts from God. James says, *“Every good gift*

and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (James 1:17).

God is unchanging, and He is unchanging in His goodness toward us. But as I had pointed out earlier, in receiving the gifts, we must not forget to thank the Giver.

This Chinese New Year, as your families come together, remember to thank God for His goodness. Thank God for what He has given – physical strength, material provisions, spiritual blessings and family. Spend some time with your family recounting the blessings of God.

The 65th Psalm is a psalm of thanksgiving. Yet the uniqueness of this psalm is that although it is a psalm of thanksgiving, the word “thanks” or “thanksgiving” is never used in this psalm. The lesson we see here is – that thanksgiving is not just a matter of the lips. Although words are important, it is not just plain words; it is about our deeds.

And the beauty of giving God thanks is that He totally deserves it. We do not have to withhold our praises and thanksgiving. We do not have to overlook certain flaws and make an effort to concentrate on His good features, because God is totally good. And there is a sense in which we can praise Him with wild abandonment. This is the expression we see in the closing verse of Psalm 65, *“The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing”* (Ps 65:13).

The psalmist starts with the words, “Praise waiteth for Thee.” There was a time when the people were waiting in silence, and as they begin to sing, they get gradually louder and louder so that at the end of the psalm, we read that the people were shouting for joy. There is, as it were, a crescendo of praise. And so it should be with our life and our walk with God. Every passing day is another day of God’s blessings, and it should increase our volume of praise for God’s goodness.

May God give us a thankful and a thanksgiving heart to praise Him.

01 Feb 09

Euthanasia (Part II)

The very word “euthanasia” (literally, good dying) is an euphemism. The act of euthanasia itself – as they say in newspeak – has been given a good spin because of it. Euthanasia is man’s attempt to control the end of his life. He wants a happy and painless end. Those who advocate euthanasia claim that it is a man’s right to choose how and when his life shall end. Proponents of active euthanasia (intentional taking of another’s life) give the following reasons in support of their cause.

It is a man’s right to die with dignity. This claim implies two things. First, painful and protracted suffering is not dignified. Hence, it is necessary and even merciful to terminate a man’s life so that he can have a dignified death. That is a man’s right.

In a Straits Times article – “Euthanasia: Right to die – or licence to kill?” (24 Dec 2008), the writer says that “Advocates of euthanasia emphasise consent and dignity. They argue that the law should recognise the right of any competent person to consent to ending his life so that he may die with dignity.” That consent must be free; free in the sense that the person who is making the decision to kill himself must be free from any form of coercion.

But as the writer correctly points out it is doubtful that the person can make a free decision when his medical condition and psychological state are taken into consideration. “The pain that can cloud judgment, the anxiety and fear arising from uncertainty, the wish not to be a burden to family, friends or caretakers – and in some cases, the lack of support from family members – these are all factors that can vitiate consent. Indeed, researchers have noted ‘hopelessness, which is strongly correlated with depression’ as the predominant factor in catalyzing the wish for death.”

What about the notion of “dying with dignity”? As a matter of fact, the law legalising euthanasia is known as the “Death with Dignity Act.” This notion of “death with dignity” is man’s final stand of his pride. The right to die with dignity is man’s last act of rebellion against the God who is the Giver, the Sustainer, and the Taker of life.

God says, “*See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand*” (Deut 32:39). Job declares, “*The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD*” (Job 1:21b). David says, “*My times are in Thy hand*” (Ps 31:15a).

The country’s laws allow for euthanasia. This has not yet happened in Singapore. The Netherlands is the first country in the world to legalise euthanasia. The law in Holland was passed in April 2002. Belgium passed its euthanasia law in September 2002. In Switzerland, although euthanasia is still technically illegal, the Swiss law allows for doctor-assisted suicide. In the United States, active euthanasia is legalised in Oregon.

These euthanasia laws rest on the argument that dying is a matter of individual concern and constitutional right.

The civil laws may be amended to legalise any activity, but it does not mean therefore that the activity is moral. Canada has passed legalising same-sex marriages. There is also a push in Canada to legalise marijuana. Just because an activity is legal in the eyes of man, it does not mean that it is moral in the eyes of God. Christians must not forget the warning from Scripture that during the period of Judges, the children of Israel were doing that which was right in their own eyes (Jud [17:6](#); [18:1](#); [19:1](#); 21:25).

Euthanasia is an act of mercy to the sufferer. The argument is based on the practice that sick animals are put down to prevent their suffering. So if we are humane to sick animals, why cannot we be just as humane to sick people. The most compassionate thing to do for a terminally ill person would be to end his pain by euthanizing him.

This argument presupposes that man and animal are the same. The Bible says that man is different from the animal. *“The LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul”* (Gen 2:7). Man has an eternal soul. An animal does not.

The reason Christians can put down a sick animal and not a sick person is precisely because we know that human beings are not animals. The moment we fail to make this distinction between human beings and animals, then it opens the floodgates to many things that human beings do to animals that even euthanasia proponents will not dare suggest.

Animals are used for experimentation, and we called them guinea pigs. Undesired traits in some animals are eliminated and weeded out through selective breeding to ensure a superior breed.

In another highly controversial biomedical issue, animals are now being bred for their organs. The UK Telegraph reported that Lord Winston, the fertility expert, has started breeding pigs to produce hearts, livers and kidneys for transplanting for man. The reason there is no loud public outcry against Lord Winston and for his pigs is because the world recognizes that there is a difference between human beings and animals. If human beings and animals are the same, it would have been much easier to just raise human beings solely for the purpose of harvesting their organs for other human beings.

Death to euthanasia proponents is a natural process of life. A man is born. He grows up. He grows old, and he dies. The Bible says that death is the result of sin. The death of the body is not the most dreadful thing; death of the soul is. Death of the soul is eternal separation from God. *“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years”* (Rev 20:6, see also 20:14 and 21:8). For this reason, our Lord Jesus warns, *“Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill*

the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt 10:28).

God willing, next Lord’s Day we will consider whether “morally questionable” means can justify “seemingly good” ends. May the Holy Spirit give us the spiritual discernment to know and do the truth with a humble heart.

08 Feb 09
Euthanasia (Part III)

Over the last few weeks, some church members have been regularly going to the children's oncology ward at a local hospital to visit and pray with one young man who is currently undergoing chemotherapy treatment. While the room is painted bright yellow with cheery motifs, the pain and suffering of the young patients were obvious. In the same room, there was a 13-year old boy, the son of a pastor, who had numerous intravenous drips into his body. There was also a boy – no more than eight – and he too had just as many IV drips. Earlier, there was another young patient who had a relapse of the disease; he had to be put in isolation because he had suffered a severe infection, a side effect of the treatment.

The sufferings of the patients are clearly evident. What is not seen and often overlooked is the anguish suffered by the parents and caregivers of these young patients.

Euthanasia is an act of mercy to the sufferer's caregivers. This unseen suffering is one of the reasons given in support of euthanasia. The argument is that euthanasia is also an act of mercy to the sick person's caregiver. The immediate caregivers are often the patient's family, but they would also include society at large. In cases of protracted illness, it is not only the patient who suffers, but the family and the caregivers also have to shoulder the burden. Euthanasia, as the proponents claim, would therefore relieve the caregivers of the emotional and psychological anguish and financial burdens.

With rising healthcare costs, severe sicknesses can and do often wipe out a lifetime of savings; some caregivers are even forced to go into debt. Besides being a strain on the individual family, these expensive treatments also impose a burden on a country's limited healthcare resources.

We also live in an aging society where healthcare demands always exceed its supply; the aged sick and the terminally ill do present a heavy burden. So euthanasia proponents advocate those with the least hope of recovery should be relieved – “pull the plug and save the buck.”

Euthanasia for the purpose of easing the financial strain is based on the premise that we can put a price tag on a man's life. The base assumption is that we help the sick only if we can afford it. This is a materialistic approach to life. Can a decision that would terminate a life be based purely on dollars and cents?

Our Lord Jesus asks, “*For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*” (Matthew 16:26).

Can a person's life be decided on pure economics? In His parable on the lost sheep, our Lord Jesus asks, “*What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them,*

doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?” (Luke 15:4).

To continue with the analogy, pure economics dictates that the shepherd should not jeopardise the well being and safety of the ninety and nine to go looking for the one lost sheep. He should be thinking about the 99 sheep. His time and resources would be better spent on them than on the one lost sheep.

But the shepherd went looking for that one sheep. *“And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing...when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost” (Luke 15:5-6).* There is no price tag huge enough that we can put on a soul.

The policy-makers can lay down objective, cold and hard policies on matters of life and death. But such policies have an impact on real persons. The love that the shepherd has for that one lost sheep may not be appreciated by others until the situation arises when they become that lost sheep.

Euthanasia is a means to just the ends, which is to relieve suffering. This is the fundamental philosophical difference between the secular humanistic worldview and the biblical worldview. The secular humanistic worldview says that man is a product of chance and evolution and is therefore accountable to no one but himself. The Christian worldview states man is created by God and therefore is accountable to Him.

To the secular humanist, he is – in the words of William Ernest Henley’s poem, *Invictus* – “I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul.” To the Christian, God is sovereign. God is the one who determines life (Deut 32:39; Job 1:21; Ps. 31:5; Acts 17:28).

The secular humanist, his main concern is the quality of life, and that is why all human suffering is bad and must be avoided at all costs, even the cost of one’s life. Thus, the terminally ill patient must be euthanised. To the Christian, because life is given and sustained by God, we believe in the sanctity of life; in other words, all life (regardless of quality and productivity) is sacred and must be preserved.

The secular humanist sees no point in suffering. The Christian sees suffering as life lessons. James says, *“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing” (James 1:2-4).* The apostle Paul told the Christians at Rome that *“we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope” (Rom 5:3-4).*

Far from being an evil to be avoided at all costs, suffering can be an opportunity of refining and character building (Job 23:10). It is also proof of a faithful God, whose “*compassions fail not*” (Lam 3:22).

Conclusion

When we make decisions on matters of life and death based on convenience or economic expedience for the living, we are on a downward slide in the erosion of the biblical principle of the sanctity for human life. When unborn babies are aborted because they pose an inconvenience or an extra financial burden to the adults who brought about the life, then we have treated the God-given life merely as an expendable commodity. Euthanasia is yet another rung lower in this downward slide.

In Chinese folklore, there is a story of a man who told his son one day to prepare a blanket for the grandfather. The son asked his father, “What’s the reason for the blanket for Grandpa?”

“Well, son, you see, Grandpa is old and very sick, and he can’t do much anymore. He is of not much use. So I am sending him to the mountains so that he can spend his last days. The blanket will see him through the cold nights.”

The son looked at father, and said, “Father, can I borrow your scissors?”

“What use do you have for a pair of scissors?” the father asked.

The young son replied, “I thought that I would cut the blanket into two pieces. I will give Grandpa one half, and the other half, I will keep for you when you are old and sick and when you can’t do much anymore.”

The story ended well because the father repented of his foolish cruelty. But think of another alternative ending where the young son kept half of the blanket for his father. And when the time came for him to send his father into the mountains, his own son cut that half into two pieces, and then, that cruelty is further compounded.

The Apostle Paul in comparing the church to the body says, “*Those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked*” (1 Cor 12:22-24). By way of application, the moral strength of a society is not measured by what we can do for the healthy, strong and productive. Rather the true strength of a society/nation/church is measured by how we treat the sickest, weakest and the most infirmed.

May the Holy Spirit grant us the compassion of our Lord.

15 Feb 09
Passive Euthanasia

Earlier in the week, the newspaper reported that the family of an Italian woman who has been in a coma for 17 years said that they wanted her to die. The father of the girl had won a court order to stop feeding her intravenously.

This case is similar to Terry Schiavo in the United States, where her estranged husband won the court legal to have the feeding tubes of her removed over the protests of her own parents.

These two instances bring to the fore the more difficult question of making the life and death decision on behalf of a loved one. Euthanasia is to bring about death by an active means. Usually, it is the application of a lethal dose. Dr Jack Kevorkian, nicknamed “Dr Death” was served eight years of a 15-year sentence for helping terminally ill patients end their lives.

Active euthanasia clearly is wrong because it goes against the biblical principle of the sanctity of life. Passive euthanasia, which allows death to happen without active intervention is slightly more complicated. The morality of passive euthanasia depends on circumstances. Christian ethicists differentiate between unnatural passive euthanasia and natural passive euthanasia.

Unnatural Passive Euthanasia

Unnatural passive euthanasia is allowing someone to die by deliberately withholding ordinary means of sustaining life. These would include depriving the patient of air, water, food, or in the case of Terry, the removal of the feeding tubes and thus causing her to starve to death. In Terry Schiavo’s case, she died of dehydration two weeks after her life support was removed.

Those who argue for unnatural passive euthanasia make the point that it would have been better for the patient to die. But the means to achieve that end is far from ethical. Society at large would find morally reprehensible mothers who abandoned their helpless babies without proper food and care.

Unnatural passive euthanasia like active euthanasia goes against the biblical principle of sanctity of life. It is wrong to kill a life whether it is by plunging a knife into a man’s heart or by withholding of breath or water or food that is necessary to sustain life. The taking of life – in patient assisted suicide – also goes against the biblical principle of God’s sovereignty. The act is unnatural because God tells us that “for no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it” (Ephesians 5:29).

Natural Passive Euthanasia

Natural passive euthanasia is the withholding of extraordinary means (usually in the form of intrusive medical treatment) that only prolongs the life but does not restore the health of the patient. While it is wrong to take a life, it is not always wrong to allow a person to die. We had earlier noted that allowing death by withholding of the ordinary means of life is cruel and should be forbidden. But the question is then asked, "Is it morally right to withhold extraordinary means to allow the person to die naturally?"

Ethicists debate over what constitutes extraordinary means. Some argue that intravenous feeding is unnatural because that is not how man naturally gets nourishment. But others argue that it is natural because food is the natural means of sustaining life. Death by starvation and dehydration would constitute cruelty.

What about medical treatment? Is there ever right to refuse medical treatment? Here, the difference must be made between healing and merely sustaining. Medical treatment is part of healing. A man's refusal to receive medical treatment would be deemed as suicide. However, there are extraordinary medical procedures that do not heal but merely delays death. And I have known of Christians who know that they are terminally ill and refuse medical treatment. While it may be desirable and wise for them to accept the treatment, it is certainly not morally necessary for them to do so.

Concluding thoughts

Active euthanasia is clearly wrong. Passive euthanasia by withholding the ordinary means of sustaining life is also wrong. And while passive euthanasia by withholding of extraordinary means of sustaining life may be acceptable, such a decision is by no means an easy one.

The advancement in medical science has complicated the decision. One Christian ethicist writes, "Usually the most important decision is the one made to a person on a life-sustaining machine. Sometime this is unnecessary, and it creates a later ethical dilemma concerning when the machine should be disconnected. Life has become so mechanized that technology has created its own new morality. The scientific advances that have made the extension of life possible have also made the process of dying longer; technology is a mixed blessing. Hence, an important moral decision should be made at a very early stage concerning whether it is necessary to put someone on life-support machine or not."

The decision to take off life support (and other extraordinary means of sustaining life) should not be based on economics; neither should it be based on the convenience of the care-givers. Such a decision should not be based on the perceived quality of life.

To take a person off life support, the disease must be irreversible. No one should be allowed to die if present medical science is able to save the person's life. The patient must have the final say over the decision to end all life support. If he is not conscious, that is where the patient's desire in the living will or advanced medical treatment should

be respected. If the patient is unconscious and has not left any instructions, then those who are responsible for him have to make the decision.

But who should make the decision? Certainly, such a decision should not be left to one person alone. “For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counsellors there is safety” (Proverbs 24:6). Since there are legal, social, spiritual, moral ramifications to the decision, it ought to be a collective decision of family members, doctors, and pastor. I also believe that such a decision should be unanimous. A majority decision in such a case would lead to more recriminations in the future.

Above all, such a decision must be preceded by much prayer. “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (James 1:5). God is sovereign. It is His will to give and to take life. And it is in His will that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28), and part of God’s will includes death. “And as it is appointed [by God. i.e. His will] unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27).

The terminally ill unbeliever whose life is sustained by machines desires to die because he has no so-called quality of life. For him, it is not just a matter of turning off the switch and dies, but the judgement he will face when he meets God.

The concern for the Christian is how we live, how to make everyday of our lives count for God so that we are always prepared to meet our God (Amos 4:12).

22 Feb 09

As you walk around the church, you may have noticed posters announcing the Bible Camp for 2009. I know that there are yet four months before our Annual Church Camp. However, it is time for you to pray and plan to attend. And I trust that you will seriously pray and consider taking time off to be at the Camp. The Bible Camp is a time where we can be refreshed physically and spiritually.

The current world events may have thrown some of us off balance, and I understand that there may be real financial concerns. Even as the people in the world are urged to take this lull time to be retrained and to be ready for the future when the economy improves, so I see the Bible Camp as time to help us refocus our lives, to redirect our priorities for the glory of God. So pray, and prepare and plan to attend the Camp.

God willing, over the week (23-28 February), I will be in Sri Lanka to minister at the Calvary Reformed Presbyterian Chapel (CRPC). A few weeks ago, they had their election. Elder Vijayenthiran, Deacons Thayanath and Devaparan were elected. Deacon Devaparan has just returned from Scotland, where he studied for the ministry. He will be a helpful addition to the Chapel. On 22 March 2009, Elder Vijayenthiran will be ordained as a minister of the Gospel. Rev James Chan will be leading a team up to Colombo for the occasion. If you are interested in joining him, please contact Dn Jeffrey Soh by 6 March. Please pray for the brethren at CRPC that God will lead and bless their ministry.

The Names of God

Over the next few months, we will be considering in these pages the different names of God. William Shakespeare wrote in *Romeo and Juliet* these words: "What's in a name? that which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet."

Do names then, as suggested by Shakespeare, not really matter? It may be so with man, but as far as God is concerned, every one of His Names reveals something about Himself. In the Holy Scriptures, God is known by several names. In the Authorised Version, when it comes to God, there is even a deliberate differentiation even between "LORD" and "Lord."

In Genesis 4:26, we have the first reference in the Holy Scriptures where God's people began to "*call upon the name of the LORD.*" This does not mean that before Enos, there was no one who called upon the name of the LORD. Rather, as the KJV translators pointed out in the margin notes, it was from the time of Enos that men began to call themselves by the name of the Lord. The implication is that the family of Adam had grown to be so large and diverse that there were some of Adam's descendents who had stopped worshipping the LORD.

We see here also that the Name of God is closely related to the proper worship of Him. We cannot worship God rightly if we do not address Him rightly. The Third Commandment – "*Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the*

LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain” (Exodus 20:7) – warns believers of using the Name of God in false worship.

The Name of God is also intimately related to His covenant relationship with Israel. To Abram, God said, *“Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward”*(Genesis 15:1). In Genesis 15:7, God told Abram *“I am the LORD [Yahweh]”* (Genesis 15:7). Later, God said to Abram, *“I am the Almighty God [El Shadday]; walk before Me, and be thou perfect”* (Genesis 17:1). It appears that as Abraham walked with God, God revealed more and more of Himself through His Names.

To the children of Israel – Abraham’s descendents – that covenant relationship continues with God identifying Himself as *“I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”* (Exodus 3:6).

God spoke these words to Moses, who was then tending sheep for his father-in-law in the land of Midian. God identified Himself by showing the relationship that He had with the forebears of Moses. And it was here – on Mount Horeb – that God commissioned Moses to go to Egypt and deliver the people out of slavery. The first of Moses’ many excuses was that he did not know the name of God. *“Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?”* (Exod 3:13). God obliged and said unto Moses, *“I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you”* (Exod 3:14).

The English transliteration of “I AM THAT I AM” is rendered Jehovah or Yahweh. It is translated as LORD (in upper case) in the Authorised Version. A cursory reading of “LORD” does not convey very much concerning the supremacy and sovereignty of the omnipotent and omniscient Creator of the universe. The other world languages offer very little insight as well. In the Indonesian Bible, “LORD” is translated “Tuhan” and God is rendered “Allah.” In Mandarin, “LORD” is merely transcribed as 耶和華, and God is translated as 神 or 上帝 (literally, Above Emperor).

The difficulty of all human languages to describe God in one name is indicative of His magnificence and uniqueness. Thus the Bible reveals God in a number of ways and identifies Him by several names, each of which reveals a particular aspect and highlights a specific character of His person.

Elohim: The Root

To begin let us return to the very first mention of God in the Bible. The opening statement of the Holy Scripture reveals the name of God. *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth”* (Gen 1:1). The word “God” is translated from the word “*Elohim*.” While *elohim* is not the most popular word for God, it appears over 2,200 times in the Bible. The word is derived from the root “*El*” which is translated God over 200 times in the Bible. “*El*” means mighty, or strong. It is used to describe the power of God.

For example, “*God [El] brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn*” (Num 23:22).

In Deuteronomy, Jehovah is described as the “*God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God [El], a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward*” (Deut 10:17). It is also the name that is assigned to the Messiah, “*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given . . . and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God [El], The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace*” (Isa 9:6).

Thus from *El*, we may derive that *Elohim* is used to express the creative and sovereign power of God. It was the *Elohim* who spoke the universe into existence. It was the words of the *Elohim* that the world was framed (11:3). It is therefore, appropriate, that God should reveal Himself first as *Elohim* to bring light out of darkness, order out of chaos, meaning out of emptiness, and life in His own image.

There is another view which says that *Elohim* is derived from *Alah*, which means to make an oath. After the flood, it was *Elohim* who made a covenant with Noah – “*I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh . . . the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God [Elohim] and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth*” (Gen 9:15-16).

To the children of Israel, the LORD promised to keep His covenant, and it is repeated time and time again that “*this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God [Elohim], and they shall be my people*” (Jer 31:33).

Elohim: The Plural Form

Another interesting note about the name *Elohim* is that the name is in the plural form. It has the Hebrew ending for masculine plural nouns. It is pointed out that when *Elohim* is used, it refers to the Holy Trinity. “*God [Elohim] said, Let Us [plural pronoun] make man in Our image, after Our likeness*” (Gen 1:26). Comparing Scripture with Scripture, we know that our Lord Jesus, God the Son also created the universe (John 1:3; Col 1:16), and so was God the Holy Spirit (Gen 1:2). This means that the Holy Spirit and Christ are included in *Elohim*.

It is also significant that although the plural form of the noun is used, sometimes, its accompanying adjectives, pronouns and verbs are in the singular. Example, “*In the beginning God [Elohim] created [singular verb] the heaven and the earth*” (Gen 1:1). In Isaiah, God pronounced, “*I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God [Elohim] beside Me [singular pronoun]*” (Isa 45:5). As surely as *Elohim* is a plurality, it is also a unity.

Without a doubt, the use of *Elohim* is in line with the great doctrine of the Triune Godhead. There is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, and yet the Holy Three are one in power, sovereignty and glory.

That begs the question – so what? We must never fall into the error of thinking that God reveals Himself merely to impress us with His amazing attributes and power. The “so what” of *Elohim* is that God’s revelation carries with it a responsibility on our part. God reveals, and we have to respond. He says, “*Obey my voice, and I will be your God [Elohim], and ye shall be my people*” (Jer 7:23). And I trust that we may respond as David did, “*I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God [Elohim]; in him will I trust*” (Psalm 91:2).

01 Mar 09

This year's Family Bible Camp promises great things. The Reverend Ian Goligher, Pastor of Cloverdale Free Presbyterian in Canada will be returning as our speaker. Pastor Goligher is no stranger to us. He has ministered to us for several years in the past at our Family Bible Camp and to great effect. We have seen the Lord's blessings upon us through the ministry of Pastor Goligher. This time, he will also be accompanied by his wife, Beulah. Pastor Goligher will be speaking on the theme – Our All Worthy Saviour.

For the Mandarin-speaking congregation, the Camp Speaker will be the Reverend Lee, and he too has ministered to our Mandarin brethren in previous Bible camps.

The Camp Committee under Dn Su Chun Wei has worked very hard to secure a good place for our annual retreat. The rest is left to you. There may be some of you who, because of the economic downturn, have already decided that you are not going to Camp this year. Let me encourage you with these words from Malachi, "*Prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it*" (Malachi 3:10).

GOD'S NAMES: JEHOVAH

The most common name for God is *Jehovah*. The King James Version translated the word as "LORD" in capital letters to distinguish it from *Adonai*, which is also translated "Lord" but in lower case. *Jehovah* is the most commonly used name for God. It appears over 6,000 times in the Bible.

Jehovah first appeared as the LORD God (*Jehovah-Elohim*) when the world was being made. After the creation account (Genesis 2 and 3), *Jehovah* and *Elohim* are sometimes used separately; at other times, they are used together. This apparently haphazard references to God led some liberal scholars to postulate the theory that the Book of Genesis was the work of two men: one to whom God appeared as *Elohim*, and the second to whom God appeared as *Jehovah*. This teaching denies the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. The fact is that these liberal scholars approach the Bible as they would any other piece of literature and they only see the literary significance for the use of different names of God. But it is easier to see the spiritual significance and a divine purpose in the use of these different names.

Jehovah and Israel

The name *Jehovah*, the Tetragrammaton (YHWH) of the Greeks, refers to God as the self-existent One, who in Himself possesses essential life and eternal existence. *Jehovah* is the also most sacred of all names for God. Tradition has it that the early Jews held the name so sacred that it was never pronounced except by the high priest on the great Day of Atonement, when he entered into the most holy place.

It was a name that the Pharisees guarded zealously. When our Lord Jesus told them “*Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad*” (John 8:56), the Pharisees were perplexed because they knew Jesus to be no older than fifty years old. Then our Lord said, “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am*” (John 8:58). This statement infuriated the Jews that they understood that Jesus was claiming to be *Jehovah*.

Moses Maimonides, a Jewish scholar in the 12th century said, “All the name of God which occur in Scriptures are derived from His works except one, and that is *Jehovah*; and this is called the plain name, because it teaches plainly and unequivocally of the substance of God.”

To the Jews, *Jehovah* is the superlative name for God. Another Jewish scholar wrote, “In the name *Jehovah* the personality of the Supreme is distinctly expressed. It is everywhere a proper name denoting the person of God and Him only...The Hebrew may say the *Elohim*, the true God in opposition to all false gods, but he never says the *Jehovah*, for *Jehovah* is the name of the true God only...He speaks of the God (*Elohim*) of Israel but never the *Jehovah* of Israel, for there is no other *Jehovah*. He speaks of the living God, but never of the living *Jehovah*, for he cannot conceive of *Jehovah* as other than living.”

The Significance of Jehovah

It must be pointed out that the significance of the name *Jehovah* was not fully revealed to the patriarchs although they used the name frequently. When God provided a ram for Abraham’s sacrifice in the place of Isaac, Abraham called the place Jehovah-jireh (Gen 22:14). However, God later told Moses, “*I am the LORD (Jehovah): And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them*” (Exod 6:2-3).

It was not until the time of Moses that the significance of the name *Jehovah* was revealed. Moses asked God, “*Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God (Elohim) of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?*” (Exod 3:13).

God told Moses, “*I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations*” (Exod 3:14-15).

There are several things to note from God’s answer. First, when God revealed Himself to the people, He used the name *Jehovah* – “*I AM hath sent me unto you.*” Second, the name *Jehovah* is used in connection with God’s covenant with the people of Israel. *Jehovah* is the unchanging, ever faithful God who keeps His promises. He is the

“LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”

In the name *Elohim*, we see the power and sovereignty of God. In the name, *Jehovah*, we see the spiritual and divine attributes of a covenant-keeping God. *Jehovah* is especially the God of revelation to Israel. The pagan nations all had their gods (*elohim*), but only the faithful in Israel would cry out, *“O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou art our God”* (2 Chron 14:11).

To the redeemed, the name of the LORD (*Jehovah*) is the basis for our salvation. *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”* (Rom 10:13). And as He was faithful in His covenant to the people of Israel, He is faithful to us, and we can be *“confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ”* (Phil 1:6).

08 Mar 09

Thank you for praying for Deacon Jeffrey Soh and me for our mission trip to Sri Lanka. We were there to deal with some leadership issues concerning the Calvary Reformed Presbytery Chapel. Please continue to pray for our Sri Lankan brethren. Please also pray for the Calvary Mission Fellowship under the direction of Eld Foong KY as we help the mission stations.

Praise God also for the safe return and the fruitful ministry of Rev James Chan and Bro. Yap Chuan Yu from their month-long mission trip to North Thailand.

I am greatly encouraged when members of the church express an interest and take the initiative to go on mission trips. Let me encourage you to join one of many mission trips organized by our church. There is nothing that will do more to open your eyes to the needs of the people than to go on a missions trip. Please remember our brethren in these up coming mission trips.

- 14-21 March: Dn Peter Goh will be leaving for Vietnam with a team to visit Phan and his wife, Hoa.
- 21-23 March: Rev James Chan, Deacons Peter Goh, Jeffrey Soh, Dr Liang MH and Rev Eric Kwan (Zion BPC) will be going to Sri Lanka for the ordination of Eld Vijayenthiran. After that, Deacons Peter and Jeffrey will also visit the mission station at Trincomalee, an eight-hour car ride on the north-eastern coast of Sri Lanka.
- 11-17 March: Eld Mak will also be leading a team from the Chinese Congregation to Hui Hai, North Thailand.
- 24 March-1 April: Preacher Wu will also be leading another team to Maepen, North Thailand.
- 13-20 April: I will be speaking at the Bible Camp in Sri Lanka.

While we have overseas missions, we must not forget our local outreaches. On 11 and 12 March, there will be a Junior Worship Teacher's Training Seminar conducted right here in our church. If you are a JW teacher or an AWANA leader, or if you want to be involved in the children's ministry, please come and attend these seminars.

Last week, you have seen the launch of the Bible Camp 2009. As the Camp Master, Dn Su Chun Wei had said, make a decision to go, and if you are willing and determined, please do not allow the cost of the camp to be a deterrent. Pray and prepare to go to Camp [Correction: the speaker for the Mandarin camp is Rev Tang Chee Keong].

GOD'S NAMES: JEHOVAH (PART 2)

Jehovah is the name that distinguishes God as the God who made the covenant with Israel – *“Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God [Jehovah-Elohim] of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations”* (Exod 3:15).

In *Elohim*, we see God as the all-powerful Creator. In the general account of the creation of the universe, the Bible uses *Elohim* to describe the Creator. However, in the specific account of the creation of man, the name LORD God (*Jehovah-Elohim*) is used (Gen 2:4ff) – *“And the LORD God [Jehovah-Elohim] formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”* (Gen 2:7). This is indicative of the special relationship that God has with the one whom He has made in His own image; it was a relationship that distinguishes man from the rest of creation.

To man, the LORD God (*Jehovah-Elohim*) is not just the giver of life; but He is also the one who has endowed man with the capacity to enjoy and worship Him. It is a covenant relationship in which the creature receives and is able to respond to God's goodness and love. Hence, it is interesting to note that when the serpent tempted Eve, it used God (*Elohim*) and not LORD God (*Jehovah-Elohim*), and when Eve replied, she also used the former name and not the latter (Gen 3:1-3). Could it be that in using “God” (*Elohim*), Eve chose to disregard the covenant relationship that she had with the LORD God?

Jehovah – the God of Righteousness and Holiness

The Bible says that we are *“created in righteousness and true holiness”* (Eph 4:24). Righteousness and holiness are the key attributes of Jehovah. In the Old Testament, the LORD God wanted to be known above all else as the God of holiness – *“Be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God”* (Lev 20:7).

As such, the Jews regarded *Jehovah* to be so sacred that they would not pronounce it. This fear was based on Leviticus 24:16, in which the person who blasphemed the name of the LORD was to be put to death. So instead of pronouncing the name, the Talmud suggested that Jehovah be substituted with “*Adonai*” or “*Ha-Shem*,” which literally means, “the Name.”

It is this righteousness of the LORD against whom men sin. And it is this holiness of the LORD that condemns men's unrighteousness and pronounces judgement.

When Adam sinned, it was the LORD God that judged him, and expelled him from Eden – *“Therefore the LORD God [Jehovah-Elohim] sent him forth from the garden of Eden...so He drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the garden of*

Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.” (Gen 3:23-24).

It was also the LORD God that destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah – *“The LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven” (Gen 19:24).*

Jehovah – The God of Love and Mercy

The prophet Habakkuk said that the LORD is of *“purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity” (Hab 1:13a)*. It is no wonder that when he saw a vision of the glorious God, Isaiah cried out in despair, *“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).*

But Jehovah is also the God of love and mercy. In Jeremiah 31, we read, *“The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee” (Jer 31:3).*

When David pleaded for mercy, he beseeched in the name of *Jehovah* – *“O LORD, rebuke me not in Thine anger, neither chasten me in Thy hot displeasure. Have mercy upon me, O LORD.” (Ps 6:1-2).*

Jehovah – He Judges and He Redeems

So while Jehovah (the God of righteousness and holiness) condemns, Jehovah (the God of love and mercy) redeems. The LORD against whom man sins, is the LORD who now seeks to restore and redeem. When Adam and Eve hid from His holy presence, it was the LORD who came to them – *“the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?” (Gen 3:9).*

It was the LORD who taught how sinful men may approach Him. It is therefore not mere coincidence that in the first seven chapters of *Leviticus*, which are God’s instructions on how the people were to approach the Almighty through the various kinds of sacrifices and offerings, the “LORD” (Jehovah) is used almost exclusively, some 78 times; whereas “God” (Elohim) is used only twice.

No man could come to the LORD without He first extending His arms. Moses in recounting his experience with God wrote, *“the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin” (Exod 34:5-7).* And Moses quickly bowed his head to the ground in worship.

And so should we when we come into the presence of the LORD. Dear reader, call upon Him, rejoice in Him, and as the Psalmist says, “Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of Thy countenance. In Thy Name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted” (Ps 89:15-16). May the LORD help us to know Him, walk in His light, and rejoice in His holy Name.

15 Mar 09

The Mandarin Congregation is organizing a Gospel Rally on 4 April (Saturday). Please invite your Mandarin speaking friends and loved ones to come for this special meeting.

Names of God: *El-Shaddai*

This name of God, *El Shaddai*, was first revealed to Abram – “*And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God [El Shaddai]; walk before Me, and be thou perfect. And I will make My covenant between Me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.*” (Gen 17:1-2).

The aging Abram had believed God’s promise – “*And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.*” (Gen 12:2-3). This was a promise made to Abram over twenty years ago, when he was 75 years old.

Over the years Abram “*believed in the LORD; and He counted it to him for righteousness*” (Gen 15:6). However, as the years passed and Abram’s body weakened, as did Sarai’s, Abram took the counsel of his wife to marry her handmaid, Hagar. From this expedient union came Ishmael. But Ishmael was not the seed that God promised Abram (see Gen 17:20-21).

Abram was 86 years old when Ishmael was born (Gen 16:16). It would be another thirteen years before God came to Abram. It was on this occasion that God revealed Himself as the Almighty God (*El Shaddai*).

Meaning of *El Shaddai*

In our study on the names of God, we noted that *El* (*Elohim* in plural) describes God’s sovereign and creative power. It is the name that God used in the creation of the universe. In the psalms, we read – “*Thou art the God [El] that doest wonders: thou hast declared thy strength among the people.*” (Psalm 77:14). “*The God [El] of Israel is He that giveth strength and power unto His people.*” (Psalm 68:35). In his prayer, Moses asked, “*O Lord GOD, Thou hast begun to shew Thy servant Thy greatness, and Thy mighty hand: for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to Thy works, and according to Thy might?*” (Deut 3:24).

By the name *El*, we know God as the One who has the power to do wondrous works. So it seems that the name Almighty-God (*El Shaddai*) seems superfluous. By *El*, we know God as omnipotent; what then is the purpose of further qualifying the all-powerful God as the Almighty God? There are two possible views.

First, some Bible scholars believe that *shaddai* comes from the root word meaning powerful, especially one who has the power to change the laws of nature. Certainly this is true in the case of Abram, when the Almighty God appeared to him when he was 99 years old, when his body was dead. Sarai was also beyond the age of child-bearing. However, the Almighty God (*El Shaddai*) was able to change the laws of nature, and bring life into the bodies of Abram and Sarai.

Second, there are also scholars who believe that *shaddai* is derived from the word “breast” (*shad*), and representing *shaddai* as one who nourishes, satisfies, and blesses. *El Shaddai* is then seen as the Almighty God who blesses His people. Just before his death, Jacob blessed his children. Concerning Joseph, he said, “*Joseph is a fruitful bough...his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:) Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty [Shaddai], who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts [shad], and of the womb*” (Gen 49:22-25). The Almighty God (*El Shaddai*) was the one from whom the blessings flowed.

Thus by *El Shaddai*, God is known as the one who has the power to send forth the blessings. Needless to say, the Almighty God is the one who has the power to overcome any and all hindrances to carry out His purposes and plans.

Significance of *El Shaddai*

El Shaddai is the Almighty God. It took almost 25 years before God fulfilled His promise to Abram, and he took matters into his own hands. Abraham thought he was helping God when he married Hagar for the purpose of producing a son. Later, when God appeared to Abraham, he thought that Ishmael would be his seed. But the Almighty God told Abraham that his seed must come from Sarah (Gen 17:19).

Abraham and Sarah must first realize their own impotence before the Almighty God could demonstrate to them His power and sufficiency. When they acted upon expediency, they failed. The lesson for us is this: with regard to our salvation, we must recognize that God’s saving grace cannot be intermingled with our own efforts. Salvation is “*the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast*” (Eph 2:8-9). With regard to our service for God, we must recognize that we cannot do God’s will our way. Many a Christian have tried to run ahead of God, and found their efforts end in futility and failure.

Connected with the might of *El Shaddai* is His demand for whole-hearted obedience. It is interesting to note that when God introduced Himself as the Almighty God (*El Shaddai*), He also commanded Abraham to “*walk before Me, and be thou perfect*” (Gen 17:1). The word “perfect” simply means “complete” or “whole-hearted.” The lesson here is that the Almighty God demands of us — and deservedly so — our whole-hearted devotion.

El Shaddai is the Almighty God of blessing. When Isaac blessed Jacob, he said, “*God Almighty [El Shaddai] bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people*” (Gen 28:3). When Abraham’s covenant was passed on his grandchildren, God revealed to Jacob, “*I am God Almighty [El Shaddai]: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins*” (Gen 35:11). When Jacob blessed his beloved son, Joseph, the same name of God was invoked (Gen 49:25).

El Shaddai is the Almighty God of judgement. When Naomi was left without husband and sons, she said “*the Almighty [El Shaddai] hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?*” (Ruth 1:20-21). In the Book of Revelation, the Almighty God is directly linked to the pouring out of judgements — “*And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments*” (Rev 16:7, 14). In Revelation 19:15, we read of the “*fierceness and wrath of Almighty God*” (Rev 19:15).

Conclusion

Here is something for you to ponder. The God of blessing is also the God of judgement. There is no contradiction. Revelation 21:22 puts the two divine aspects together — “*And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it*” (Rev 21:22). The Almighty God placed His judgement on the sins of the world upon the Lamb, so that sinners who take cover in His blood would receive the blessings of salvation and escape the judgement of the Almighty God. Judgement or blessing? Dearly beloved, which will it be for you?

22 Mar 09

Calvary BP Church has been supporting the mission work in Sri Lanka since 2000. The work at the Calvary Reformed Presbyterian Chapel (CRPC) was first started by Dr Paul Hoole. Over the years, by the grace of God, the work has grown. One of the fruits of the ministry is Vijayenthiran, a young man who gave up a job in a bank to go into the full-time ministry.

Vijayenthiran was first elected elder of CRPC in 2005, and he was re-elected in January 2009. He is a graduate of the Far Eastern Bible College. Today (22 March 2009) the Reverend James Chan and the Reverend Eric Kwan of Zion BPC are in Colombo to ordain Eld Vijayenthiran as a minister of the Gospel. Dn Jeffrey Soh and Dn Peter Goh will be representing the Session and congregation of Calvary BPC. We rejoice with session and members of CRPC on this joyous occasion. And we pray that God will continue to raise God-fearing men for the Gospel work in Sri Lanka.

God's Names: Adonai

In our study on the names of God, we have so far looked at names that describe the nature and person of God. In *Elohim*, we see God as the all powerful Creator. In *Jehovah*, we see Him as the self-existent, holy, and covenant-making God. In El-Shaddai, we see God as the One who is able to bless. When a people called upon *Elohim*, or *Jehovah*, or *El Shaddai* as their God, there are certain expectations. There is an implied relationship between God and His people. The people of *Elohim* must recognize that they are creatures. The people of *Jehovah* must be holy because He is holy. The people of *El Shaddai* must recognize that all blessings come from God.

Observations about Adonai

The name of God that describes a direct and definite relationship between Him and the people who bear His name is *Adonai*. There are several observations that we can make of the name.

Adonai is translated as “Lord” (small letters, whereas *Jehovah* is translated as LORD) in our English Bibles. *Adonai* occurs over 400 times in the Old Testament, though it must be pointed out that it is not always translated as “Lord.” The title first appears in Genesis 15:2 – “*And Abram said, Lord [Adonai] GOD [Jehovah], what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?*” (Genesis 15:2)

Adonai is also translated as “master” and “sir,” and it is used to address men. Sarah used it to address Abraham, her husband – “*Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord [adon] being old also?*” (Gen 18:12). Eliezer used the title to address Abraham, his master – “*And [Eliezer] said, O LORD God of my master [adon] Abraham, I pray thee, send me good*

speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master [adon] Abraham” (Gen 24:12). It was the title that was used to address the Pharaoh – “And it came to pass after these things, that the butler of the king of Egypt and his baker had offended their lord [adon] the king of Egypt” (Gen 40:1).

There is, however, a noticeable difference when the title is in reference to God and when it is used to address men. When used of men, it is always in the singular [*adon*]. When it is used in reference to God, it always appears in the plural form [*Adonai*]. Some scholars believe that the plural *Adonai*, like the plural *Elohim*, reflects the concept of the Triune God.

The only time the singular form [*Adon*] is used to refer to God is when it identifies one specific member of the Holy Trinity. Example: “*The LORD [Jehovah] said unto my Lord [Adon], Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool*” (Psalm 110:1). From Matthew 22:41-45 and Acts 2:34-35, we know that the “Lord” [*Adon*] is Christ Jesus, the second Person of the Trinity.

Meaning of *Adonai*

Adonai signifies ownership. The use of the word in the Old Testament reveals the relationship between God and His people. It also reveals His expectations of them. *Adonai* is used for the first time by Abram to address the LORD – “*Lord GOD [Adonai Jehovah], what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?*” (Gen 15:2).

The context in *Adonai* provides insight into the meaning and significance of the name. Abram had rescued Lot and retrieved his possessions as well as those that belonged to the king of Sodom. Abram turned down the reward from the king of Sodom because Abram did not want his success to be attributed to a pagan king (Gen 14:21-23).

After these things, The LORD came to Abram in a vision and said, “*Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward*” (Gen 15:1), and Abram addressed the LORD as “*Adonai*.” Abram knew the meaning of *Adonai*. He was himself a master of more than 300 slaves (Gen 14:14). Hence, in addressing the LORD as *Adonai*, Abram was acknowledging God had complete ownership of everything that he had. In other words, The LORD was the Master, and Abram was His slave.

Slavery is frowned upon today, but in the Old Testament, slaves were deemed as closer to the master than the hired servant. According to OT law, hired servants could not partake in the Passover feast, but slaves could (Exod 12:44-45; Lev 22:10-11). Slaves also enjoyed a special privilege not afforded to hired servants. This is seen in the relationship between Eliezer and Abraham, the slave could be made the heir of his master’s household. When the LORD promised Abram that He would be his shield and great reward (Gen 15:1), Abram was assured of God’s protection and provision (Gen 15:1). Similarly, when a person confesses the LORD as Master, he too comes under the shadow of His wings.

Dear reader, the Psalmist puts it well when he says, “*Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O Thou that dwellest in the heavens. Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that He have mercy upon us*” (Psalm 123:1-2). We are but servants, and that is not a bad prospect when we consider our Master, the Almighty God, who is our shield and exceeding great reward.

29 Mar 09

I want to thank all who have prayed for my recent eye problem. My family and I do appreciate very much your concerns. Praise God that my eye is in the mend. Last Lord's Day, Elder Vijayenthiran was ordained to be a minister of the Gospel in Calvary Reformed Presbyterian Chapel (CRPC). We rejoice with the Session and members of CRPC on this joyous occasion. Continue to pray for the Rev. Vijayenthiran as he labours and leads the work of the chapel.

Last Lord's Day, the Calvary String and Wind Ensemble (CSWE) made its debut at the English Worship Service. We will call it the CSWE until someone comes up with a better name. The idea of an ensemble was conceived late last year, but the CSWE was formed sometime in February. The CSWE has three objectives. First, it is to provide an opportunity for members who are endowed with musical talents to serve God. Second, it is to enhance our worship services by introducing the wind and string instruments. Third, and most important of all, it is to glorify God (1 Cor 10:31). Please pray for the members of CSWE under the leadership of Bro. Daniel Wu (he is the one who plays the clarinet). God willing, the CSWE will provide the music on the Gospel Sundays (fourth Sunday of every month).

Praise God that *Daily Manna* (April-June 2009) is out. We thank God that the *Daily Manna* is now being used by many churches both locally and overseas. To meet the demand, we have increased our print run for this quarter. What you may not know is that behind the *Daily Manna*, there is a team of writers, proof-readers, and designers who worked very hard for this quarterly publication. And we thank God for the many encouraging feedback from *Daily Manna* readers. Please take as many as you can use, and also introduce the *Daily Manna* to your friends. The *Daily Manna* is also being translated into Thai and distributed in Thailand.

A little reminder on the Bible Camp 2009 – please sign up early. The Camp Committee has worked very hard to organize the Bible camp. The camp fees, while higher than previous years, already represent a 30% subsidy. Most churches I know do not provide any subsidy, and if there is, not quite as high. The Session has set the 30% subsidy and not higher so that we can better help those members who really want to go for the camp and yet could not afford. So the idea is this – 30% subsidy for all campers, but there will be targeted subsidies for those with special needs.

God's Names: Adonai (II)

By the name *Adonai*, there is not an implied but a direct and definite relationship between God and the people. *Adonai* means master, and it signifies ownership. As the Master, God promises protection and provision. He also demands obedience. In return, while men enjoy the blessings of God, we are expected to obey Him and do His will. By calling God our Master, we are saying that we belong to His possession, and that we are completely in His submission.

Use of *Adonai* in the Old Testament

When *Adonai* is used, God's ownership is emphasized. Hence, *Adonai* is the name that is often used when the LORD called a person into His ministry. Following are several examples. Moses was called by God to deliver the children of Israel from Egypt. Moses gave several excuses for turning down God's calling: He was a nobody. He did not know the name of God. The people would not believe him. Finally, Moses said, "*O my Lord [Adonai], I am not eloquent*" (Exod 4:10).

When these words were spoken, we read that the LORD's anger was kindled against Moses (Exod 4:14). Why? Because Moses was being duplicitous: while he acknowledged the LORD as *Adonai*, he tried to evade the duty assigned to him by his Master.

When Joshua and the Israelites were defeated at Ai, it was to *Adonai* that Joshua called for help. "*And Joshua said, Alas, O Lord [Adonai] GOD [Jehovah], wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan! O Lord [Adonai], what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies!*" (Josh 7:7-8). Joshua was pleading his case as a slave to *Adonai*, asking the Lord, "where is your promise of protection?"

Adonai is also frequently used by David. In one passage – 2 Samuel 7:18-20 – David addressed God as *Adonai* four times in three verses. David who was king and lord of his people acknowledged that the LORD was his Master, and that he was but a servant of the Lord – "*And what can David say more unto thee? for Thou, Lord [Adonai] GOD [Jehovah], knowest Thy servant*" (2 Sam 7:20).

The Psalmist also used *Adonai* to show God's ownership. The name of the Lord (*Adonai*) is excellent in all the earth (Ps. 8:1) because He is the Creator and He has dominion over all creation. God is the *Adonai* of the whole earth (Ps. 97:5). God is the *Adonai* who is above all gods – "*For I know that the LORD [Jehovah] is great, and that our Lord [Adon] is above all gods [elohim]*" (Ps. 135:5). *Adonai* is also the One to whom the psalmist resorted for help and deliverance – "*But do thou for me, O GOD [Jehovah] the Lord [Adonai], for thy name's sake: because thy mercy is good, deliver thou me*" (Ps. 109:21).

Adonai is the name often used in the calling of the prophets into the ministry. Isaiah saw the vision of the Lord (*Adonai*) in the year that King Uzziah died (Isa. 6:1). Isaiah also heard the voice of Lord (*Adonai*) calling, "*Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?*" (Isa. 6:8). Thus was Isaiah called into the prophetic ministry.

When Jeremiah was called, his response was similar to that of Moses, "*Ah, Lord [Adonai] GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.*" (Jer. 1:6). And as with Moses, God promised that He would supply and equip those whom He had called.

In Ezekiel, “Lord GOD” (*Adonai Jehovah*) is used almost exclusively, some 210 times. The other four times, God is addressed as *Adonai*. This is significant because Ezekiel’s prophecies concern not only Israel but also the heathen nations (Ezek. 25-32). The phrases “*ye shall know that I am the Lord God*” and “*they shall know that I am the Lord GOD*” appear several times, meaning that *Adonai* claims lordship over Israel as well as the rest of the peoples of the world.

In the Book of Daniel, *Adonai* is used 13 times, but nine of those occurrences were found in Daniel 9, which is the record of Daniel’s prophecy on the seventy weeks, and God’s judgement upon the world. In his prayer for mercy, *Adonai* was repeatedly invoked (Dan. 9:3-4, 7-9, 16-17), culminating in Daniel’s dramatic plea – “*O Lord [Adonai], hear; O Lord [Adonai], forgive; O Lord [Adonai], hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name*” (Dan. 9:19).

Use of *Adonai* in the Old Testament

The meaning of *Adonai* is also carried over into the New Testament. In the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament), *Adonai* is translated as “*despotes*.” However, “Lord” is more commonly translated as *kurios* in the New Testament. The meaning of the word remains the same: the Lord is our Master. As such, we are told to consecrate our lives for His service.

The calling of Saul on the road to Damascus is a good example. When Saul was asked the reason for his persecuting the Lord, Saul asked, “*Who art thou, Lord [Kurios]?*” (Acts 9:5). When Jesus identified Himself, a trembling Saul asked, “*Lord [Kurios], what wilt thou have me to do?*” (Acts 9:6).

The same idea of Master-servant relationship is carried over from OT *Adonai* to NTKurios. The Lord (*Kurios*) calls and equips (1 Tim. 1:12). He protects (Acts 23:11). He delivers (2 Tim. 4:18). He strengthens (2 Tim. 4:17; 2 Cor. 12:9).

Conclusion: Christ as Our Example of Servanthood

In the New Testament, Christ was often addressed as the Lord. Yet, He was also a servant, who delights to do the will of the father (John 4:34; 8:29). He is servant (Luke 22:27). As a servant, our Lord Jesus “*made Himself of no reputation . . . He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*” (Phil. 2:7-8). In so doing, our Lord fulfilled the redemptive work, and also set the example for us. Our Lord Jesus said, “*Ye call me Master and Lord [Kurios]: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him*” (John 13:13-16).

We are to follow Christ's example. There is an Old Testament practice in which the servant willingly bound himself to a life-time of service to his master out of love – *“If the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free . . . his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever”* (Exod. 21:5). In the same way, every redeemed person is Christ's servant (1 Cor. 7:22). And like the slave, every Christian must bound himself to Christ to serve Him forever. Reason: because we love Him.

Lovingly in Christ,
Pastor Isaac Ong

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