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IN FRONT OF GOD'S BAKERY

The sense of smell may have the most profound effect on us of all our senses. Who among us that has not lost this sense can pass a bakery, or General Mills factory when they are making chocolate cereal, an not melt at the odors blessing us. Smell, not hearing or sight, has the greatest effect on our memory. I cannot pass a donut shop early in the morning without thinking about Korea. You see, on almost every street corner in Pusan is a vendor with a portable grill, selling fried eggs, griddle cakes, or "monkey meat" (a sailor's term for any unidentified meat). Thus, the smell of hot oil hangs over downtown Pusan and that smell affects me even though I only spent two days there.

Lebanon must have been a sweet smelling place with all its cedars, for scripture blesses that which has the smell of Lebanon (SOS 4:11; Hos 14:6). God associates sacrifice with odor, and even promises not "to smell in your assemblies" when sacrifices are insincerely offered (Amos 5:21). The smells of earth symbolically reach even into heaven, for Rev 5:8 says, "And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints." (Rev. 5:8)

The smells can go both ways, however. It has been said that this world is like a street in front of the world to come. If we put ourselves in the proper place in the street, we will get a smell of that other world, and it will be better than all this life. We can, it seems, choose to walk in front of the bakery of heaven.

We must first understand that we cannot get there on our own. We are like the man Jesus healed by the pool of Bethesda; we have no man to put us in the pool and others get there first. Not only can we not make it to heaven on our own, we cannot even get outside its door. Others can help us there, though, and we in turn can help even others. "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the

gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Rom. 10:14-15) Faith can carry us into that part of the street, and our preaching bring others with us.

Our good works will also get us to the proper part of the street. It is for good works we were created in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:10). It is to provoke others to good works that we assemble together each week (Heb 10:24-25). Paul told Titus to be zealous in doing good works (Tit 2:14). He further said "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men." (Titus 3:8) Paul even tells Timothy that good works will get us to the right part of the street:

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. (1 Tim. 6:17-19)

If faith and good works will put us outside heaven's bakery, where will we be if we don't participate in those things? What will we smell, if not the refreshing odors from heaven? Perhaps we will be outside the forge. But then, some people seem to prefer the stench of overheated metal to the odor of bread.

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JOSEPH-MORDECHAI-JESUS

Although the book is named for his relative, perhaps the real hero of the book of Esther is Mordechai. While the events of the book are celebrated on Purim (Feb. 26 this year) it might be worthwhile to look at the man at the center of the story. Some Jewish scholars have noted some similarities between the stories of Mordechai and Joseph. Let us take a look at those, and compare them to yet another person. I think there are valuable lessons in doing so.

Textual Similarities

Although there are many obvious similarities, there are even parallels in the language of the texts. It is some of these I wish to look at first.

In Genesis 41:34 and Esther 2:3 we find the appointment of “officials” for a task. In the former case it was to oversee the storage of grain; in the latter it was to oversee the selection of candidates for queen. The Hebrew word for “officials” in both cases is based on the word for “appoint.” Thus it was that they were to “appoint appointees” for their given tasks. A similar event occurred years later when one appointed delegates or appointees. “And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles.” (Lk 6:13)

In the stories of Joseph and Mordechai the appointees had a task of gathering or assembling. One set assembled grain (Gen 41:35), the other to assemble maidens (Est 2:3). No less were the apostles tasked with

Jesus found favor in the eyes of the ruler of the universe.

assembling.

Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.

(Jn 4:35-38)

Even the phrase “day by day” or “daily” has its significance with these three individuals. Genesis 39:10 says that Potiphar’s wife spoke to him “day by day,” tempting him. When Mordechai refused to bow to Haman in Esther 3:1-4, the king’s servants asked him “daily” why he would not obey the king’s command. (For a possible reason he would not bow, see the Minutes With Messiah of March 2001.) In contrast to these two, our third individual was not questioned daily, but made himself available every day. “Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me.” (Matt 26:55)

Even in Jesus’ final night before the crucifixion (for we are indeed comparing Joseph and Mordechai to Jesus) there is an echo of words said in the stories of the other two. Joseph, before revealing who he was, asked his ten brothers to bring Benjamin with them the next time they came for grain. Jacob, of course, opposed this. When they had no choice but to return to Egypt Jacob finally relented, with the words, “If I am to be bereaved, I shall be bereaved.” (Gen 43:14) Esther was asked to appear before the king unannounced. Knowing the dangers of such a course she begged for prayers and said, “If I am to perish, I will perish.” (Est 4:16) Compare with these examples of surrender to God’s will the words of Jesus in Gethsemane. “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.” (Matt 26:39)

Joseph suggested collecting grain in the good years and storing it against the lean years. “And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants.” (Gen 41:37) When Vashti was banished, the king’s servants suggested a search be conducted for a wife to replace her. “And the thing found favor in the king’s eyes.” (Est 2:4) Jesus, likewise found favor in the eyes of the ruler of the universe. At his immersion and at his transfiguration a voice from God was heard saying, “This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.” (Mt 3:17; 17:5)

There are other, more obvious similarities between these three. Let us look at some of them in more detail.

Rising to Power

Perhaps the most obvious similarity between Joseph and Mordechai is that they were both condemned Jews in a foreign country who were suddenly elevated

to a position second only to the ruler of the land. Jesus is no less so.

Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery. While a slave he was falsely accused and imprisoned. In prison he correctly interpreted dreams for two of Pharaoh's servants. Two years later he was taken out of prison to interpret a dream for Pharaoh. As a result he gave the interpretation and the suggestion that "found favor in Pharaoh's eyes." Because of his wisdom he was placed in charge of the grain storage project. At the time of that appointment Pharaoh said, "Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou." (Gen 41:40) He suddenly became the second most powerful man in Egypt.

Mordechai heard a plot to kill the king of the Persians. He told the appropriate people who foiled the plot. Later Mordechai refused to bow to Haman, the king's favorite. Because Mordechai would not bow, Haman had all Jews in the kingdom condemned to death, in a manner of speaking. Yet after the events commemorated by Purim this is written of Mordechai: "Mordecai the Jew was next unto king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren." (Est 10:3) The phrase "next unto the king" places him second in power in all of Persia.

There was another Jew, one Jesus of Nazareth, who was a respected rabbi in Judea. Because of his teaching, and his claim that he was the Messiah, the rulers of his people had him condemned to death. In fact, they had him executed. And yet Paul prays that God will give Christians knowledge

according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. (Eph 1:19-23)

In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul further points out that Jesus the Christ will reign until death is conquered. At that time he will turn his rule back to the one who gave it to him. Thus in the spiritual realms he is, in essence, in the same position that Joseph and Mordechai occupied.

Salvation and Rejoicing

By their actions Mordechai and Joseph both saved their people from destruction. Joseph was in Egypt just for the purpose of distributing grain so that

his father and brothers would not die. That he saved thousands of other people is only incidental to the true purpose of God. Mordechai used his influence with his cousin, Esther the queen, to save all the Jews in Persia from genocide. When Joseph revealed himself to his brothers their terror was turned to gladness (Gen 45-46). When Ahasuerus allowed the Jews to defend themselves from annihilation, "The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour." (Est 8:16)

These two men are mere shadows to show us ahead of time what true salvation and rejoicing are like. Jesus the Messiah is the substance, the one who brings true salvation and joy, not to a limited few but to all who will acknowledge him.

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die,

All three were
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second in the kingdom.

but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." (Heb 9:27-28) The salvation Jesus offers is not salvation from famine or sword (to use Jeremiah's favorite words), but from sin. The death from which Jesus saves is not mere physical death, but separation from God for eternity.

Certain destruction was turned to joy in Genesis and Esther. So it is with us as well. They saw their saviors and rejoiced. We rejoice in our salvation even if we can not see the savior, "Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." (1 Pet 1:7-9)

Just as Peter tied rejoicing to the salvation through Jesus, so also does Paul. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." (Rom 5:10-11) Joseph. Mordechai. Jesus. Truly God is the same throughout history. He gave us not one, but two examples of his Messiah in the respects mentioned above. How great is our God, who is in control to such an extent that he can bring about such parallels in three great lives!

THE DRIVE-THRU CHURCH

The Drive-Thru Church Menu

	Regular	Super Sized
Welcome speech	2 minutes	3 minutes
Song	2 minutes	4 minutes
Prayer	3 minutes	5 minutes
Lord's Supper	5 minutes	10 minutes (mini-sermon included)
LS Combo (Lord's Supper & a song)	5 minutes	10 minutes
Contribution	5 minutes, no cash	5 minutes plus money
Sermon	20 minutes	30 minutes
Announcements	4 minutes	6 minutes
Fellowship	1 minute	10 minutes
Bible Class	45 minutes	1 hour

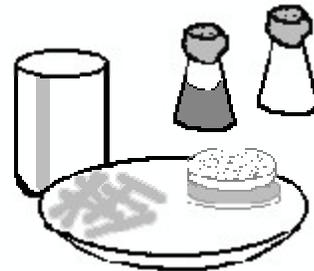
Limit: 3 hours per week, 3 ½ hours if super-sized.

The Lord's Church Menu

Service to God 24 hours a day

Served with all items off the Drive-Thru menu without limit plus an never-ending supply of the following side dishes:

Grace (Romans 5, Eph 2:7-9)
 Forgiveness of Sins (Col 1:14; Acts 2:38; Eph 1:7)
 Spiritual Blessings (Eph 1:3)
 Holy Spirit (Romans 8; Gal 4:6; Gal 5:22-25; 1 Jn 3:24)
 Adoption (Gal 4:4-7)
 Trials of Faith (Matt 5:11-12; Jas 1:3)
 Good Works (Eph 2:10; Titus 2:14; Titus 3:8)
 Faith (Rom 1:17; Gal 2:20; Hebrews 11)
 Hope (Rom 5:2-5; Rom 8:24-25; Col 1:27; Heb 6:18-19)
 Love (Rom 5:5; Rom 8:35-39; 1 Jn 4:7-11)
 Peace (Jn 14:27; Php 4:7)
 Crown of Life (Jas 1:12; Rev 2:10)
 Eternal Life (Jn 3:16; Jn 6:54; Rom 6:23; 1 Jn 5:11-13)



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