



# Minutes With Messiah

Volume 22, Issue 11

Web Site: <http://www.minuteswithmessiah.com>

September 2021

## CHILDPROOF

Most of us have had to deal with “childproof” packaging. Some bottles require you to push down on the lid and then turn. Others, worse, require you to push a tab while turning. Even others, worst of all, require you to push on both sides of the lid in a certain place and then turn. For some of us of a certain age and strength, these make the bottles adult-proof as well as childproof. (Fortunately, many pill bottle lids are reversible so that they can be opened without pushing.) Then there is the plastic packaging on many products that requires a knife, garden shears, or a blowtorch to open. These are not just childproof or adult-proof, they are practically dynamite-proof. Many things in this life are hard to open. Fortunately, the Bible is not one of them.

Peter did admit of the apostle Paul that he wrote things “in which are some things hard to be understood.” (2 Pet 3:16) Apocalyptic literature (Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and the Revelation) can be hard to understand because we have lost the meaning of some of the symbols. For the most part, however, the Bible is easily understood.

To say that the Bible is easily understood, is not childproof, does not mean one can read it once and know all it says. Every rereading opens new ideas. In that way, it is complex. But one does not need someone else to interpret it for them.

In the Middle Ages, the theory was that the Bible could only be interpreted by the initiated, which sometimes included the priests. Even if they could read, which was uncommon, the common people were too unlearned to understand the Bible without help. They were children, and the Bible was childproof. The problem is, the church of the day underestimated the ability of children. If a three- or four-year-old child could teach himself to read by looking at cereal boxes during breakfast, then what could he not learn from the Bible? Otherwise, why do we have Bible classes for infants? Nothing is truly childproof, and the Bible least of all.

People from Eastern European Missions tell a story about the power of the Bible. I don’t remember all the details, but the gist of the story is as follows. Eastern European Missions is an organization dedicating to

putting Bibles and Bible-related materials into the hands of people, primarily in the former Soviet Union countries. The story goes that the founder of the organization was traveling by train in one of the Eastern Bloc countries some time after World War II. He was sitting in the train car reading a Bible. A soldier saw him and snatched the Bible from his hands. Stating that Bibles were not allowed in the country, he threw it out the open window of the train. After years of smuggling Bibles into the Soviet Union and its satellites, this same man was in the same area. In a village, he found a group of people meeting as a church. They taught basic Christian principles, including baptism for forgiveness of sin. When this man asked how the congregation came to be, he was told that a man was walking by the railroad tracks. He came upon a Bible that had apparently been thrown from a train. He read it and showed it to others. In spite of the danger to themselves, they formed the congregation that he now saw. They showed him the Bible they had found, and indeed it was his Bible that the soldier had thrown from the train. They didn’t need someone to interpret the book, or tell them how they should worship. They understood it all from just reading. That is how simple the Bible is.

Another organization, Faith Comes By Hearing, has the same philosophy. Their goal is to get the Bible translated into every heart language, and distribute audio Bibles so that people can hear the Bible in their own language and interpret it themselves. They don’t send missionaries to teach the people what they should believe. The Bible will do that by itself. It is, after all, not childproof.

### CONTENTS

Childproof	1
Psalm 84	2
Not Thee but Me	4

*All articles Copyright 2021 by Tim O’Hearn unless otherwise noted. The ideas expressed in these articles are those of the authors and are not to be considered the doctrine of any specific congregation or eldership.*

# PSALM 84

Some of the Psalms are quite popular. Even people who don't know much about the Bible know the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm ("The Lord is my shepherd...") Whether they can quote any of it, many people know that Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible. Some psalms, like number 22, are popular because they have their fulfillment in Jesus on the cross. Psalm 148 is a popular psalm of praise; so much so that some church songbooks put the popular musical version of it as number 148 in their book. Some psalms, particularly those written by David, are quoted in part or in whole elsewhere in the Bible.

That being said, there are also many of the psalms that are not as popular. Many of David's psalms call for the destruction of his enemies. While there may be times that we agree with David, we usually don't make such psalms our favorite. Others are just not well-known. We can learn from all the psalms, even David's most

---

Just the fact of living in  
the tents of the Lord is  
sufficient to elicit  
constant praise.

---

bloodthirsty ones, but some of these others are ripe with meaning that we often neglect. One such is Psalm 84.

The introduction of the song indicates that it was for the sons of Korah. There are eleven such psalms, mostly numbered in the forties or eighties. These sons of Korah were of the Levitical tribe of Kohathites. In the Temple, the Kohathites were responsible for ensuring the special bread was placed on its table each week. (1 Chron 9:32) The sons of Korah were in charge of the Temple gates (1 Chron 9:19), and also had some skilled singers.

## The tents of the Lord

How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. (Ps 84:1-4)

The psalmist begins with a description of how desirable the tents of the Lord are. An alternate translation to the first line is, "How lovely are your tents, O Lord of hosts!" This was not the first time this phrase was used. Balaam was paid by Balak, King of Moab, to curse the

Israelites as they came out of Egypt. Twice Balaam had blessed the people rather than curse them. The third time, he blessed them again with these words.

How pleasant are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the LORD hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters. (Num 24:5-6)

The tents of the Lord are so pleasant that the psalmist uses strong words for his desire to dwell among them. He longs, nay, even faints for the courts. His whole being, heart and flesh, cry out for God. Have you ever seen a house that you said was ideal for you, where you said, "I would love to live there?" That was what the psalmist feels about God's dwelling place.

It is not just the writer of the psalm that desires these precincts. Even the birds are desirous of living there. The swallow and the sparrow build their nests and raise their young in the tabernacle of God because of how beautiful it is to live there.

The psalmist closes this section by pronouncing a blessing on all who dwell there. That would include people, birds, lizards, and anyone or anything else that chooses to live in the tents of the Lord. Why? Because they will be praising God. Just the fact of living in the tents of the Lord is sufficient to elicit constant praise. That is because God also dwells there, and in the presence of God praise is the only possible response. Note the threefold description of the owner of the tents, "LORD of hosts, my King, and my God." This is one of the longest names or descriptions of God in scripture. He is the leader of armies, the General of the angelic hosts. Beyond that, he is the king, the ruler of all the people. Above that, he is God, the supreme and sovereign being, the creator and sustainer of all that exists. How could anyone that knows these things about God not praise him?

## Blessed is the man

Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them. Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools. They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God. O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. (Ps 84:5-8)

Men trust in many things. In the 1920s, men trusted that the stock market would continue to rise, and wealth would be nearly unlimited. Then one October day it all came crashing down. The Republicans in the Spanish Civil War trusted their armies, until Generalissimo Franco's Nationalists cruelly defeated them, with the help

of the Germans and Italians.

Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD! (Isa 31:1)

Happy, though, is the man whose strength is in the Lord. This does not mean that he ignores those things that the Lord has given: vaccines, doctors, governments. He realizes that these come from God and are not to be trusted in absence of God.

The King James Version uses a phrase that is difficult to understand: “in whose heart are the ways of them.” Of whom? That phrase, “of them,” was supplied by the translators and is not in the original Hebrew. Most newer translations give a variation of “in whose heart is pilgrimage.” The man who trusts in God longs to go the tents of the Lord. At the time the psalm was written, that would involve a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

On the way to Jerusalem, many pilgrims had to pass through a valley called Baca, or Weeping. This writer takes the idea of weeping and compares it to rain. Instead of dryness, the valley will be filled with water, as a spring or a pool. The word translated pools is more commonly rendered blessing. It is the same word many Jews use for prayers. Ezekiel may have been thinking of this psalm when he said, “I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing.” (Ezek 34:26)

These pilgrims gain strength from the journey. They are sustained by their trust in the Lord. As a result, they will appear before God in Zion. They will reach their goal. What gets them there? Perseverance and prayer. On their path they continue to ask God to hear their prayer.

### **A doorkeeper in the house of God**

Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed. For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee. (Ps 84:9-12)

“Look at me, God. I have completed the pilgrimage and been anointed with oil.” This is the desire of the pilgrim. He is not saying God should be proud of what he accomplished. Rather, he is acknowledging God’s part in the completion of the pilgrimage.

“I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.” (Ps 122:1) There is rejoicing in the tents of the Lord. One day in God’s presence is better than a thousand elsewhere. If that is true, then how great would be an eternity with God? There is no such thing as a thousand eternities, but if there were they would

be nothing without God. That is the real punishment of hell; the absence of God.

Remember that this psalm was dedicated to the sons of Korah? And what was the job of the Korahites? It was to be the doorkeepers of the Temple. Thus we see the next phrase of the psalm as having special meaning to those to whom it is dedicated. “I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God.” It must be noted that this is not to be taken as calling doorkeeping a menial task. He is not saying he would rather have the lowest job in God’s house. Instead he is praising the sons of Korah. He is calling their job an honorable task, even if some might think of it otherwise.

Jewish poetry is characterized by couplets that are phrased differently but have the same meaning. That is the

---

These pilgrims gain  
strength from the  
journey. They are  
sustained by their trust  
in the Lord.

---

case here. A day in God’s courts and being a doorkeeper in the house of God are equivalent. A thousand days elsewhere and living in the tents of the wicked are as one. Following God is better than not following him.

God is a sun and a shield. The sun rises every morning to give light to the world. In the same way, “God is light and in him is no darkness at all.” (1 Jn 1:5) He is a protector. In our modern times we tend to forget the concept of a shield. We do have terms like Blue Shield insurance or Armor All Extreme Shield Protectant, but few people outside of the Society for Creative Anachronism carry a shield. God’s people, on the other hand, always have a shield. We are protected.

God is the giver of all good gifts. Among those gifts are favor and honor, grace and glory. Some gifts God bestows on everyone. “He sends rain on the just and the unjust.” (Matt 5:45) Some gifts are reserved for the upright. God will never withhold those gifts from one who walks with Him, who trusts in Him.

The writer of this psalm was, of course, thinking of the Temple in Jerusalem. That Temple is no more. It was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Even the rebuilt Temple that was expanded by King Herod is no more, having been destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. That doesn’t mean, however, that this psalm is no longer of value. It tells us much about the nature of God and man. In addition, we can still think about the tents of the Lord as congregations of the church of Christ. It is still better to be a servant in the church than to dwell in the houses of the wicked.

# *NOT THEE BUT ME*

Being a parent is not easy. There are the usual problems, like sickness, injuries, or expenses. There are arguments over “I want this toy,” or “I don’t want to go to sleep now.” Being a parent is great, with many joys which usually overcome those other things, but that doesn’t make it any less hard. As difficult as some of those problems are, perhaps the most difficult thing when you are a parent is seeing your children do something that you believe will be harmful to them. You teach them the dangers of certain pathways and they choose to follow them anyway. With some children, as the song from *The Fantasticks* says, “they did it because you said “no”.” Those children rebel because rebellion is in their nature.

One thing to understand is that God knows what it feels like. From the beginning, his creation has been prone to wander away from his pathways. It began with Eve and Adam, and has been going on since. So when we have wayward children, God says “I understand.”

The people of Israel had been in the Promised Land for over 300 years. During that time they had worshipped other gods, fallen under foreign domination, and returned to God many times. God was patient with them, but firm. But there came a time that the people told Samuel, “make us a king to judge us like all the nations.” (1 Sam 8:5) Even though God had predicted such a time hundreds of years before (Deut 17:14), Samuel was upset. He was the supposed leader of these people, and they would rather have a king “like the nations.” God had to calm Samuel down and put the incident into proper perspective.

And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for

they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. (1 Sam 8:7)

To a Christian parent, there is pain when a child falls prey to drugs and alcohol. It hurts when a child turns to crime and ends up in the hands of the law. But the greatest pain is when a child that you have “trained up” in the way that he should go, chooses to reject your faith. Some things harm the body, but can be forgiven. There is great pain over something that endangers not the body but the soul.

And yet, God reminds us, “they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me.” If there is any consolation, small that it may be, it is that God says you did your job to the best of your ability. The blame for their rejection is not laid at the feet of the parents, but of the child.

We all suffer rejection at some time or another. Rejection hurts. But there are degrees of rejection. Most of us don’t feel rejected if we are not selected in the MLB draft. Some college athletes, however, may feel rejected if they are not taken in the first round, even if they are selected in subsequent rounds. God is telling us that we may feel rejection, and it is real, we cannot feel the rejection that He feels. He is not only not being selected in the first round, He is not being selected first in the first round. God should be first, and understands our feelings of rejection because his rejection is even greater.

There is some comfort in that. Maybe not as much as we would like, but God sympathizes with us, and we sympathize with God. We are made in his image, and we can feel rejection. But so can He.

Timothy J. O’Hearn  
737 Monell Dr NE  
Albuquerque NM 87123