

Fountaingate Christian Foundation presents...

The King's Table

Series
Our Spiritual Roots



***Sending the Word of God
to the Ends of the Earth***

A Personal Letter

Dear Friend,

Many today are interested to find out what their natural roots are - where they come from and who their ancestors are. But our spiritual roots are even more important. They affect our whole lives...our faith, our focus, our strength, our victory, and our growth in Christ. They define who we are and our total purpose for life.

Many Christians are concerned about their spiritual "fruit" (Galatians 5:22-23). They pray and struggle to produce more love, or more faith, or more patience etc. But as Paul writes in Romans 11:16...

"...if the root is holy, so are the branches..."

This series of "The King's Table" examines our spiritual "roots" revealed in the Word of God. Recorded in God's Word are the lives of the "heroes of faith". They are a great example for us and we have much we can learn from them. The "roots" of our heritage in Christ are found in them.

Our prayers are with you as you study the important truths found in the Word of God about our spiritual roots.

Every blessing,

Paul and Buntty Collins

The King's Table

"He brought me into His banqueting table..." Song of Solomon 2:4

The Importance of Roots

‘ ...and if the root is holy, so are the branches...
You do not support the root, but the root supports you. ’
Romans 11:16,18

The Picture of Roots

In Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23, the Lord Jesus tells the story of a farmer sowing seed in his land as a picture for us of spiritual truth. The ground, He says, is the hearts of people (Luke 8:12-15); the seed is the Word of God (Luke 8:11); the Sower is Jesus, Himself (Matthew 13:37). The seed that fell on the rocky ground withered and died *because it had no roots*. Jesus emphasized in this parable the importance of our spiritual roots in God.

Every truth in the Word of God is like a seed. When we hear the Word it is very important that it goes deep into our hearts and becomes rooted in our lives.

Christians like Trees

"The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green, proclaiming, 'The Lord is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in Him'" Psalm 92:12-15 (Jeremiah 17:7-8; Psalm 1:3).

The Palm Tree

A palm tree can grow in the most desert-like conditions. In drought everything around it will dry up and die, but the palm tree will continue to grow in freshness because it has a long taproot that goes deep into the ground and finds the water beneath. As Christians, we, too, continue to grow and "flourish" in the Lord no matter

what the outward circumstances may be like. The roots of our lives are in the Living Water - Jesus (John 4:7-14).

The Cedar Tree

The cedars of Lebanon are known for their strength and beauty. The height and width of the Cedar above the ground are the same dimensions of the roots below. It is only as our roots go deeper and deeper into Christ that we are being filled to all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:17-19; Colossians 2:6-7).

Branches depend on Roots

The growth and branches of a plant will only be as healthy as its roots are strong and deep.

There is a parable in the Old Testament about a magnificent cedar tree:

"So it was beautiful in its greatness, in the length of its branches; For its roots extended to many waters" Ezekiel 31:7 (NASB).

The reason it was such a magnificent tree was because its roots went deep down and reached "many waters". The beauty that was evident above the ground was the result of the unseen roots beneath. So it is with us as Christians. We are not to focus our attention on trying to fix up our "branches", that is, trying to be good Christians, or live like Jesus by our own efforts; rather, our focus should be on our "roots", allowing the truths of the Word of God to be deeply planted in our hearts and to become a reality in our experience. If our roots in God are strong and healthy, our outward lives will automatically show the life and nature of Christ to those around us (see John 15:4-5, 7-8).

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Roots of Ancestry

6 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.
1 Corinthians 15:22

Two Representative Men

The roots of our spiritual ancestry are in one of two men whose actions have affected the whole of mankind. Each stood alone before God as the representative of the human race (read Romans 5:12-21).

Father of the Human Race

At creation God put a law into action. Every life-form was to "produce after its own kind" (Genesis 1:11-12,21,24-25). Adam and Eve were created in the image of God. They, too, were meant to produce after their own kind and fill the earth with people in the image of God (see Genesis 1:26-31). But when they sinned (Genesis 3:1-19) the glory of the image of God departed from them and they were left naked, ashamed, fearful and banished from their regal position of relationship with God. And they reproduced after their own kind. All humanity has experienced the consequences of Adam's action. None has escaped its devastating effect. All the succeeding generations have inherited a rebellious and diseased nature and have been alienated from God. All of us were born into this world with our roots firmly planted in our ancestor, Adam (Romans 3:10-12,23).

Second Representative Man

It was no good just patching up the fallen creation. Like a diseased plant, mankind would still continue to receive its life-source from the roots of Adam. Man needed to be uprooted and grafted into new roots to receive a new life-source. So, at exactly the right time in history, God sent another representative man into the world. This man,

too, was to affect the whole of the human race.

The Last Adam

"... *'The first man, Adam, was created a living being'; but the last Adam is the life-giving Spirit*" 1 Corinthians 15:45 (GNB).

When Jesus Christ was dying on the Cross a wonderful act of God was in process. Jesus was representing the fallen Adamic race. He was dying as the last of Adam's descendants. God laid an axe to the roots we had in Adam (Matthew 3:10). In Christ God was putting *us* to death, and all connection with fallen Adam was being severed (Romans 6:6-11).

The Second Man

"*The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven*" 1 Corinthians 15:47 (see also verses 20-23).

Jesus is not only called "The Last Adam", he is also called "The Second Man". God accomplished two feats in sending His Son to represent us. The human race from Adam was full of sin, so God put an end to it through Jesus' death on the Cross. Then he started all over again. In the Resurrection, Jesus became the beginning of a whole new humanity (Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:18).

The New Humanity

"...*And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven*" 1 Corinthians 15:48-49 (see also 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; 1 Peter 2:9).

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Roots of Lifesource

‘ ...In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Gen.2:9 ’

Our spiritual roots are in one of two trees. Read Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-24. Each of the two special trees planted in the garden by God symbolized a choice for Adam and Eve.

Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil imparted a lower life-source. It represented self-deification; independence from God. Adam and Eve, and all who followed after them, received an ability - the ability to judge between what is right and wrong from a self-centred perspective. It symbolized Death.

Results

- * **Death** (Genesis 2:17).
- * **Broken relationship with God** (Genesis 3:8).
- * **Broken relationship with others** (Gen.3:12).
- * **Self-justification** (Genesis 3:12-13).
- * **Cursed life** (Genesis 3:16-19).
- * **Cut off from eternal Life** (Genesis 3:22-24).

The Tree of Life

The Tree of Life represented a higher life-source. It represented a life's fusion with God, offering the nature and life of God Himself. God, too, knows good and evil (see Gen.3:2), but with His knowledge are the other attributes of His nature - love, grace, mercy, wisdom. See Proverbs 3:18. Thus the Tree of Life meant not just the *knowledge* of good and evil, it imparted *wisdom* on how to use that knowledge, plus the *love* for the one committing the wrong, and the *power* to bring change. The Tree of Life is the expression of God's life flowing through us. It symbolized Life.

Results

- * **Life** (Genesis 3:22).

- * **Relationship, forgiveness** (Rev.22:14).
- * **Restoration** (Revelation 2:7).
- * **Healing** (Proverbs 15:4; Revelation 22:2).
- * **Fulfilled desire** (Proverbs 13:12).
- * **Righteousness** (Proverbs 11:30).

Scriptural Examples

Jonah

Read Jonah 3:10; 4:1-2. Jonah viewed the Assyrians out of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Because of the evil acts the Assyrians had committed against his people, he wanted them to be punished. He ran away because, knowing the merciful heart of God, he did not want to give the opportunity for the Assyrians to be forgiven. No question, he was in the right and they were in the wrong. But when God saw their repentant hearts He forgave them.

Jesus

Read Jonah 8:3-11. The Pharisees were definitely right...what the woman had done was wrong, and was punishable by death under the Law. They were seeing her out of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. But Jesus, out of the Tree of Life, used *wisdom* to confound them (vs 5-9). He was the only one with the right to stone the woman, for He was the only one without sin. Yet instead, ministering out of *love and grace*, He forgave her and imparted to her a new way of life (v.11; John 6:63).

If God had expressed the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil to us we would have all been condemned immediately to Hell. But He expressed the Tree of Life and sent His Son to take the judgment we deserved (John 10:10). We are now called to express to others the same heart that God has expressed to us.

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Roots of Righteousness

By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man... Hebrews 11:4

Adam and Even had been created, by nature and potential, in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-31; 2:7-8;15-17). But because of their sin and rebellion against the Lord, this was lost. The ground Adam was to till was cursed and death was now their only future (read Genesis 3). But with the tragedy they had brought upon themselves, God promised to send a Redeemer to restore all that had been lost (Genesis 3:15). This, then, was the heritage of their sons, Cain and Abel, as they were born into the world (Genesis 4:1-2).

Cain and Abel

"In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor..." Genesis 4:3-5 (also vs 5-8).

Our spiritual roots of righteousness are pictured in these offerings the two brothers brought to God.

The Way of Abel

Both brothers would have known that the way of *sacrifice* had been definitely appointed by God (see Lev.17:11;Heb.9:22), for Hebrews 11:4 says *"by faith Abel offered..."*, and Romans 10:7 tells us that *"faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (NKJB). Abel had *heard* that God required a sacrifice; he *believed*, and he *obeyed*. The way of Abel is *faith*. In bringing the offering he did, Abel was confessing that he was a fallen creature, a guilty sinner. He recognized that his only hope before

God was in a substitute taking his place and bearing the punishment (death) that he deserved. Abel represents those who put their faith in the sacrifice of Calvary, who rest in the redemptive work of the Cross, who receive as their substitute and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. As John declared when he saw Him...

"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" John 1:29 (see also 1 Peter 1:18-19; Romans 3:21-25).

The Way of Cain

"Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain..." Jude 11.

Cain was a religious man. He did not deny God. But he denied his own ruined and fallen condition and refused to accept the remedy God had provided - that of a substitutional sacrifice. He followed his own way - his own ideas. He offered the fruit of his own works - the fruit of the cursed ground (Genesis 3:17-19). His offering was probably the best fruit. He had worked hard and was very proud of it.

Cain is a picture of the natural man, who, in his pride and self-righteousness, rebels at the idea of the need for a substitute. He represents those who turn their back on the blood that Jesus shed on the Cross and who think that they can obtain righteousness by their own "good works" (see Ephesians 2:8-9). The way of Cain is *unbelief*. The roots of our righteousness are either in Cain or Abel.

"...to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith his credited as righteousness" Romans 4:3-5.

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Roots of Vision

‘ I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you...
Ephesians 1:19 ’

Our roots of vision are found clearly in two men whose focus in life dramatically effected the way they lived and the generations which followed. Both were the 7th generation from Adam. Lamech was the 7th through the line of Cain (Genesis 4:17-18) and Enoch was the 7th through the line of Seth (Genesis 5:1-18).

Lamech - Earth-Bound

Read Genesis 4:19-24. Lamech was self focused. His total purpose in life was to please himself.

Self Focused

Lamech was the first polygamist, violating God's purpose for marriage (Genesis 1:26-28; 2:18-24) and exalting himself (Genesis 4:19-23).

Self Rights

Lamech used the Word of God as a tool to justify himself and declare his rights.

"...I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for injuring me. If Cain is avenged seven times, then Lamech seventy-seven times" Genesis 4:23-24 (see Gen. 4:13-15 and note Jesus' words in Matthew 18:21).

Self Comfort

As seen in his sons, Lamech's eyes were set on establishing a strong, comfortable and happy life on earth (Genesis 4:20-22).

- ***Food/clothing (Jabal)***
- ***Entertainment/relaxation (Jubal)***
- ***Industry (Tubal-Cain)***

Enoch - Heaven-Bound

Read Genesis 5:21-24. Something happened to Enoch when Methuselah his son was born.

God Focused

"Methuselah" means "when he dies it shall come". God had revealed to him that his son was the "time-clock" for His judgment against sinful man.

"Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: 'See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone...'" Jude 14-15 (read also Hebrews 11:13-16).

Enoch "saw" not only the coming Flood (Gen. 6-8) but the end of this man-made world at the Second Coming of Christ (2 Peter 3; Rev.19).

God Centred

The revelation Enoch received launched him into a close walk with God. Like all the heroes of faith listed in Hebrews 11, Enoch responded in faith to what he saw and it effected his whole way of life here on earth (see Heb.11:13-16).

God Pleaser

"...before [Enoch] was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. And without faith it is impossible to please God..." Hebrews 11:5-6.

Enoch is given as the example of true faith, which pleases God. He so pleased God he was then, as a pre-picture of the Last Day Church (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17), caught up alive to heaven to be with God.

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Roots of Favor

‘ But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. ’
Genesis 6:8

Two men of ancient times found favor - one with men, the other with God. Our roots of favor are either in Nimrod or in Noah.

Pre-Flood Conditions

"The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain" Gen.6:6. Read through verses 1-13; Matthew 24:37; Hebrews 11:7; 2 Peter 2:5.

Post-Flood Conditions

God blessed Noah after the flood, as he had blessed Adam (Genesis 1:28), and told him to "fill the earth" (Genesis 9:1) But as mankind increased in number, as those before the flood, they rebelled against God's plan.

Nimrod wins World's Favor

"...Nimrod...grew to be a mighty warrior on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord..." Genesis 10:8-9 (1Chronicles 1:10).

Nimrod carried on in the spirit of the pre-flood world. Like the Nephilim of pre-flood times, Nimrod was a man of renown. He had the favor of the world. He headed the post-flood people in a great rebellion against the Lord, setting up a counterfeit Heaven on earth (read Genesis 11:1-9; 10:10-12).

- * **Counterfeit KINGDOM** (Col.1:12-13).
- * **Counterfeit NAME** (Philippians 2:9-11).
- * **Counterfeit CITY** (Hebrews 11:13-16; 12:22).
- * **Counterfeit RELIGION** (Tower of Babel).

Instead of the *unity* they planned, God's judgment resulted in *confusion* (Genesis 11:5-7); *division* (Genesis 10:25); and *scattering* (Gen-

esis 11:8-9).

Noah wins Lord's Favor

"By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith" Heb.11:7 (Gen.6:9;7:1).

How Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord is the same way we do today. In the midst of his wicked generation, Noah...

- * **Heard from God** (Genesis 6:13-14; Matthew 24:37; 1 Thessalonians 4:4-6).
- * **Believed God's Word** (Hebrews 11:1).
- * **Was filled with holy fear** (Hebrews 11:7).
- * **Obeyed** (Genesis 6:22; James 2:20-26).

His faith brought God's favor and Noah...

- * **Was righteous** (Romans 1:16; Heb.11:7).
- * **Was blameless** (Philippians 1:9-10).
- * **Walked with God** (Genesis 6:9).
- * **Preached righteousness** (2 Peter 2:5).
- * **Condemned the world by his faith** (Heb.11:7).

Example of Believers

Noah stands as an example of all those of faith. Like the believer in Christ he was...

- * **Saved from judgment** (1 Peter 3:18-22; 2 Corinthians 6:1-2).
- * **Given a covenant** (Hebrews 9:15).
- * **Blessed by God** (Ephesians 1:3; Luke 2:13).

The roots of our favor with God are seen in Noah.

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Roots of Faith

Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring...He is the father of us all. Romans 4:16

Abraham's Faith

Abraham is given as the greatest example of faith. Read Romans 4:13-25.

He had a firsthand word from God

Abraham's faith was based in three aspects of God's nature:

- * *God's promise* - Romans 4:20.
- * *God's character* - Hebrews 11:11.
- * *God's power* - Romans 4:21.

His faith was in the unseen

"Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, 'So shall your offspring be'" Romans 4:18.

Bible "hope" is not wishful thinking. It is the sure foundation of faith. It is impossible to have faith without hope.

"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" Hebrews 11:1 (read verses 13-40; 10:23).

He endured in face of opposition

"Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead - since he was about a hundred years old - and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised" Romans 4:19-21 (also Hebrews 6:12; 11:11-12).

Lot's "Faith"

Everything Lot experienced was secondhand ...based on the word of Abraham, the character of Abraham and the power of Abraham.

He had a secondhand word

Lot had left his home stepping out of the word that God had given Abraham (Genesis 12:1-4).

- * *A secondhand blessing* - Genesis 13:2-5.
- * *A secondhand victory* - Genesis 14:8-16.
- * *A secondhand deliverance* - Genesis 18:16-33; 19:1-29.

His faith was in what he saw

Lot saw the richness of the land and the prosperity of Sodom and Gomorrah and because of this chose to live in the midst of wickedness (Genesis 13:10-11). He had soon moved from the tents outside Sodom to live inside the city (Genesis 13:12; 14:12).

He surrendered in face of opposition

- * *Opposing circumstances* - 2 Peter 2:6-8.
- * *Enemy attack* - Genesis 14:12.
- * *God's judgment against sin* - Gen.19:4-10.

Abraham - Faith in Action

Abraham acted on God's word (see Hebrews 11:8-10; 17-19; James 2:14-24). The difference between Abraham and Lot is clear...

- * *Abraham initiated* - Lot followed
- * *Abraham intervened* - Lot surrendered
- * *Abraham interceded* - Lot ignored

The Christian believer's roots of faith are in Abraham not in Lot!

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Roots of Covenant

“ He had made us competent as ministers of a new covenant - not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. 2 Corinthians 3:6 ”

A covenant is a contract between two or more people in which each party promises to fulfil certain conditions in order to enjoy the benefits of the agreement. The covenants in the Bible were sealed by blood sacrifice, representing the life of the two parties joined in total union.

Two Men, Two Covenants

In Galatians 4:21-31 Paul describes how the two sons of Abraham - Isaac by his wife, Sarah, and Ishmael by his slave, Hagar - represent two covenants which God made with man (Gen.16; 21).

The Covenant of Faith - Isaac

God made a covenant with Abraham and his “Seed” (see Romans 4:1-25; Genesis 12:1-3; 15:3-6; 17:4-6). He promised to bless him, and through him and his offspring, all the nations of the earth. It also contained an eternal inheritance.

“For he [Abraham] was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God” Hebrews 11:10.

Abraham’s side of the covenant was simply to believe the promises God had given him. Because of his *faith* God declared him righteous. Abraham’s covenant was an eternal covenant, sealed at the Cross and becoming the “New Covenant”. All believers in Christ are the “seed” of Abraham (Gal.3:16,29; Rom.9:6-9) and heirs of the same promise. We are a part of the covenant God made with Abraham (Rom.3:21-28; 4:23-25).

The Covenant of Law - Ishmael

430 years later, at Mt Sinai, God made another, very different, covenant with the Children of Is-

rael. Israel’s side of the covenant was to keep the Law which He gave to Moses, summarized in the Ten Commandments (Ex.20:1-17; Rom.10:5). God’s side of the covenant was His promise to give them “life”, to bless them and make them His holy people (Deut.28:1-14). But if they failed to fulfil their part they would suffer His judgment. They would be cursed and not blessed (Galatians 3:10; Deut.28:15-68; James 2:10).

Why the Law was Given

“What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come” Galatians 3:19 (to verse 25; Romans 3:20; 7:7-13).

The Covenant of Law was given to reveal sin. Two things were made clear under the Law...

* ***God’s righteous standard and judgment*** (Matthew 5:21-48).

* ***Mankind’s inability to reach that standard, and deserving of judgment*** (Rom.7:14-25).

Two Covenants Compared

The letter (Law) kills

See Exodus 32:15-28; Hebrews 12:18-21.

The Spirit gives life

See Acts 2:1-40; Hebrews 12:22-24.

The Covenant of Law was fulfilled at the coming of the “Seed”, the Lord Jesus, and finished by His work on the Cross. No wonder Paul said the Galatian Christians were foolish for reverting to the Law (Gal.3:1-3). The roots of the Christian’s Covenant are in Isaac not Ishmael.

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Roots of Motivation

‘ Just as it is written: ‘Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.’
Romans 9:13

Esau and Jacob

Read Genesis chapters 25, 27-33. Esau and Jacob are given to us as examples of the kind of lives that attract either the love (choice) or hatred (rejection) of God (see Malachi 1:2-3). As we follow the characters of these two men, described in Scripture, we see that it was because of a particular attitude of heart that each had - an attitude that was the *motivation* of their whole lives.

Two Attitudes of Heart

Esau: the man of the field

In the New Testament, Jesus speaks of the “field” as a picture of the world (Matt. 13:24-30; 36-43; John 4:34-38). So also we see, as the Genesis account unfolds, the statement that declared Esau a “man of the field” (Gen.25:27) not only described his occupation, but also was a picture of his heart-attitude. Esau was a man who loved the things of the world - who lived for the pleasures of life *now*.

Jacob: the tent-dweller

Gen.25:27 specifically separates Jacob as the one who lived in tents. Hebrews 11:8-10 tells us why:

“By faith [Abraham] made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.”

Jacob, along with Abraham and Isaac, had one main focus in life: he had his eyes on an eternal

dwelling. He believed God’s promise to Abraham that he would be the father of many nations (Genesis 12:2-3; 17:4-7,16; 18:18; 22:17-18). This promise was ultimately fulfilled in Christ and the New Creation that came forth from Him, for it was the New Creation people, born through Christ’s atoning work on the Cross that would make up the “City” of God (Hebrews 12:22-24; 13:14; Galatians 3:7-9, 13-19, 29; Revelation 21:2).

The key to Jacob’s life was that “living in tents” represented a transient life. His whole attitude was that he was a foreigner and pilgrim in the world (Hebrews 11:13-16). He had his eyes on one major goal - *God’s eternal purpose*.

The Birthright

Read Genesis 25:29-34. The birthright of the firstborn was the right to fulfil in his generation the next step in God’s continuing plan and purpose (Genesis 17:7). When Esau sold his birthright to Jacob to satisfy his temporary physical hunger, he was virtually saying he put no value on the purposes of God (Hebrews 12:15-16).

The Blessing

Read Genesis 27:1-36. Esau thought the blessing was separate from the birthright. When he sold the birthright to Jacob, he knew he was selling him the right to be part of God’s purpose, but he had no intention of selling him the material wealth and blessing of his inheritance. He “burst out with a loud and bitter cry” (verse 34) when he heard he had lost the blessing.

The roots of our motivation in life are either in Esau or Jacob. God desires each of us today to have a Jacob-spirit (Hebrews 12:1-3).

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Roots of Purpose

“...called according to his purpose...to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. Romans 8:28-29”

The Firstborn

In Israel's culture, instituted by the Lord Himself, the Firstborn was set apart as belonging to the Lord (Numbers 3:12-13; Exodus 34:19-20) and had specific rights. These were given so that he could fulfil specific responsibilities. Although the firstborn rights usually belonged to the first born son (Deuteronomy 21:15-17), God intervened numerous times to declare the firstborn to be one who was *not* first born (Genesis 17:15-21; 25:23; 48:8-20; Psalm 89:27).

Read Genesis chapters 37; 39 to 47.

Rueben

Natural choice

As the first born of Jacob the firstborn rights and responsibilities should have been Rueben's.

Fails in the purpose

The specific responsibility of the firstborn, and the reason he was given double inheritance and authority in the family, was so that he could come to the aid of any of the family who got into trouble. Rueben failed to take his authority and failed in his responsibility to save Joseph (Gen.37.21-30).

Fails in the test of character

Fearing for his own life, Rueben fails to take Simeon's place (Genesis 42:18-24).

Abdicates to another

Rueben fails to take responsibility for Benjamin. He allows Judah to do what he should have done as the firstborn (Genesis 43:1-9).

Joseph

Divine choice

God declared Joseph to be his chosen firstborn through the dreams he gave him (Gen.37:3-11).

Triumphs in the test of character

* ***The betrayal of his brothers:*** Joseph forgives them because he understands God's purpose (Genesis 45:4-8).

* ***The temptation of Potiphar's wife:*** Joseph stands in his righteousness and flees the temptation (Genesis 39; 1 Timothy 6:1-16).

Triumphs in the trial of faith

Everything that happened to Joseph was the opposite to God's word to him. Joseph had to decide what he was going to believe - the circumstances or the word of the Lord (Ps.105:17-19).

Fulfils the purpose

Joseph fulfils God's purpose for his life by bringing salvation to Egypt and his family.

The Roots of Our Purpose

As believers in Christ, the roots of our purpose are not in Rueben. Our purpose in life is not based on natural choice or our natural ability. It is based on the call of God. Only by His enabling and empowering can we triumph in the tests and trials and fulfil all that God has planned and purposed for us to be and to do in this life. The roots of our purpose are in Joseph, who is a pre-picture of *the* Firstborn - Jesus (Romans 8:28-29).

The King's Table

"He brought me into His banqueting table..." Song of Solomon 2:4

Roots of Leadership

‘ God has set some in the church...to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of the ministry.... Eph.4:13-14 ’

The Lord is looking for specific qualities of character in those who will lead His people (see 2 Corinthians 3:1-6; 1 Corinthians 2:1). The choice of our roots of leadership are found in two men whose leadership qualities were in total contrast to each other.

Korah

“...certain men....Woe to them!...they have been destroyed in Korah’s rebellion” Jude 11. Read through verses 3-13.

Read Numbers 16:1-35. We see in Korah the leadership God abhors:

He was self-appointed

He rose up to lead by his own initiative (vs 1-2).

He gathered followers to himself

He gathered a large number of influential people to follow him (vs.2-3,19). His ambition was the leadership of the whole nation (vs.8-10).

He was filled with pride

He believed he was as good (“holy”) as Moses and Aaron in his ability to lead (verse 3).

His heart was focused on Self

Jude picturesquely describes the heart of a leader like Korah (verses 12-13), declaring him to be:

*** Selfishly motivated**

“Shepherds who feed only themselves”.

*** Promising life but with no reality**

“...clouds without rain...autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted - twice dead”

*** Led by his own whims and ambitions**

“...blown along by the wind...wild waves of the sea...wandering stars”

Moses

He was chosen of the Lord

The call to Moses came directly from the Lord Himself. Read Exodus 3:1-4:17; Hebrews 5:4.

He followed the Lord

Moses leadership was in complete obedience to the Lord (Exodus 7:6).

He was filled with humility

“(Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth)” Numbers 12:3 (see Philippians 2:3-11).

Moses humility had been learned. He had tried to fulfil God’s call in his own strength and had failed miserably (Exodus 2:11-22). He then lost all sense of his own worth and ability to fulfil the call. His five responses when God’s call came revealed this (Exodus 3:11,13; 4:1,10,13). But with God’s call came *His* empowering to fulfil it. Moses had learned total dependency on God. This is true humility (Exodus 33:12-17).

God’s leaders are the *foundation* of His church (Eph.2:20). That foundation is not only the *gifts* and *ministries* God has given these leaders, but, above all, it is their *character*. Read 1 Cor.15:9-11; 2 Cor.10:12-18;11:1-12:19; 1 Tim.4:12.

His heart was focused on God

“...Now show me your glory.” Exodus 33:18. Read through v.19-23; 34:29-35.

The focus of Moses’ heart was the desire to know God in all His glory (Hebrews 11:24-27). This is the heart of true leadership. We impart to others what we have experienced ourselves (Acts 3:6).

The King's Table

"He brought me into His banqueting table..." Song of Solomon 2:4

Roots of Action

“...I will show you my faith by what I do...[Abraham's] faith and...actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. James 2:18-22”

Read Numbers 13 and 14. Moses sent 12 spies into the Promised Land. Their report was to help Moses develop a strategy to go in and possess the inheritance which had been promised by the Lord (Genesis 12:4-7; Ex.13:5; 33:1-2). All twelve spies came back with an accurate report of the land (Num.13:26-29). However, they were divided in their reactions to what they had seen.

Ten spies

“...they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, ‘The land we explored devours those living in it...’” Numbers 13:32.

These ten spies were in captivity to their five senses. They put their faith in...

* *What they saw*

“All the people we saw there are of great size” verse 32.

They believed what they saw more than the Word of God.

* *What they felt*

“We can't attack these people; they are stronger than we are” verse 31.

They believed how they felt in the situation. They were ruled by their fear.

* *Their own lack and inability*

“We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them” v.33.

Two spies

“...We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it” Numbers 13:30.

Two spies, Joshua and Caleb, moved beyond

the realm of their five senses. Despite what they saw and felt they put their total trust in what God had promised.

Faith in Action

Romans 3:27, KJV, speaks of “the law of faith”. There is an active process by which faith works:

* *A Word from God*

“Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ” Romans 10:17.

Joshua and Caleb believed God's promise more than what they saw and felt. They knew their own lack but they put their trust in the Lord.

* *Obedience to that Word*

Their faith outworked in action. They were eager to “go up and take possession of the land”. They were wholeheartedly committed to follow the Lord (Numbers 14:24; Romans 1:5; 1 John 2:4-5; Acts 6:7).

* *The trial of faith*

They stood fast on what they believed despite the opposition of the other spies and the whole company of Israel (Numbers 14:1-10; 1 Peter 1:3-7; Hebrews 6:12).

* *The result - victory*

Joshua and Caleb received their inheritance as they led the new generation into the Promised Land (Numbers 14:21-24, 28-30).

“For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God” 1 John 5:4-5.

The roots of our action are to be in the two spies (*faith*), not in the 10 spies (*unbelief*).

Making the Truth Mine

Write out in full the scripture from this lesson which means the most to you. We encourage you to commit the verse to memory.

Write out one statement from the study which you feel is most significant for your life.

Write in your own words how you believe you should respond to the truth of this study. Are there any decisions you should make?

You can make a difference!

For this study to have its full effect in your life, we encourage you to:

- * Read and digest the study - meditate on the Word of God.
- * Put into action what you have learnt (James 1:22).
- * Share the Word of God with others.

Your places of ministry have been pre-arranged by God: your home, the street you live on, your place of work and your church.

“I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free” Psalm 119:32

Food for Thought

Sending God's Word to the Ends of the Earth

The Word of God made available in a
clear, simple layout for personal study and
for use in sharing with others.

The King's Table is designed to help...

- * ***Every believer for personal study***
- * ***Parents to teach their children***
- * ***Leaders of home groups***
- * ***Ministers of congregations***
- * ***Christian schools and home schooling***
- * ***Missionary projects to other nations***

Our Project 21 series for leaders has been widely received and multiplied throughout Asia and the Pacific. The reports from many places of growth and blessing encourage us greatly in the spreading of the life-giving Word of God. It is something that for us never loses its excitement.

The King's Table is an extension of the Project 21 teaching program which has many series of 21 lessons on different subjects. Our prayer is that these studies might be a great blessing to you.

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