



FEED MY SHEEP

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Honey Sweet and Bitter

The basis for this study is the story found in 1 Samuel 14. (Space precludes our reproducing it all here, so we trust you will read it before proceeding.) King Saul's son, Prince Jonathan, and his armor-bearer, had performed a daring two-man commando raid against the Philistines. Meanwhile, Saul had pronounced a curse of death upon anyone who ate anything that day. Jonathan had not heard his father's oath. So when Jonathan came across a hive of honey, he ate of it and was no doubt refreshed and re-energized. Let us now turn to examine the metaphorical meaning of this story. Honey is associated with the knowledge of wisdom.

Proverbs 24:13 My son, eat thou honey, because *it is good*; and the honeycomb, *which is sweet to thy taste*:

14 So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul: when thou hast found *it*, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off.

If honey is a metaphor for wisdom, then what is our *source* of wisdom? It is the Word of God. This is verified in several places in the Scriptures. One is:

Proverbs 2:6 For Yahweh giveth wisdom: out of his mouth *cometh* knowledge and understanding.

Honey is further linked with the Word of God in the psalms and prophets.

Psalms 119:103 How sweet are thy words unto my taste! *yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!*

Ezekiel 3:1 Moreover he said unto me, Son of

man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, [roll = scroll. Today we would say "eat this book."] and go speak unto the house of Israel.

2 So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll.

3 And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat *it*; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.

The apostle John drew many of his prophetic symbols from Ezekiel and so, not surprisingly, we find the simile of honey in his vision in the book of Revelation. In chapter 10 John gives a prophecy of the time when the printing press would be invented and the Christian West would receive the Bible in their own languages.

Revelation 10: 9 And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book [the Bible]. And he said unto me, Take *it*, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.

10 And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.

Why would it be sweet in the mouth but bitter in the belly? Could it be because when we first ingest the word of God (i.e., "get saved"), it is a very sweet experience. What a joy to learn of the free gift of salvation! But as we actually begin to digest more and more of the Word, we learn Yahweh's laws (unless one is in one of the ubiquitous antinomian churches).

It is God's law that teaches us the knowledge of good and evil, and that is often a bitter and painful experience.

Yet it is the only way to get to the goal God has planned for us. For these bitter and painful life experiences constitute the sanctification phase of our salvation. As we struggle against our carnal nature (our "Philistines"), we realize that we fall so woefully short of the perfection of God's law. This results in the very unpleasant feelings in our "belly," that is, in our innermost being. Yet, simultaneously, we can rejoice knowing that our salvation does not depend on our keeping the law.

Prior to the exodus and during the wilderness wanderings, God promised Israel the land of Canaan, which was often described as "a land of milk and honey." Jonathan is an aspiring overcomer. He sallies forth to do battle with the Philistines, the flesh. After the victorious battle, Jonathan figuratively comes into the land of honey—the Promised Land. In other words, while Jonathan himself is "under Pentecost" (the reign and age of Saul), he is given a glimpse and foretaste of Tabernacles, the glorious Kingdom Age. We shall return to Jonathan's sweet experience presently.

Honey from the Lion

Honey figures prominently in the story of Samson (Judges 13-16). Samson himself, like Saul, was another symbol of Pentecost. He burned the *wheat* of the Philistines at Pentecost. He was blinded and finally overcome by the Philistines (flesh). In his blindness, he tried to deliver Israel but failed. He looked to his own strength—the works of his hands—for deliverance. All these and other factors¹ indicate that Samson, like Saul, represents non-overcomer believers. There is much to this story, but we will focus solely on the honey symbolism.

Judges 14:8 And after a time he [Samson] returned to take her [Delilah in marriage], and he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion: and, behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcass of the lion.

9 And he took thereof in his hands, and went on eating, and came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat: but he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion.

Here we have a dead lion. Who or what could a dead lion represent? Perhaps the lion of the tribe of Judah who was killed? Yes, indeed, Jesus the Christ is (was) the dead lion. In his carcass is found honey. One way to look at this would be that by the death of Jesus, the Word of God in the form of the honey of the New Testament came forth.

Another would be that by his death, the requirements of the law for the sins of the world was satisfied and that atonement resulted in great sweetness and enlightenment for all who would taste thereof; that is, all who would believe on His accomplished sacrifice. Now back to the story of Jonathan.

Jonathan is enlightened

1 Samuel 14:27 But Jonathan heard not when his father charged the people with the oath: wherefore he put forth the end of the rod that was in his hand, and dipped it in an honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his eyes were enlightened.

Jonathan's "eyes were enlightened." The honey, the wisdom of the Word of God enlightens our understanding. Do we desire to be enlightened and illuminated? Do we desire to be one of the true and righteous "Illuminati?" The true Wise Ones? We obtain that enlightenment and divine illumination by eating the Word of God. Jesus is the Word made flesh. Jesus created great consternation among His hearers when He told them that in order to attain to everlasting life they must "eat His flesh."

John 6:51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

53 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

Because multitudes of the disciples hearing Jesus' words interpreted them literally, they left Him in droves, wishing to have no part in what they thought was His encouragement of cannibalism. This points up a problem which still plagues believers today. Many are prone to *literalize* what is meant spiritually or metaphorically. We must wonder how many people in our day have left churches in disgust

when told they must believe this or that doctrine literally. That is to say: people have left the faith, have quit following Jesus, because their Saul leaders have insisted that their *literal* interpretation is the one and only correct belief.

Jonathan's enlightenment enabled him to accurately discern his father Saul's character. After partaking of the honey, the people informed Jonathan of his father's vow to execute anyone who ate that day.

1 Samuel 14:29 Then said Jonathan, My father hath troubled the land: see, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey.

The word "troubled" is the same word as *Achan* and the valley of *Achor*. Not a flattering thing to have to say about your dad, but unfortunately it was true. The story of Achan is found in Joshua, chapter 7. What were Achan's sins? They were the same as we see in King Saul and in the Saul church.... First, it is disobedience to the clear commandments of God. Then, covetousness—seeking after wealth and power.

Achan disobeyed by taking some of the spoils at the conquest of Jericho. Specifically, Achan stole gold, silver and a beautiful *Babylonish garment*. Just like the Saul church. Over the centuries, they have coveted both riches and power. The Babylonian garment which Achan stole was no ordinary garment. It was a tool of power. We told the story in our book, *Television, VCRs and Christians*, but since it is now out of print, we will summarize it here.

Nimrod was the founder of both Babylon and Assyria. He was lord and king over all the sons of Noah. Genesis 10:9 tells us that Nimrod was a "mighty hunter." Much more detail is found in the book of Jasher.² It explains that it was a *garment* which gave Nimrod his power and made him a mighty hunter. It states that this garment was given to Nimrod by his father, Cush, who received it from his father, Ham, who had *stolen* it from his father, Noah, who had it bequeathed to him by Methuselah, who had received it from his father, Enoch, who had received it directly from Adam, who had received it from God when He made garments for Adam and Eve in the garden after the Fall.

This garment had become a cursed thing (when

Ham stole it). Thereafter, it was used for evil, Nimrod using it to obtain *power over men*. In Jasher 27 we learn that Esau killed Nimrod and stole the garment. He was on the run from Nimrod's men when he pleaded with Jacob for food. He eagerly traded the Abrahamic birthright to Jacob for a bowl of soup because in his view, he had something of greater value: the Babylonish garment. According to Jasher, Esau did indeed use the garment as a tool to power. It states that Esau was "a designing and a deceitful man, one who **hunted** after the hearts of men and inveigled them." A marginal note explains that the Hebrew verb *biage* literally means that Esau "**stole their minds**"(!) by the use of the garment. There is nothing new about the concept of mind control.

The parallel to the Roman church is astonishing. As Alexander Hislop documented in his book, *The Two Babylons*, over a century ago, many actual rituals and accoutrements of the ancient Babylonian mystery religion were imported wholesale into what became the Roman Catholic church. In other words, the Roman church was dressed up in and covered herself with the "garments" of Babylon. These were all essentially means of mind control and of maintaining power over the people. That power can only be broken when the Word of God is available to the people, as we shall see below with the advent of Luther.

Once again, therefore, all this is the antitype of King Saul to the *nth* degree. (Incidentally, the word "antitype" means the fulfillment of the type, not a negation of, or in opposition to a type.) Just as King Saul succumbed after a short time in power, the church hierarchy, by and large, succumbed to the pursuit of riches and power. They no longer desired to be servants, but to be served and to rule as tyrants. We repeat verse 29:

29 Then said Jonathan, My father hath troubled the land: see, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey.

30 How much more, if haply the people had eaten freely to day of the spoil of their enemies which they found? for had there not been now a much greater slaughter among the Philistines?

The implication here is that Jonathan would have had the people also share in the honey. If they had been nourished by it as he was, they would have been able to kill more of the Philistines. Typologically, the

Saul church denies honey to the people. They say: we possess the Word of God, and you just trust us; we will dole out the truths of Scripture as we decide what is best for you.

For a long period of time, the Catholic church forbid the people of Europe to have a copy of the Bible. They kept it chained to the pulpit in the church building. To make matters worse, it was still written in Latin, which virtually no one except the clergy could understand.

But the overcomer candidates like Wycliff, Huss and Martin Luther come along and said in effect: "Let the people eat the honey; let them have the Scriptures in their own language, and let them have a personal copy in their house. Let the Holy Spirit guide them into all truth. We don't need a hierarchy of priests to be the sole arbiters of the truth of God's Word."

Just as Jonathan realized, when the Christian people are nourished by the honey, they will be able to conquer more Philistines. In other words, the more we are fed by the Word of God, the better we are enabled to overcome our carnal natures.

Fortunately for Jonathan, when Saul declared that he must die, the people rose up and withstood their ruler and thus saved his life. Occasionally, when the Saul church attempts to muzzle and stifle overcomer candidates, the people rise up and deny the intentions of Saul.

It would seem that this was manifested during the Reformation when Rome tried to lure Martin Luther into various traps so they could silence him, eventually by killing him. But certain rulers in Germany cast their lot with Luther and protected him, thus preventing the Roman Catholic Saul church from executing him.

Just as Saul had made the foolish vow, the Roman church had made the foolish policy of declaring that the people were not allowed to eat the honey-Word of God. In response, Jonathan (Luther) said to the people of Europe: My father (the Roman church) troubleth the land. Luther testified to the people: I myself tasted the honey and it is very sweet; it will enlighten you and give you spiritual strength.

But Rome discerned that someone was in transgression of their authority. Rome said: who is it that is

going about eating honey without our permission? We will kill anyone who does that! Oh, you say it was one of our own priests? Well, too bad, that doesn't matter, he must die anyway!

45 And the people said unto Saul, Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel?

Just as Jonathan's commando raid had brought a physical salvation for Israel, so Martin Luther also wrought great salvation in Israel because he re-discovered the great truth of *sola fide*, salvation is by faith alone, not of works. He told the people that they could not be saved by any or all the works the Catholic church says they need to do. He told them that that the Scriptures say that one is saved solely by faith in Jesus Christ alone. As a result, the princes and people of Germany withstood Rome and said (paraphrasing the remainder of 1 Samuel 14:45):

Shall Jonathan (Luther) die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: *as* Yahweh liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day. So the people rescued Jonathan [Luther], that he died not.

Honey—the Word of God is indeed sweet in our mouths. It is the fragrantly sweet fruit of the gospel of salvation which first apprehends those who partake. But for those who continue to imbibe and ingest, the sweetness turns to bitterness—in the sense that deeper immersion in the Word and seeking after deeper truths often brings the bitterness and harshness of persecution from the hands of the Sauls. But yet we can give praise to Him knowing it is all for good. It is marvelous to notice how so many of the character traits of King Saul have played out in the Saul church for the past 2,000 years. One is almost led to conclude that Someone planned it that way.

ENDNOTES

1. See *The Wheat & Asses of Pentecost* by Stephen Jones, \$5 ppd.
2. *The Book of Jasher*, \$15 ppd. (genuine 1840 version).

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