

WILLIAM GOODMAN

Symbolism in the Word



BS
525
•G66



Symbolism in the Word

by
William
Goodman



Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City
Kansas City, Missouri

RILEY LIBRARY
NORTHWEST NAZARENE COLLEGE
N.A.M.D.

85567

First Printing, 1974

*Printed in the
United States of America*

Contents

1. Water	7
2. Fire	14
3. Light	17
4. Grain . . . Bread	21
5. Oil	26

502/113 444



1 WATER

MAN'S GREATEST NEED . . . fresh water" is written on the back of the green truck of the Honolulu Water Co. Few would argue the point, especially those who have hiked across Haleakala Crater without a canteen. Without water, there is desolation—life is impossible.

Nearly three-fourths (71 percent) of the earth's surface is covered by the oceans, whose depth goes to over six miles in some places. The five oceans listed by size are the Pacific, Atlantic, Indian, Antarctic, and Arctic. Their water is salty. The oceans provide rain; control temperature; provide transportation; provide food, recreation, and vast amounts of minerals.

The tides of the ocean are truly a remarkable phenomenon. They rise and fall twice every 24 hours and 52 minutes. The gravity or pull of the sun and the moon causes the tide. The highest tides come when the sun, moon, and earth are in alignment. The tides are important for harbor access and for carrying refuse out to sea. They are sometimes harnessed for hydroelectric power.

Connected to the major oceans are numerous saltwater seas, such as the Mediterranean, North, Caribbean, Bering, China, etc. They provide channels of commerce far inland.

Then there are the freshwater lakes. These are actually widened channels of rivers with water constantly flowing through them. They are formed by glacial action, stream action, volcanoes, and foldings and faultings of the earth's

crust. There are also the great river systems of the world such as the Nile (4,000 miles long) the Amazon (3,000 miles long and 200 feet deep at the mouth), the Volga (longest river in Europe, 2,300 miles long), the Congo, and the Yangtze, to mention a few.

Besides these various kinds of surface water, there is also the vast reservoir of underground water which is tapped by wells. Where this water is trapped in depressions, artesian (flowing) wells result, or springs flow out of the ground in places. Where these waters go deep enough, they are heated by the earth's inner core and flow out as hot springs or even as geysers.

Many interesting facts can be cited concerning man's relationship to water. For example:

Two to three hundred pounds of water is required to produce one pound of plant material.

One-sixth of all rain seeps into the ground, one-half evaporates, one-third runs off into the rivers and on back to the ocean, from where the moisture-laden air originally came.

One hundred pounds of sand can hold 25 pounds of water; 100 pounds of clay can hold 50 pounds of water; 100 pounds of humus can hold 200 pounds of water.

In areas where less than 20 inches of rain falls annually, irrigation is needed for producing crops. This usually comes either from wells or from dams.

The clouds giving one inch of rainfall over a radius of 100 miles contain almost 2.5 billion tons of water.

When we talk about man, the earth, or the universe, the hydrosphere is involved. Discussions of climate, weather, temperature, air movement, crops, vegetation, land forms, soils, minerals, travel, culture, civilization all involve water.

The positions of the oceans, lakes, rivers, etc., were not always as they are now. Marine shells have been found

10,940 feet above sea level at Dent du Midi, Switzerland. They can be found thousands of feet above sea level in the Appalachian Mountains and in the upper midwest region of the United States, hundreds of miles from the ocean. If the earth's highest mountain (Everest, 29,028 feet high) were sunk into the ocean's deepest trench (35,800 feet deep), its tip would be far below the surface. Level all the land in the world and it would be covered by water to a depth of 12,000 feet.

One theory to explain the fact that there was no rain before Noah's time is the canopy theory. This says that the earth was enclosed in a canopy of vapor which diffused the heat rays, maintaining a uniform temperature of 72°. There could therefore be no storms, and all chemical rays causing decay and fermentation were also filtered out. When the canopy collapsed, the floodwaters fell and dramatic climatic changes occurred. The earth may have tilted on its axis at this time, producing the seasons and causing the ice caps at the poles.

Whatever the theories concerning the cause, the world once had a universal mild climate and the flora and fauna were abundant because of the adequacy of water. The dinosaurs of the Red Deer River Valley in Alberta, Canada, which include 26 different species, were products of this period. Prehistoric creatures 50 feet long lived by the thousands near the Chalk Bluffs of Kansas, along with flying reptiles with heads 3 feet long and wings 20 feet long, Tyrannosaurus lizards 18 feet long, and brontosaurus 66 feet in length and weighing 38 tons. Some birds stood 10 feet tall. A snail shell was found 1 foot in diameter, a lobster 6 feet in size, and an ancient locust with 7-inch wings; dragonflies were 18 inches long, and frogs 6 to 10 feet in length. The remains of the abundant vegetation are seen in the great coal fields. It takes 10 to 14 feet of buried vegetation to produce a seam of coal 1 foot thick.

There are many seams of coal 40 to 50 feet in thickness, and in Wyoming there is one 90 feet thick.

The world of Adam, Methuselah, Enoch, and Noah, a paradise, was washed over and destroyed by water. God spared not the angels that rebelled, nor did He spare His original plan of water and world, but opened the great deeps and poured forth a cleansing stream flooding forth in the here and now.

The story of water is the story of man. Billy Graham wrote: "Intended to be a river running through pleasant and productive pastures, man chose to take a course that plunged down from the sunny heights. Dashing against rocks and churning between deep, sunless cliffs. All generations yet unborn plunged downward with Adam, infected by the disease of sin. Though we lift our voices and cry for help, still we choose deliberately . . . as Adam did . . . the wrong way."

Since water is so much a part of our lives and of our existence, God speaks literally and symbolically of water in His Word. In Gen. 1:2 we read, "God moved upon the face of the waters"; in verse 6, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters"; and verse 20, "God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life." In Job 5:10, we read that water is God's gift: "Who giveth rain upon the earth, and sendeth waters upon the fields"; and in 37:6-10, "He saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth; likewise to the small rain, and to the great rain of his strength. . . . By the breath of God frost is given: and the breadth of the waters is straitened."

God's extraordinary providences are done in miracles of water. Exod. 7:17 reads, "Behold, I will smite with the rod that is in mine hand upon the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood." Exod. 14:21 says that "Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord

caused the sea to go back . . . and the waters were divided." Josh. 3:13 reads: "It shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon an heap."

Turning to the New Testament we read in John 2:7, "Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim." The stage was thus set for the performance of His miracle of changing the water into wine. Matt. 14:28-29 reads: "Peter answered . . . Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus." Luke records another miracle on the sea (8:24): "Master, master, we perish. Then he arose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water: and they ceased, and there was a calm."

God's judgment has been by water, but the next judgment will be by lack of water to quench the fire. In 2 Pet. 3:5-7 we read, "By the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth; which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

In symbolic terms, God speaks of himself as "the fountain of living waters" in Jer. 2:13. Jesus called himself the living water and said, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). The Spirit is poured as water in Isa. 32:15, and the birth of the Spirit and of water is suggested in John 3:5.

The wicked are likened to "the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt" (Isa. 57:20).

The backsliders are rebuked as "broken cisterns, that can hold no water," because "they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters" (Jer. 2:13). The self-willed who refuse "the waters of Shiloah" will be overflowed to their necks by the waters of the river (Isa. 8:6-8). In an opposite figure, transgressors are likened to "a garden that hath no water" (Isa. 1:30). Punishment by death is promised by shutting off the water in Job 24:19: "Drought and heat consume the snow waters: so doth the grave those which have sinned."

The invitation to salvation is pictured as a fountain that is freely given for those that thirst in Rev. 21:6. Sorrow for sins is expressed in the lament, "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" (Jer. 9:1). He that drinks of the water that Christ gives drinks of that which quenches the thirst forever and gives eternal life (John 4:14).

You and I are creatures of water, the flowing fluids of our bodies are life, and we need at least a quart of water a day for proper body function. Desert travellers tell many a story of the misery one experiences without water. Our food grows only when watered. In fact, take the water out of foodstuffs and little would remain. The apple is only 1 percent apple; the rest, bulk and water. Milk and ice cream without water are nothing. The dehydration of foods, powdered milk, baking mixes, and so forth, all illustrate this point.

Our Lord stressed His ultimate importance by calling himself the Water of Life. He is the Water that quenches the thirsty soul forever. A glass full of pure water can be polluted with dirt, salt, oil, etc. But He is pure—like pure water. We empty our vessels of dirty, sin-tainted water, and we are filled with the pure Water of Life.

*Ho, ev'ryone who is thirsty in spirit!
Ho, ev'ryone that is weary and sad!
Come to the fountain; there's fullness in Jesus,
All that you're longing for. Come and be glad.
"I will pour water on him that is thirsty;
I will pour floods upon the dry ground.
Open your heart for the gift I am bringing.
While ye are seeking Me, I will be found."*

—LUCY J. RIDER

 **2** FIRE

IN MY FIFTH-GRADE social studies class we were studying about man's discovery of fire and how it benefited him. It was said the lightning started the first fire. Later man captured it and took it into his cave for warmth and protection. Then he found out about using fire to cook his food. In the poem "An Ode to a Pig," the story is told of a man in China who owned a pet pig. One day his house caught fire and burned, including the pet pig. The owner, trying to retrieve the cooked pig, found the flesh falling apart in his hands; and brushing his mouth with his hand, he tasted the roast pork. It was so good, in fact, that he shared his discovery with his friends. Even in most primitive areas, roast pork is a delicacy.

Fire has captured the heart of man. It is not only an intriguing spectacle but he has learned to make use of it. He uses it to produce steel, purify metals, harden clay, make rubber and numerous other products. Fire is used to make steam, one of his key sources of power. It cooks his food, warms his house, and gets rid of his trash. In fact it is hard to conceive of a world without fire. Its constructive uses far outnumber its destructive terrors.

The center of the earth is molten fire. The source of our light and energy—the sun—is a ball of fire. One of nature's most spectacular scenes is a fiery bolt of lightning crashing to earth, or the hot lava blowing skyward and boiling across

the earth from an erupting volcano. Fire is an essential element of God's creation.

The book *Terror in the Name of God* tells of the strange sect of Doukhobors who migrated from Russia to Canada, where they defy the Canadian laws in the name of God. They demonstrate in the nude, go on hunger strikes, and bomb and burn federal buildings and even their own living quarters. These "Sons of Freedom," as they are called, said God told them to burn and in one year burned 105 buildings. In 40 years they have burned 1,112 buildings and cost the government of Canada over \$20 million. Their idea of burning began in Russia when Czarina Sophia ordered extermination of those who did not attend the Orthodox Mass. Instead of complying, they burned themselves alive and called it "cleansing by fire."

The Bible has much to say about fire and the spiritual significance of fire. One of its most important symbolisms is that it represents divine presence. God was in the burning bush at Horeb and called unto Moses from it (Exod. 3:2-3). Heb. 12:29 reads, "Our God is a consuming fire." Jesus is pictured in the midst of seven candlesticks in Rev. 1:14, where "his eyes were as a flame of fire"—a phrase which is repeated in Rev. 19:12. When the Holy Spirit appeared at Pentecost, one of the manifestations was the "cloven tongues like as of fire" which touched each of them (Acts 2:3).

Not only does fire represent divine presence, but acts and actions are also symbolized by fire. The idea of purification, for example, is found in numerous places. Isaiah's experience of the "live coal . . . laid . . . upon my mouth" (Isa. 6:6-7) symbolized the purging of unclean lips. The wrath of God is often pictured in terms of fire destroying sin. Deut. 4:24 reads: "For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire," from which the words of Heb. 12:29 may have been taken. The fury and indignation of God is spoken of by

Isaiah in these words: "His lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire" (30:27).

God also punishes with fire, as in Gen. 19:24: "The Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven." God purifies with fire: "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich" (Rev. 3:18). God protects by fire. "If any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies" (Rev. 11:5). God will use fire to show His power: "I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke" (Joel 2:30); and He will put fire-power in the mouths of His spokesmen: "Because ye speak this word, behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them" (Jer. 5:14).

On the human level, fire represents the passions of man: "If they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn" (1 Cor. 7:9). James warns: "The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell" (3:6). Fire will try or test every Christian's works (1 Cor. 3:13). In other words, the tests of life and of daily living are as an enduring fire.

Fire will play a significant role in the second return of Christ, and in the final judgment. "They went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone" (Rev. 20:9-10). Then follows the dire pronouncement: "Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (20:15).



3 LIGHT

GOD SAID, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth. . . . God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also" (Gen. 1:14-16).

Light comes to us from tiny, invisible worlds of atoms and from enormous worlds of distant stars. Sunlight is life, for without it we would starve to death. It is a key ingredient in plant growth. The energy of sunlight is also stored away below the surface in the form of coal and other fossil fuels. Coal is the remains of plants that were given energy centuries ago. Coal is burned to produce electricity, which, in turn, gives light. Light is, in fact, a form of energy.

Lightning is a form of natural illumination produced by the explosive interaction of positive and negative electrical charges in earth and atmosphere. One bolt of lightning one mile long has the equivalent lighting power of 1 million light bulbs.

In man's earliest days, the sole source of power was his own muscles. After a time he learned how to harness the energy of animals to serve his purposes. The next step was to find ways to multiply his energy. He found the wheel a prime helper. Later the wind was harnessed by windmills, and water was channeled to turn waterwheels. Then came

steam-powered turbines to produce electricity—man's most useful servant, which produces both power and light.

The world of light is one of the most fascinating studies of all the sciences. It takes one into the sources of light, both natural and mechanical—the sun, moon, stars, electricity, etc. It takes one into the area of luminous bacteria, fireflies, angler fish, phosphorus, etc.; the use of oil of all kinds in lamps, and the natural and manufactured gases used for the same purpose. It leads to a study of X rays and heat lamps, radium and ultraviolet light, and more recently, into the fabulous world of the laser beam. There is seemingly no end.

Man's involvement with light and his uses of it (even black light) are legion.

Light is good news. It illuminates, gives guidance, chases away the darkness which would shut us in. It is life itself; and when we talk about anything that is alive, we talk about light. God talked about light frequently and reminded mankind that light was life. Light in the Bible is a holy thing, a gift of God. Light is more than physical in that we cannot touch it, yet it touches us. It ultimately comes from outer space, its travel measured in light-years, and yet we don't see it until it gets here. At the flick of a switch or the strike of a match, light springs from somewhere, and just as quickly can be extinguished and disappears until called upon again.

Light has a profound effect upon people. Emotions rise and fall with it. If the lights in a room are low, the atmosphere will tend to quiet people and make them contemplative. If the lights are bright, they will cause people to be more active. During the dark of night, people become thoughtful about life. More people die at the dark of night than during the light. But also, in the absence of light, criminal activity increases. The greatest deterrent to crime is adequate lighting during the night hours. Light also tends to

lift the spirits. *Dawn* is an exciting word, for it signals the end of night's darkness. To the sailor, shore lights and channel lights are expressions of hope, safety, and home.

To the ancient Hebrew, light was a holy thing, the natural symbol for Deity. God is extolled as the Creator of light and as being clothed with light (Ps. 104:2). Light is used to express the ultimate blessedness which God gives to men (Ps. 36:9). The holy of holies was an otherwise dark chamber where the divine light of God was the sole illumination. During the Exodus, God's light was displayed to Israel in cloud and fire (Exod. 13:21). You will recall Moses had several meetings with God at and on Mount Sinai. And so much did he reflect the light of God's glory that he had to put a veil over his face when talking to the people.

Over in the New Testament we have numerous references to God and Christ as Light. In 1 John we read: "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1:5-7). God is a Light that does not go into eclipse, does not fade, does not change. That Light is Truth—unaltering and unalterable Truth.

Light in the New Testament is spoken of as residing in the Logos, and the Logos is the Life of men. "In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not" (John 1:4-5). John the Baptist was sent to "bear witness of the light . . . the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (vv. 7-9). So Jesus, the incarnate One, is the Word which becomes the Light of the World. Jesus himself said: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall . . . have the light of life" (John 8:12). On

the other hand, evildoers hate light. It is only the truth-seekers who come to the light. But ultimately the light of judgment sweeps over all men; and as the light searches the heart of man, he becomes his own judge.

The bright searchlights of a prison that reveal a man climbing the wall prompt him to admit, "Yes, I was trying to escape." No one needs to say it for him. Likewise we stand in the bright light of Jesus. His searchlight shines into our hearts, and we don't need anyone to say it for us, "Yes, I am guilty of breaking God's law," we confess, or else we testify with assurance, "Yes, my heart is clean; my sins have been forgiven." "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be re-proved" (John 3:20).

This is often the reason why people don't attend the church where the light of truth is being shed! If the light of God's Word, Christ's truth, penetrates the sinful heart, it will make one feel uncomfortable and guilty. But after he has found forgiveness, he will smile and say, "Let the light shine!" That light of truth will feel good, for all is well between him and God.

When the Apostle Paul was converted, he encountered a bright light that blinded him. When the scales of sinful darkness fell from his eyes, he was commissioned to bear the light to all men, which included the Gentile world. Paul put on the armor of light to contend with the rulers of darkness, who were led by Satan. He warns his hearers (and readers) that the evil one will disguise himself as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14), and exhorts his converts to "walk as children of light" (Eph. 5:8). In fact one of the clearest figures used to describe the Christian way is "walking in the light." It describes a known way, a sure way, and a conscience-free way. The searchlight of God holds no fear, and the lights of our eternal home beckon us on.



4 GRAIN . . . BREAD

A DAM, CAST OUT of the fertile Eden, would labor for his life. "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. . . . In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (Gen. 3:17-19). Raising grain for bread became the farmer's lifetime occupation.

Barley was, in Bible times, the most common cereal grain. It was a winter crop, sown in the fall and harvested in early summer. It was a symbol of poverty, for it was commonly fed to animals and to the poor. But, nonetheless, it was a staple food. Solomon's Temple builders had a daily ration of 20,000 measures of barley. Jesus fed the multitude with a lad's barley loaves. Barley was also used as a unit of measure in Israel: 3 barley grains end to end equaled an inch; 24 equaled a span; 48 equaled a cubit (17 inches).

The other principal grain crop was wheat. It produced a better quality of flour and was also used in certain sacrifices. It was more difficult to raise than barley and was less plentiful. Wheat and barley are referred to as "corn" in the Bible, which doesn't mean Indian maize as we know it in the Western world.

In the Near East, since man's earliest recorded times, grains were part of his culture. Grains of wheat have been found in the settlements of Stone Age people. The earliest evidence of wheat culture in the world comes from the vicinity of Mount Carmel on the coast of northern Israel. Bread has always been the "staff of life."

In the United States, the annual consumption of grain per capita is 230 pounds. Barley is used in baby foods and breakfast cereals; corn in cornmeal and cornflakes; wheat and rye in baking flour; oats in cereals, and so on. We probably could not survive without the products of grain.

Bread or food from grain is mentioned 200 times in the Old Testament, and 100 times in the New Testament. Bread has been described as a gift from God which strengthens man's heart (Ps. 104:15). After the Israelites crossed the Red Sea and journeyed down the west side of the Sinai peninsula, they clamored for bread, saying, "In the land of Egypt . . . we did eat bread to the full" (Exod. 16:3). Then the Lord said: "I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day" (16:4). The children of Israel called the bread from heaven manna. "It was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey" (Exod. 16:31).

In 1823, a German botanist, G. Ekrenburg, came up with the explanation that the manna was a resinous secretion exuded by tamarisk trees and bushes at night, which *did* have a sweet taste and melted under the morning sun. But this "scientific" explanation has not been fully supported. Nor can it account, for example, for the enormous quantity of manna which was needed.

During the years in the wilderness, the Israelites celebrated their deliverance from Egypt with a Passover feast, a feast of "unleavened bread and bitter herbs" (Num. 9:11). Unleavened bread is a flat cake of ground wheat made without yeast. Bread without yeast was to remind the Hebrews of their hurried journey from Egypt when they didn't have yeast with them nor time to let the bread dough rise. Yeast is related to mushrooms and molds, a fungus that grows by putting out thin, small, cell strands. Yeast can grow in the absence of oxygen. In the process of growing, it changes sugar into alcohol and carbon dioxide. The carbon dioxide

gas is what makes the bread rise. The yeast bought today is yeast cells mixed with starch.

In biblical times a bit of dough was held out from one batch and kept to leaven the next. That is what is meant by the phrase "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (Gal. 5:9). Leaven was symbolic of sin, which permeates the soul and must be "purged" completely, for even a speck will spread through the whole (see 1 Cor. 5:7).

In the Talmud, the rabbis gave some very interesting advice on dietetics. Thirteen things were said about bread eaten in the morning. It protects from the heat, cold, injurious spirits, and demons. It makes the simple wise and helps to win lawsuits. It helps one learn and teach the Torah. It causes attention getting, helps the memory, ends body odor, attaches a man to his wife so as not to lust after another, and destroys tapeworms. It drives away envy and brings love. Before a man eats, he has two hearts; after he has eaten, he has one heart. The bread should be made from white flour; barley flour causes worms. Eat bread cold; hot bread has fever in it. Salt must be added to bread and water. There are 83 diseases connected with the bile which can be cured by eating bread in the morning. Poor people will eat bread morning and evening.

Jesus taught His disciples to pray for daily bread (Matt. 6:11). At the same time, it is a normal Christian duty to earn one's bread (2 Thess. 3:8). The Bible speaks of a "bread of affliction" (1 Kings 22:27), of "tears" (Ps. 80:5), of "wickedness" (Prov. 4:17), of "idleness" (Prov. 31:27), of "adversity" (Isa. 30:20), and "from heaven" (Exod. 16:4).

Jesus described himself as "the true bread from heaven": "I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world" (John 6:32-33). Then Jesus went on to say, "I am the bread of life: he that

cometh to me shall never hunger" (v. 35). This conversation developed after Jesus had taken the barley loaves and fed 5,000 men with it and had 12 basketfuls left over. Masses of people followed and Jesus frankly told them, "Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled" (v. 26). Jesus knew people's needs for bread and to be filled, but He was more concerned that they partake of the "meat which endureth unto everlasting life" (v. 27). Jesus promised to fill their spiritual appetites if they would allow Him. If we keep His menu, we too will be served.

Bread is the menu at the Jewish Passover feast. As mentioned earlier, it is unleavened bread to represent expediency and to represent freedom from evil (leaven being symbolic of evil). Twelve loaves of "presence" bread or shewbread (leavened) were placed each Sabbath on the golden table in the holy place of the Temple to represent God's temporal and spiritual provision for His people.

In Jesus' parable of the leaven, He said heaven is like three measures of meal with leaven, the whole being thus leavened. The gospel of heaven will likewise spread universally (Matt. 13:33). We, too, who are the followers of Christ, are the gospel leaven in a sinful world. Somewhat conversely, Jesus warned His disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees (Matt. 16:12; Luke 12:1). Their hypocrisy could so easily permeate the disciples' own thinking.

As was the tradition and custom of the Jews, Jesus observed the Sabbath and the holy feast days. On one such occasion Jesus gave the most profound symbolism of bread ever given. Jesus told Peter and John, "Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat" (Luke 22:8). At the night hour, Jesus sat with the disciples and, in the course of the meal, "took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you:

this do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). Thus was instituted the Lord's Supper, one of the two sacraments observed by the Church today.

Jesus said, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). This is the Bread of Life. Too many eat of the physical bread to their stomachs' fullness, but their lives are empty and bleak. Men need the true Bread of Life that comes out of heaven. Christ said He would fill, and He does just that. He will fill a man's life to the fullest if he will but partake. "O taste and see that the Lord is good," wrote the Psalmist (34:8).



5 OIL

THOU ANOINTEST my head with oil; my cup runneth over" (Ps. 23:5). The symbolic reference to oil is frequently found in the Bible. It usually refers to oil applied literally to the body of man, as in this psalm. Oil today, in the literal sense, could mean oil of the olive, oil of the palm, oil of the castor bean, oil of vegetable, oil of animal, oil of the ground.

Adam's son Abel "brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof" (fat meaning oil from animal) (Gen. 4:4). Noah was commanded to apply pitch within and without the ark (Gen. 6:14). Pitch is a petroleum substance with waterproofing properties.

Gen. 19:28, concerning the land of Sodom and Gomorrah, says, "Lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace." Xiel Pedermann, a businessman, read this and asked himself, Did these conflagrations indicate subterranean gas? He sent a company of oilmen to this Dead Sea location and on November 3, 1953, the first Israeli oil well was drilled.

Oil of the soil means money. The Rockefellers, the Gettys, and others owe their fortunes to it. But civilization depends on it more than on any other single commodity. The energy crisis has made us painfully aware of this. Billions of dollars have been invested in the discovery and development of oil sources throughout the world. The existence of empires has hinged on the matter of oil.

Though for centuries oil had had its uses, principally for healing, for waterproofing, for cooking, for illumination, for heating, and for lubrication, it took the invention of the internal-combustion engine to skyrocket its importance. Now, through scientific developments of recent years, oil has become even more a part of our lives. It is the source of carbon black (tires, plastic), synthetic gas (explosives, animal feed, fertilizers, polyesters), methane (toys, plastic, solvents, refrigerants, nylon, fumigants), ethane (antifreeze, detergents, paints, foam, insulation), propane (seals, epoxy, resins, paints, synthetic rubber, acrylics), butane (nylon, lacquer, solvents, Plexiglas, oil additives, adhesives), benzene (resin, pharmaceuticals, boats, auto parts, dyestuffs, insecticides), toluene (nylon, explosives, paint solvents), xylene (fibers, reinforced plastic), naphthalene (dyestuffs, insecticides). Eventually scientists hope to make oil the major source of protein.

Nobody knows for certain how the oil in the ground was formed, but man is constantly searching for it. In Bible times people used basically oil which came from plants and animals. Their oil was used for food, medicine, lamps, and religious purposes. But there is evidence that oil had been discovered in the ground. Pitch is an example. But in Deut. 32:13 we read, "He made him [Jacob] . . . that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock." Archeologists say that the roots of the ancient olive tree and vine provided the oil of the flinty rock. Some would say that the oil was subterranean. The oil of the olive was used in the ceremonial, unleavened bread of Aaron, the priest, and his sons (Exod. 29:2).

In Lev. 2:15, the instruction of the Lord was to put oil on the corn. Elijah met the widow of Zarephath and asked her for bread. She said she could not furnish any because her supply was low. She had only a handful of wheat and a little

oil in a cruse. Elijah told her to share it; that the supply would never be completely used up. And God supplied wheat and oil for many days (1 Kings 17:12-15). God reminds Jerusalem of how He loved her by allowing her the sumptuous diet of "fine flour, and honey, and oil" (Ezek. 16:13).

Botanists have discovered the biblical spices that were added to olive oil for skin and hair treatment. Even prophets such as Daniel used oil for cosmetic or health purposes (Dan. 10:3), but Amos warns those who "anoint themselves with the chief ointments" (6:6).

The Lord reminded the children of Israel to prepare and bring pure oil of olive for light and to burn the lamp always. Again in Leviticus the Lord calls for continual fire in the lamps of the candlesticks in His Tabernacle (24:2).

Jacob anointed the rocks at Padan-aram as the place of God by pouring oil upon it (Gen. 28:18), perhaps instituting or following the practice of applying oil upon persons or things set apart as special or sacred. The most common such practice was the anointing of priests and, later, kings such as Saul. Instructions were consistently carried out in the anointing of the Tabernacle, its furnishings, and Aaron and his sons. In Samuel the anointing for the kingship is often mentioned. Such an act symbolized the coming of the Spirit of God upon the person for his work, whether priest, king, or prophet. The Messiah, in Isa. 61:1, is said to be anointed by the Spirit of the Lord, and Jesus was subsequently referred to as "the Anointed One."

Anointing with oil was early associated with the healing of the sick. The disciples "cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them" (Mark 6:13). James recommends for the sick, "Pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" (5:14). The practice has continued in healing services to this day.

One of Jesus' best-known parables is the one about the 10 virgins. The 5 foolish virgins had failed to have with them an adequate supply of oil for their lamps and so were unable to share in the marriage supper. It behooves us all to have the anointing oil of God's Spirit upon us, and to have our spiritual lamps burning brightly when Jesus comes to take His bride—the Church—to share in the "marriage supper of the Lamb."

BS525.G66

Northwest Nazarene College

Symbolism in the Word



3 9371 00071379 2

About this book . . .

Among the many spiritual symbols to be found in the Bible, the five most frequently used are water, fire, light, grain/bread, and oil. In this small volume, the author gives intriguing facts about the physical qualities of each of these, its significance in the everyday life of the people, and the spiritual application of each as presented in both Old and New Testaments.