

DAY TWENTY-FOUR

“TESTING HEARTS”

PSALM 11:1-7

Like the morning dew, the rhythm of life continues without much interruption. But no matter how routine your life has become, if you take the time to listen to your heartbeat and call upon your Creator for His presence, you might be surprised that He is always there with a willing ear—*desiring to commune with you*. The challenge is ordering your day so that you prioritize your time with Him in a quiet place where you can be away from the distractions of life. This, however, takes a certain amount of discipline, so you may acquire some precious moments with Him.

For the past twenty-four days that I have been committed to Counting the Omer, my dedication to meditating on the selected Psalms has been a tremendous blessing. My relationship with the Lord is being renewed to a point where He is pleased to reveal more and more about the intimacy that He desires. Interestingly, as I pondered Psalm 11 last night and again this morning, the remembrance of testing, trials, and tribulations seemed to percolate to the surface of my thoughts. But before commenting on these things, please take the time to consider reflecting on the following passages:

PSALM 67:1-7

For the choir director; with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song. God be gracious to us and bless us, *and* cause His face to shine upon us—Selah. That Your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all nations. Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. Let the nations be glad and sing for joy; for You will judge the peoples with uprightness and

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guide the nations on the earth. Selah. Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. The earth has yielded its produce; God, our God, blesses us. God blesses us, that all the ends of the earth may fear Him.

PSALM II:I-7

For the choir director. A Psalm of David. In the LORD I take refuge; how can you say to my soul, ‘Flee as a bird to your mountain; for, behold, the wicked bend the bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string to shoot in darkness at the upright in heart. If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?’ The LORD is in His holy temple; the LORD’s throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men. The LORD tests the righteous and the wicked, and the one who loves violence His soul hates. Upon the wicked He will rain snares; fire and brimstone and burning wind will be the portion of their cup. For the LORD is righteous, He loves righteousness; the upright will behold His face.

As I considered these verses, which are referred to as a Psalm of “Refuge and Defense” in some study Bibles, I was drawn to reflect upon the middle three verses:

“If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? The LORD is in His holy temple; the LORD’s throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men. The LORD tests the righteous and the wicked, and the one who loves violence His soul hates” (Psalm 11:3-5).

As I considered the reality that the LORD God is constantly watching us and testing us in a variety of ways, the Psalmist’s usage of “the foundations” (*ha’shatot*) caught my attention. Thinking about the inspiration David must have felt as he composed this Psalm, I recalled that he was known as a “man after God’s own heart” (cf. 1 Samuel 13:14; Psalm 89:20; Acts 7:46). It is obvious from reading what the Scriptures reveal about his character, that as a young man and into his adult life, he was someone who devoted a considerable amount of his thoughts to the Holy One of Israel. David knew that his relationship with the Lord was of paramount importance, and his accredited compositions reflect the intimacy that he had. Here in this Psalm it is evident that David probably meditated upon the preeminence of God in the Heavenlies, seated upon His throne, surveying the world scanning not only the righteous, but also the wicked.

If you take a moment to think about this posture, you might begin to understand why David had a holy reverence for the Creator. In a like manner, if we too could imagine the Almighty continually monitoring not only our actions, but also our thoughts, we just might begin to humbly respond in obedience to His Word. By so doing, we might receive an occasional nod of approval in that what He sees is pleasing in His sight. But is it possible that as David took on increasing responsibility, during his ascension to become king of Israel, that some of his earlier

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patterns for communing with the Lord were interrupted or altered? Is it possible that some of the foundational disciplines of his personal faith were eroded by the cares of the world?

From the Scriptural records, we know that King David was not a perfect human being, but one who had failings that affected his life and the history of Ancient Israel. But rather than dwell on some of the mistakes he made and the consequences they caused, it would be beneficial for each of us to simply reflect upon our own spiritual walk and how important it is for us to individually maintain a communion with God. None of us is predestined to become future kings over Israel, but we all have to contend with whatever human responsibilities that we bear during our sojourns through life. Let us remember that regardless of the positions we have in the world in which we live, according to the wisdom seen in the words of David, even the righteous will be tested.

If you really know and believe that the testing of the Lord is coming to you, perhaps you might want to prepare in advance for some of His examinations. All of us have areas of our lives that need to be changed, in order to be conformed to the image of the Messiah (Romans 8:29). The unfortunate problem is that *most people do not want to do what is required for change*. Most simply want to get along with the minimal amount of effort in their spiritual development. Our flesh is very good at avoiding things it does not want to do, or accommodating things it wants to do. Whether on the physical plane (diet, exercise, work) or on the spiritual plane (prayer, Bible study, service/ministerial duties), the reality of life is that most people will get very comfortable in some routine that just allows them to “survive.”

It is often not until we come into a season of testing and trials, that a change to our actions is often accomplished. It is at this point that whatever disciplines we have established in our walks of faith will keep us on the straight and narrow path. Or, if our foundation has been at all eroded or has not even been built, then we will be subjected to some of the more horrendous consequences when the storms of life come. **And trust me, they will come!**

Even if you are a person after God’s own heart like King David, then if his pattern for life is replicated, will you desire with all your heart to be right with the Lord? Do you remember that after he dealt with his sin, the consequences of adultery, and the loss of a son at birth, he composed one of his most revealing Psalms about how much he desired intimacy and right standing before his God? As he concluded this heartfelt plea to the Lord, he actually implores Him for more testing:

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; **try me and know my anxious thoughts**; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way” (Psalm 139:23-24).

Here, the contrite David cries out to God to test him in order to know his heart. **David wanted to get his heart right with the Lord.** Since the disciplines of his faith were established in the hills of Judea, when as a young

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shepherd boy he tended sheep and communed with his Heavenly Father, he was led to go right back to *the Source* of mercy. David recognized that God is full of compassion and forgiveness. Of course, we know that His mercy was extended, but not without David and Israel ultimately reaping some consequences of ungodly behavior that ultimately took root in his son and successor, Solomon.

The question that we should all ponder, as we continue to Count the Omer on our journey to the Feast of Weeks, is what kind of disciplines are we establishing for our spiritual walks today. Are you taking the time to commune with Him on a regular basis? Do you sincerely desire to want to know Him in a more profound way? If you are, then your actions should certainly reflect this passion. You might even find yourself devoting some of your precious time to prayer and Bible study. You just might try to Count the Omer, no matter what method you employ, knowing that the Holy One is simply looking after your heart's desire to obey and serve Him. He sees into our innermost parts, and knows our true intentions. The Prophet Jeremiah declares that only the Lord understands the common deceitfulness of the human heart:

“The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds” (Jeremiah 17:9-10).

In these revealing comments, we see that the unregenerate human heart is truly wicked, and that the Lord searches the heart and tests the mind to render to each person according to his ways.¹

Where is your heart today? Are you being tested in any way as to what your motivations are in your relationship with God? How about your foundations? Are they solidly on *the Rock*, our Lord Yeshua the Messiah? What are you doing to maintain your relationship or improve your knowledge of Him? Are you spending some priority time with Him, or are the cares of the world distracting you and keeping you from the intimacy you once enjoyed?

These and countless questions can come to mind during this special season. But do not be discouraged if you see that you are putting yourself ahead of Him. This is our natural, mortal predisposition. Instead, determine in your heart **that you want to know Him more than anything else you can imagine**. In so doing, then you too can realize what David concludes with, as he speaks about the destiny of the upright who seek Him: “The upright will behold His face” (Psalm 11:7b). Commit yourself to making the Lord first, and He will guide you into His great purpose!

As you develop more spiritual discipline in your faith, I pray that you will behold His face and see His eyes gaze upon you with His love and approval. The culminating remarks that we all long to hear uttered from His mouth are: “Well

¹ For some more reflection, consult the article “The Work of the Holy Spirit: Perfection of the Heart” by J.K. McKee, appearing in the *Messianic Spring Holiday Helper*.

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done, good and faithful servant” (cf. Matthew 25:21, 23; Luke 19:17). Certainly by such a future point, we will know that our hearts have passed all the tests which have been administered. David yearned for this same approval, and testifies that he received it:

“Let my judgment come forth from Your presence; let Your eyes look with equity. **You have tried my heart;** You have visited *me* by night; **You have tested me and You find nothing**” (Psalm 17:2-3).

May we all be blessed with this same response as He tests our hearts!