

119 "the continual dew of thy blessing"

In the Prayer Book service of Morning Prayer, one of the set prayers we address to "Almighty and everlasting God" is for "the clergy and people". Within that prayer are found two beautiful phrases, so full of spiritual meaning - "Send upon them the healthful Spirit of thy grace: and pour upon them the continual dew of thy blessing".

The first phrase speaks of the health-giving, grace-filled work of the Holy Spirit in all Christian lives, including His giving of those gifts and the bearing of that spiritual fruit that we have been considering in the past two Reflections. This time we turn to "the continual dew of thy blessing".

By looking through the references to the word "dew" in our Concordances, we are shown precious things from the Lord. He tells us, first and foremost, that dew is from God Himself, from heaven, that it is deeply precious of itself, and is highly valued by the Lord's people. The Lord asks Job, " who hath begotten the drops of dew?" (Job 38.28): frankly, He has, and Job hasn't!

We read in Exodus 16.13 that - "the dew lay round about the host"; here was the Lord's faithful gift of manna, in response to the murmurings of the people in the wilderness, just as He had promised (verse 12).

Isaac blessed his two sons (Genesis 27.28 and 39): to Jacob (who had tricked him) - "Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine"; and to Esau, "Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven above".

Later, (Deuteronomy 33) Moses blessed the tribe of Joseph - "Blessed of the Lord be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew ..." (verse 13), and then all the people of Israel - "Israel shall dwell in safety the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew" (verse 28).

In Psalm 133 the dwelling-together of brothers in unity is likened to "the dew of Hermon, and the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, life for evermore". How precious is such unity, as precious as the dew itself.

Just as dew is seen as a blessing from the Lord, so its absence speaks of His displeasure with His people. Elijah announced to Ahab the king, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word" (1 Kings 17.1); and then, very sensibly, Elijah made himself scarce!

During the rebuilding of the temple, the Lord sent His prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judea: God's own house was a waste, yet the builders of it were living in comfortable houses themselves - "Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit" (Haggai 1.10).

The Lord also sometimes likens His people's behaviour to the dew. ".... Your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away" (Hosea 6.4); and concerning the idolaters amongst His people, "Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away" (Hosea 13.3).

So time after time throughout the Old Testament we see how dew possesses particular spiritual significance - be it as a symptom of God's blessing, or of His discontent, or of the people's own fickleness before Him.

Yet there is one more lovely reference worth mentioning here - Micah 5.7 - "And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass". Here is the old promise, seen in times past and to be seen again in times to come, that the very presence of "Abraham's seed" amongst the peoples means that those peoples are blessed (Genesis 12.2-3), blessed as with "dew from the Lord".

As we ask God our Father for "the continual dew of His blessing" in our prayers, we remember that we, as Gentiles, are now also of Abraham's seed, by reason of our faith in Jesus Christ (Romans Chapter 4). That means that our very presence too can be a blessing, as dew from the Lord, to all those people amongst whom we live - family, church family, neighbours, colleagues, friends, enemies, strangers.

What a calling. What a privilege!