



AND three of the thirty chief went down, and came to David in the harvest time unto the cave of Adullam: and the troop of the Philistines pitched in the valley of Rephaim. 14 And David was then in an hold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem. 15 And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate! 16 And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the Lord. 17 And he said, Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mighty men. (2 Sam 23:13-17)

There are many wells mentioned in the Holy Bible. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were prolific well-diggers. These wells have provided life-giving water to many with parched lips and barren souls. You will recall poor Hagar fleeing into the wilderness to escape the harsh treatment of Sarah. The Lord found her by a well of water in the wilderness. (Genesis 16:7) *"Wherefore the well was called Beerlahairoi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered."* (Gen 16:14) The well was named, by Hagar, *"Beerlachairoi,"* meaning a 'well to the Living One who seeth me.' "

There is another famous biblical well outside the gates of the Samaritan city of Sychar (Samaria) known to us as Jacob's Well. A woman of immoral living came there in the heat of the day to draw water. It might be supposed that she came at that noon hour to avoid the sharp tongues of the women of the city and their gossip. She came seeking the water some fifty feet beneath the earth, but left with an overflowing abundance of the waters of salvation. *"Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."* (Isaiah 12:3)

All wells mentioned in the Bible were important to men and women and often meant the difference between life and death. But the Wells of Salvation that the Lord offers us is an overflowing Fountain whose source is Eternal. *"Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But 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 4:13-14)

It is given as the best counsel under Heaven to drink from that Fountain of Living Waters which our Lord represents rather than those contaminated and stagnant wells of man who preach for filthy lucre.. *“For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.”* (Jer 2:13)

I would like to focus, for the remainder of this devotion, on another well beside the gate of a small hamlet of Judah called Bethlehem. Bethlehem was the place of birth of King David, and later the legal (not physical) Son of David – the Lord Jesus Christ.

King David has just lost his son, Absalom, while battling elements of Israel in the wilderness. The kingdom is divided and David is King of Judah. The Philistines occupy Jerusalem, and David is in a stronghold in the desert regions. His heart is heavy owing to the treachery of his son, Absalom, and finally the death of the same. It seems to David that the enemy is on all fronts, and there is no rear echelon of power. In such times, the mind of a man or woman may wander back to more innocent and happy memories. David remembers his old home place in Bethlehem which is under the control of the Philistines. He may have remembered playing in the narrow streets there, and keeping watch over his flock on the hills overlooking Bethlehem – the same hills over which the Angel of the Lord announced to the shepherds the birth of a Savior. He longs for the peace and joy of those bygone days. Then his mind falls upon the memory of a Well of Water just beside the gates of Bethlehem. Suddenly, that Well embodies all that is good in the memory of King David.

Well, a good King commands the loyalty and love of his people. When David, in a moment of abandon, comments on his desire to simply drink once more from the Well at the Gate in Bethlehem, three of his courageous men immediately undertake to get that water for their king. Risking their lives, they break through the lines of the Philistines at Bethlehem and retrieve the treasured water. This is not the water that David really craves, but it is the water of the Wells of Salvation that haunts his heart’s desire.

In these modern days of rampant sin and irreverent disregard to God Almighty, we, too, often hail back to a more innocent age when the cardinal sins of our day were unheard of among the common people of our nation. If we could just turn back time to those days, we would be in good stead, we think. But the hands of time cannot be set in reverse, and neither can the innocence of a fairer age be restored to a stiff-necked and rebellious people. Only God can turn the hearts of man back to His Law and Grace.

There are no cultivated plants in a wilderness desert. There may be plenty of briars, weeds and undergrowth that cannot satisfy the hungers of men. Weeds, like sin, grow without cultivation. But the hearty crops of our food chain require the labor of the plow and bucket. Life-giving plants do not grow without cultivation.

For me, the Well by the Gate of Bethlehem is an era of my childhood in which drug abuse (and even alcohol abuse) were unheard of or very rare. Marital infidelity was not a common thing. In fact, when we learned that a divorced woman had moved into a small community near our home, my friends and I wanted to go see what a divorced woman looked like. Homosexuality was a dirty word, and I knew no one who practiced that filthy sin. In my young days, a man could go to jail for using a curse word in public. No one would have even conceived of another wearing their pants down so low as to bare their undergarments, or something even more vile.

But I can never drink from that Well by the Gate of Bethlehem any more than King David dared to do so. We cannot go back – we can only go forward. Someone in America, long before my birth, made provision for a Godly and decent society for children to grow up in during my young age. As we go forward to the future, should the adult population – the parents, teachers, policemen, and clergy, not be about cultivating gardens of delight instead of sewers of filth and sin for our upcoming generations?

I find that even that old well of my youth cannot provide the sweet and life-giving waters of the Fountain of Living Waters which our Lord has provided. Quite often, that Fountain, like the Well of *Beerlachairoi* that the Lord set before Hagar, may be found in Wilderness places. David found such a Fountain and gave us a beautiful prayer that all can repeat who have found the Lord in the wilderness of the world:

O GOD, *thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; 2 To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. 3 Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. 4 Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name. 5 My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: 6 When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches. 7 Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice. 8 My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me. 9 But those that seek my soul, to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth. 10 They shall fall by the sword: they shall be a portion for foxes. 11 But the king shall rejoice in God; every one that sweareth by him shall glory: but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.* (Psalms 63:1-11)

David, a short time later, was returned to Bethlehem to be buried, but did, indeed, drink of the Wells of Salvation purchased by another Child of Bethlehem – the Lord Jesus Christ. *So David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David (i.e., BETHLEHEM).* (1 Kings 2:10)