THOUGHTS OF APRIL, 2011

1. Every man needs to get downwind from himself from time to time. Selah, brothers.

2. Read Matthew 25:all. It is written to two types of believers, not disciples vs. unbelievers, and not disciples vs. those who may become disciples. Those parables were spoken to us in the church, and the Lord classed us as being in one of two distinct groups – disciples or hypocrites. He did not leave room between those two groups for a third group. That is the crux of this Thought.

The message is about right living in order to be prepared for our home-going, whether by our earth-death or by rapture. “Being saved” starts with our being born again, but does not then leap to our going to heaven. That is not the Lord’s picture or definition of our being saved. The God who saved us from going to hell also saved us into a righteous life, delivered from having to/being bound to sin, as can be shown by evil behavior, self-centeredness, or unfruitfulness. The God who made us born again has tied righteous living to our rebirth, not only to our going to heaven when we die. We are either disciples [God-directed through loving fellowship with Him – although imperfect folks] or hypocrites [self-directed, disobedient, lazy, and unfruitful – although possibly religious and nice folks]. Therein read what happens to Christian hypocrites, which is not “going to hell.” Notice that all three of the loser-types [one in each parable] called Jesus “Lord.” Also read Matthew 7:21-23.

3. We have hope for something better, aspirations for something better, for ourselves or for others. Then what happens if we don’t get that better thing, don’t even come near being considered for it, and we languish where we are. The temptation then is to be and do less than our best, isn’t it. That’s human nature but not godly nature.

In Genesis 40:14 Joseph asked his fellow prisoner, who had been Pharaoh’s cup bearer and was about to be restored to that position, to remember him when he was restored to that high position. He asked him to kindly mention to Pharaoh that there was a good man in prison, one whom Pharaoh could use. But, when the cup bearer was restored, he forgot Joseph.

Two years later the cupbearer did remember Joseph and told Pharaoh of Joseph’s talent. As a result, soon thereafter Pharaoh placed Joseph over all of his house and nation. In all of the Egyptian Empire, only Pharaoh was greater than Joseph. What had Joseph done in prison during the interval? He had excelled at whatever he put his hand to.

Our lesson: If we were born to be rewarded or elevated, the Lord will do it. Like Joseph, we may be hankering for something less than the Lord plans for us. Joseph just wanted out of prison. There is no way that we will miss what He plans, perhaps unless we respond unfaithfully to being passed over during our preparation process.

4. Here is probably the most accurate and condensed comprehensive commentary on fasting that you will ever read [semi-joke]: Food and drink fasting [and there are broader aspects of fasting shown in Scripture, such as sexual intercourse] is a form of denying self in order to develop soul-muscles. Fasting is an exercise in self-denial, of voluntarily taking better control over our flesh in an area of life that may already be perfectly righteous [not in sin], and of moving “stuff” such as food out of our lives as we draw closer to the Lord. Jesus taught us to take up our crosses daily, deny ourselves, and follow Him. Fasting is not to get God’s attention, nor to call others’ attention to our greater spirituality, nor to afflict ourselves [punish ourselves] due to our sins. A group may fast jointly about a matter. Fasting may be in preparation for a coming event. It is often associated with intentional prayer. The Holy Spirit leads us to fast, although we can fast aside from His leadership or strength.

5. You businessmen and professionals, if you are on an honest search for the truth [and I know that you are], and you respect the dignity of humans [and I know that you do], at times you may have noticed that things like responsibility, integrity and enterprise can get stomped on by the expediency of a government handout coming your way. Here in America we wonder, “What would Jesus cut” from our government’s welfare programs, as the budget battle wages in Washington, D.C. and in our state and local governments. It seems that we must [wrongly] equate God’s concern for the poor with government welfare programs. If we advocate reducing redistributionists’ solutions we start fretting about being immoral and unbiblical.

That political and theological progressive influence is obvious to most of us. It shows as the media, churches and schools call for the redistribution of others’ property in the name of morality or social justice. Far too often, those who listen are convinced that The Way is that way.

Some comments: 1) We get no credit for giving when it is forced giving, which applies to giving through the process of forced taxation. 2) We should be alerted when those who use Scripture to shame us into voting more tax money for charity are not themselves believers – as measured by their church attendance and the amount and proportion of their own non-tax giving. 3) Giving to those who will not work destroys society. 4) When government is looked upon as one’s last resort, we have made our government into another of our many gods.

6. In the days of the stagecoach here in America, riders bought 3 classes of tickets, much like our airline first and second class tickets. On the stagecoach the tickets were “sit,” “walk” and “push.” When the stagecoach got into a bog or had to cross a waterway, those with “sit” tickets sat, those with “walk” tickets got out and walked until the stagecoach passed the difficulty, and those with “push” tickets pushed.

Which ticket have you purchased in your church congregation?

7. Millions of people have been murdered while others tried to advance them into something, such as a better form of government that they were not prepared to understand, accept, or maintain. In the example at hand, I’m speaking of democracy, and those nations for whom we want freedom and some form of democratic government. We want the best for them, do we not?

They want freedom, but only a few who have been westernized know what it is, whether it is desired by the masses, how to start it, and how to maintain [be responsible for] it. Those several Moslem nations in which are so much unrest are current examples of this situation.

Here is a voice of understanding and reason in the matter, as quoted from A-7 news: “An editorial in a Qatari newspaper has told U. S. president Barack Obama that Qatar was not keen on the U. S. exporting ‘democracy’ to that country. ‘Mr. President, we have often written about U. S. foreign policy having double standards and being unmindful of the process of change in the Middle East. We do not want U. S. to export democracy to us because we do not want to repeat the Iraq experience,” wrote Khalid Al Syed, the editor-in-chief of the Doha-based daily the Peninsula in his editorial. ‘We believe Qatar is on the learning curve and we are making progress in practicing democracy, from media to public debate and education. It is true, we do not have party labels and a representative house, but all Qataris are one party behind the Emir and parliament and that will come sooner or later.” Al Syed concluded, “We strongly believe that change and democracy should come from within and should never be imported or we will have what happened in Iraq.”

That person has understanding and wisdom, and should be listened to by our government.

8. Of course, you know that the English of “Nuf Awad on Al-Hayat al-Jadida” is “he couldn’t slaughter a chicken.” That was an easy one. How about, who said “Common sense is nothing more than a deposit of prejudices laid down by the mind before you reach eighteen?” That was Albert Einstein.

9. Here is a “soft” prophetic statement, meaning that I think it is likely true. It does not rise to the level of confidence required biblically as “a word from God.” Words spoken with that proclamation had to be right, or the prophet was executed. That was the Lord’s instruction, which at least informs us of the importance of speaking accurately for Him. Those prophets, in addition to prophetic statements, were always teaching God’s word and biblical principles from God’s previously spoken words, such as from the writings of Moses. They also gave godly counsel. Only a few of the things they said in their broad ministry of God’s word rose to the “firm” prophetic level at which they would say: “This is from the Lord. He gave it to me. I commit my life to its being fresh, absolute truth.”

I almost missed giving the “soft” prophetic statement, which may indicate that I am more of a teacher than a prophet. It is likely that Japan will produce the next group of world missionaries – will be the nation that next sends out a large group of missionaries. Consider the religious history of Japan just during my lifetime. After centuries of deeply embedded ancestor and emperor worship, while keeping out foreigners and foreign religions, they entered World War II on a religious high. They lost. Their religion and the emperor failed them. They were in a profound state of confusion. General Douglas MacArthur was in charge of Japan during that prolonged post-war occupation. During those years, with Japan seemingly open to new Western ideas of all types, the General urged Christians to come as missionaries. He perceived the openness of the people and interpreted it as God’s time. The church did not respond, except sparsely. The exception was that, years later, various Christian-based helps organizations began to work. Among other things done, in more recent years every household in Japan had Christian literature placed therein, twice. Then came the earthquake and tsunami and nuclear reactor meltdown. Now the worlds’ churches are moving in with temporal assistance, which means the Japanese people are being shown the love of God and of His people. Those recently established and proven helps ministries have the ear and eye of even the highest levels of Japanese leadership, including the Emperor. This is likely the beginning of the Christianization of Japan, from which may develop their worldwide ministry of the Gospel.

10. When you were born, you were crying and everyone around you was smiling. Live your life so that when you die, you will be smiling and everyone else will be crying.

11. The happiest of people don’t necessarily have the best of everything; they just make the most of everything.

12. A person or a country is what it stands for, when standing for something is the most difficult.

13. It is not difficult to recognize the difference between a “cause” and an “excuse.” When one thing causes another, removing the cause makes the effect vanish. On the other hand, if one thing is an excuse, then even taking away the excuse does not deter the effect.

14. Historians have come up with numerous theories to explain anti-Semitism. Here are the top six: 1) Economic: Jews are hated because they possess too much wealth and power. That is easily disproven. 2) Chosen People: Jews are hated because they arrogantly claim to be the chosen people. That is partly true, but they didn’t devise the claim – God did. And, I have never known a Jew to be arrogant on that matter, nor have I read such. On this matter, they are quiet and humble. Besides, the church [composed of Jews and Gentiles] is also God’s chosen people. 3) Deicide: Jews are hated because they killed Jesus Christ. That’s an oldie that most biblical Christians have abandoned. All sinners are responsible for His death, and all are sinners. The Father sent Jesus to His death for our sakes. 4) Scapegoat: Jews are a convenient group to single out and blame for all troubles. Many other minorities have the same problem, but the Jews have a vast edge on this one. 5) Outsiders: Jews are hated because they are different from the rest of society. That’s partly true of Jews, but also partly true of many other groups. 6) Racial theory: Jews are hated because they are an inferior race. I’ll not waste a comment on that one.

All of these “reasons” for hating Jews are untrue or substantially untrue, which makes them “excuses,” not “causes,” of anti-Semitism.

15. I will try to attach three separate writings to this edition of THOUGHTS. If unsuccessful, I will send them separately.

The Lord is with you, no matter what or where or when [or how]. That’s not simply my opinion.