



10 gents gathered on the lovely morning of 12 August 2017 to again enjoy the food, fun and fellowship that is the LCOC Men's Prayer Breakfast. And home cooking was on the menu with a feast of freshly made eggs to order (as long as you wanted scrambled), sausage links, bacon (the REAL thing, not that turkey imitating bacon stuff), toasted English muffins, fresh fruit, OJ, milk and coffee. What a treat! IHOP, Denny's and Waffle House chefs can just take a back seat to our culinary expert, and the price couldn't be beat. Can't imagine starting the weekend off any better.

Our normal Scandinavian corner was at it again discussing all things Norwegian, Danish and Swedish. Most of the discussion this particular morning was focused on a topic near and dear to them – eating. Didn't catch a lot of the chatter since a fair amount of it was in one language or another that wasn't English. At one point they were talking about "hard ess" to discover it was a linguistics thing about how the languages pronounced similar words but either with a "hard ess" or a "soft ess". That was a relief, some of us thought they were talking about their dads or former bosses.

Our resident pack rat walked in with this rather large Styrofoam box, one that looks like the things EMTs use to transport transplant organs like a heart, liver or kidneys, or what your Omaha Steaks would arrive in. Apparently, whatever was in it was too large to stuff into one of his shirt pockets, his normal storage and transport choice. Anyway, we found out it contained a video which was one of nine video lessons about what you're missing from the Bible. Thankfully it didn't contain some pulsating human internal organ. Sadly, no rib eyes or filet mignons either. One gent won this video as a result of guessing the answer to one of the biblical trivia questions posed. Almost like winning the Lottery!

Another gent (the winner of the aforementioned video) was discussing how his new dog was just learning to bark (am I the only person who didn't know puppies had to learn to bark?). Perhaps he would have preferred to have won a Rosetta Stone video on learning dog barking instead. He went on to discuss the merits of various Doggie Day Care facilities, and things to consider to ensure proper care and pampering of your pooch. Sounded better than some places I took the family on vacation in their younger days. We also heard a gent discussing the trauma involved in planning to take their recent high school grad to college in Florida. You know that possibly the toughest decision facing the new college student is deciding where to spend Holiday vacations, especially those in November and December. Let's see, Florida or Virginia? Duh....

Lee had the lesson for the day, and his topic was from an internet site and an article titled ***The Life of Adam and Eve***. But first we had to engage in some **Qigong** (pronounced *chi gong*) which is a holistic system of coordinated body posture and movement, breathing, and meditation used for health, spirituality, and martial arts training. With roots in Chinese medicine, philosophy, and martial arts, qigong is traditionally viewed as a practice to cultivate and balance *qi* (*chi*), translated as "life energy". According to Taoist, Buddhist, and Confucian philosophy, qigong allows access to higher realms of awareness, awakens one's "true nature", and helps develop human potential. Qigong practice typically involves moving meditation, coordinating slow flowing movement, deep rhythmic breathing, and calm meditative state of mind. We opted to simply stand up and then sit, bend our knees, roll our hands and breathe deeply (generally not a problem for our group after exercising). We then moved through the lesson quickly before our naps.

The ***Life of Adam and Eve***, also known, in its Greek version, as the ***Apocalypse of Moses***, is a Jewish pseudepigraphical (meaning "falsely attributed works") group of writings. It purportedly recounts the lives of Adam and Eve from after their expulsion from the Garden of Eden to their deaths. This period has also been referred to as the ***Fall of Man***. The ancient versions of this account include ones in Greek, Latin, Slavic, Armenian, Georgian, and one or two fragmentary Coptic (i.e. Egyptian translations of Greek) versions. While the surviving versions were composed from the early 3rd to the 5th century, the literary units in the work are considered to be older and predominantly of Jewish origin. There is wide agreement that the original was composed in a Semitic language in the 1st century AD. For our purposes, we only looked at the article to use the stories for discussions of our own faith that comes from our true source, our Bible.

We are all quite familiar with the story of Adam and Eve and their fall from grace in ***Genesis*** chapter 2. But the Bible doesn't follow their exploits after expulsion from the Garden, and this writing tries to fill in those blanks. As such, the first part of our study talks about Adam and Eve's search for food after their banishment from the Garden of Eden.

There was no need for bodily nourishment in Eden, and now on Earth they find that human pain from hunger needs earthly food similar to what God provided for animals and other beasts to eat to survive. So, we discussed our lives and the world and how the search for, and need for food plays important roles in our livelihood. What would it be like to never have to eat? Was it because of Adam and Eve's sin we are not forced into an earthly need for food, and how now the dust from which Adam was formed now must provide the source of the food we now eat? Interesting to see how such parallels exists in the Bible ("dust to dust") and how we view our world today.

We then read where Adam and Eve were doing penitence in hopes of God forgiving them and either providing them food or taking them back into Paradise. And during this period Adam and Eve are again tempted by the Devil, transformed into "*the brilliance of an angel*" and their struggles to resist. The story uses this period to also address the Devil's fall from grace and how he was not at fault for his actions and it was Adam, created in God's image, that caused him and his followers to be cast out from Heaven. Again, we talked about how people are constantly challenged to decide good from evil, easy from the difficult, right from wrong, blaming our failings on others, etc., and how faith in God serves to strengthen our resolve and knowing that even if we succumb, our God is a forgiving God always striving to renew and strengthen our faith and trust in Him. The story relates of how Adam became exasperated at the Devil's taunts and accusations and called out to God "*O Lord my God, in your hands is my life*" and asked God to rid him of the Devil, and the Devil disappeared. Whether this happened or not is not as important as the lesson of the importance of having faith in God and the power of prayer.

The story moves on to Eve's birth of Cain, and how Eve prayed for mercy in her pain, of Adam also praying to God for Eve, and how angels arrived to comfort them and prepare them for the safe birth of their child. The angel Michael also gave seeds to Adam from God such that he could plant them and receive fruits from the earth to sustain them. Later Eve gave birth to Abel, and the story goes on to tell of Cain's slaying of Abel and Eve's subsequent delivery of her third son, Seth. The remainder of the story tells of Adam and Eve recounting their fall from grace and life experiences to Seth, and how Seth must never forget that even when evils are brought upon him, he must pray to God, for He is a loving Father, merciful and forgiving. The story then tells of the deaths of Adam and Eve and the messages they also pass on to their surviving children of God's mercy and love.

There is much dispute over the origin, accuracy, authenticity, significance and meaning of the *Life of Adam and Eve*. Most likely these were mythical stories passed down by word of mouth over centuries to try and offer explanations as to the challenges of a mortal earthly life versus immortality in Paradise. There are linkable passages and lessons from the Old Testament to some of this story that some would argue lend some credibility to the story. But the overwhelming majority of the analyses of these writings largely support the need to focus more on the importance of the lessons conveyed by the story as opposed to the validation of any actual events. The fall from grace, the heartaches and pains, physically and mentally, of life on earth, temptation by the Devil, the need for penitence, and most importantly, the importance of having faith in God are principal teaching points of these writings. And it was in that vein that we undertook this particular lesson, as skeptical we might be of its origin. But then, that's the fun of our LCOC Men's Prayer Breakfast studies, not being afraid to get out of our comfort zones and discover other writings and teachings that we can explore and add to our own catalogs of life experiences and beliefs.

Our **next LCOC Men's Prayer Breakfast is Saturday, 9 September 2017**. As always, we're always looking for new folks to join us, if for no other reason to enjoy a nice breakfast, swap some stories, and take part in discussing topics presented by members of our group. No preparation is really needed, no dress code (but wearing pants and shirts is encouraged) and a commitment to having some fun.

Hope to see you all then!!!