

# The Berean Ecclesial News

A newsletter devoted wholly to the Berean Christadelphian Ecclesial welfare, with the object of providing ecclesial news and information of fraternal interest to the Brotherhood.

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ECCLESIAL NEWS.....	Portland
EXHORTATION.....	King Saul - The Peoples Choice.....75
AS YE SEE THE DAY APPROACHING.....	85
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?.....	88
FRATERNAL GATHERINGS.....	Lampasas, Richard, Hye
B.E.N.'S PAGE.....	(Insert)

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God Willing, The Berean Ecclesial News will be published monthly as an avenue of providing information of ecclesial interest to the Brotherhood. Ecclesial news and correspondence, Fraternal Gathering notices, special activities and upbuilding exhortations are welcome. We hope this effort will upbuild and prepare us in heart and mind for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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CHRIST IS COMING SOON AND WILL REIGN ON EARTH

## ECCLESIAL NEWS

PORTLAND, Oregon -- Memorial 11 am. Study class Sunday afternoon once a month. Meetings held at various homes. Please direct communications to Bro. Dave Burnett, 25321 NE 72nd Avenue, Battle Ground, WA 98604; phone 360-687-5641.

Loving greetings to all our Brethren and Sisters in the hope of the Truth.

For a weekend in May of this year we were very pleased to have the company and fellowship of Bro. Braden and Sis. Shirley Edwards. We had lots of discussion on the things of God, and enjoyed the memorial meeting together, with Braden providing the essential word of exhortation. On Saturday we tried to get a good view of a mostly cloud-covered Mt. Hood while going back in time quite a few years with a fun ride on the old Mt. Hood Railway, and over the whole weekend we generally got to know each other much better. Their time and effort in coming so far were truly appreciated.

In our last ecclesial report we wrote of the falling asleep in Christ of Bro. Bill Sharp. Since then Sis. Lois has remained in our area, and we have all felt very privileged to have her association. And Lois is really a very "sharp" sister: if we have forgotten something about some person or event of the past, we just ask Lois! She is usually able to be with us for the memorial meeting at least every other week. For any who may not have this information, mail to Lois should be sent c/o Paul Sharp, 19830 SW Gassner Road, Aloha, OR 97007. The telephone number is 503-649-0930.

We continue our practice of meeting at various homes as noted above. In our Sunday afternoon class we are nearing the end of The Faith in the Last Days, which has been a very invigorating study. The closer we get to the works of the earlier brethren of these latter days, the more we appreciate and thank God for their understanding and labor, and the more determined we should be to uphold and never surrender the treasure with which we have been entrusted.

On behalf of the Portland ecclesia, and with much love from all of us here, Bro. Dave Burnett

## FRATERNAL GATHERINGS & ACTIVITIES (To be held God Willing)

LAMPASAS FRATERNAL GATHERING.....June 11-13, 1999  
Please call or write to: Bro. Rusty Stephen at: 512-556-6771  
Box 16A HC3, Lampasas, Tx 76550

**RICHARD FRATERNAL GATHERING**.....July 2-5, 1999  
Please call or write to: Bro. Dan Jackson at: 306-445-8677  
R.R. #1, North Battleford, Sask., Canada S9A 2X3

**HYE FRATERNAL GATHERING**.....July 21-28, 1999  
Please call or write to: Bro. Curtis Hurst at: 915-985-3868  
Rt 1 Box 40, Mullin, Tx 76864

### **KING SAUL - THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE**

Our discussion this morning will center on Israel's first King, Saul, the people's choice. But it is important for all of us to understand that before he had become the people's choice, he was God's choice. Saul made a conscious and intentional decision to choose to serve the people, rather than God.

When Saul was introduced before Israel as their first King, the prophet and last judge Samuel made this declaration concerning Saul: "And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the LORD hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king."(1 Samuel 10:24)

Saul was he whom the Lord hath chosen. He was a special man. One in whom God saw fit to pour out his spirit upon. We read of Saul, after he was anointed King by Samuel, "And it was so, that when he (Saul) had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day. And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them. And it came to pass, when all that knew him beforetime saw that, behold, he prophesied among the prophets,

then the people said one to another, What is this that is come unto the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the Prophets?" (1 Samuel 10:9-11)

And Saul had been given a very special calling by God. We read of God saying this to Samuel before Samuel had met Saul: "Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying, To morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me."(1 Samuel 9:15-16)

So Saul, the people's choice was first and foremost God's choice. He was called by God to deliver Israel, to be their saviour. He was called to prophesy, to be one in whom the Spirit of God could be entrusted to lead Israel in the correct path. And he was uniquely chosen by God. With such a wonderful introduction to Israel, the final result of Saul becomes even more tragic. For like so many men who were given such a wonderful calling, he eventually falls away, corrupted by the privilege of his calling.

Nearly every commentator we looked at in preparation for this discussion this morning, suggested that Saul was chosen because of his stature, that he was head and shoulders above all in Israel. That he had a warrior's physique, one which could command a leadership presence among the people. And it's true that he had all these things. But God is very clear that no one is tempted beyond that which he could bear. God has promised us through the apostle Paul: 1 Corinthians 10:13 "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

So Saul, just like you and I here today, had the ability to survive the various trials and temptations to which we are subjected. Saul chose to fail. He chose to rely on his physical attributes, on his worldly attributes to lead Israel, rather than the path of faith.

In his example, brothers and sisters, we have a powerful exhortation. Each one of us here today have been specially called out of the darkness of the world around us to the glorious light of the gospel. What are we doing with our calling? Are we, in humbleness and meekness, developing

ourselves in a Godly manner, are we daily working out our salvation with trembling and with fear? Or have we become distracted in the world, impressed with ourselves--with the wealth of our generation, and acting in a way that would imply confidence in our own capabilities, no longer wholly dependant upon the grace of God? This, as we shall see this morning, was the root of Saul's failures. But before we examine his failures, we should first look to see those characteristics that Saul had which caused God to call him in the first place.

We perhaps see the first trace of it when we are introduced to Saul. We read in: 1 Samuel 9:3-5 "And the asses of Kish Saul's father were lost. And Kish said to Saul his son, Take now one of the servants with thee, and arise, go seek the asses. And he passed through mount Ephraim, and passed through the land of Shalisha, but they found them not: then they passed through the land of Shalim, and there they were not: and he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they found them not. And when they were come to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant that was with him, Come, and let us return; lest my father leave caring for the asses, and take thought for us."

So Saul first appears to us as a man who understands and is living the Mosaic Law. The law said: Exodus 20:12-13 "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee."

And so when his father's asses were gone, Saul obediently set out to find them. But he was very respectful of his father. His concern was with his father, and he knew that to stay away too long would cause his father great concern, as it would any father. In this we learn that Saul was a very loving and caring man, mindful of the law, and mindful of the feelings of other people.

Further, we come to see Saul as a man who knew to hallow the things of God. To honor them, and not to consider them as Proverbs fane or ordinary. Saul wanted to find his father's asses, but would not even consider going to enquire at the man of God unless he could bring the holy man a gift. 1 Samuel 9:7-10 "Then said Saul to his servant, But, behold, if we go, what shall we bring the man? for the bread is spent in our vessels, and there is not a present to bring to the man of God: what have we? And

the servant answered Saul again, and said, Behold, I have here at hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver: that will I give to the man of God, to tell us our way. (Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to enquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the seer: for he that is now called a prophet was beforetime called a Seer.) Then said Saul to his servant, Well said; come, let us go. So they went unto the city where the man of God was."

That his servant had silver to present to the man of God we find was particularly pleasing to Saul. Silver was the redemption money. It was a most appropriate gift to give to God for those who recognized their faults and their complete dependance upon God for redemption and deliverance from sin.

When Saul enters into the city, we then learn of his low esteem for himself, and his unfeigned humbleness and meekness. We learn: 1 Samuel 9:18-21 "Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is. And Samuel answered Saul, and said, I am the seer: go up before me unto the high place; for ye shall eat with me to day, and to morrow I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that is in thine heart. And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them; for they are found. And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on thee, and on all thy father's house? And Saul answered and said, Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?"

Saul was made very uncomfortable by the words of high praise that Samuel had for him. Samuel said to Saul, "And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on thee, and on all thy father's house?" Such a strange statement for one who held himself humbly. And further, Saul knew that he would feel uncomfortable to be sitting in the presence of a holy man of God - not uncomfortable because he was an immoral man, but uncomfortable, not deeming himself worthy of such an high honor.

Next we see in Saul's character, his willingness to be a tool in God's vineyard, and his initial obedience. Samuel had given Saul specific instruction on what to do in the immediate future, and Saul obediently follows all that Samuel tells him. The spirit of God falls upon Saul, and he prophesies with the prophets.

Then, when coming home his uncle (or some loved one) asks Saul what he has learned from Samuel, Saul declines to mention anything about the Kingdom. In this Saul exhibits the divine character of patience. Saul, at this point in his life was a man of faith, and was willing to patiently await God to perform those things which had been Proverbs promised to him.

And when the nation was summoned by Samuel to Mizpeh, where Samuel would anoint the King of Israel, Saul, knowing his future, was again humbled to the point that he feared to go with the people, “but hid himself among the stuff.”

But he was brought forward. He was anointed King by Samuel, yet the children of Belial mocked at him:

1 Samuel 10:26-27 “And Saul also went home to Gibeah; and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched. But the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought no presents. But he held his peace.”

By despising him, and bringing him no presence, it meant that they refused to pay the taxes or tribute necessary for Saul to begin to perform his Kingly duties. He therefore, could not immediately ascend his position. In this matter, Saul proved himself a man of peace, choosing not to assert himself, demanding his rightful due, but again patiently awaiting for God to provide.

Just how long Saul waited is a matter for which I doubt there is a satisfactory answer in Biblical history. Clearly he jointly reigned with Samuel as judge and himself as King for some period, some say for a period as brief as 2 years. I would suggest it was a period of 14 years. But either way, clearly Saul was quite patient content to allow God to dictate the terms and the times upon which he would assume the throne.

And that time finally came for Saul when Nahash the Ammonite came up against Jabeshgilead, demanding that the people of the city put out their right eyes. When this happened, the care and love that Saul had for his people, and his understanding of his own responsibilities came upon him. We read of Saul: 1 Samuel 11:6-7 “And the Spirit of God came

upon Saul when he heard those tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly. And he took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, and sent them throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen. And the fear of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out with one consent.”

Now it is not a matter of what Saul, the man, wanted. It was a matter of what Saul, the king of Israel, needed. Saul took his calling seriously, and no longer allowed the pettiness of some in Israel to distract him, but demanded obedience to the position to which he had been called.

Observe also the great cooperation that Saul had with Samuel. “Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel,” Saul said, linking his political leadership with the divine leadership provided by Samuel. He was at this time, a very unselfish man.

And he fought against the Ammonites and defeated them. When the battle was over, the people wanted vengeance on those sons of Belial who did not want Saul to rule over them. But Saul, the chosen of God, said: 1 Samuel 11:13-14 “And Saul said, There shall not a man be put to death this day: for to day the LORD hath wrought salvation in Israel. Then said Samuel to the people, Come, and let us go to Gilgal, and renew the kingdom there.”

This was the man that God chose to be the first King of Israel. Let's look, for a minute, at the fruits of the spirit as listed by Paul in his letter of the Galatians. Paul said: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” (Galatians 5:22-23)

This was Saul's character when he was chosen by God. He showed love, in his honoring his father, in his respect for Samuel, and in his selfless demanding of support for the children of Israel at Jabeshgilead. He showed joy in rejoicing in the spirit God being poured out upon him, and seven days prophesying with the prophets of Israel. He showed peace, longsuffering, gentleness, and goodness in his dealings with those who did not view him fit to rule over him, both before and after he claimed the kingdom for himself. He displayed his faith in first obeying his father, then in obeying Samuel,

and then patiently, (longsufferingly) waiting for God to perform that which was promised to him. He showed meekness in his reluctance to sit with Samuel at the feast in Ramah. And later he showed his meekness and humbleness, hiding himself among the stuff so as not to be forced into the unwanted limelight. And in all things throughout this time, he displayed extreme temperance, not rushing anything, but allowing God to work out His plan.

Such was Saul, chosen of God. So what happened? What happened is that Saul forgot all the training which had led to the development of his righteous character, and began to lean upon his own understanding. He wanted to be “the people's choice” more than he wanted to be God's choice, and so he did things which caused that to happen.

After Saul had reigned for two years he engaged the Philistines in war. Samuel had agreed to come to Saul in Gilgal in seven days to offer burnt offerings and peace offerings that the Philistines would be delivered into the hands of the children of Israel. But Samuel delayed his coming. And the Philistines had come up against Israel in mass. We read: “And the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the sea shore in multitude: and they came up, and pitched in Michmash, eastward from Bethaven.” (1 Samuel 13:5)

When this occurred, the children of Israel lost heart and began to desert Saul's camp, and those who stayed hid themselves. With the people deserting him, Saul lost faith. There was no reason for Saul to have lost faith. What could the Philistines do to Israel that God did not want them to do? Nothing! What could Saul do to the Philistines by himself? Nothing! So as a matter of faith, Saul should have waited, but he didn't. He chose to please the people, and give them the false sense of courage to stand by him, rather than to please God. He went ahead and offered the sacrifices himself in violation of divine precept.

Saul was almost to the point of being rewarded for his love and care for Israel. But his disobedience changed everything. Samuel told him: 1 Samuel 13:13-14 “And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom

upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee.”

Because Saul had lost his faith, the kingdom was not established upon Israel forever. What a terrible tragedy to Saul. But his behavior in the matter shows that the change in his character was permanent. Rather than beg forgiveness, Saul goes ahead with his plans. He numbers Israel, organizes his armies, and defeats the Philistines.

And what does Saul learn from this? Apparently he learns nothing, but seeks even the more, to take matters into his own hands. He has discovered that he can use his great size and his warrior like appearance to his own advantage. He can rally troops to the battle. He becomes even more the pleaser of men, rather than the pleaser of God.

But God does not give up on us easily. Nor did He do so with Saul. Saul was given another chance, and this time it was to war with, and utterly destroy the Amalakites. The command was quite clear. We read of Samuel delivering it to Saul: “Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.” (1 Samuel 15:2-3)

But Saul, ever anxious to please the people now, refused to utterly destroy Amalek, but rather sought to take a spoil. His rebellion was becoming more bold with every year that he reigned. More and more he leaned to his own understanding, to his own confidence in himself to be able to win wars apart from divine interference. And so we read of God speaking with Samuel after this second and last chance for Saul: “It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night.” (1 Samuel 15:11)

Samuel was sent to Saul and the discourse was short and to the point. “And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD. And Samuel said,

What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" (1 Samuel 15:13-14)

Had Saul abided by the commandment of the Lord, there would be no bleating of the sheep of the spoil. This was clear. Saul stood before Samuel charged and convicted. But now we see how one mistake soon forces another. This is the problem with the truth. Once an error is made in one part, another error has to be made to make up for that. Then another, and another until all is lost. Such is the course for all who would depart from the truth, leaning to their own understanding. We read in the Proverbs: "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." (Prov. 3:5-6)

Saul now found that he needed an excuse. The years of being King had taken away the humbleness, and meekness that so endured him to God that God chose him to lead Israel. And so Saul blamed the people. "And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed." (1 Samuel 15:15)

And again: "And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal." 1 Samuel 15:20-21

Notice how - to cover his error - Saul first found someone else to blame, and then tried to put a face on it which would excuse his disobedience. We wanted to make a great sacrifice to the Lord, Saul said. "Certainly that is understandable, isn't it? That's why we didn't obey the command of the Lord?"

Samuel allowed no excuse. There was no excuse for Saul, and there can be no excuse for us. Obedience is a requirement. It is not an option. It is not for us to choose how to worship God. It is God's prerogative to tell us how we will worship him, and our responsibility is to obey. Do we think another way is better? It doesn't matter. Do we think another way is more

glorious? It doesn't matter. Do we think another way will achieve a better result? It just simply does not matter! Adam and Eve thought fig leaves were the ideal covering for their sin, but God would not have it. Cain thought the fruit of his field was an excellent offering. It was not what God wanted. Hence Saul finds out here and now: "And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king." (1 Samuel 15:22-23)

"To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Here is the divine principle that everyone of us is subject to, whether King or Pauper. Jesus said in his final address while alive to his disciples: "If ye love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15)

This principle is universal in the scriptures, and it is non discriminatory. There is nothing difficult about it. If we love God, we will show it by keeping his commandments. Not by finding excuses to break His commands, not by inventing new and better methods of worship; not by finding perhaps more glorious or more puritanical ways. We show our love for God by keeping what He told us to do.

But Saul had fallen woefully short. And now, as Samuel was turning away from him Saul feared greatly that the people, the very people he had chosen to serve, rather than to serve God - Saul feared that the people would reject him. And he makes his final appeal to Samuel: "Then he said, I have sinned: yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD thy God. So Samuel turned again after Saul; and Saul worshipped the LORD." (1 Samuel 15:30-31)

What would Israel have thought if Samuel had publicly rejected Saul and refused to accept his repentance? Saul probably could not have held onto the kingdom had this happened. So Samuel, who had come to love Saul (probably through the years of cooperation they had experienced, perhaps by this time nearly 20-25-maybe even 30 years of cooperation in

which they had worked together for the hope of Israel;) because of his love for Saul, Samuel turned and worshipped with Saul.

But the change in Saul had become complete. Saul had allowed himself to be so overrun with the rewards that the world had to offer that the fruits of the spirit that he emulated so well in his youth, were no longer a part of his character. They were completely blotted out. Who had he become? He had become the enemy of the plan and purpose of God. He had become the people's choice - but the rejected of God. That's what the world did for Saul, and brothers and sisters, that's what the world can do for us to.

How complete was Saul's transformation? So complete it is startling. We read: "And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons. And Samuel said, How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me. And the LORD said, Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the LORD." (1 Samuel 16:1-2)

Samuel knew that the change which had taken place in Saul was so complete that he feared for his life to do the things that God commanded him to do. And so while we were introduced to a man who would not even consider asking a righteous man where his father's ass's were apart from bring an appropriate gift, we now see a man capable of slaying a servant of God and a man who he had worked closely with.

His wickedness and determination to hold onto the world's blessings was so intense that he exceeded even what the people of Israel would do. When Doeg the Edomite told Saul of Ahimelech the priest's cooperation with David, Saul ordered Ahimelech and all the priests slain. The Israelites refused to follow Saul's orders, so Doeg, and Edomite carried out this wicked deed. "And the king said, Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech, thou, and all thy father's house. And the king said unto the footmen that stood about him, Turn, and slay the priests of the LORD: because their hand also is with David, and because they knew when he fled, and did not shew it to me. But the servants of the king would not put forth their hand to fall upon the priests of the LORD. And the king said to Doeg, Turn thou, and fall upon the priests. And Doeg the Edomite turned,

and he fell upon the priests, and slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod." (1 Samuel 22:16-18)

Saul had lost his spiritual perspective. He had lost his reliance on God. And Samuel told him directly that this was the reason that the Spirit of God was departed from him, and that another would sit upon his throne. The man who hid among the stuff so as to avoid his leadership role, a man who was uncomfortable to sit with Samuel the prophet in front of the people, a man who referred to himself and his family as the least in Israel no longer held this humble opinion of himself. And so Samuel explained to him: "Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the LORD hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on. And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel?" (1 Samuel 15:16-17)

And Samuel then said that verse we have already quoted as the end result of Saul's loss of divine principles: "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king." (1 Samuel 15:23)

And not only Samuel, but those around him, including his son Jonathon and also David, the beloved of God who Samuel anointed to be king after Saul, experienced the change in the characteristics of Saul, the people's choice.

Where we were introduced to Saul the obedient caring son, one who called his uncle beloved, now we see Saul the people's choice taking an oath against his wife, and casting a javelin at his son, when Jonathon made a plan to save David. "Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness? For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die. And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said unto him, Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done? And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him: whereby

Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David.” (1 Samuel 20:30-33)

Brothers and sisters, as I researched this subject, in almost every case, the commentators took the righteous deeds of Saul in his early life, and attributed evil motives to them. When he told Samuel that his family was the least of the families of Benjamin, it was called false modesty. When he refused to tell his uncle about the sayings of Samuel, that he should be king, it was attributed to "prudence" not wanting to become the target of other men aspiring to the throne. Its as if they said that Saul must have been a wicked man to have fallen to such a disobedient position before God after he took control of the kingdom.

The truth of the matter is that Saul was a man of like passions with us. His character was such that God saw in him something useful in developing His plan. Saul failed, not because he was a bad and immoral man, but because he chose to fail. He chose to put divine principles behind him in favor of present power. His love of his kingdom caused him to lose his faith in divine principles and he began to deny the principles which had led to his calling in the first place.

Like the modern commentators, we all want to think that these things cannot happen to us. Sure they happened to Saul, but that is because he was an evil man, right? That's what we'd like to think. It can't happen to us. But brothers and sisters, these things do happen to us every time we are disobedient to divine principles. The degree to which we are carried away is directly proportional to our personal desires to be justified in this lifetime. The degree to which we are carried away is directly proportional to our love for the world. The degree to which we are carried away is directly proportional to how close we can stay to those characteristics we have that led to God calling us in the first place.

Those principles are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. Is the world and our cares in the world blurring and obscuring these characteristics in us? The world got to Saul and obliterated these principles in him, and not only in Saul, but other men, specially chosen by God to be kings in Israel who came on the scene and failed miserably, such as Jeroboam, and Jehu.

We must not ignore the warnings that the Scriptures give us through these men of old.

Bro. Jim Phillips

## AS YE SEE THE DAY APPROACHING

Hebrews 10:25

The Apostle Paul wrote to those in the Thessalonian Ecclesia, "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do." (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11)

We are living in the days when we can expect our Lord to come as a thief to the unsuspecting world. We are living at the end of the long, dark and perilous times of the Gentiles. The prophet Hosea spoke of this time period thus, "I (Yahweh) will go and return to my place, till they (Israel) acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: In their affliction they will seek me early." (Hosea 5:15)

He continues with the same prophecy in the next chapter, speaking of Israel: "Come, let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days, (of a thousand years duration each) will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight." (Hosea 6:1-2)

The apostle Peter wrote stating in 2 Peter 3:8, "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." Peter may have had Psalm 90:4



Thousands more are still missing throughout the Central American region and the latest death tolls exceed 10,000.

Texas has suffered this past summer from record breaking heat with much loss both in cattle and crops. Just this week damage in Texas from the recent floods has been set at a half billion dollars! The last 10 years worldwide have been brutal. Severe weather has caused damages of 55 billion dollars annually over the last several years alone!

In Russia, protests marked Revolution Day, (the 81st anniversary of the Russian Revolution). Protesters demanded the resignation of President Boris Yeltsin, blaming him for the loss of Soviet-era stability and the countries economic collapse. Speeches were laced with anti-Semitic rhetoric - a growing trend in Russia. Economic hard times have caused the ordinary citizens of Russia to suffer, on average, a 75% plunge in living standards. This is almost twice the decline of income that occurred during the Great Depression.

With the depressing news about us every day, we can be thankful for being able to see the signs within the news pointing toward that day of the return of our Lord Jesus. Our knowledge of the Truth would not be complete to see these events were it not for the dedicated labor of our pioneer brethren, Bre. Roberts and Thomas. This past month marks the anniversary of the death of our Bro. Roberts, who has now been asleep in Christ for 100 years. He died of heart failure on his return trip home from Australia on September 23, 1898 in San Francisco, California. His funeral was held on Sunday, October 9th, in Greenwood Cemetery, Brooklyn, NY, where he is buried next to Bro. John Thomas. He was born April 8, 1839 in Aberdeen, Scotland, living 59 years and five months. He was immersed into Christ Jesus at the age of 14 in 1853 in the River Dee. He spent his lifetime in service to Yahweh and His anointed.

His works that helped in organizing the ecclesias include: The Bible Companion for daily reading of the Scriptures, The Christadelphian Hymn Book, The Statement Of Faith, forming a unified basis of fellowship. The Guide To The Formation And Conduct Of Christadelphian Ecclesias was written in 1884, based on 30 years experience.

Some of his other major works are: Christendom Astray, The Law Of Moses, Nazareth Revisited, Thirteen Lectures On The Apocalypse,

Visible Hand of God, Ways of Providence, The Slain Lamb, Seasons Of Comfort, Further Seasons Of Comfort, Ministry Of The Prophets: Isaiah, The Blood Of Christ and The Declaration. He founded and edited The Christadelphian Magazine.

Through 36 years of intense labor, from 1862 to 1898, this pioneering brother produced these and many other works. We can all read of the hardships and difficulties he and the other brethren experienced in these early years. We have it so very easy with computers, tape recorders, airplanes and telephones. In light of this, what manner of people should we be in all manner of holy conversation, "As We See The Day Approaching."

Bro. David VanPelt

## WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

"She began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head." - Luke 7:38

This does seem like a strange verse when we think about it. How could someone "wash his feet with tears?" I believe this verse has reference to the old custom of collecting tears and preserving them in a bottle. The "tear bottles" found in many ancient tombs, were made of thin glass. They were all very slender with a broad base and a funnel-shaped top. Each person would own a "tear bottle;" when serious trouble or a death occurred, the tears of each occasion would be stored in the bottle. This bottle and its contents would be a very cherished possession. All the heartaches, sorrows and bereavements they had ever experienced were treasured in that bottle. Family members, or very close associates, would be invited to add their tears into another's tear bottle to share in their sorrow and show their fellow feeling. This is what David would have in mind when he prayed that God would, "Put thou my tears into thy bottle, Are they not in thy book?" Psalm 56:8

He was asking God to consider the heavy and continued trials through which he was going; to act as a close companion in his sorrows and to have sympathy for him in all his grief. He did not want God to be unmindful of his sorrows; rather he wanted God to share his "tear bottle" with him! What greater assurance could we have that someone is truly feeling our sorrow,

than for him/her to extend their personal tear bottle to us, to place our tears into?

This helps us better understand what this woman did for her Master. The most precious of her possessions, the thing which represented her deepest emotions, was poured out on his feet! All her past sorrows and troubles were behind her, she had no need for her tear bottle any longer, and once poured out, there could be no replacing them, they were gone. She would have no tear bottle to be buried with her, the past had already been buried, poured out at his feet in loving devotion. Simon the Pharisee, did not provide water to wash the Lord's feet; so this poor, sinful woman, longing for forgiveness and a new life, took her tear bottle and together with the tears she now shed, washed his tired, dusty feet and wiped them with her hair. In return for this act Christ said,

“Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much.”

Here are a few lessons we may gain from this unusual verse:

1. Are we willing to “share our tear bottle” with others, to be there for them and help them bear their burdens?
2. How often do we have Simon’s judgmental feelings, and fail to understand that it is always appropriate for anyone to pour out their inner feelings and grief at his feet?
3. Do we always feel free to do so?
4. Are we like Simon, willing to open our home to the Master and others, and yet neglect the “small” personal attention to their needs?