

The Berean Ecclesial News

A monthly magazine devoted wholly to the Berean Christadelphian Ecclesial welfare, with the object of providing Ecclesial news, exhortations, articles and information of fraternal interest to the Brotherhood. Upholding the Truth since 1923.

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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 up building exhortations are welcome. This is an effort to up build and prepare us in heart and mind for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

CHRIST IS COMING SOON AND WILL REIGN ON EARTH

Ecclesial News

HENGOED, Wales, UK — Breaking of Bread, 11am; Sunday School, 12:45pm; Lecture, 2:30pm; Wed. Bible Class, 7:30pm in various homes; Elpis Israel Class, 1st Tues. in month in various homes — Bro. Phillip Hughes, 25 Hoel Y Gelli, FForchneol Parc, Godreaman, Aberdare, Mid Glam., UK CF44 6LN; phone (011) 441-685-870254

Beloved Brethren and Sisters in the Bonds of the Abraham Covenant.

It is difficult to send *glad tidings* at this time when we bear in mind the pain and sadness of our Brethren and Sisters in different parts of the Brotherhood. We are saddened at the sorrow of our fellow travelers who mourn, are sick, and are downcast. Our hearts reach out in silence to those who suffer in many different ways, and in different circumstances. The sorrows of the present are a powerful reminder to us all of the infirmity of the flesh which must accompany the few days of our mortality. They help us to realize that the present holds no lasting joy, except that of service to our Heavenly Father; and that the future age is the time for the perfect unalloyed joy of the spirit nature. Our love and prayers are with the household in these sad times.

We do however desire to thank all our Brethren and Sisters who attended our Spring Gathering this year which was based on the sobering events of AD70, and who made it such an enjoyable event. We were greatly encouraged by all in attendance, and their company around the Word of Life was a source of great joy. We were exhorted by the events of that terrible epoch to hold fast to the Truth, and remember that our God is a consuming fire. We were especially grateful to the brethren who spoke and brought these details out, and also to those who read, prayed and helped out in many other ways, not least in the interesting and thought provoking discussions based on the Daily Readings. A great deal of spiritual enjoyment and pleasant conversation was also engaged in with those who remained after the Gathering.

Those in attendance were Bro. and Sis. Freddie Higham, Bro. and Sis. Steve Osborne, Bro. and Sis. Beryl Snyder, Bro. and Sis. Paul Neely, Bro. Lynn Osborne, Bro. Seth Brown, Bro. Ricky Hurst, Sis. Rachel Johnatty, Sis. Elizabeth Phillips, and Sis. Karen Neely. One disappointment was that our own Bro. Robert Bennett was ill at the Gathering and unable to attend the Meetings. We are pleased to say that he has recovered now.

We were also grateful to Bro. Freddie Higham for providing further words of exhortation on top of his labours at the Gathering, when he and Sis. Ruthie remained with us for the following Sunday. Bro. Freddie also gave the public address on that occasion entitled, "*The Jews in God's Purpose.*" We were also pleased to have the company of Sis. Elizabeth Phillips on the Sunday before our Gathering. These pleasant and uplifting occasions are indeed a foretaste of the great joy to come, if we are faithful

The day of our Master's return is near and we need to take every opportunity to meet with those of like precious faith, when we are able to do so. May our Lord come soon.

On Behalf of the Brethren and Sisters of the Hengoed Ecclesia,
102 Bro. Phillip Hughes

Ecclesial Correspondence

Dear Brethren and Sisters and Young People,
Greetings in the faith.

The young are quick to observe and are very imitative: they pin their faith on what mother and father do.

How many are the examples of good and bad parentage recorded in God's Word for our learning? Let us heed our obligations in this matter. In this age of increasing ungodliness and unbelief, there is added reason why we should be careful and obedient. God sees everything we do and so do our children. Not only parents in the truth, but also other members of the ecclesia and young people need to follow this lesson. The young Sunday School students see what everyone does and how everyone speaks at the meeting and at gatherings. It is a shame when a parent hears "but mom why can't I do that, Bro/Sis ----- does". What examples are we setting for the young? At a young age we have to learn the evils of human nature and that not all are of Israel who say they are.

Gatherings are a place where we all enjoy the company of others of like precious faith and we have to be especially careful and remember that little eyes and ears miss nothing. Conversations are overheard, attention is paid to how people are dressed and who is and isn't paying attention to the talks. We are all looked up to by the young, brethren, sisters and teenagers alike. "----- is really cool, I really like him/ her". Really cool in the things of this world? or really cool in the things of the Truth?

Think on these things and remember, not only God is watching!

With love in the truth, Bro. Norman and Sis. Tina. Blacker

P.S We were so pleased to hear of the recent baptisms in the Hengoed ecclesia. Our love goes out to our newest Brother Matthew Hughes and Sister Elizabeth Hughes as well as everyone else.

FRATERNAL GATHERINGS & ACTIVITIES

(To be held God Willing)

LAMPASAS FRATERNAL GATHERINGJune 9 thru 11, 2000

Bro. Rusty Stephen, HC3 Box 16A, Lampasas, TX 76550, 512-556-6771

HYE FRATERNAL GATHERING July 24 thru 30, 2000

Bro. Curtis Hurst, Rt. 1 Box 40, Mullin, TX 76864, 915-985-3868

CANTON BAYLOR BEACH PICNIC August 26 & 27, 2000

Bro. Don Miller, 6695 Carriage Lane, N.Canton, OH 44721, 330-494-7717

CANTON FRATERNAL GATHERING.....

.....October 7 & 8, 2000

Bro. Beryl Snyder, 4095 Prosway SW, Massillon, OH 44646, 330-837-1956 103

Ecclesial Correspondence

Hello, Brethren and Sisters! This is Bro. Seth Brown.

Before I left the U.K. for home a month ago, Bro. Fred had asked me if I would write a recap of the Wales 2000 Fraternal Gathering. I said that I would. However, something extraordinary has happened back here in Texas...I've actually been busy at my job!

However, I'm not going to let that stop me from settling my promise. And even though it would have been better to have done this when the details were FRESH in my mind, at least I still recall enough to make a proper summary.

If I am not mistaken, this was the largest gathering of Brethren and Sisters that Hengoed has ever seen. The attendees, which Sis. Elizabeth Hughes listed for me before I went over, were as follows:

First, the local ecclesia: Bro. Phillip & Sis. Cheryl Hughes, and Bro. Matthew, Bro. Arthur & Sis. Barbara Hughes, Sis. Elizabeth Hughes, Bro. Robert Bennett and several other interested friends and relatives.

Others from the UK: Sis. Rachel Johnatty. From Detroit: Bro. Fred & Sis. Ruth Higham. From Boston: Bro. Steve & Sis. Sharon Osborne. From Denver: Bro. Lynn Osborne. From the Ohio area: Bro. Beryl & Sis. Becky Snyder, Sis. Elizabeth Phillips. And from Lampasas: Bro. Ricky Hurst, Bro. Paul & Sis. Jo Neely, Sis. Karen Neely, along with other visitors and myself. I apologize if I missed anyone.

Bro. Ricky and I were travelling together, leaving on March 22 and arriving early morning London time, March 23, at Heathrow Airport. Bro. Phillip and Bro. Robert were there to collect us. Despite the early effects of jet lag, the trip to Wales by car was very pleasant. I remember being impressed by the Severn River as we first crossed into Wales. And then I entertained Bro. Philip and Bro. Robert by tangling my tongue over the unusual (for me at least) Welsh names we came across until we reached Aberdare.

The Brethren of Wales graciously hosted the visitors before and after the gathering, and Bro. Ricky and I were welcomed at the home of Bro. Arthur, Sis. Barbara, and Sis. Elizabeth Hughes. To put it simply, they made us more than welcome, and I cannot thank them enough for taking care of us. (And how did I repay them? By giving them my cold which I caught; I'm still sorry about that.)

The gathering itself was held in the town of Brecon, using the Brecon Castle Hotel. While I personally didn't see much of the castle part - I believe it was off-limits at the time - the hotel itself was very nice...just right for the occasion.

The topics were based on the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. Bros. Steve and Beryl focused on the history of that time, describing the terror and cruelty that happened to the Jewish citizens. My address focused on the modern times, and how the world could be caught unaware at Christ's return, just as the Jews were. Bro. Freddie delivered the Sunday morning exhortation which tied in the lessons for us today as we prepare for that coming day.

Unfortunately, Bro. Robert became ill, and could not deliver his address; another Brother substituted for him. The vacation did not end when the gathering did; the following week had plenty of activities itself. On Monday, everyone went to the village of Hay-on-Wye. This village is, more than anything else, one large used book market. If books are 104 your

thing, you would have a field day in Hay-on-Wye. I know I did. One thing I found interesting was that one bookstore we visited had a Christadelphian placing in the Religion section. However, it was disappointingly scant, consisting mostly of small pamphlets. That evening, the young and old split up to different houses for general visiting.

Tuesday saw a "dividing of the camp." Since Sis. Elizabeth Phillip and her friends had to return to the USA on Wednesday, they decided to go to London to do a full day of sightseeing before they left. They were joined by Bro. Ricky, Bro. Lynn, Bro. Matthew and their friends. Meanwhile, most of the rest of us went to the Gower coast, past a still used ecclesial hall in which Bro. Roberts and Bro. Thomas preached the Truth over 130 years ago. The Hengoed Ecclesia had rented a hall in Port Eynon for a meal, visiting and the daily Bible readings. While it wasn't quite an ideal day for swimming, and it was hard trying to skip a rock into the choppy waters, the highlight certainly had to be the smuggler's cave.

Although this involved some STEEP hill climbing and descending to get to, it was still an amazing thing to see. I was QUITE exhausted after that, but I'm glad I still saw it for myself.

On Wednesday, everyone rested. The visitors to London returned, and that evening we held a Eureka class at Bro. Phillip's house. The next day, Bro. Arthur, Sis. Elizabeth H, Bro. Ricky, and myself set out to do some castle sightseeing. Our first stop was Caerphilly Castle. I was especially happy with this castle, as the maintainers had taken care to preserve as much of the old style as possible, adding only safety features and information displays as necessary. I used an entire camera film on that castle. We then headed towards Cardiff Castle, and it was by happy accident that we had Bro. Fred and Sis. Ruth on the same tour! Bro. Phillip had brought them into town. Cardiff Castle was more decorative and artistic than Caerphilly, as a 19th century master craftsman had filled every room with symbology. The major theme of his work was that since man's time was limited on Earth, we must recognize and use the power of love to make the most of it.

Then came Friday, and just about everyone went to the Rhondda Heritage Park. This was a fascinating museum/tour that explained the importance of the coal industry to Wales, especially the Cwm Rhondda region. After a fascinating film & mannequin introduction, we went into an "underground" mineshaft to get a hint of what it was like to be a miner. The most enjoyable part, though, was "the ride out" of the mine on a "coal cart." This was a movie ride, complete with a moving platform that moved in unison with the action on screen...which was very thrilling and delightful. After this, the young people had supper at Bro. Phillip's house, with everyone coming over for Bible readings afterwards.

Unfortunately, every vacation comes to an end at some point, and Saturday was Bro. Ricky's and my turn to head on back. However, we made as much of a day of it as we could, squeezing in a little sightseeing of London before heading back to Heathrow Airport for the flight out. We said our goodbyes and thank-you's, and then headed for the plane. Two flights later, we arrived in Dallas at about 10:30 PM local time.

I am quite pleased that I decided to make the trip to Wales, and especially thank those of Hengoed for prodding me just enough to actually do it. Even in a totally foreign environment, it's a joy to see the Truth showing its familiar face, no matter where in the world it may be. Having been to Wales once, I certainly want to go back now. And while my job will keep me away in 2001, if Our Master tarries, I hope God wills that I can repeat the visit in 2002. It certainly won't take much prodding then!

The Pearl of Great Price

We all know what a pearl is: it is a semi-precious gem from an oyster. We know that "the pearl of great price" represent the Truth. What is the Truth? It is comprised of The Things of the Kingdom and the Name of Jesus Christ: but, it is far more than this. It is a whole way of life, a continual overcoming of the Old Man of the flesh (and his ways) to the New Man in Christ Jesus, the Son of God: from the ugliness of the flesh, to the righteousness of a son or daughter of God. This change will take a lifetime of service to God, a constant overcoming, for "in my flesh dwells no good thing." It will be a constant battle. We will fall and fall again, but with God's help we can overcome. And what a change it will be – from the self-engrained thinking of the flesh to that of loving and pleasing others. Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth."

Why do we compare the Truth to a "pearl of great price"? Because there is nothing to compare to the Truth. We say this over and over, but do we truly mean it? The older we get, the more we realize there is nothing to which to compare the Truth: we see how shallow and ugly the ways of the world are. They have no eternal power at all. They are here today and gone tomorrow. If a man possesses all the world's wealth and live many years, yet he would have absolutely nothing without the Truth. He would die and leave it all behind, and re-main in the grave forever.

On the other hand, if one has the Truth and grows in it, to love God, His Son, and the brethren then he has everything. When he dies he will be resurrected and given eternal life, to live forever on a blessed earth, praising God for eternity.

The Truth is eternal. Can we grasp eternity? All we know is to live a few short years and die, but the Truth is forever. (I Pet. 1:24-25 reads, *"For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of men as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."*)

We all know these things, but do we believe them enough to devote our whole lives to God and His service? Is it all our hope & desire as it was King David's? Do we meditate on them all the while we are awake as he did? Does it fill our whole being? Or do we just think of them when it is convenient?

It is this glorious Word of Truth, this Pearl of Great Price, we wish to speak of this morning. We have heard many exhortations on the glories of the Kingdom. We have heard them so long, we know them by heart; of Christ coming back to this earth to raise the dead and judge them, giving the righteous eternal life, and turning the rejected back into the beast nations; of Christ setting up the Kingdom of Israel again, and conquering the whole world, and setting up a kingdom which will rule over a blessed earth with a righteous rule, but with a rod of iron because man is not capable of ruling himself; of our part in this, if we consist of the 144,000 whose names are written in heaven; of the time when Eden will be Eden again, a paradise on earth; of all creation being ruled in righteousness and peace by righteous rulers; when the land covenanted to Abraham will be given to him and his seed (a land truly flowing with milk and honey, when the earth shall yield forth her increase); when the desert shall blossom as 106 the

rose and war shall cease, everyone beating their swords into plowshares and

their spears into pruning hooks; when everyone will sit under his own vine and fig tree to move no more; and, when a child shall die a hundred years old, and the wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock. "They shall not hurt, nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord." And others: When the mountain of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains and exalted above the hills; When a handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains, the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon; when all shall know the Lord from the least to the greatest, and His glory will cover the earth as the waters cover the seas; when His Name alone will be exalted in that day. Yet, have these things sunk into our hearts enough to change our entire life?

This will truly be a New Heavens and a New Earth. *"God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."* (Rev. 21:4) *"...Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man., the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."* (I Cor. 2:9; Isa. 64:4)

In this day our probation will be over; all our trials and sorrows shall be a thing of the past. We will see (our Saviour for the first time) whom we have seen only through the eye of faith. The lame, halt, blind and deaf will be healed by his healing power. We shall be able to see the 144,000 redeemed of the Lord out of tribulation, who thought this Truth to be important enough to cast aside all and follow Christ no matter what this mortal life would bring.

We shall see Able, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (to whom the Promises were made), Joseph, and Moses (who chose to suffer with the people of God rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season): who said to Israel, "The Lord God would raise up a prophet like unto me." And others such as Samuel and David (the man after God's own heart), Josiah and Hezekiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, Peter (who denied his Lord, but afterwards was strengthened and fed Christ's sheep, to whom the keys of the Kingdom were given) and the Apostle Paul who said, *"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."* (Rom. 8:18) Who also said, *"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing"* (II Tim 4:7-8)

We hope to see Bre. Thomas and Roberts, and those who have died in our lifetime: some attended this gathering, exhorted us, who sat here and there. What a glorious day it will be for us to see all those we have loved (who have fallen asleep *in* Christ) raised along with many others whose names are recorded in heaven. Then will be fulfilled the saying at Christ's birth, "Peace on earth, goodwill toward men.

It is through Christ that all this is possible. If God hadn't sent a Saviour, a Messiah, all men would perish and return to the dust, to rise no more. The wages of sin is death, and all men have sinned; therefore, it was necessary for God (in mercy) to send one who did no sin to redeem (by his blood) all those who would seek eternal life through him. The main thing the Law showed was that all men are worthy of death; that no one could be saved by his own righteousness. Therefore, it was necessary 107

to send one that could save man. He would have to be of sinful Adamic nature in order to be tempted as his brethren, yet without sin. He had to experience the same temptations we do and overcome. One who needed a cleansing sacrifice himself, being born of a woman.

This Jesus Christ did. He lived a perfect life, he did not sin, and when he offered himself for a sacrifice (for himself and his brethren), when he hung on the cross, he fulfilled the Law. He opened a way for eternal life to all who would take up his cross and follow him. The grave could not hold him, because he was the only man to die who did no sin. Therefore, God raised him from the dead, showing His righteousness. It is the only Name given under heaven whereby man might be saved. He rose the third day to die no more; his body was changed from mortal to immortal. He was the first fruits; many brethren shall be changed, and given immortal life at his Second Coming.

Jesus was sent to destroy the works of the devil; this he partially did when he hung on the cross. He swallowed up death in victory in that he rose again. He opened the way for you and I to rise again through the forgiveness of our sins through his name. He will completely overcome the works of the devil at the end of the thousand years: when sin and death shall be eradicated from the earth.

We have heard (over and over again) of his love for us in hanging on the cross: the nails being driven through his hands and feet, the scourging before, the pain and suffering during, dying that we might have life. It behooves us to appreciate what he did for us; to love him with all our heart and to keep his commandments that we may be with him in the day of his glory, and be given to eat of that Tree of Life.

As we said before, the Truth consists of more than just the Gospel. It consists of an entire way of life: one dedicated to God. We notice a merchant sold all that he had to buy the Pearl of Great Price. He didn't sell just part of what he had, but ALL. The lesson is obvious: if we are not willing to give up ALL for the sake of the Truth, then we are wasting our time. If we are laying up treasures on earth where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through to steal, then we waste time. *"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."* Is our heart centered on the Truth? We will be judged in that great day by our hearts: do our lives show it now? The Truth is not a bunch of words written on paper, but an entire way of life. If our hearts are centered on earthly things – better houses, cars, lands, clothes, jobs, or worldly pleasure– we have no chance.

However, if our hearts center on the Kingdom of God, we will change from earthly cares to spiritual cares. Is living the Truth a pleasure or a chore? Do we do it for the reward, or because we love God? Is God *in* our every thought, or just when we have the time?

Another aspect of the Truth is our brethren. God has given us brethren - sometimes to help and sometimes for a trial. It would be hard to live the Truth without their help and companionship. No matter how they act, they are our brothers. Each of us will have to answer for the wrong we do at the Judgment; however, during our probation we are commanded to love our brethren. We must not talk about them behind their backs. 108 Jesus said, *"Hereby men shall know ye are my disciples if ye love one another."*

(John 13:35) Do we truly love our brethren? Do we yearn to be with them, or would we rather be with someone of the world? What do we talk about when we are with them?

When we are in the world we have no one who has the same goals and interest in life, but when we are with our brethren we are of one mind. Therefore, we should take advantage of this time that it might strengthen us for the times we are out in the world making a living. Do we truly try to help when one is in trouble? Do we say, "That brother doesn't need my help, he's stubborn?" We need to realize that our advice isn't always needed, but support and help is. There is an old Indian saying: "Don't talk about someone until you have walked a mile in his moccasins." The question we should consider is, "What would Christ do?" Would he gossip about a brother or sister, or would he help them? Did he gossip about Judas; did he tell the disciple how bad he was?

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." (Matt. 25:34-46)

Christ is not bodily with us today. What we do for Christ we do through our brethren by helping and loving them. We will be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ by how we loved and treated his brethren. I John 4:20-21 — *"If a man say I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also."*

This could not have been written any more plainly.

This is the test to see if we love God, or not. We may say we love some brothers, but some we don't. Or we may say we don't hate a brother, but talk about him behind his back. This is wrong, and we know from example Christ was not like this. Most of us have been guilty at one time or another of this very thing. We must change now, or Christ will come and say, "Depart from me. I never knew you."

At times we disagree on a certain scripture (not a doctrinal point). Because we disagree gives us no right to belittle a brother. If we are truly thankful for our brethren, we will not gossip. How much more love and harmony there is in an ecclesia if there is no gossip.

A brother recently told me he thought the telephone was one of the worst things a Clvstadephian could have. I believe he is right IF we use it to gossip, but think what a blessing it could be if used to encourage someone. (These days, a computer would fall into the same category.)

The formula for being admitted to the kingdom is quite simple: love God, and keep His commandments; and love Christ and his brethren. It is simple, but sometimes hard to carry out. To love God with all our heart, soul, and mind and to put Him first above all else, is all He requires.

At the Judgment Seat of Christ if our hearts are overflowing with love for him and his brethren, then he will forgive us our sins and faults. There isn't one of us that will be admitted to the Kingdom by our works or our righteousness — no, not one of us. None of us deserves eternal life. It will be a gift...a gift from God. If He should mark iniquities, all flesh would perish. We are all unprofitable servants: even if we did all that was asked of us, we would still be unprofitable. Everyone of us will need mercy: it will be meted out to us according to the mercy we have shown one another.

David committed a great sin by committing adultery and murder, yet his heart was right with God. Although God punished him (the sword would not depart from his house), yet God forgave. And it is said David was a man after God's own heart. Can that be said of us?

Another aspect of the Truth is prayer. Through prayer is the only means by which may communicate with God. It is the only means we have to ask for forgiveness of our sins. It is the only way to be strengthened in times of sorrow or trial. God hears our prayers if we love Him and approach in an acceptable manner. *"The fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."*

Who are we that the Creator of heaven and earth should hear us? He is the potter, we are the clay. We are but dust and ashes in His sight. We are nothing, yet He will hear us if our hearts are right. The power of prayer is far greater than we realize.

We pray when one is sick physically, but do we pray when one is sick spiritually? Which is more important? When we pray, we should thank God for His Word of Truth, for His son, and for our brethren. We should not pray as the Pharisee — "Lord, I thank thee that I am not as other men." We must take care to be meek, lowly, and tremble at His Word. *"To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."* We should be like Moses — meek.

A poem on prayer was sent to me. It reads:

Like a letter that's unwritten,
Like a book that lies unread,
Like a field unplowed, untended
Is the prayer that's left unsaid.

Though God knows the thoughts and wishes
That are secrets of the heart,
Yet the prayer must still be uttered
For His healing power to start.

Though at times we might neglect Him
And refuse to hear His call
When we think we don't need Him
Then we need Him most of all!

Yet another aspect of the Truth is rejoicing. We have heard we should rejoice, yet we don't rejoice enough. When we have trials we become depressed and don't remember to rejoice. It is through trials that we will enter the Kingdom. The disciples rejoiced that they were "accounted worthy" to suffer for Jesus' name. If we are rejoicing, we shall have no time to feel self-pity. We are to be thankful for God's mercies, and we have more reason than others to rejoice, for we have His holy Truth however unworthy we are.

Study is yet another aspect of the Truth. Most of us fall far short in this area. We are to "study to show ourselves approved unto God"; we are to be "workmen that needeth not to be ashamed", rightly dividing the Word of Truth. If we do not study, we cannot rightly divide, false doctrine may easily creep in, and we may be easily lead away by "every wind of doctrine". We should study not only to learn God's Word, but to grow in wisdom and in grace, to apply all principles to our lives. Knowledge profits nothing if we do not apply it to our lives.

Truth is being thankful to God for all His mercies and blessings. We have been called out, given His Truth. We have brethren and sisters, families and the earth around us. He gave us all things, but all are His. The only thing we can give back to God is love and obedience.

It is an important aspect of the Truth to attend the Meetings. Bro. Growcott said that we should never miss a meeting if it is physically possible, so we might be with our brethren and sisters. There are many aspects of the Truth such as visiting the sick, writing letters of comfort, helping financially the poor, and standing steadfast through trials.

Yes, this is the Truth, that Pearl of Great Price. It can be ours. What more could a man ask for? What more could a man want? We have the Truth. What are we doing with it? We should take advantage of the great opportunity given us, before it is too late. Let us be ever ready to meet our Master when he returns that he may say unto us, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." If we live this Truth, whether we close our eyes in death, or meet him alive when he comes, we will have that peace of mind only God can give. Let us fight that good fight, keep the faith, finish our course. Let us do all that is in our power to do, that we though Christ's help and forgiveness may put off that old man of the flesh and become sons and daughters of God. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter – fear God and keep His commandments: this is the whole duty of man.

Mid-Eastern Policy

All future events, whether or not any politician wants to admit it, are keyed to the political events in the Middle East. This is apparent from such Scriptures as Zechariah 2:7, *"Deliver thyself O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon. For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye."*

Israel, the middle of the problem for the Middle East is the Apple of God's eye. But it is a portion of the world that is quickly reaching a flash point. The current American President, Bill Clinton, is very anxious to have a "legacy" as modern journalists call it, beyond his scandal ridden 8 years. He remembers the lasting fame attained by former President Jimmy Carter due to the Camp David Peace Accord, (which ended hostile relations between Israel and Egypt) and longs to be able to attain such a success. In the Middle East, his focus this year has been on the Palestinians and Syria and their relations with Israel.

His problem is at least two fold. As regards the Palestinians and Israel, there is very little more that the two sides can agree to, and both sides along with the moderator, the United States, seem to know it. The current leadership in Israel would like to be able to find a way to give back the Golan Heights to Syria, but the populace is a major obstacle to this. And this leads directly to the second problem. Syria's ruler Hafiz al-Asad, is very old, believed to be very sick and is trying to leave power in the hands of his son. But there are forces inside Syria who do not want to see Asad succeed. For political reasons, they would rather leave the Golan Heights in the hands of Israel, believing it will be easier to depose Asad's son and power base, if they do not achieve this political success.

As regards the Palestinians, everything that can be agreed to, has now been agreed to, and the talks have reached a point where compromise is necessary on the part of one side or the other. President Clinton himself has admitted that this is the case, and that it may be necessary at this point, for the United States to take the initiative in suggesting the compromise. He has gone on to say that he hopes both sides know that they will not get everything they want. Chief among the categories where the sides cannot agree is the future of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is considered a "Holy City" to both the Moslem Arabs and the Jewish Israelites, and compromise on this issue appears to be impossible.

Under the 1947 United Nations agreement, Jerusalem was to remain a divided city, half Arab, half Israel. Israel was not to make Jerusalem its capital, but rather the capital was to be sea port of Tel Aviv. This arrangement satisfied no one, and was key to the wars which ensued. From the earliest times of Israel's modern history, Jewish leaders have understood the importance of Jerusalem to the rebirth of the State. In 1947, though its defense was strategically difficult, Israel's first Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion instructed his generals that they had no choice but to defend Jerusalem. He reasoned that if Jerusalem fell, all Israel would fall. 112

In 1966, following the fighting of that year between the Jews and the Arabs, Israel ended up in control of the city, and they have never relinquished it. In 1977, they began, quietly, to move the operations of the nation from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. In 1980, they announced to the world that Jerusalem was their capital city. This announcement sparked outcries from the nations, which were mostly ceremonial, in that every nation that dealt with Israel had already been forced to have two embassies. They had an official one in Tel Aviv that had become quite useless, and an unofficial one that actually was involved in the work between the two states in Jerusalem. With Egypt and Israel on the verge of peace during that time, no political pressure was brought to bear on Israel for fear of upsetting the on going talks.

Curiously, the only large western hue and cry was from the World Council of Churches, and its sister, the American Council of Churches. These organizations denounced Israel repeatedly in the press during these times. The reason for this is obvious. They teach that God has cast off Israel, and that the rebirth of Israel as a nation in 1947 is merely coincidental. They deny the writings of the prophets:

Jeremiah 30:10-11 Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid. For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet I will not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.

The establishment of the nation of Israel, and further, its capital in Jerusalem convicts them of error, and so they opposed this quite vigorously. Still, they spoke in the most noblest of terms about the dangers this had to the peace process. They managed to find their way onto every talk show and news broadcast that they could to denounce Israel's intention to establish Jerusalem as their capital. But the more they protested publicly against Israel, the more closely they themselves were examined. When this happened, the Marxist element in their individual groups were exposed, and they lost credibility in the public's eye.

In the late 1960s through the early 1980s, Christendom was being heavily influenced by a teaching called "Liberation Theology." This was a teaching that it was quite acceptable for Christians to aid in the overthrow of governments it termed as oppressive, in order to bring about social justice. This teaching originated in the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church feared that with the successes of the 1970s for Communism world wide, she would need a theology compatible with Marxism in order to survive in a Communist world. The Catholic Church has long recognized the need to have supporters on both sides of the war, so that after the war, they could bring forth a class of men who could say, you see, we supported you all the time. At one point, the world was shocked at the murder of four Nuns in San Salvador, only to realize later that these Nuns were actively supporting the communist Sandinistas in their battle against the government.

The public scrutiny of the World Council of Churches revealed that they, too, were involved in the work of overthrowing governments. An examination of their budgets revealed that they had purchased arms for rebel groups in Central America. When one of their leaders were blasting Israel on a televised news show, a journalist asked him about this purchase. He responded that they bought food, and books, and clothes for countless people the world over, and all everyone wants to talk about is this purchase of arms in Central America. The journalist responded, "You are a religious organization. It is expected that you would buy food and books and clothes. What isn't expected is that you would buy guns and bullets."

Nevertheless, Israel was successful in establishing Jerusalem and getting almost all the world to recognize it. But then came the peace proposals of the Camp David Accord, along with several proposal's under president Ronald Reagan, and suddenly it became apparent that the Arabs also, are not interested in a divided Jerusalem. They have argued that the peace process states clearly that they must end with Palestinians in full control of Jerusalem. The Jews have consistently said this is not true. The American politicians have been completely silent on the point. And those of us watching from afar have marveled about how there could be such confusion about something so fundamental to the over all process?

The American strategy for this summer appears to be rooted in the following compromise. Israel will yield the Golan Heights to the Syrians, and the Palestinians will yield their demand for complete control of Jerusalem.

The Golan Heights is an elevated area in Galilee from which an enemy nation could easily rain artillery shells upon many of the cities of Israel. Is it argued by most military strategists today that the area is no longer of strategic importance. They claim that the weapons of modern warfare no longer make such an area of land so important. Therefore, should Israel wish to give this land up, they could easily do so without risking her national security.

This may be true, but the problem for Israel's government in making such a compromise is that every school child who ever has studied national history has been told about how significance of the Golan Heights is to their security. They were taken on field trips up to the Golan Heights, and shown the view of the surrounding cities, and shown and told how easy it would be to attack Israel from here. The idea of the need to hold on to the Golan Heights has been firmly and visually entrenched in every Israeli's mind.

And, when Benjamin Netanyahu was voted out of office, his last act was to pass a law that the Golan Heights could not be given up to a foreign power without a popular vote of the people. So even if Israel's current politicians were of a mind to yield on the Golan Heights issue, somehow they would have to find a way to convince Israeli citizens that what they had seen with their own eyes, and had been taught all their life, was now no longer true.

114 And the Arabs have similar difficulties. The president of Syria, Hafiz alAsad is an old man, and thought to be dying with a long running but terminal

cancer. He would like to regain the Golan *as* a show of his success and give the power to his son, who is next in line to power in Syria. But forces in Asad's own army are actively working to see that Asad does not realize the kind of success necessary for his son to be able to solidify his power base. They would like to see these peace efforts fail to enhance their own political futures.

Part of the compromise already struck calls for Israel to remove its military presence from southern Lebanon. Syria has long called Lebanon a part of "Greater Syria" claiming the right to govern it. It has become apparent in recent weeks that Lebanon fears Syria at this point in time, more than she fears Syria. There have been protests in Lebanon due to the Israeli withdrawal. The protest is rooted in a fear of putting back into place the imbalances that destroyed Beirut in the 1980s. Lebanon is a political alliance between the Moslems and the Christians, really Catholics. If Israel withdraws and the Moslems assert their political power supported by Damascus in Syria, then the nation is again set to be pulled apart from the inside.

Mr. Clinton was asked whether in the face of all these difficulties, the peace talks could succeed. He said that it was necessary for them to succeed if either side was to have any hope. From his perspective, we suppose it seems so. But he couldn't be more wrong. Concerning the hope of Israel the apostle Paul once said:

Acts 28:28 *For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain."*

The hope of Israel. It is the hope that the Apostle Paul was willing to be bound for, in fact was willing to die for. What is the hope of Israel? The hope of Israel simply stated is this. That the son of David would sit on David's throne in Jerusalem, ruling the whole world in peace. This hope started long ago in the early pages of our Bible.

Genesis 13:14-15 *"And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever."*

This promise made by God to Abraham, that he and his seed would inherit this land, a promise that was repeated to his sons Isaac and Israel became the hope that all Israel longed for. And that hope was intensified when Isaiah prophesied of the Messiah sitting upon David's throne as we have already seen in Isa. 9, which prophecy was based upon the following promise to David, for David was told that his son should sit upon his throne.

2 Samuel 7:12-14 *And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.*

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These were the promises which became the hope of Israel, for which the apostle was willing to be held in chains. And throughout the history of Israel, God provided them prophets to warn them, to encourage them, and to strengthen the

faithful to hold fast to these promises. He told them that they had not been fulfilled when Paul wrote in Hebrews 11:

Hebrews 11:39-40 *And these all, (that is, the faithful men of old listed there in that 11th chapter) having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.*

No, Israel has not received the promises. But though this hope has not been fulfilled, we never should be lured into thinking that it will not be fulfilled. It is not dependant upon the goals and desires and fears of the world's presidents and kings and power brokers. It has been ordained by God from the oldest of times.

Zechariah 12:2-6 *Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it. In that day, saith the LORD, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness. And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the LORD of hosts their God. In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem.*

Still, it has been fascinating to watch the political process unravel in the Middle East. As we said from the beginning, the current president only has as his lasting chance for a positive legacy the Middle East Peace Process. It appeared to most observers, that the administration was bringing pressure on Israel to relinquish her goals by bringing public pressure directly upon the State of Israel. Mrs. Clinton, the wife of the President, had met publicly with Arab leaders, and had spoken very critically of Israel and their role in the peace process as recently as 18 months ago. While the President claimed that his wife was a private citizen and entitled to her own views, and while he openly stated that her views were not the views of his administration, no one really believed that this wasn't part of a strategy to publicly pressure Israel into compromise.

Then, Mrs. Clinton became interested in becoming a Senator from New York. In campaigning in New York, she soon learned that she could not hope for strong support from the Democratic party and its large Jewish constituency, if she continued her public attacks on Israel. She was forced to publicly reverse herself.

If Mr. Clinton wants a peace treaty in the Middle East, there is one card still on the table. It is the same card that has been there since the end of the 1948 war. Israel will enter into almost any peace treaty with the Arabs, if the United States will place American troops on Israeli soil to guarantee the peace and security of Israel. Every American President has refused this as strongly as possible, 116 remembering the quagmire Britain found herself in before 1947 which led to

her embarrassing exodus at that time. Even in the recent Gulf War, it was only after every other possible solution had failed, and Israel threatened to attack Iraq, (which would have torn apart the southern alliance) that President George Bush agreed to put Americans in Israel to man the Patriot Anti Missile installations.

Ultimately, they will be there. The prophecy from the Scriptures is clearly stated.

Ezekiel 38:13 Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil.

The prophecy does not show the southern power asking the northern host if they are going up upon the mountains of Israel to take a spoil, but rather, are they "coming" to take a spoil, clearly indicating that the southern defender is already in the land. Will the logjam of the current negotiations and the desperate attempt at some positive legacy for a scandal-ridden president lead to the United States placing troops in Israel? Or will it be some yet unforeseen turn of events which cause it? It is impossible to know, but it is clear that God has not forsaken Israel. The spirit of God in the Psalms wrote:

Psalms 137:5-6 "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; I prefer not Jerusalem above my chiefjoy."

Bro. Jim Phillips

As Ye See The Day Approaching

We are living at the end of a long, dreadful and terrible age of apostasy which began in the first century. The Apostle Paul prophesied of this awful departure from the Truth which would set in to those of his generation in the Ecclesia at Thessalonica. He records in his second epistle in Chapter 2 beginning at verse 1: *"Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: 117*

That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Paul gives further evidence of this departure in his first epistle to Timothy. In Chapter 4 beginning at verse 3 he says: "*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of **them which believe and know the truth.***"

All around us we see people professing to know Jesus Christ as their personal savior. They claim to worship the one true, living God and to believe the Gospel of salvation found in the Holy Scriptures, affirming that they have the one faith and are pure in doctrine. As Christadelphians, we know their beliefs and teaching are not sound. They worship they know not what, as Jesus stated of the Samaritans unto the woman at Jacob's well at Sychar. (John 4:3-43, esp. v.22) These supposed "Christians" know neither the Father nor the son, in that they worship a triune god. Such a god is not the God revealed in the Bible. One intelligent in the word of God could never speak of the Deity as a trinity of three persons, all CO-eternal and CO-equal. Yahweh alone has underived immortality. Jesus Christ is the only begotten son of God. He was mortal, subject to his Father in all things, doing all His will. He died the cruel death of the cross; crucifying to the uttermost the law of sin in his members (the devil). In doing this, he declared God's righteousness. God raised him from the death state, giving him eternal life and also all power in heaven and earth. He gave to Jesus a name above every name (saving His own glorious name).

Those of the apostasy can't possibly believe the Gospel, as they do not know it. One who does know the Truth can quickly assess whether an individual has understanding. The Gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone believing. It is the good news or glad tidings of the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. They know nothing of the covenants of promise - neither land nor seed promise. They have not the faith of Abraham and are most impure in doctrine, being filled with the wisdom which is from beneath, "earthly, sensual, devilish". (James 3:15) Not only do these hold a completely false concept of God and His anointed, but hold the baseless idea of immortal soulism. They believe many false teachings, one being: the existence of a supernatural evil fallen angel they style Lucifer and Satan - the Devil! Attributing godlike powers to this supposed devil, the apostates make it more powerful than God, in that it has more followers. The devil actually is nothing more than the law of sin in our members. These hold the idea of going to heaven at death, supposing that even ignorant and unbelieving infants, children and idiots are given places there immediately upon their deaths! The apostasy holds the idea of a fiery burning hell. We know that hell is merely the grave. They teach for doctrine the commandments of men. Sprinkling is put for baptism by them! As we know, Scriptural baptism is complete immersion in water of a candidate knowing the Truth as it is in Jesus and who is willing to obey the commands of Christ, either unto death or the second coming. They perform this abomination of rhanism (sprinkling) on people (young and old alike) ignorant of the Gospel of salvation. How can they give a good confession, having not the faith that alone pleases God? Jesus plainly commands his disciples: "*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every 118 creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth*

not shall be damned." (Mark 16:15-16) They put darkness for light, call evil good, forbid to marry and command to abstain from meats. Those of the Roman superstition make Mary, the mother of Jesus, to be the one mediator between God and men. Paul tells us in his first epistle to Timothy: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus..." (1 Tim. 2:5) They worship the dead, supposing their canonized dead ones (whom they blasphemously style saints) are protecting and guiding them! They imagine that the bread (host) and wine actually become the literal body and blood of Jesus Christ! This is the doctrine of transubstantiation. Like all of the rest of the false doctrines, it is not even possible, but is absurd.

We are living in perilous times, indeed. The wicked walk on every side, on the right hand and on the left. Vile men are high in place. The wicked oppress the poor, fatherless and widow. They extort, cheat, steal and lie at will. At present the wicked prosper. They are set up. We must remember that the joy of the fool and of the hypocrite is only for a little while. Soon they shall be cut down like the grass. In the morning, they shall not be. Violence at present fills the earth, as it did in the days of Noah before the flood. We are misunderstood, scoffed at and rejected as religious fanatics and heretics. People feel that they are obviously on the right side, as they have the far greater numbers. There are just about a billion Roman Catholics. There are hundreds of millions each of Eastern Orthodox Catholics, Moslems Buddhists and millions upon millions of the various Protestant branches and numerous sects, names and denominations throughout the earth. Our population is hardly a measurable fraction compared to the vast multitudes of the various apostate groups. We should keep in memory that Christ was misunderstood, despised and rejected of men. He was a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief. (Isaiah 53:3) We can only expect to be misunderstood and hated by the world as our Lord was. It is written in John 14:18-23: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also."

Though it might seem that we are alone, we must remember that we are not. Yahweh and Christ are keenly aware of all that happens to us. We see the apostasy and rebellion maturing day by day. The daughters are returning to their mother. Though hand is joining hand, we know that the wicked shall not go unpunished. Let us not become discouraged, but encouraged all the more. Soon these things, the long, terrible nightmare of evil and wickedness will be over. Soon the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of Yahweh as the waters cover the sea. Righteousness shall soon be throughout all the earth. Let us draw nearer and nearer to God, striving to learn more of His word that we might truly be His children in that day of His son's coming. If we do the will of God now in these days of adversity he will bless and keep us and bring us through every trial unto that perfect day. "...If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31)

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

"And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day."

(Matthew 27: 6-8)

The verse above says that the chief priests bought the "field of blood" with the thirty pieces of silver, but Luke tells us in Acts 1:18 & 19 (Speaking of Judas), *"Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity--- that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood."* Did Judas purchase this field, or did the *priests*? How can we reconcile these two accounts?

There are several plausible explanations, but as I see it, the main problem lies in thinking that these two transactions occurred at the same time. The two accounts could be referring to the same field but at different times.

We know that Judas held the position as the treasurer for Christ and the disciples. We also know that he was a thief and that he had taken some of these funds for himself (John 12: 6 & John 13: 29). It is very probable that Judas took this stolen money (rewards of iniquity), and with it purchased a parcel of land just outside of Jerusalem for himself. While Jesus had nowhere to lay his head, Judas was arranging a little "nest egg" for himself. This would fulfill the account in Acts.

After Judas returned the thirty pieces of silver to the priests, he went over to his ill-gotten property and hanged himself. (Acts 1:18-19). The priests then held a meeting to decide what to do with the thirty pieces of silver. They decided to exchange Judas' money for his field, which would now be available. The priests arranged this "act of humanity" (i.e., providing for the interment of strangers), hoping that this covered their wickedness (bargaining with Judas to betray innocent blood).

Judas was motivated by a desire for self- preservation. He sensed the growing opposition to Christ and, unlike the others, began to have doubts about the future when Jesus talked about his approaching death. As his hopes of immediate glory faded, he lacked the faith to see beyond the present and sought other means of compensation.

Matthew shared the same practical and administrative talents as Judas. Ability and talents can provide both opportunity and temptation. Matthew used them profitably in the Lord's service, while Judas allowed his ability and business talents to become a snare, so that what could have been a blessing was turned into a curse. The steps of his decline were so gradual they were hardly discernable, until the full end of the matter is seen.

"Let us be not highminded, but fear." (Romans 11:20)

"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (1 Corinthians 10:12)

