

# 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.

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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,

On Wednesday 26th April, we were reminded that Yahweh is still taking out of the nations a people for His name. **Elizabeth Hughes** (the daughter of Bro. Arthur and Sis. Barbara Hughes) put on the Saving Name of the Lord Jesus Christ in the waters of baptism after giving a good confession of her faith before the Brethren. We were all delighted that this important first step of obedience was taken, and rejoiced together on that occasion. Our rejoicing continued on the Sunday following her baptism, when Sis. Elizabeth was given the right hand of fellowship by Bro. Robert Bennett.

Nor did our joy have time to abate! Another application for baptism was received from **Matthew Hughes** (the son of Bro. Phillip and Sis. Cheryl Hughes). He, also, gave a good confession of his faith before the Brethren; *"remembering his Creator in the days of his youth."* With continuing joy and thanksgiving to our Heavenly Father, Matthew was baptized on Saturday 6th May, and given the right hand of fellowship by Bro. Arthur Hughes the following day.

Sis. Elizabeth and Bro. Matthew were baptized in a Swimming Pool in a little village called Aberfan. This is a sad place which still bears the marks of grief from 1966, when a coal tip at the top of the village slipped and covered a school killing 116 children below the age of eleven, and 26 teachers. They were buried alive in a deluge of watery mud and coal. The contrast was inevitable. The burial of the old man of the flesh in the cases of Sis. Elizabeth and Bro. Matthew, spoke not of grief, but of joy, and a rising to newness of life! The memorial gardens and graves which we saw near by spoke of eternal death. Our new Sister and Brother on the other hand, have hope, not just of life, but of everlasting life. Not even the grave could hold them! He who is the Resurrection and the Life hath prevailed, and we rejoice in his victory.

We pray that Yahweh will bless our young Sister and Brother as they walk unto Zion. A walk, which we hope and pray, will be a short one.

On Behalf of the Brethren and Sisters of the Hengoed Ecclesia,

122 Bro. Phillip Hughes

## **Trials And Tribulations**

The practice of having words of exhortation in connection with the Breaking of Bread on Sunday morning is a tradition among Christadelphians - going back even to the days of the apostles. It serves the dual purpose of comforting those that have heavy trials to continue on toward the Kingdom, and also as a tool that helps each one of us to examine our lives and see if we are living according to God's will. It is good that we listen attentively to these words; for it is necessary for our minds to be renewed and stirred up toward a better life in the Truth, drawing lessons from our trials for use in our daily lives.

*"Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works; Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." Hebrews 10:24-25*

The word provoke means to incite and sharpen along side. Exhortations are supposed to not only up build us, but to excite us about God's will and also be abrasive enough to purge out that old leaven of malice and wickedness within us, for we know that *"we must through much trial and tribulation enter the kingdom,"* (Acts 14:22; I Peter 1:7).

We find the assembly of ourselves here each Sunday a refreshing time from the daily schedule of living and the struggles that we face. The word of exhortation is a call for us to come near, in heart and mind, to the Divine principles of our faith that have brought us together around the table of the Lord. As we listen to the words of comfort and consolation on Sunday mornings, we are brought nearer to God and farther away from the temporal and passing things of the world about us.

*"I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation.. "*

These are the words of Paul at the close of his letter to the Hebrews (13:22). Paul is telling them to be patient with his words and likewise the word of exhortation should fall on receptive ears that the mind may be directed into those channels of thought. It is often a burden to be pulled away from thoughts of what we must be doing next in our occupation and our planning for the future or what we have forgotten to do. But it is for our good to edification if we are to be brought near to the purpose of the meeting together to remember Christ. No matter how capable the speaker is, or how well he prepares, the words can only reach out to help and encourage those who are ready and anxious to receive of the water of life freely, that it may be in them as a well of water springing up unto eternal life.

We must prepare our hearts and minds before we are ready to render acceptable service and worship to God. Isaiah's words about Israel were, *"They honor me with their lips but their heart is far from me."* Without this preparation of the heart by the indwelling of the Word, we shall all go away from the table on Sunday morning, untouched, unmoved and without comfort and consolation. If our minds and our hearts are attentive and eager, the words of exhortation will stir up and call to remembrance things new and old, things pertaining to our hope - a girding up of the loins of our minds, a renewing and strengthening of our faith and above all, walking daily in the steps of Christ.

We notice that the Jews in the time of Christ had one day that they called a "preparation day," so that they might prepare to observe the Sabbath in the way God had commanded them. We read in Mark 15:42,

*"And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath..."*

This was a Friday, in which they made all the preparation that was necessary in the way of cleansing themselves from defilement, and getting ready the food for the following day, so that when the day came they could devote themselves wholly to its requirements - not doing their own will, nor finding their own pleasure, but turning their minds to God, delighting in His law and talking one to another of His wonderful works. The Sabbath started at 6 PM on that very day.

As we think back on what we have done during the past week, do we find that each day was filled with the application of our minds to the development of the fruits of the Spirit?

If so, then we come to this hour of worship with open hearts and hearing ears to receive comfort and strength, as we sing praises to God, and offer our prayers and supplications to Him. We are ready to absorb the word of exhortation, so that we may be renewed in the spirit of our minds, and go away comforted and strengthened for the work before us. We can then take comfort in the 23rd Psalm:

*"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in paths of righteousness for His Name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."*

Christ will *"rule the nations with a rod of iron, and as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers."*

Moses' rod likewise was used in several ways. It destroyed the 124 Egyptians to deliver Israel - It was a shepherd's crook when he

appeared at the burning bush. It was used by in all of the plagues - and on one occasion became a serpent. And it was an instrument of Moses' greatest trial when he struck the rock in anger with his rod and was not permitted to enter the land.

but to those who submit to Christ's rule and walk in his ways, this same scepter will be a rod of deliverance and protection. David was comforted by the knowledge that God was in control through all his trials and tribulations. We recall David's words to the prophet Gad on the occasion when he was told to choose between three years famine, three months while the sword of the enemy overtook him or three days in which the sword of the Lord and pestilence would destroy:

*"And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let me fall now into the hand of the Lord: for very great are His mercies: but let me not fall into the hand of man."*

As the rod represented God's majesty and power over all living things; so the staff is a symbol of support and guidance, over rough and narrow places, and on dark and cloudy days. The knowledge that God's rod is over us, and His staff of support and guidance is always near, gives confidence and assurance when the way is dark and uncertain as the comfort of a shepherd leading and guiding his sheep with his rod. We take comfort in the rod and staff that God has promised to those who delight in His ways and give their lives in loving service and obedience to His Word.

*"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and He delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand."*

It is comforting to know that we are in the hands of the living God, and that no man can touch us for harm or evil except as God permits; and that what He does permit in our case is for our ultimate good. We must realize that His angels are about us at all times. It is written:

*"We know that ALL things work together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to His purpose."*

The apostle Paul gives comfort to us in the last verse of 1 Thess. 4,

*"Wherefore comfort one another with these words."*

The words he refers to are those contained in the preceding 2 verses:

*"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout with the voice of the arch-angel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."*

Maybe we do not feel worthy because of our failures in the past, in that we have allowed other things to enter in and choke the Word and thus hinder the development of any fruitful service to God. Should we be discouraged with the thought that our hope is gone? That would be foolish. Opportunity is here if we leave this meeting with a strong determination that from now on God will be our portion each day of our lives, and that we will give our thoughts, our hearts and our love to Him in constant, daily meditation, prayer and study of His Word. We should enter each day with the knowledge that this is the first day of the rest of our life. We need to listen and take heed to the words of the prophet Ezekiel to Israel in the time of their lowest declension from God:

*"Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed; and make ye a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourself, and live ye."* (Ezekiel 18:31-32)

We do not run from, nor do we want to avoid, experiences of trial and tribulation, for they are essential parts of our development. Gold is refined only by fire. The apostle Peter says,

*"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings."*

*"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried by fire might be found unto praise, honour and glory."* (1 Pet. 4:12; 1 Pet. 1:7)

Our memorial meetings, are for restrengthening and refinement to help the process of adjusting our course in daily living so that we maintain the way of life, the Truth. We come to get refurbished, re-energized, renewed in conviction, so that we can return to this warfare and to the work of personal transformation and to endure the trials of every day life.

We know that trials and testing often come within the ecclesia itself in instances or circumstances that may arise. We are not here to evaluate others—we are here to evaluate and do a self examination of ourselves and make certain that we learn from our self examination and apply it during the following week.

*"But let a man examine himself; and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."* (1 Corinthians 11:28).

Can we, in truthful, self-examination, identify ourselves as Christ's 126 brethren? In Mark 3:32-35 we read:

*"Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren ? And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother."* We identify ourselves as Christ's brethren in the true sense by doing the will of our Father.

During the past few days we have looked into the trials of many of the faithful in the past. We can see in these faithful similar behavioral traits, and living patterns that are characteristic of the faithful through the ages. If we are true followers of Christ, we should be able to identify with the feelings that many of them went through.

Certainly we are living in perilous times and the day to day pressures that we all are experiencing are to develop us in ways that we often question. The pressures on the young people today are greater than they have ever been in the history of the world. The morality and standards of the world today are further apart from what God wants than at any time in the history of man. Today's times are like in the days of Noah or Sodom and Gomorrah. We are constantly trying to reduce the stresses and pressures that surround us. Some of these we find are a part of our life in Christ. To some, the living of the Truth and trying to follow what is right, becomes extremely discouraging and depressing. Living the Truth and trying to do God's will in this day and age is a difficult life.

There is a Divine joy and peace that comes from living the Truth. But that does not guarantee that we will be free from the pain and pressure and problems of life. Most of us that have been in the Truth for some time realize that it is during these experiences of problems and pressures that God is closest to us and is developing us in ways that we often do not understand at the time. These experiences may be unpleasant to go through at the time and we often question the reasons, but on looking back we will often see that God was controlling the situation for us. James was writing to brethren who were experiencing many of the same trials and pressures that we are enduring and he says,

*"James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting. My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations (or trials); Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience."*

When we read these verses we find it hard to believe that we are to count it all joy. It is one thing to read and to hear about others troubles, but when it is we who are in the midst of experiencing the situation we tend to think that our problems are unique and nobody else realizes what we are going through with the pain and guilt and self pity and humiliation 127

and depression. In the midst of all these feelings, the apostle tells us to count it all joy.

Paul reminds the Hebrews of how joyfully and fearlessly they had served and suffered in their original zeal -

*"Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods."*

How many of us would do the same? Zeal makes hardships easy to withstand and gives inward joy and peace in the midst of outward suffering. These early brethren suffered much and rejoiced in it. We find it hard to show joy and patience over the smallest of our trials and troubles.

Even though many of us have been in the Truth for some time, we still go through many of these feelings during our trials. But we have to sit back and realize that it is not the situation itself that we are to analyze, but we are being tested on how we react to these situations and how we should respond to them. What is the way that God would want us to respond to these circumstances?

Moses spent the first 40 years of his life in Egypt. This was a trial of his faithfulness to what his mother and father had taught him. The second 40 years of his life he spent on the back side of the desert where God was preparing him and working in his life to send him back to Egypt to bring about the Exodus of God's chosen people. This trial taught him a different kind of patience, which was the opposite to the full life of Egyptian court. Moses was now over 80 years old, well educated in Egypt and more importantly he had the humble character that God had molded and prepared him to be the leader of His people to bring them to the land of promise. And yet Moses, in one moment of impatience and anger, strikes the rock. All through the wilderness Moses had been the stable leader that God had selected and called out - but one moment of human emotion slipped through and it cost him his entry into the land during his lifetime.

Look at David. A man after God's own heart. A king who was developed by God through trials of wars and family feuding and waiting for God to take care of Saul, coming through all these trials as a man of stability, humility and obedience to God as manifested in the Psalms. And yet, after all this, he falls into an adulterous relationship with Bathsheba.

Peter, the apostle, was always at his master's side. Among the closest of Christ's disciples, who would defend Christ to the end. A man of great courage. But on a particular night, while seated by a fire, when asked about his association with Jesus, he denied even knowing Jesus.

The fact is that there is never going to come a day in our life when we'll reach some kind of plateau where the problems will cease - when the 128 pains are going to go away - when everything will be forever easy

and we'll just slide into the kingdom with no effort at all. We need to see the reasons for all these problems.

Some of these problems are the result of our own mistakes and our own sins. We bring many of them on ourselves. Many of these problems, however, have their source in something other than the flesh. There are some problems that come our way because God allows them to come into our lives. He allows a certain set of circumstances, because he has something in mind that he knows will overshadow and far out-distance anything that we may be feeling at the time. If we learn how to respond correctly, God will produce his results regardless of whether it was our fault or whether it was Him that brought the problems into our lives.

We can respond by resisting the problem. This is often our first reaction to trouble. We don't like it. We're angry about it. We don't deserve it. We're going to fight it and make it go away. But we must remember that to fight against problems may put us into the position of fighting against what God has put there to develop us. Fighting back is not the correct response, but unfortunately it is the most immediate response. We have to remember that our responses are not to be primarily emotional, but they should be thought out responses. We have to take time to sit back and calm down before taking any action at all. Emotional reactions are of the flesh and the natural way that we react and it is just not God's way.

Another response may be to run from the problem, like Jonah from going to Ninevah. We may think that we don't have to get involved. That we don't have to stand for this any more. We don't have to work here any more. If this is a situation that God has engineered or allowed to happen in our lives and we run from the problem, we are actually running out on God. We say, and often convince ourselves, that we would never run out on God. That we could not hide from God. But our actions will show our actual belief. Do we truly believe that God is in control of the situation? Or is this just one little thing where we have to control ourselves and let God handle the bigger things? Our actions will speak louder than words.

Or we may retreat in bitterness. That is we may become inwardly resentful and bitter and before long, if we are not careful, we will grow to hate the other person or our circumstances or the situation.

When we find ourselves under pressure, what is our first response? Have we been fighting back? Have we been running away from the problem? Have we been allowing ourselves to become bitter and resentful toward God?

Finally we can reap the benefits and the rewards of the experience that we are going through. We need to be molded and shaped and 129

developed to fit the pattern that God wants for each of us. This molding and shaping are often done with pressure and heat much the way materials in industry are molded and shaped under heat and pressure. This process is to make us more pliable toward God and to accept what He wants for us. In nature we see trees mature and grow up. They are blown every which way by the winds and rain and the harsh weather. But the harsher the treatment and the more pressures they have to resist, the deeper the roots grow and strengthen the tree in the end. He wants to develop within us the character qualities of Himself, and it's by this trying process that each of us becomes stronger. Ease, pleasure and comfort are not the way of Christ. Our life in Christ will always include pressures and problems. Each of us has to decide if we are going to come out of our trials full of bitterness and resentment or will we decide that we will do it in the right spirit and reap the rewards of joy that God has in store for us.

God is not trying to see how much pain and suffering we can withstand. God's ultimate purpose is that in the sanding process, the polishing process, the sifting process, the pruning process of trimming away the old dead branches, that each one of us might better reflect God's spirit and that our characters will be refined to have that joyful attitude.

We cannot pretend to ourselves and to God that we love problems and pain. God certainly knows that we don't love these conditions. It is unnatural even for the most faithful to love these situations. We recall again James words from verse 2, "*Count it all joy*" when these things happen for it brings us closer to God and hopefully we will feel His love for us.

For an example of this we recall the situation in Acts 16 where Paul and Silas had been preaching the Gospel in Phillipi and then were dragged into the market place before the authorities where they were beaten with rods with many blows. After this they were thrown into the inner prison and their feet, were fastened with stocks. They were hurt very bad, and in this dungeon they could not even move with their feet fastened in the stocks, "*And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.*" We know that Paul was able to seek the inner comfort of the situation that was also mentioned by James when he said,

*"Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience."* For Paul told the Corinthian brethren in 2 Corinthians 12:9 "*My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*" Paul is telling us here that he has learned

something about handling these pressures and problems and pain. Paul also said, *"For when I am weak, then am I strong."*

Paul knew that he and Silas were not alone in that prison. God's angel was in there with them, like the angel in the furnace of fire along with Daniel's 3 friends, and that God was in control of the situation and that God was working out something good in his life and that is why he could rejoice in this situation. It was never going to get out of God's control and God was working out something in Paul's life. What a joyful thing to think about. This gets back to James and the fuller meaning of what he says when he tells us to count it all joy my brethren. We are to think these things through, not making hasty decisions but realizing, *"that the trying of our faith worketh patience or endurance."*

We are going to be able to handle it better the next time.

The producing of good in our lives is based upon our response to these problems. The good things that God has in mind for you and me are not going to happen if we do not respond properly. There is a wrong way to respond, as we mentioned before by resisting and running from it and resorting to bitterness, and there is a right way to respond by thinking it out first and remembering that God is in this with us and He'll never subject us to more than we can bear.

David writes about this in the 55th Psalm when he says, *"Cast your burdens on the Lord and he will sustain you."* David certainly realized that God was always there beside him to help sustain him. We must realize that God will not take all the pressure or solve the problem for us. Something happens to us on the inside as Paul tells us that he was filled with all comfort and joy because God is in control and good will follow.

As long as we are in the flesh we are going to make mistakes, we are going to fall, we are going to make wrong judgements and at times we are going to sin against God. But at the same time God is growing us like a plant. He is nurturing us. He is cultivating us and He is pruning us and attempting to keep us balanced so that every aspect of our lives, whether it's our business, our family, our home or our ecclesial life will all grow up together and become a balanced plant, growing us straight and tall with deep roots that keep going down deeper and stronger. God sees us out of balance over here and suddenly a pressure comes up over there to keep us straight. He sees us out of balance over there and he sends a problem over here and he keeps us growing up straight, if we will listen. We are continually growing up, every one of us, like children and we are never going to stop growing up. Hopefully God is going to continue working with us in our lives to help us to grow up as a tall and sturdy plant. 131

Though our problems seem too insurmountable as a great mountain, we can still face God as the great problem mover and the great navigator. God may carry us over that mountain. He may take us around it. He may help us tunnel through the mountain or he may just let us sit in front of the mountain for a few years to ponder His wisdom and glory. We come back to James words, "*Count it all joy.*" Not when our problems are removed, but when they are encountered. We shouldn't wait till we see our way clear to praise God. James tells us to do it when we encounter them. At the very beginning of the problem. That is when we start counting it all joy. There is not anything that we cannot face, if we learn how to respond properly in the way that God wants us to. When we look at these painful experiences through God's perspective, there is no suffering or sorrow that is not worth the final result that God wants to bring into our lives. Sorrow is a passing and necessary factor in the wisdom of God's love to produce the final joy.

What is that final joy that God wants for us? What is the final result He desires each of us to attain? It is that we will be prepared to become kings and priests and reign with Christ in His kingdom upon the earth. It is our prayer and desire that through this present chastening and pruning, God will grant each of us the promised results. All that He has promised, He will provide, IF WE respond to His guiding hand.

*Bro. Fred J. Higham*

## **Seven Times For Your Sins**

Under the Mosaic Law, the children of Israel were told: "*And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me; Then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins.*" Leviticus 26:27-28

The history of Israel is a history of their rebellion. They found every way imaginable to provoke the Lord their God till at last, He drove them from the land. The Nation of Israel and her ten tribes were driven out of the Holy Land first, at about 721 BC. Recording this event the scriptures write:

*"Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria; and Hoshea became his servant, and gave him presents. And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea: for he had sent messengers to So king of Egypt, and brought no present to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year: therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison. Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed 132 them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities*

*of the Medes. For so it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods."* 2 Kings 17:3-7

Judah, the southern nation, made up principally of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin fared better than their sister Israel. They had some righteous kings which had forestalled their turn towards corruption. Still, the move was inevitable because of the hard heartedness of the Jews, and eventually the mighty nation of Babylon conquered Judah, completing the destruction of the Kingdom of Israel.

In Chronikon Hebraikon Bro. Thomas chooses the date 610 BC for the attack of Babylon in their first invasion against Judah. This is an interesting date, because most experts of his day felt that the actual date was 612 BC. He knew, somehow, that the generally recognized date was too early for this event, both historically and prophetically.

Bro. Thomas used the 610 BC date to begin to calculate the seven times which passed over Israel and a punishment for her rebellion against the laws and principles of God. He reasoned that the 7 times were 7 multiplied by 360. 360 is the number of days in a Jewish year. The normal Jewish year had 12 months of 30 days each. Each month began with the first slight crescent of the new moon. Each year began with the first new moon after the sun had crossed the vernal equinox. Instead of adding a day to the calendar every four years such as we do with our 365 day calendar, they added a month as necessary. If the 13<sup>th</sup> new moon was not after the sun crossed the vernal equinox, then a second twelfth month was added to that year. In this way, the seasons were always kept perfect for planting crops.

The 360 day cycle came to be the standard for the circle. Hence, in geometry today, we are taught that there are 360 degrees in a circle. A time, in Bible prophesy then, is one circle made up of 360 days. And on the principle of a day for a year, a prophetic time came to stand for a period of 360 years.

The seven times of punishments which were to pass on Israel was  $7 \times 360 = 2520$ . Based upon his perception of the Divine time frame, Bro. Thomas reasoned that there would be 2,520 years from the beginning of the punishments upon Israel, till their conclusions. As he anticipated the return of Christ in 1867-70, he could see that the 2,520 years would expire in 1910, after Micah's terrible 40 years. He then anticipated the 7 times passing over Israel till Christ had reestablished the Nation of Israel on earth in its entirety.

Looking back on all this, Bro. Thomas was far more correct in his evaluations than his critics wish to give him credit. The seven times of punishments that Bro. Thomas knew had to come upon the Nation of Israel did in fact begin with the first Babylonian invasion. Only, from modern archeology, we now know that invasion did not begin in 612 BC such as was the commonly accepted date, but much later. The magazine, Bible Archeology Today sets the date for the Babylonian Conquest to have been 603 BC. The following is from Bible Archeology Today, July/August, 1999.

*"The Babylonian subjugation of Judah was not long in coming, although Judah seems to have held out for another two years after Egyptian defeat at the Battle of Carchemish. Judah surrendered only in the winter of 603 B.C.E. (or according to several scholars, in 604 B.C.E.), even though Nebuchadnezzar had already reached as far as Ashkelon and utterly destroyed it a year earlier (i.e., in 604 B.C.E.). Of this destruction, we now have archaeological proof from excavations at the site.*

*"Even though Judah had submitted to Babylonia in 603 B.C.E., it nevertheless lost no opportunity to throw off the yoke when it had the chance. That chance came in the winter of 601/600 B.C.E. when Babylonia attacked Egypt proper, a major historical event revealed only relatively recently through publication of the Babylon Chronicle. This official historical record conceals neither the Babylonian shortcomings during this campaign, which led to heavy losses on both sides, nor the subsequent empty-handed Babylonian retreat. This Babylonian defeat apparently encouraged the Judahite leadership to rebel and defect to the Egyptian camp."*

So here we are given a date, independent of the Scriptures for the invasion of Judah by Babylon. The Babylon Chronicle records this date as the equivalent of winter, 603 BC. Using Bro. Thomas' prophetic understanding that this started the "seven times of punishment upon the Jews," we would expect to see some major event taking place in history, 2,520 years after 603 BC. What would that be? The following is from the Encyclopedia Britannica:

## World War I

### Palestine, autumn 1917

Having assumed command in Egypt (see above The Egyptian frontiers, 1915-July 1917), [General Edmund] Allenby transferred his headquarters from Cairo to the Palestinian front and devoted the summer 134 of 1917 to preparing a serious offensive against the Turks. On the

Turkish side, Falkenhayn, now in command at Aleppo, was at this time himself planning a drive into the Sinai Peninsula for the autumn, but the British were able to strike first.

The Turkish front in southern Palestine extended from Gaza, on the coast, southeastward to Abu Hureira (Tel Haror) and thence to the stronghold of Beersheba. To disguise his real intention of achieving a breakthrough at Abu Hureira, for which, however, the capture of Beersheba was obviously prerequisite, Allenby began his operation with a heavy bombardment of Gaza from October 20 onward. When Beersheba had been seized by converging movements on October 31, a feint attack on Gaza was launched next day to draw the Turkish reserves thither. Then, the main attack, delivered on November 6, broke through the weakened defenses at Abu Hureira and into the plain of Philistia. Falkenhayn had attempted a counterstroke at Beersheba, but the collapse of the Turkish centre necessitated a general retreat. By November 14 the Turkish forces were split in two divergent groups, the port of Jaffa was taken, and Allenby wheeled his main force to the right for an advance inland on Jerusalem. On December 9 the British occupied Jerusalem."

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So from the winter of 603 B.C. when Jerusalem was first conquered by the head of Daniel's image, to the winter of 1917, or for a period of 2,520 years Jerusalem lay subjected to some form of control by the power of that great image.

As archeology in the Holy Land gets better and better, always confirming the Bible true, opposition to the Bible by Archeologists has become more obtuse. Archeology did not start off as the Bible's friend. In fact, the original contention of Archeologists, as this was becoming more of a science, was that they would prove once and for all that there never was any such city of Babylon. Those who denied the validity of the Bible knew that the Bible taught of a wonderful city which dominated the whole world, but by 1811, all vestiges of this once magnificent city had vanished. Not only that, but the natives living in the area held strong superstition, and were reluctant to travel into the region.

A British expedition in 1811 uncovered the mounds of the great city, and some minor excavation then, and again in 1817 confirmed the existence of a once huge city beneath the overgrown mounds. This marked a significant change in archeological procedure. Rather than using archeology as a tool to disprove the Bible, archeologists began using the Bible to locate lost cities.

Archeology found another use. After the formation of Israel in 1948, a debate raged between the Arabs and Israelis as to who had the original claim over the Holy Land. Former American President Jimmy Carter once complained that he had to have his Bible marked for him by his pastor, so that he could understand these ancient border disputes as he tried to mediate the Camp David accord between Israel and Egypt. Archeology was providing a powerful tool for the Israelis in their arguments against the Arabs concerning the fact that they existed in the land, according to the history recorded in the Old Testament.

So telling, in fact, were the archeological proof behind the historical claims of Israel based on the Old Testament that Syria actually shut down several archeological digs because they didn't like the things coming out of them. But now there are more enemies to archeology than just Syria. The Israeli government of Benjamin Netanyahu discouraged archeological digs on the grounds that it is wrong to upset ancient graves. Understand the teaching of the Mosaic Law on this matter, and the conservatives attempts to hold to the law, we can certainly understand how this is a justifiable complaint.

But with the new government came new problems. Hoping to find the "shackles" removed with the new government, archeologists actually have found just the opposite. The new government is extremely interested in a peace agreement with the Arabs, and so they too, have begun discouraging archeological digs which could threaten Arab claims.

A recent example of this came from the Temple Site itself. According to Jewish law, dirt cannot be removed from the Temple Site without notifying the government. Yet in the end of 1999, the Moslems removed three truckloads of dirt from locations near the Dome of the Rock, the Moslem Shrine, and dumped them in the Kidron Valley. The government of Israel did little except wring their hands over the matter, till a group of Jewish University students went out to the site where the dumping had taken place, and began to go through it. Upon publishing their finds, the Israeli government arrested the students for stealing historical artifacts.

The reason for this is clear. The Dome of the Rock sits squarely over the ancient Temple site. The only question that archeologists wrestle over is whether the actual Dome sits over the Temple site, or whether the Temple site was in the northwest corner of the courtyard of the Moslem Holy Place. But the Israeli government is reluctant to officially state this, knowing the risk of inciting Jewish zealots to destroy the structure should they officially declare what every one already knows. Such an action would permanently damage Jewish Arab relations, not to mention the 136 damage that would be done to Israel's image in the eyes of the

world. It is, therefore, in the best interest of this government to stop prying eyes from learning too much.

Against this backdrop has come a new generation of Archeologists, those who did not have to go through the painstaking exploration of their predecessors who used the Bible for their guide. This new class is called the Minimalists. Their name is derived from the fact that they give a minimum amount of credibility to the Bible.

Their arguments are two fold. First, they say that the oldest Bible (Old Testament) is from the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC. They argue that since this is the oldest one, it must not have existed before the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Yet the scarcity of Bibles prior to the 7<sup>th</sup> Century is testified to by the Bible itself.

*"And Hilkiyah, the high priest, said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. And Shaphan the scribe came to the king, and brought the king word again, and said, Thy servants have gathered the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of them that do the work, that have the oversight of the house of the LORD. And Shaphan the scribe shewed the king, saying, Hilkiyah the priest hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes. And the king commanded Hilkiyah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Michaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asahiah a servant of the king's, saying, Go ye, enquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us." 2 Kings 22:8-13*

If the Jews living in Josiah's day, which would be about 620 BC for his Great Passover, had no copies of the law because of its falling out of respect among the Jewish people, it would seem unlikely that archeologists 2,500 years later should expect to find any.

But classic among the Minimalists arguments is that there has been no evidence found of Solomon's Temple. Yet this structure would have been in existence at the time of the writing of the oldest of the Old Testament texts. How could the authors of the Scriptures, even those writing in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel write a work describing a Temple that contemporary readers knew didn't exist? And how can features of Solomon's temple be found, when the current government is trying so hard not to find any?

Such are the lengths that modern man is achieving in his never ending quest to deny the obvious when it pertains to divine matters. The Scriptures themselves gives us the measure by which they should be graded. It is not their accuracy of past events, (which is perfect, but simply not the standard) but rather their accuracy in future events.

*"Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and shew us what shall happen: let them shew the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together. Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work of naught: an abomination is he that chooseth you. I have raised up one from the north, and he shall come: from the rising of the sun shall he call upon my name: and he shall come upon princes as upon mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay. Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know? and beforetime, that we may say, He is righteous? yea, there is none that sheweth, yea, there is none that declareth, yea, there is none that heareth your words."* Isaiah 41:21-26

Have the prophecies given at a minimum of 700 years before Christ come true? Did God execute his Seven Times of punishments upon Israel? Did God call Israel back together from her scattering across the face of the earth as Ezekiel predicted? Is God causing a mighty nation to the North for Israel to be developed, and has he put a mighty naval nation to the south to spread its wings over Israel? These are the questions whose answers show God is still working out His plan of Salvation for mankind. And these questions are being answered more plainly each day, while the world has its senses dulled. May we be among those sharpened by the daily events of life to look from earnestly for the great day of our Lord.

*Bro. Jim Phillips*

## **DANIEL - THE MAN AND HIS BOOK**

*The Eternal Spirit, styled by Peter "the spirit of Christ", is the real author of both prophecies (i.e. the Apocalypse and Daniel); and what He omitted to tell Daniel, He communicated about seven hundred years after to the apostle John; and all for the benefit of those who "walk by faith", and are "the called according to his purpose". Should it be necessary, then, to exhort such to make both the Apocalypse and the Book of Daniel the subject of diligent and persistent meditation, that they may be able to take heed to the "sure word of prophecy", which is in very deed "a light shining in a dark place"? No genuine believer of "the gospel of the kingdom" will need 138 such an exhortation. [Exposition of Daniel – Bro. John Thomas]*

The Book of Daniel is one of those books contained in the Scriptures of Truth which captures the imagination of young and old alike. Is there a Sunday School scholar who does not thrill to the lessons of Daniel and his 3 friends? Is there a brother or sister who is not equally excited by the thrilling accounts of faith which time fails to dim?

For example, the youngest child in the Sunday School can recite with open mouth and wide eyes the courageous actions of Daniel which led him to become the companion of lions which dared not open their mouths at the faithful servant of the Living God. How we smile at the victorious expressions on the little faces as the details are related of how Azariah, Mishael and Hananiah escaped the flames of destruction, not even leaving an odour of smoke on them. By simple steps the great lesson of **faith** is taught to the "heritages of Yahweh."

The older children too are greatly impressed with the refusal of these servants of God to succumb to the pressures upon them in Babylon, and eat of the King's meat. By this powerful example, they learn that **obedience** to God, even in a strange land, is of paramount importance, and will in the end be rewarded.

Those who are even older in the Sunday School, still find that their maturing and inquiring minds have much to think and meditate upon, as they are stimulated by the wonder and power of the prophetic Word of God in such passages as Daniel chapter 2 and chapter 7. The lessons of childhood are cemented into a life of **faith and obedience**, where they have been able for themselves to see in the historical accuracy of prophetic revelation, that the faith and trust they have been taught is founded upon the adamant rock of the Word of God.

What about ourselves? Have we stopped learning from the Book of Daniel? Do we perhaps regard the lessons as excellent in themselves but more appropriate to the young ones who are learning the ways of God. The examples above are certainly well known to all of us more or less. Most of us have taught them to our children, or to the Sunday School class. We have often turned up the verses in Daniel chapter 2 in our public lectures to prove the veracity of the Word of God as the progress of the world empires are detailed. Or perhaps we have referred to the Stone power breaking in pieces the Kingdom of Men, and the Kingdom of God taking its place. It is true that we are generally well acquainted with the "beloved" Daniel and his prophetic writings, and of course, we realise that we have much to learn from those parts of the Scriptures that we *think* we know so well. How many times have we heard the expression "I have never seen that aspect before" when a point has been drawn to our attention? It is one of the glorious attributes of the Scriptures that it is ever new, if we apply our minds diligently to study and meditation. As Bro. Growcott wrote, *"the study of the Scriptures has enough fascination for one hundred lifetimes."*

The answer then to whether we have stopped learning, or know enough is obviously "no." We recognize that we always have more to learn, whatever part of the Bible we look at. However, have we in the words of Bro. Thomas quoted above, given these apocalyptic books "diligent and persistent meditation"? Perhaps here is where we hesitate. Do we need to give such attention to these books? We may be reluctant to do so, because some of the prophecies in Daniel and in the Apocalypse require us to give a great deal of attention, in order for us to comprehend their meaning. Maybe we are less inclined to put the effort into searching out the deeper things of the Word, and leave it to others to do so. Bro. Shawn Tyler of the Misikhu, Kenya ecclesia informed us recently that Bro Simiyu led Bible classes in Daniel. So why is there a need to give this part of Scripture such careful attention?

Before going any further let us ask why Bro. Thomas thought, and exhorted that the books of Daniel and the Apocalypse should receive such careful attention? Obviously he did not mean to exclude the study of other parts of the Bible, but he suggests that these books receive particular attention. The reason is given in his own words quoted above, i.e. that the reader may be able to take heed to the "sure word of prophecy." As Bro. Thomas goes on to say in the preface from which this extract is taken, the reader will be enabled to "discern the signs of the times, which are so luminously indicative of his appearing."

Bro. Thomas, as we know, expected the return of Christ in his own day. That was not realized, although his expositions and anticipation's of world events have proved to be exactly in accordance with what he understood the Bible to teach regarding the time of the end. We have seen the events he predicted come remarkably to pass. It was the *time* of Christ's return that Bro. Thomas was unable to predict with accuracy. He has sadly (and unreasonably) been the subject of criticism in some groups because of this, as if this were a great sin! His critics cast aspersions at him because he predicted a date, which did not see the long expected advent of the Messiah. In short, he expected Christ too early! - a "sin" which he will not need to worry about at the great tribunal before which we must all appear!

So Christ did not appear as early as our pioneer brethren expected. Does this reduce the force of the exhortation to diligently study the books referred to? Absolutely not! The expositions of our pioneers have given the clearest indications of "the times" in which we live, based upon a sound understanding of the inspired writings. It was the earnest desire of Bro. Thomas to give his readers an accurate understanding of these times, and we are able to benefit by realizing that we are actually living in the time of the end. We do not know the day or the hour, but we have the Scriptural pointers and fulfillment's of prophecy to tell us that these are the "latter days." The correct basis for 140 understanding the prophetic times has been supplied by our pioneers

who have based their expositions on the solid rock of Scripture, particularly those found in Daniel and the Apocalypse.

This should then be a great incentive to us. To be able to recognize that our Master is at the door because we have been given the general indications of such, must be an encouragement to us. The faithful remnant in every generation have looked carefully at their own day, to see if the return of Christ could be expected. By studying Daniel and the Apocalypse, we are able to have great confidence that we do indeed live in the time of the end.

There is another reason for keeping our attention focused on these writings as expounded by our pioneer brethren. We live in days when other expositions are prevalent and which take away from the writings of Bro Thomas and Bro. Roberts and introduce features which are not in accordance with faithful exegesis. For example, there is a failure in some groups to recognize the harlot of Rome as she is depicted in the Scriptures, drunk with the blood of the saints, speaking great blasphemies against the Deity. If we fail to discern the great system of iniquity, which has made "all nations (drink) of the wine of the wrath of her fornication" (Rev.18.3), then we are liable to be looking for the wrong things at the time of the end. We are liable to be deceived in our understandings of the events to take place. Furthermore, we will not appreciate the utter detestation the Deity has for Catholicism, and which we must imbibe ourselves. The Book of Daniel provides a basis for our understanding of this aspect, which is further exemplified in the Apocalypse.

It is therefore intended to look at the Book of Daniel in a series of articles with these thoughts in mind. However, after all that has been said, it is not intended to be a deep and intensive study. The notes, which will form the basis of these articles, were designed for young people of teenage years. The intention was to give them an overall understanding of the Book of Daniel, including those "deep" parts! But it was also designed to provide encouragement to them. After all, when we are first introduced to Daniel, he was a teenager himself in a very hostile and ungodly world. Did he forget his Scriptural background? Not at all. He kept in mind what he had been taught from childhood. In the words of the apostle Paul, he continued in the things which he had learned and had been assured of, knowing of whom he had learned them, remembering that from a child he had known the holy Scriptures, which made him wise unto salvation (2 Timothy 3.14-15). Such a heritage gave him a good standing in the city of Babylon with all its temptations, idolatry and worldly interest.

When we turn the pages of Daniel, we observe circumstances at different ages of his life, all instructive to the student of God's Word. And when we leave the aging prophet, it is with the thought that his whole life has been given to the service of the living God, in times of trial and distress. What greater encouragement do we need when we see the prophet "diligently" studying the prophecy of Jeremiah to understand the "number of years" 141

that had transpired to complete the 70 years which would bring deliverance to the captives (Dan.9.2). He was looking at the "signs of the times," just as we do! He was enthusiastic for the things of the Truth, and is it not our desire that our young people will demonstrate in their lives a similar commitment to the Hope of Israel, a desire to lovingly serve the living God with diligence?

In our own times of trial and distress, is it not our desire also to maintain the life of faith and obedience, which Daniel did? Of course it is. It is the aim of these articles, therefore, to provide not only an understanding of the prophetic Word which some of our younger readers may benefit from, but also to provide words of encouragement and instruction to prepare us for the great day when Daniel shall stand upon the earth again.

It is also earnestly hoped that our younger Brethren and Sisters will be encouraged to pick up the writings of Bro. Thomas and Bro. Roberts from whom the notes largely owe their direction. We live in perilous times. The continuation of the Truth in these days depends upon the diligent study and accurate understanding of the Word of Life, but as the days go on, we become more and more convinced that it is also dependent to a large extent upon our assimilation and appreciation of the pioneer writings.

There is also a great incentive to apply our minds to the study of Daniel in the way it is actually written. We refer to it as the writing of symbols, or signs. Empires, battles, individuals, and events, are referred to in symbolic language by the employment, for example, of Beasts. The Kingdom, and even Christ himself, is the subject of sign when we consider the Stone cut out of the mountain without hands, which became a great mountain filling the whole earth.

In simple terms, we are being taught by pictures! That takes us back to the earliest class in the Sunday School! How do we teach the little ones? By captivating their minds with pictures. We ask them to imagine David and Goliath, Noah and the Ark, the opening of the Red Sea, and yes, Daniel with the lions. We hope to create in their little minds pictures that will remain with them for life. We often supplement the teaching with pictures from a Bible book, and if we have the ability, we draw, and help them to draw, the things we have been describing verbally. Many of us can probably call to mind the pictures of Bible lessons we had years ago. They are indelibly fixed in our minds.

That is exactly the way Yahweh often teaches His children. He employs pictures to impress our minds with the truths He wishes us to learn. There is great force in this, and which a few moments contemplation and the providing of some examples will drive home. Our minds are impressionable. They have been created that way. In the image of the Elohim is how Genesis 1 verse 26 describes it. Our minds are constantly receiving impressions. From the time 142 we awake to the time we go to bed, our minds are receiving all sorts of

images. Many of them will be forgotten because they are routine, but many of them will stick because they are out of the ordinary. Is that a good thing? Well, it all depends on the image that has been received. A tragic car accident that we may have witnessed may well be an image we would rather forget, but it is there all the same. On the other hand a baptism is a "picture" we cherish and will want to bring back to mind. There may be other images in our minds . which we have allowed to be impressed there and which we would rather have "deleted." However, On this computer there is no delete button! The memory stays! (How careful we need to be therefore to ensure that only acceptable images are stored!)

Returning to the point, pictures impress upon our minds, lessons, ideas etc., in a far greater way than mere words. The expression comes to mind, "one illustration is worth a thousand words." The book of Daniel is filled with illustrations; pictures to help us understand and *remember* what God wishes to teach us.

Finally, another reason why Daniel should receive "diligent and persistent" meditation is Daniel's own insatiable desire to learn and understand. Throughout the book, which bears his name, we see his interest in the divine revelation. Consider the following references: -

*"Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast"(Daniel 7:19)*

*"I, even I Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning"  
(Daniel 8:15)*

*"I Daniel understood by books" (Daniel 9:2)*

*"...then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?"  
(Dan.12:8)*

Let us imitate Daniel in his desire to learn that we may be among "the wise" (Dan 12:10), who have discerned the times in which they live and order their lives accordingly.

*Bro. Phillip Hughes*

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## What Does That Mean?

*"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." (1 Thess. 5:1-3)*

This passage sounds like Paul is saying that there is no need to discuss this subject; that it is a useless endeavor because Christ's coming will be as a thief in the night. But isn't that exactly why the Thessalonians wanted him to write, and why *we* need to talk about the signs?

As with so many "problem verses", if we take the context of this passage into consideration, the problem goes away. Paul goes on to explain why he considered this a useless subject to discuss in verses four and five:

*"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."*

Think of it this way: You ask me when and if I think a thief might break into your home. You have deadbolt locks on all the doors and windows. You have the latest electronic security system installed which connects directly to the police and which controls lighting inside and outside of your house. You have an eight-foot fence around your property with barbed wire at the top. You have security guards stationed around your property line. You have German Shepherds roaming the yard as well as inside the house. My answer: Why should you be concerned about when a thief may try to break in? It doesn't matter. You are ready; you are prepared.

If, however, you know that your security has flaws (i.e., frequent storms knock out power for long periods of time, rendering your security system useless; the dogs go to the kennels when you don't think they need to be patrolling; the guards are often found sleeping while on duty, and other such issues), then -- unlike those to whom Paul wrote -- you are not fully prepared... and you'd better get ready! Although we don't know *when* Jesus Christ will return, we can be assured that it will be like the coming of a thief in the night and the travail of a woman with child--certain and inevitable.

The question addressed in these verses, then, is not "How can I figure out when the thief will come?" (Paul says that is a useless exercise). The real question is, "Am I ready?" It boils down to self-examination. Are we prepared for that day when the "thief" arrives?

*"But of that day and that hour knoweth no man ... Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is... Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."*