

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 upbuilding exhortations are encouraged. This is an effort to upbuild 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

LAMPASAS, Texas -- S.S. & Study Class, 10:00 A.M.; Memorial 11:00 A.M.; Seasons of Comfort Class 1:15 P.M., Lecture -- 4th Sunday; Bible Class Wednesday 7:30 P.M.; Fraternal Gathering, 2nd Weekend in June. – Bro. Rusty Stephen, HC3 Box 16A, Lampasas, TX 76550; phone (512) 556-6771. E-mail ssstephen@n-link.com

Greetings in the Masters Name,

It has been awhile since we have communicated from our corner of the vineyard and since that time several events have transpired that should have given us all, a wake up call and reacquaint us with our own mortality and the fact that we should live every day unto the Lord. We know not the day nor the hour that will be our last. Of course, I am referring to the illnesses that came to Bro. Gary Smith a year ago and to Sis. Sue Garvey and Sis. Dottie Banta earlier this year.

As of this writing Bro. Gary is doing well. We are sad that Sis. Sue lost her battle and is now asleep in the Lord. Our hearts and prayers go out to Bro. Paul and their children and it was nice to have Sara visiting recently. Sis. Dottie Banta is having a tough time with her treatments and any words of strength and encouragement to her and Bro. Bud are appreciated, knowing that all things are subject to the Lord's will, prayer and fellowship are our only rays of hope.

We are sad to announce the falling asleep in Christ of Sis. Winnie Carroll in June. She was quick to discuss the Truth and quick with words of cheer and encouragement to everyone. She will be very much missed by this writer and all of the Brotherhood.

On a brighter note, Bro. Pat Cassidy is doing well . It brought a tear to my eye when he was able to offer prayer at Meeting a few weeks ago. We are also happy that Sis. Shiloh Brown is back with us after several years of being in the Boston Ecclesia.

Our June Fraternal Gathering has just passed and despite the much needed rain, it went off with out a hitch. We had a variety of speakers starting with Bro. Bob Wolfe on Friday night, Bro. Wayne J. Wolfe, Bro. Noah Brown, Bro. Jimmy Phillips and ending with Bro. Gary Smith on Sunday. The Exhortations and Lectures given were all very uplifting and very much appreciated by one and all.

Bro. Dan and Sis. Misty Wolfe are new parents of a fine son, Noland Ray, may God bless and keep him in the ways of righteousness.

We have been blessed with many visitors throughout the past year including Sis. Lennie Hennig, Bro. Bob & Sis. Sharon Wolfe, Sis. Anne Prado & family, Bro. Bob Bent & family, Bro. Harry & Sis. Cindy Cassidy, Bro. Jack Carroll, Bro. Lynn Osborne & Bro. David Humphries.

We look forward to seeing a lot of you at the Hye Gathering, God Willing, to be held July 24th – July 30, 2000.

With all the love in the Truth,

Bro. Rusty Stephen, Recording Brother

Books For Kenya

There is an ongoing need for books and study material on the Truth for our Brethren and Sisters in the various Kenya Ecclesias. If you have books and material that you can send and would like to help in this effort, please contact Sis. Kaye Yuen for instructions on where to send to each ecclesia and she can let you know where the current need to send is and the best route to send them. She can be contacted at Syuen33550@aol.com or fax (604) 925-0649.

Fraternal Gathering Tapes

Tapes of the Fraternal Gathering are available from Sis. Pam Naglieri, 13 Old Coach Road, Husdon, NH 03051, 603-598-1745

FRATERNAL GATHERINGS & ACTIVITIES

(To be held God Willing)

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

Are You Afraid To Be Different?

In a recent program about current events in Israel, they showed the general in charge of the area of Southern Lebanon and northern Israel. Israel's population seems to now take a poor view of military operations in Southern Lebanon. Many soldiers have died, and the people's view is that it was needless. They showed how dangerous a job this general has. Many people want him dead. His life is probably going to not last much longer. The bottom line of the show was the following. He was asked by the commentator, 'Has Israel changed?'. He said "yes, it has." He was asked, "In what way has it changed?" He said, "Now Israel is just a normal country."

This is a sad commentary in a way. Look at Israel's history. At the time of Samuel, Israel felt the need to be like other nations — just a normal nation.

In 1 Samuel 8 we read: "Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles. And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD." 147

Another time, more than a thousand years later, another Israel, and yet the same nation said: John 19, *"Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar."* Just like when Israel rejected God from being their king, wanting to be like other nations, again they rejected Jesus — the King of the Jews.

Did God ever, ever intend for Israel to be a normal nation? No, of course He didn't. What does He say about Israel – Deut. 14:2, *"For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a **peculiar** people unto himself above all the nations that are upon the earth."* They were not to be like other nations — they had to be different — peculiar. If they ever become a normal people, a normal nation — trouble was on its way. The process of becoming like the other nations is called in modern language *"Assimilation."* The closest word I can find to this in the Bible is stated in Romans 12:2, *"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."* You see, the process of becoming conformed to the world, is the process of becoming normal — becoming just like everyone else. And what is everyone else like?

At our Wednesday Night Bible class this week, we began our study of Romans. In this first chapter, the Holy Spirit lays out for us what this world is like. That was 2,000 years ago. But what is different — it is wicked again. Serving the flesh is what is normal, just like it had become in Roman times. Reprobate minds turn to every evil work, and self-serving pleasure. Homosexuality's had become wide-spread, people choosing to be stupid instead of wise. Knowledge being shunned, anger and interest in wickedness kept increasing. The result of all this as it developed over the next 200 years resulted in the Roman Catholic Church, the essence of wickedness that covers the earth today. They not only are normal and like other nations, they are the organization from which most others are derived. The influences of that worldly organization are felt in every part of our lives, from the calendar we use, to the ways religions conduct their meetings, to regulations of dates such as Easter and Christmas — determined by Catholic popes. Most people readily conform their lives to those Catholic determined things. The popish powers leave their mark upon so many nations — and the daughters of that great harlot — the protestant churches, control the rest. And it is these nations that Israel has become like unto. After 2,000 years of assimilation — then finally breaking free and getting their own nation — suddenly after only 50 years, they are yet again assimilating and becoming like other nations — just a 148 normal nation.

But you might be thinking — we don't need a political lesson, this time is for meeting, this time is to remember what Jesus' requirement is for us. Are we ever in danger of assimilating — of become just like the nations around us? Would that be a bad thing? For that matter, are we supposed to be different and peculiar and not normal?

For one thing, the passage we read from Romans applies to us. It is an exhortation to us. Romans 12:1, *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."*

People are interested in serving their flesh — doing what feels good, what makes them happy for the moment, what makes them avoid dealing with reality — they are intent on serving their guts, certainly not serving a cause that will not happen until some unknown time in the future like us. Most people seem willing to accept what they see around them as all there is, and all they will ever want. But that is not what we have settled for, is it?

A passage from Brother Thomas defines the reasoning that most people just don't heed:

"God invites you to reconciliation; *"Come unto me,"* says Jesus, *"all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."* Have you no ambition beyond the mean and groveling aspirations of this animal life? Are the glories of personal decoration with silks and velvets, and gold and precious stones, the choicest brilliants after which you sigh? Is the honour which comes from vain and foolish man, corruptible and defiled in all his parts, your highest aspiration? Is the immortality of fame with future generations the most renowned for which you long? Fellow mortals! Of what value are baubles such as these to tenants of the tomb? Are the particles of dust which once rejoiced in the glory and renown of a Nebuchadnezzar, a Cyrus, an Alexander, a Caesar, or a Napoleon, more happy or estimable than those of a Lazarus? All these things perished in the using, and are now equally valueless to all, both of high and low degree."

In our weekly Bible studies we all have gone through Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians. One of the common lessons taught throughout these books is that people who are not serving God are very far away from God, but very close to the dirt which they are made out of. What God wants us to do is to come out of that dirt and get closer to 149

Him. He has provided a way for that to happen, but it is up to us to follow that way. Unfortunately, like a child playing in some filthy, dirty place, most people are perfectly content to live out their dirty little lives and never give eternity a second thought. Maybe they have pondered it a little bit at a brief time of their lives, but then it is gone from them.

Wanting to be different, and doing anything in our power to be different, is a grand theme of the Bible. Let's look at a few verses passages indicating this.

The priests were told:

Lev. 10:9-10, *"Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations: And that ye may put **difference** between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean."*

1Peter 2:9, *"But ye are ... an holy nation."*

We are not to be normal people, assimilated into the society around us. As a matter of fact, God has commanded that we be different, or separate.

2Cor. 6:17, *"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye **separate**, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you."*

These are just a few examples of verses that teach us that we are to be different. We need to find ways to be separate from other people. Of course, we don't actually leave the world, we do still associate with people, but there is a kind of separation that has to take place, if we are to draw closer to God and please Him.

Israel went far far astray from that down through the centuries. A number of times.

For example, in the time of Esther, her cousin Mordechai had to counsel her to get involved in being a distinct people.

The Jews got into a lot of trouble because of a wicked man named Haman. He explained to the King that the Jews were obviously different from everyone.

Esther 3:8, *"And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them."*

Brethren and Sisters, isn't this the position we are supposed to be in? We are to obey the local laws UNLESS they are in conflict with God's laws. We know that from what Peter said: *"We ought to obey God rather than men."* There are things that we just don't obey. If required to sue, we don't sue, if required to swear, we don't swear, if required to kill, we don't kill. These are examples that make us DIFFERENT. They also can be things that make people hate us. It certainly made Haman hate Esther's cousin Mordechai.

If we truly are different, then sometimes people will notice, and it just might make them hate us. It made Haman hate Mordechai. Haman had a law passed to kill all the *Jews*. Mordechai sent to Esther:

Esther 3:13-14, *"Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"*

One thing about being different, is that it becomes very possible to make a real difference in many ways. Esther, or Haddasah, as was her real name was able to make possibly one of the more important differences in history because she was willing to be different, she was willing to speak up, be a Jew openly identifying herself with other Jews. If she had kept her mouth shut, the Jews may have all been destroyed, since that was the general plan. She opened her mouth. Haman was destroyed, and the Jews got saved.

Sometimes making a difference means opening our mouths, sometimes it means keeping it shut. Ecclesiastes 3:7 says, *"time to keep silence, and a time to speak."* Jesus spoke out sometimes, and stayed quiet other times.

We have to be different. We cannot assimilate into the cultures around us. It may be very tempting to look at other churches to see how they do things, but we can't act like them. They are part of the false system of religion prevailing upon earth today. Just like God said in Leviticus, the practices of the heathen are abhorrent to God.

Leviticus 20:23, *"And ye shall not walk in the manners of the nation, which I cast out before you: for they committed all these things, and therefore I **abhorred** them."*

We know that the churches will end, the evil superstitions will fail. Why would we take part in them? And yet we do. It is very difficult 151

to avoid such practices, many of them are done without giving them a second thought. But, giving things a second thought — what the Bible calls — "Considering" (See Haggai). Hag. 1:7, *"Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways."*

When we consider our ways, when we obey the commandments: *"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"* We should be asking ourselves, as one of our examinations — are we different than those around us?

I should ask myself — *"Am I the same as the man working next to me, am I the same as the man next door, or the man at the grocery store."* Are you the same as the people you grew up with, who are not in the Truth? Are we the same as the people in our town. Are we just as any normal church? Are we just the same as any normal family?

The general I spoke of in Israel said — *"Israel is now just a normal nation."* Is that what we have become? Are we just average and normal Americans? Are we normal? Or are we different? The Bible says we should be different, we must be different. How can we say we are separate, how can we say we are distinct, how can we claim to be peculiar, if we are the same as the unbelievers around us?

To the advertising and marketing industry, we fall in the category of being normal. We buy what they tell us to buy. We wear what they tell us to wear. We can deceive ourselves into thinking this is not true, but if we really think about it, it is. Of course it is, and sometimes we don't have much choice because we have to buy what is available, what is sold. Even if it comes down to food, clothing and shelter, we can only buy the cloth, thread and clothing patterns that they tell us to buy and market to us. We can only buy the types of flour and food ingredients that they tell us to buy, we buy the houses they make available, and use materials to build houses that are popular now.

Is that so bad? No, probably not — because I am talking now about things, things like this are to perish with the using, and we are to be content with the things we have. But, our practices and the way we think, must be different.

Dare to be different is a phrase I remember from when I was younger. It takes a great deal of courage to be different than our friends and family. It takes courage to let go of current trends, fads and popular thinking. We all have long since let go of those things, or, maybe never bought into 152 them at all.

The passages of the Bible containing what we call the "Sermon on the Mount," challenge us to be different — in fact, demand a complete change in thinking, practice attitude, that the result would be to make the doers of the teachings noticeably different than other people. The ways of Christ demand that we love one another, *"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."* Daring to love one another is what can make us noticeably different than people around us. For all the efforts of the media and the so-called hippies of the last century, for all the efforts of grassroots movements and the *"love generation,"* there is less love in the World now than there was 30 years ago. It didn't work, because they left the key to love out of their efforts. That key as we all know, is Jesus Christ. The Son of God showed what love is all about, obeying the commandments of the God of Israel. The commandments are not grievous. And they are things that can be tried out and practiced by any given person on this earth if they will only believe in the Truth and get baptized. These things are things that will make us different, they make us *"not normal,"* they make us *"not assimilated."* The things taught by Christ that make us different, if followed, will ensure that we do not conform to the image of this world but are rather transformed, because they renew us spiritually.

Romans 11 says things like, *"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Be kindly affectioned one to another, don't return evil for evil. Act happy, use your money to help each other, be given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not."*

These are the same kinds of things from the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus challenged Israel, in the Sermon on the Mount with these very things. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. People see us, brethren and sisters. If we are people of light, if we are the shining lights in the world, people see us. Do they recognize that we are different? We are supposed to be the salt of the earth. We are called out to be part of God's name. When people taste what we are and walk away, is there any taste? Is it bitter or tasty? If the salt loses its savor, of what point is it?

We see the world say that killing is wrong. They eliminate the electric chair, they try to get police to stop killing people. They attempt to disarm the average citizen. But Jesus bypasses all this, and challenges us much further. Anybody can say stop using weapons to kill each other, but what about who ever says, *"you fool, shall be in danger of hell fire?"* Jesus bypasses it all and challenges our minds saying, get control of your thoughts and feelings, stop even speaking in anger or using

insulting words. Get down to the heart of the matter. Dare to be different. When people around us argue and fight, dare to bless and be kind. When people around us focus on their diversity and difference, dare to be one. When people around us swear to things with complicated oaths and contracts, or hedge what they say with pages of disclaimers and contingencies - dare to say Yes or No.

The challenge that Christ gives us is to dare to be different. Come out from among them and be separate God says, and I will be your God and you will be my people. Dare to love your enemies, dare to love strangers and greet them. Dare to be perfect just like God in Heaven is perfect. Dare to forgive and release people of their debts to you. And he goes on to say if we don't be different in this way — that we will not be forgiven by God when we want our debts forgiven and released.

What a sad commentary if our general had to turn to God and say that we were just a normal church. What a sad commentary if he were to say — depart from me, I never knew you. The day of judgment is coming. Will we be told — yes brethren you stood out and were distinct to ME, you dared to be different, you dared to be not normal and average, you let your light shine, you didn't hide it under a bushel basket, you dared to show my teachings and ways to the people around you, even if you got embarrassed or persecuted for it sometimes.

Jesus dared to be different than the religious system around him. He was therefore killed. Nailed to the tree — hung out to die. He died and was buried. But ROSE AGAIN to life. Now we, with him, carry on the work he authored. Let us dare to be different and as we remember what he began on the night of the first of the last suppers, let us do it in remembrance of him the author and the finisher of our faith.

Bro. Michael Morrell

Lessons from the Life of Joseph

"Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colors. And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him."

If you turn with me to Genesis 37 you will see the words I have just read. Many exhortations have been written on Joseph, however, he is a person that I've had on my mind for a while for the examples that he has laid out before us in his life. I would like to take a few moments to relate 154 some of my ideas on Joseph.

In these two verses that we have just read, we see the communication was poor between Joseph and his brothers. Strongs puts it in the word "peaceably" — in other words they did not have a good human relationship. Now we can try to put ourselves into Joseph's shoes. However, let me try to present a scenario to you. Who would you trust more, your family, or a stranger? We find that by reading verse 2 that Joseph was only 17 years old. He would have trusted his family. Joseph loved his family and he served his family as related to us in verses 13: *"And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? Come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here am I. (Ready to go!) And he said to him, go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron and he came to Shechem. And a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou? And he said, I seek my brethren: Tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks. And the man said, They are departed hence; for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan."*

He could have easily gone the first time and not found them and said, *"Ah, they're not here! Heading hom,"* but he continued to pursue after them. He loved them and he knew what his father had said unto him — he had to serve them.

Yet because of the dreams that God gave him, his brethren grew to hate him. We all know those dreams with the sheaves and the cows. Their hatred was so strong they wanted to murder him.

I John 3:15 says, *"Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."* Their hate for him already had created this idea for murder.

This brings us to the thoughts for today. The results of their hatred led them to conspire (or to be deceitful, crafty or conniving) against him, as Strongs says. Here they are, the brothers, being deceitful, planning amongst themselves; crafty — in figuring out how they can do it and conniving as far as getting Joseph to come over to them. We read in the same record that we have started this morning, where it says in verse 20:

"Come now therefore, (this is the brothers talking) and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams." So it was because of the dreams that they hated him and wanted to kill him. *"And Rueben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him. And Rueben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this 155*

pit that is in the wilderness (a particular pit they had found), and lay no hand upon him: that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again. And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him; and they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it. And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmael' tes came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt."

We tend to read this passage and pass over one of the most important parts. Seven words with such meaning *"And they sat down to eat bread."*

Wow! Here was a young man who loved and served his family, yet they cast him into a pit and sat down to eat. It said the pit had no water in it, so this would indicate to us that this was a dried up well. Very dark, very deep, very cold, very narrow, very confined, very alone!

Amos makes a reference to this incident in chapter 6:3 *"Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near; That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall: that chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music like David: That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments; but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph."*

Here we see a pretty good picture of the brothers and how they treated Joseph. What a terrible crime — yet did Joseph hate them back? Did he call them names? Did he fight back physically? NO. In his own quiet way he knew it was God's plan. What a tremendous amount of faith, brethren and sisters. Could we see ourselves handling this situation? Maybe, but what about being sold as a slave into a foreign country? Then again, maybe not.

His father would not have sent a search party because as far as he knew Joseph was dead. We take it up in verse 33, *"And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat: an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces. And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him."*

We take up again our story in Chapter 39, *"And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, 156 an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had*

brought him down thither." There he was, lifted up out of the dark, deep well and yet he was sold into a country. Once again we find Joseph — alone, in a dark country, confined. We know the story from here, but let us examine another incident in his life in Egypt. We skip through a lot of the time of Joseph being in Egypt — from 17 years old and beyond and we come to the time when his brothers came down into Egypt. Why did they come down? It was because there was no food. They were soon invited to a meal prepared for them by Joseph. Imagine this! The last time he saw them, they cast him into a pit and sat down to eat, not feeling anything, no emotion for Joseph! What a callous act on the brothers' part. Yet here is Joseph preparing a meal for them and inviting them to sit down and eat with him. Can you imagine the emotions that Joseph would have felt at this time? Remembering the last time that he saw them, they had cast him into a pit and sold him into slavery and sat down and ate. Yet here we see an act of love on Joseph's part that was so emotional that he could not contain himself. Chapter 43:30, *"And Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother; and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there."*

Chapter 45:1, *"Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard."*

Verse 34 of Chapter 43, *"And they drank, and were merry with him."* The first time they ate and drank, it was against them. The second time, the scripture says, it was with him. But not before he humbled them so that they might realize the errors of their previous ways. You remember how he humbled them through accusing them of being spies. How He held Simon hostage and forced them to bring down Benjamin. And now being humbled, he gathered them for this feast where he revealed himself as their lost brother. You can imagine you could have heard a pin drop in that room. You could have seen the jaws fall open of the brethren, the finger pointing starting and the fear of what would happen to them.

Chapter 45 verse 3, *"And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph: doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him (a hush would have fallen); for they were troubled at his presence."*

And, O yes, Joseph was in a position to cause trouble for them. But, Joseph says in verse 5, *"be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five 157*

years (yet to come), in the which there shall neither be earring nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve your posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt."

What an example to us, Brethren and Sisters. Forgiveness and retaliation once again established communication. Joseph could have easily thrown them into the same prison that he was in and left them to rot, but God is in complete control of all things; in our lives as well – the good and the bad. Trials come to us in diverse ways and it is how we handle them whether we pass or fail – it is how we will be judged. The brothers chose to hate Joseph, they chose to sell Joseph and they chose to pass him off for dead. Joseph, on the other hand, chose to love his brethren, to feed his family and he chose to keep them alive. Total opposites. Yet Joseph forgave them for the worst crime a family member could do to another. Notice also they were given the opportunity to repent. We too should not harbour bitterness against others who have harmed us, but should seek also to elevate them as Joseph did with his brethren.

An article OF FORGIVENESS - *"Forgiveness is a funny thing. It warms the heart and cools the sting."*

A popular philosopher named Confucius says, *"Those who cannot forgive others break the bridge over which they themselves must pass."* Something to remember.

And now as we examine ourselves by the example that is set before us in the bread and the wine, let us look briefly at one more thing in Joseph's life. Joseph was seen as a type of Christ. His sufferings prepared him for glory. We compare this with what Christ said in Luke 24:25, *"Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself"*

Jesus quite possibly was thinking of Joseph when he said this.

Stephen also referred to the mistreatment of Joseph yet in time of need *"and at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren."*

We have here the comparisons between Joseph and Jesus.

Brethren and Sisters, there are many examples in the Bible of men and women like Joseph, but for today we have seen that communication and 158 forgiveness are two qualities we must always possess. These are two

of the toughest, yet we should always keep in mind, that it is to bring about God's purpose; it is to shape us for the coming day. It will make it easier to overcome our weaknesses and help us to strive together, in harmony, as we await the coming of that type that is to be fulfilled – our Master even the Lord Jesus Christ.

Bro. Dan Jackson

DANIEL - THE MAN AND HIS BOOK

"I have a long time holden my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself"(Isa.42:14). It is now about eighteen hundred years since He spoke by His servant Johnand so entirely hath He refrained Himself from further revelation of His will, that men have at length almost generally concluded that He hath ceased to take any interest in human affairs..... Sin in its most heartless and hateful deformity reigns the universal despot of the nations....But though the Lord hath a long time held His peace, He hath not been unmindful of His people, nor heedless of human affairs. The great incidents of history which have given rise to successive kingdoms and dominions, from the overturning of the kingdom and throne of God and of David, His anointed, in Judea, by the Chaldeans, to the present time, are but events predetermined and arranged in the purpose of God, and revealed in the "sure word of prophecy." Not a kingdom has been established, nor a king dethroned, but it has formed a move, which has contributed to the maturity of the present crisis, which will ultimate in the introduction of the kingdom of God. (Elpis Israel pages 321-323)

It is always helpful when reading or studying one of the books of the Scriptures to have an understanding of the general theme which runs through the writing. It assists us in absorbing the message which that particular writing has. Whatever book of the Bible we look at, there is usually one general theme which stands out; a series of ideas or exhortations which flow through the writings. For example, Leviticus gives us details regarding the Offerings and Feasts etc. under the Law; Jeremiah describes the sins and rebellions of Judah, as the reason for Yahweh's judgement upon the nation. The epistle to the Hebrews urgently exhorts the readers not to return to the Law, providing many arguments from the Law itself.

Daniel has a number of ideas running throughout the prophecy, but the general theme may be described as the Kingdom of God versus the Kingdom of Men. In the Exposition of Daniel, Bro. Thomas writes:

"In taking a general survey of the contents of the Book of Daniel, it may be seen that the *two great powers* are the principal subjects of 159

its predictions. The one is styled "The KINGDOM OF MEN" (Dan.4:17); and the other, "THE KINGDOM OF GOD." (Dan.2:44; 4:3; 7:27)

It is true, that there are many symbols, such as the Image, the Fiery Furnace, the Tree-Stump, banded with brass and iron, the Four Beasts, the Ram, and the He-Goat; but these are signs, in the prophetic heraldry, not of kingdoms distinct and independent of those which have preceded them, but of one and the same *Kingdom of Men* in the several phases of its existence." (first two paragraphs)

We note that Bro. Thomas refers to the Kingdom (singular) of men. There have been various empires, such as Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome, but Bro. Thomas explains that these are just different phases. It is the same Kingdom of Men. The Kingdom of the diabolos and satan, opposed to the principles of God's Truth. It is a great comfort to realize, as Bro. Thomas says in the quote from Elpis Israel above, that [1] God is not unmindful of His people during these epochs, and [2] the political changes are contributing to a crisis which will ultimate in the Kingdom of God.

Bro. Thomas continues to show that this Kingdom of Men was founded by Nimrod. The Scriptures are limited in what is actually written about this man, (although archaeological discoveries and profane history are extensive in their accounts of him, his wife and the pagan religion he established). What is recorded, is sufficient to give us a good description of the kind of man he was, and the character that he imparted to the kingdom, of which he was the founder. It is worth spending some time therefore looking at the record where Nimrod is referred to, as sometimes the references to him can be passed over without realizing what an impact he had. This will amount to a rather large digression, but it is hoped that some benefit will accrue as a result.

In Genesis chapter 10, we read in verses 8-10:

"And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth.

He was a mighty hunter before Yahweh: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before Yahweh.

And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar."

The word "mighty one" in verse 8 in the Hebrew is *gibbor*, which Strong defines as "*powerful*," and by implication a warrior or tyrant, a champion or valiant man. The word is used, for example, in relation to the Lord Jesus Christ in Isaiah 9:6 where it is rendered "*The Mighty God*" 160 (*El Gibbor*). The context in Isaiah shows how the Lord Jesus Christ

will be the Powerful Warrior in the battle of Armageddon when "every battle of the warrior (will be) with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood" (Isa.9:5). Our Master will no doubt be regarded as a tyrant as he "executes the judgements written" with his called, faithful and chosen ones. The judgements will of course be righteous, for "in righteousness will he judge and make war."

Not so Nimrod! Though a warrior and a tyrant, he was anything but righteous! Interestingly, the word "*gibbor*" is used in Genesis 6:4,

"There were giants in the earth in those days: and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown."

The word 'mighty' is *gibbor*. The word 'men' is the Hebrew *adam*, reminding us of the origin of the race and how sin entered into the world. These men were certainly mighty and powerful, but in the things of the flesh. They were morally degenerate, and bent on corrupting God's way (Gen. 6:12), and His people. They had made for themselves a name. In fact the Hebrew suggests that they were men (*enosh* on this occasion) of the Name (*Ha Shem*). This was not the fearful and glorious Name, "Yahweh Elohim." Theirs was a name representing the flesh in all its evil and waywardness. Rotherham, in the Emphasized Bible, renders it "*the men of renown.*" How the flesh loves to exalt itself against Yahweh or those whom he appoints (Numbers 16:2).

Though that generation was swept away by the powerful waters of the Flood, flesh survived, and it was only a matter of time before it reared its ugly head again in opposition to the Deity and His commands. Nimrod was a typical man of the flesh. He was truly mighty, a tyrant, but again in the things of the flesh. As those before the Flood followed in the way of Cain (a pre-eminent example of the Seed of the Serpent), so this man trod the same path, and with the same effect on the servants of God.

As previously remarked, there is little direct reference to him in the Scriptures, but a clear picture emerges from the evidence we do have available to us. Josephus for example says,

"Nimrod persuaded men not to ascribe their happiness to God, but to think that his own excellency was the source of it."

How typical of unrestrained human nature to try and blot out God from their own lives, and the lives of others. In commenting upon the wealth and rejoicing of the wicked, Job records,

"Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? Their seed is established..... their houses are safe their bull gendereth, and faileth notetc.

"Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? And what profit should we have, if we pray unto him." (Job 21:14-15)

The Psalmist says:

"The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts." (Psa.10:4)

And again in Psalm 73:9

"They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth ...And they say, How doth God know? And is there knowledge in the most High?"

Nimrod was not irreligious. History testifies that he was responsible for the establishment of a system of "worship" that has actually continued down to the present day! However, it was not the worship of the true and living God, but the superstitious worship of the flesh with all its evils. It is not surprising to learn therefore that his name means "rebel", or "Let us rebel." He rebelled against Yahweh and encouraged others to do so!

When we turn to Genesis chapter 11, we see the spirit of Nimrod in the rebellious actions of the 'city builders.' In defiance of God's command to *"Be fruitful, and multiply and replenish the earth"* (Gen. 9:1), they decided to set up their own centre, and in the words of Bro. Thomas *"preferred a fraternal communism and proceeded to build a temple of social fraternity for all mankind."* They said,

"....Go to, let us build us a city, and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." (verse 4)

Undoubtedly, this was the influence of the powerful Nimrod (Gen 10:10), who was imparting his own rebellion to other men of corrupt minds.

"And Yahweh said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do." (verse 6)

As Cain was involved in building cities before the Flood (Gen.4:17), so this city builder was engaged in constructing cities which would be the 162 centre of corrupt and God defying worship. No doubt it was all very

"progressive," and very "modern." Its styles and architecture would be appealing to the flesh, and all very fashionable. In God's sight, however, it was evil and an antagonistic system to the Truth which He had mercifully revealed to man.

Yahweh confounded their language as we know, which effectively put an end to their defiant schemes, and He will shortly do so again on a much grander scale. Babel or Babylon means "confusion," and it also aptly represents the confusing religious beliefs which Nimrod had established.

Nimrod then, was the kind of man that was not to be deterred in his evil aims and ambitions. In fact, he exercised ruthless power against those who opposed him, and actually hunted them down as animals. This characteristic has continued through the centuries and is amply demonstrated in the papal system, which has persecuted the saints and saturated the earth in their blood. This system of iniquity, owes its very existence, among other things, to Nimrod.

To establish this point, the word "before" in Genesis 10:9 can be rendered "*against*." He was a mighty hunter *against* Yahweh. There is a further and similar reference to that quoted in Genesis 10 in 1 Chronicles 1:10. Here we also read:

"And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be mighty (gibbor) upon the earth."

In reference to this verse, the Companion Bible quotes from The Chaldee Paraphrase as follows,

"Cush begat Nimrod, who began to prevail in wickedness, for he shed innocent blood, and rebelled against Jehovah."

What a hateful, persecuting system had developed, and so soon after the Flood! It is significant that the cities Nimrod established were "*in the land of Shinar*." The word Shinar means 'Enemy's Tooth.' Babylon was, and is, Israel's greatest enemy. It is the serpent power manifested against the people of God.

Shem was alive at the time of Nimrod, and ancient history indicates that he opposed him. The enmity which began in Eden between the Seed of the Woman and the Seed of the Serpent, has been apparent time and time again. That warfare continues until ultimate victory will be gained by the Seed of the Woman.

This has been a lengthy examination of the origin of the Kingdom of Men, but hopefully it has given a clear picture of the man who 163

establish it, and the character he imparted to it. Bro. Thomas goes on to say in The Exposition of Daniel in relation to this Kingdom:

"As a magnificent tree in the midst of the earth, whose height reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth, the Kingdom of Men had become under the proud-hearted Nebuchadnezzar, the destroying lion of his age." (Jeremiah 4:7; 20:17)

Daniel and his three companions felt the destroying power of this Chaldean lion when they were violently taken away from the 'Kingdom of God,' and thrust into this evil, godless capital which Nimrod had set up. As Shem before them, they would engage in the warfare of faith – the Seed of the Woman, against the Seed of the Serpent. That warfare continues to our day, and we look to the examples of faith to encourage ourselves, that we, too, may gain the victory over the sin power.

Bro. Phillip Hughes

As Ye See The Day Approaching

What an exciting time in which to be alive! What a privilege to be witnesses to the events of these latter days! The times of the Gentiles are almost up! The kingdom of men is rapidly approaching the end of its allotted course! The seven times of Daniel - the 2,520 years have expired! Consequently, Israel is in the process of being restored to the extent it must be up to the time when Yahweh brings Gog against His land. Israel, of course, has returned in unbelief out of the nations. Brother Thomas showed clearly that this would be the case, knowing and understanding the Holy Scriptures as he did. Scripture that comes to mind showing that Israel abides in unbelief up to the time Messiah is manifested unto them is found in Psalm 24:7-10:

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD (Yahweh) strong and mighty, the LORD (Yahweh) mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, (Yahweh Tz'vaoth) he is the King of glory. Selah."

The question is asked twice by those in Jerusalem who will not know who their deliverer is or whence he is. They, up to that time, will not have a clue as to who has wrought this great deliverance of them from the hands of the northern invaders. His answer to them is the beginning of his revealing not only of himself, but of his Father who empowered him with 164 almighty power to do the work before him. The Almighty Father,

manifested in and through the son and also in and through the hosts with him (*consequential of their having been born of the Spirit*), will show Himself through that one anointed body - head and members; "strong and mighty...mighty in battle." Another that is doubtless familiar to most of us is found in Zech. 13:6: "And one shall say unto him, *What are these wounds in thine hands?* Then he shall answer, *Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.*" We know the result of these words Jesus gives in answer to that question. "*...and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart "*"

In Ezekiel 37:23 Israel (in its Diaspora) is shown to have defiled themselves with their idols, detestable things and with their transgressions. They have sinned while in their dwellingplaces among the nations. The day is coming, however, when they shall no longer abide in unbelief. It is written in Ezek. 11:17-20: "*Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof and all the abominations thereof from thence. And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh:*"

"That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God ""

The work of their complete restoration is a work of a considerable length of time - part of the work done before Christ's apocalypse and part after, but pre-millennial. The past fifty-two years has seen Israel struggling to survive as a state, while threatened by its surrounding neighbors. The adherents to Islam have called for Israel's destruction. They have threatened and would like to drive the Jews into the sea or expel them from what they think of as their land. THE LAND IS YAHWEH'S. We know he has covenanted it for an everlasting possession to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and to their seed, which in a singular sense is Jesus Christ 165

and in a multitudinous sence, all who are his (the faithful) at his coming.

It is written: "*For the froward is abomination to the LORD: but his secret is with the righteous.*" (Prov. 3:32) Knowing that the land is His and what He has planned to do with it, we can stay balanced in light of all that is going on in the Middle East.

Israel is evidently turning a blind eye to the construction going on on the eastern side of the Temple Mount, which has become a busy construction site over the past four months. Israeli laws have been openly mocked and the status quo established after the '67 war made of none effect by Waqf (Muslim Religious Trust) and the Israeli Islamic Movement. The area under the Al Aqsa Mosque, called the Ancient Al Aqsa has been cleared out for prayer - groups of praying Muslims. A third Mosque is being built on the eastern side of the Temple Mount underground in an area called Solomon's Stables. The Waqf was supposed to open an emergency exit, but instead tried to take out four underground arches. To do this they dug a large hole 60 meters long and 25 meters wide in the Temple Mount, resulting in a monumental entry gate at the north end of Solomon's Stables! They moved 6,000 tons of dirt, containing antiquities. The dirt ended up on trash heaps and in the channel of the Kidron.

There are even plans for a fourth Mosque on the eastern side of the Temple Mount. The area along the eastern side of the Temple Mount from Mercy (Golden) Gate around to the North side where the new arches are, is one huge construction site with bulldozers, trucks, paving materials, etc. Such unbelievable damage would not be tolerated at any other important archeological site. The Temple Mount is without a doubt the most important site in the world! Clearly, it would appear that fear of violence is what is causing the Israeli government to look the other way. At the same time, we can plainly see the real intentions and aims of the Palestinians. **What audacity and total disrespect!** We realize that the earthquake of Zechariah will doubtless do tremendous destruction to the structures still standing throughout much of Israel after the terrible invasion by the Northern armies of Gog and confederate Europe as it will be like none the earth has experienced since man was created.

Arafat stated after a three hour meeting with President Clinton: "We will declare a Palestinian state - it is out of my hands - the people want it." This was stated in Arabic and is nothing new. He has said that he will declare a unilateral Palestinian state if there is no peace agreement. It is clear that the establishment of a Palestinian state would merely be a means 166 to an end. It is just another stage in the on-going battle with Israel.

It is a fact that the Palestinian Charter has never been changed, but still calls for the annihilation of Israel!

Israeli top security officials warned Prime Minister Ehud Barak and his senior ministers of Palestinian violence if no peace deal is reached. "The security forces warned of an armed confrontation if no agreement is reached," said an aide who asked not to be identified after a five hour meeting of the inner security cabinet on the peace process with the Palestinians.

The Israeli intelligence community continues to receive reports of the potential for an increase of Islamic terrorist attacks, including the PLO. These may begin almost immediately due to a lack of progress in the talks in Washington week before last between Israeli and PA/PLO negotiators. The IDF (Israeli Defense Force) has decided to arm the residents of Yesha (West Bank) numbering 50,000. The Jewish communities of Yesha will receive different kinds of weapons, ammunition, rubber-coated steel bullets and tear gas grenades. First response units composed of military personnel are being deployed in larger communities.

This is being done to cut down on response time to areas throughout Yesha. Should the Palestinians declare a sovereign state, the PLO would quickly muster 100,000 soldiers and the PA (Palestinian Authority) has 12 divisions, adding up to 50,000 or 60,000 soldiers. The IDF (Israeli Defense Force) has 180,000 permanent soldiers. The Egyptians have been silently, but continuously arming the Palestinians in Gaza via tunnels since the start of the Oslo accords! Also of interest is the fact that the US has been building up Egypt's military. There is a deal in the works now for approximately \$77 million. Egypt has a fleet of 655 co-produced US M1A1 tanks!

Israel signed a contract with China to sell the Chinese sophisticated Falcon airborne radar systems. It has the Americans very concerned. Congress may consider cutting back on aid to Israel. Israel receives \$2.8 billion from the US annually in foreign aid - more money than any other nation. If Israel doesn't go through with the deal with China, that country will be angry.

In light of what is going on around us in the world, we need to be constantly on guard. Our Master has told us to watch. That day may be much closer than any of us think. Let us pray always that we may be accounted worthy to stand before the Son of man at his appearing to establish that kingdom which shall never be destroyed or left to others.

What does that mean?

"And Naaman said, Shall there not then, I pray thee, be given to thy servant two mules' burden of earth? for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the LORD." 2 Kings 5:17

Why did Naaman request two mules' burden of earth?

We are not told why he requested this. So, like many of the answers that appear in this section, I will offer my opinion on what it means.

If we allow the context of the verse to direct our thoughts, we see that he is thinking about offering "burnt offerings" and "sacrifices" to Yahweh only. The gods of the nations were honored by their altars. The greater the god, the more ornate and gaudy the altar. These altars would be built on the highest land, with elaborate groves surrounding them. God desired no such altars lest they should be abused with superstitious uses.

"An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen:"
Exodus 20:24

It appears that Naaman thought to please God by using the earth from Elisha's home to build an altar. We see in this a very incomplete and superficial understanding of what the worship of Yahweh is all about. He went from one extreme to the other - from contempt for the waters of Israel (verse 12), to the other extreme, where he over-values the earth of Israel. God is interested in having us come to an understanding of Him and His purpose. He is not interested in the material things, which we tend to focus on.

Bro. Thomas in Eureka vol. 2 pg.223 observes: *"The Holy Spirit signified something that he regarded important in his system of wisdom, in commanding an altar to be made of earth, or of unhewn stone: and in forbidding a tool to be lifted upon it."*

The precept to build the altar from earth, suggests the plainness and simplicity in which God would be worshipped, in opposition to the pomp and gaudy show of idolaters. The elevation symbolized the lifting up of man toward Yahweh; its simplicity directed man's attention from himself and material things to the God of Heaven. It also speaks to the figure of the earthly or human nature of Christ, who is the true altar, whereof believers in him have a right to eat. Hebrews 13:10

Let us learn from Naaman's ignorance. It is not material things that we must be concerned with. Our concern must focus on the state of our heart and mind. God requested the most basic and plain alter of earth as opposed to the large, ornate gold altars in beautiful groves on high hills. Plainness is the best ornament for the external services of religion. Worship should not be performed with external pomp and gaiety, but with simplicity, with a full understanding of the principals involved; in other words; *"true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him."* John 4:23

