

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

RICHARD, Sask. – S.S. 10am; Memorial, 11:20am; Wed. Class 8pm. Meetings held at The Richard Ecclesial Hall, Bro. Ed Truelove, 2165 Douglas Ave., North Battleford, Sask. S9A 3N8, phone (306) 445-3240

Dear brethren and sisters,

Greetings from this corner of the ecclesial world

Since our last report in October we have had the pleasure of the company of Bro Lynn Osborne (Denver), Bro Ariel Hopper (Hengoed), Sis Brenda Britton (Lampasas), Sis Jennifer Luard (Edmonton) and Sis Grace Punter (Kindersley).

The ecclesia sponsored a Youth Seminar December 27-30th. We are grateful to all who participated and attended and helped to make it the spiritually beneficial success that it was.

We are saddened to lose the companionship of bro Jim Truelove. He fell asleep in Christ on April 20 and now awaits the resurrection call. Bro Sid Jones conducted the funeral service as bro Jim was laid to rest on April 24. Many thanks to all who sent cards, flowers, etc.

Most other members of the ecclesia are doing well with the exception of Sis Cora Rafuse and Sis Sarah Sadler who have spent some time in hospital care just recently. We are constantly reminded of our frailty and of the fragility of this mortal life. We are blessed to have the hope of better times in the future coming age of Divine healing and immortality.

We are joyfully anticipating the upcoming fraternal gathering to be held here this summer, and welcome all who are able to be with us at that time. We all need the help and support of one another. It appears that each year the spiritual workload and challenge in the Lord's vineyard increases and the laborers become fewer. God appears to have seen fit to invest much in a very few, and we dare not but endeavor faithfully to respond with increase... "that at my coming I should ... receive... mine own with usury".

For the Ecclesia at Richard,
Bro Ed Truelove

Ecclesial Note: Southern California,

It is with much sadness that we report the withdrawal from the Berean Fellowship of Bro. & Sis. Davis and Sis. Laura Baumgartner.

BOSTON, Mass. – S.S. 9:30am; Memorial, 10:45am; Mid-week Study Class, Wed. 7:30pm. Meetings held at 310 Washington St. Dedham, MA 02026. Bro. Paul Garvey, 11 Maureen Way, Plymouth, MA 02340 508-224-6840

Dear Brethren and Sisters in the Hope of Israel,

Much has transpired since our last report. Shortly after the Northeast gathering, which was held in Canton, Ohio, we had the privilege of a visit from our Bro. Lynn Osborne from Denver, Colorado, who was running a marathon in nearby Hartford, Connecticut.

On the weekend of December 23rd and 24th, we had an informal study weekend. The theme was "communication," which was handled by Bro. Mike Morrell. I'm sure we are all better communicators now than before - or at least I hope so. The weekend was enjoyed by all who attended.

In February we had a new arrival to our Sunday school, or soon to be. Bro. David and Sis. Kelly Sommerville had a baby girl, Katherine Elizabeth Sommerville. Big brother (James), Mom and Dad all seem to be holding up well.

On April 21st and 22nd, we held our annual spring study weekend. The theme was, "places and names of the Bible." A very informative weekend was had by all, and we thank our Bro. Len Naglieri for all his efforts to make the weekend a complete success.

Visitors since our last report have been from the Hengoed Ecclesia, Bro. Matthew Hughes, Sis. Elizabeth Hughes, and from the Harrow, UK Ecclesia, Sis. Rachel Johnatty. From the Canton Ecclesia, Bro. Harry and Sis. Phyllis Phillips, Bro. David Sommerville, Bro. Johnny and Sis. Mary Phillips. Bro. Jim Rankin from the Holladay, Tennessee Ecclesia, Sis. Shiloh Brown from the Lampasas, Texas Ecclesia, Bro. and Sis. David VanPelt from the Wanaque, New Jersey Ecclesia, and Sis. Sharon Johnatty from the Houston, Texas Ecclesia.

On a much sadder note, our Bro. Joseph Garvey, Sr. passed away on April 19th. Death reaches out and touches us all at one point or another. We say our farewells with the surety of seeing our loved ones again, when hopefully, through the mercy of our mediator and high priest, we will be blessed with them and allowed to see that day spoken of in Isaiah that they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain saith the Lord. For this day our Brother truly labored, and never lost sight of that final goal. A better dad one would be hard pressed to find. I'm truly lucky to be his son.

With much love in the One Hope,
Brother Paul Garvey, Recorder

FRATERNAL GATHERINGS & ACTIVITIES

(To be held God Willing)

LAMPASAS FRATERNAL GATHERING **June 8 - 10, 2001**

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

RICHARD FRATERNAL GATHERING..... **June 29 – July 2, 2001**

Bro. Ed Truelove, 2165 Douglas Ave., N.Battleford, Sask, Canada S9A 3N8, 306-445-3240

HYE FRATERNAL GATHERING **July 23 - 29, 2001**

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

HOLLADAY FRATERNAL GATHERING **October 6-7, 2001**

Bro. Warren Rankin, 699 White Tail Rd, Holladay, TN 38341, 901-584-3925

The Returning

Malachi 3:7, *"Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. **Return** unto me, and I will **return** unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we **return**?"*

Who are our fathers? We might think of recently, our own dads. Maybe we would think a little more, returning to the more distant parts of our mind, and think the "fathers" for us are brother Thomas or brother Roberts. Maybe we think of the people who taught us about the Truth. Maybe we would be more like the Jews and say that Abraham is our father. Maybe after being reminded more severely it would be Christ – we would say that we are not born of fornication and God is our father. Who are our fathers?

"Since the days of our fathers, we are gone away from God's ordinances." Can that be said today – to us. Can this ever be a message to us? Would God even say that to us? Our fathers who were non-believing Gentiles, steeped in traditions of paganism, worship of the mother of Harlots and the beast, idolaters, rejecters of the Bible. So let's keep the context correct. Let's compare, as was the meaning when Malachi 3:7 was written, fathers referred to an implied ancestry of faithful fathers. But, since the days of those very fathers who were venerated, we had traveled a path of disobedience to the ordinances of Yahweh.

If that were so, then would we be able to return? Geographic returns can be very hard can't they, and spiritual returns maybe more so. Physical returns involve pulling out the roots we form in the new places where we dwell. The exile that sent us to those places, may have been opposed drastically against us, but now, many generations later, it becomes hard to 124 even want to return to the place that ancestors may have come from.

Jesus says to us, whoever follow me must lift up his cross and follow me. A suggested meaning of lifting up one's cross, or "pulling up one's stake" as the words literally mean, could mean disconnecting from the comfortable place you are, to travel with Jesus back to a different place. In this case, to travel back to Yahweh in a figure and back to the promised land in a literal sense.

Imagine being told to return after decades of non-belief, of drifting, after generations of sin and assimilation into the society and world around. Assimilation is a killer. The cares of this world, the ways around us, can drag us in and capture us forever. We are told to remember to be separate. We were told this in many ways right from the start. Don't practice their ways or worship their gods. When we first entered the land, God told us to never take up the practices of other nations. To this day, we try hard to avoid that. We don't vote, we don't join their secret societies, we don't worship in churches, we don't accept their beliefs. But we still can assimilate. After the exile, so many decades passed. There was a minor return. Then centuries passed.

We see, Brethren, that we are living in the end of the last times. In these declining years of the world on this planet, wickedness is as popular as it is widespread. Covetousness is common and accepted, even among those who want to serve Yahweh. Physical beauty reigns as the best way to judge success, and the thirst for power is evident to the extreme. How does it affect us, how could these things draw us into their control and detain us, so that we don't want to leave and return to the place our true Father wants us to come to? They draw us away, and mold us into worldly things by the subtleties they present. Our flesh likes to be pleased, our flesh adapts to our surroundings and enjoys the things around us that give us pleasure. Our flesh will choose smooth and easy paths to relax in. Always catering to our flesh, or as it says in Romans 8, "the mind of the flesh" leads to death. An unwillingness to want to leave and return to Yahweh's place, an unwillingness to accept that we are strangers and pilgrims, vagabonds in exile and awaiting return, produces complacency, and a love of this world. As it says in two different Proverbs, in chapter 6 and in chapter 24, *"Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man."* And as our Lord Jesus, the Son of God says: Mark 4 "And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful."

Those in exile, forget that they are in exile. Those who live in a land that is not the place they are destined to remain in, still, get used to it.

Especially generations later. But, the little light they might have ever had, slowly fades, it grows dimmer and dimmer, until there may only be a flicker left. And then, in the end goes out. Oh, how that happened to Israel. The lights went out one by one, dimmer and dimmer became the faithful. Then they were scattered and scattered, turned and turned, rolled away from the land of Israel all over the world. What happens to a campfire when you pull all the burning pieces away from each other and spread them farther and farther apart. The little pieces grow dimmer and dimmer, the glow lessens, until it fades and dies.

We must never accept this to happen among us. We must be embers that burn brightly, and keep that flame burning. Where do we get that light from? Ephesians 5:14, "*Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee **light**.*" We must stay alert in this foreign land in which we live. Although we feel we have homes here, we think we have an abiding place and we are thankful for our places to live and enjoy our homes and surroundings, it is of this world, it will be scoured away when the Anointed One returns in glory. Are we ready to leave, and to return to the land of promise for judgment and to share in that Glory if we are acceptable to Him?

Isaiah 51:11, "*The redeemed of the LORD shall **return**, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.*"

A day is coming when this return will occur. We have studied and seen that the saints, our brethren from ancient times all the way up through now, will be brought back to life for this purpose. They will all return to the land of promise. They are the redeemed, the sons and daughters of the Creator of the Universe. They with those faithful who are alive at his coming will gather, and after being judged, will be rejoicing and possess the promised land. The Jews, the descendants of the faithful of old, will also return, and accept the Anointed One as King, they will recognize their error and mourn because of that. But then they will be blessed as no nation has before been blessed, because they will become the Kingdom of Yahweh, and return to the land from which their ancestors had been exiled, and return to the land that they, had always lived in exile from.

The redeemed of Yahweh shall return, and come with singing. Return to where? Return to the land of promise. No longer living in tents as strangers in a strange and evil world, instead to a land where every man can have a house and trees and places to dwell in safely. No longer trying to struggle to serve Yahweh in an evil and dark place, but successfully 126 serve Him in a place where He will be the light, and darkness will no

longer prevail. No longer needing to walk about, sad and mourning, depressed and weak, but strong in the power of a good government, with laws that go forth from Zion, where knowledge of Yahweh will go out and cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. That is the goodness of the return. The return will not be a terrible time of having to leave our houses and friends behind, the return is not a loss but a gain. The return from exile is not a punishment, but the end of the punishment. It is the end of the suffering and the end of the things that would choke the life right out of us. The return is the time of blessing promised from when promises started.

Do we believe it? Do we believe with all our heart in something only ever seen in even a measure by our ancestors in faith from thousands of years ago? Of course we believe it, and we had better make sure that we believe it with all our hearts. By declaring our belief we show that we are convinced of the fact that there is a country for us. But it is not this one.

Hebrews 11:13-16, *"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."*

We seek a country, a city whose foundations were laid thousands of years ago. A city whose builder and maker is God. It's not the United States, it's not Canada, it's not England or Wales, it's not Australia or Kenya. No, we are not seeking any of those countries. We are seeking a country that is the Kingdom of Yahweh. We are seeking a country, that is Israel in the day that the glory of God will be there and the Lord Jesus, the Anointed one, reigns over it in power and splendor from Jerusalem. Yahweh, long ago drove out His people from that place, because of their sin, pride and hate. But, He calls back their descendants to this day. And the day is coming when they will respond.

Jeremiah 18:11, *"Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good."*

Jeremiah 24:7, *"And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall **return** unto me with their whole heart."* 127

They will respond and **return** to Yahweh with a whole heart. How we desire that day to come soon. When the fullness of the Gentiles has come

in, when the times of the Gentiles is come to an end, we will see it happen. What a happy day that will be. Dancing, singing and rejoicing will take place. Light and peace will grow and fill the Kingdom. The trouble and pain and anguish will be left behind, and it won't be called to mind any more. The deaf will hear, the blind will see, the lame will be whole and healed. Even animals will be happy and at peace, no longer hurting and destroying in Yahweh's holy place.

Are we ready to **return**, dear Brethren and Sisters? Are we ready to let go of the things we might hold a little bit too dear? Are we ready to forsake all for Jesus Christ? Are we ready to forsake our houses, or our brothers and sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for Jesus' name's sake, so that we can receive an hundred times as much, and inherit everlasting life? Are we ready to forsake it all so that we can live forever with him? Here we own things, stuff, that gets attacked by moths, even steel things might start to get a little bit less shiny with age, the chrome gets pitted, the windows even begin to flow down and become dull with age, our books yellow, the beautiful wallpaper dries out, yellows, must come down. Houses fall apart, taxes crush us, prices inflate until we can't believe what they have risen to. Our bodies betray us, our health fades. Friends and family fail us. Even those who we once held so dear, and thought we could depend upon, betray us, or just slowly fade away back into the world of hate, the world of falsehood. Are we ready to let go of our attachments to this world? Are we ready to leave this exile, ready to return to the land promised to Abraham, to Isaac, to Israel and David?

We had better be ready, we had better, NOW, in this day, in our minds, and in our hearts, let go of our connections and devotion to these things. Because a day is coming and is here, when it could be too late. If we are waiting to repent: if not NOW, then WHEN? If we are waiting to devote ourselves to the Word of Yahweh, if not NOW then WHEN? If we are planning to be ready in our mind to return unto the LORD — if not NOW then WHEN? Yahweh has promised, Yahweh will perform. If we draw nigh to Him, he will draw nigh to us. He is calling to **return**, Jesus is standing at the door and banging and has promised if we open the door, he will come in and be close to us — eat with us. Can we just open the door?

world. Together, all of us, we are strangers here. This is not OUR land, this is not OUR country. Our country, our citizenship is not even in this

Hosea 6:1, "*Come, and let us **return** unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.*"

Many times, we see that we are in exile. It gets to us, we feel like something is wrong, we may feel like we are on the outside looking in. We may feel estranged and alienated from things. Brethren and sisters, we all feel like that so often. You know why? Because we are aliens in this

world. Ours is in a world that will be set up on this planet soon — but is not yet. Our king is not even yet on this planet, our government is that king and he is right now, in heaven, but will soon come to earth to grow into a huge government that will rule over the nations. Our **return** is coming soon. We must stay strong, be powerful with a constant study and renewing of our minds with the word of God, and with helping each other.

If we must, we can begin our **return** now, and each day. If we need to repent, then repent — if not NOW then WHEN? If we need to forgive somebody, then do it, and be forgiven by God for our sins. If we need to return to the LORD, then do it NOW, because if NOT NOW — then When?

Jesus showed us the way to be close to God. We realize that closeness more fully when we have fellowship with each other and share the bread and wine. We examine ourselves at this time. We think about what Jesus accomplished by dying on the cross — for us, so that we can come to God, so that we can all come to Israel — no longer strangers to the covenants of promises, not longer forced out by a middle wall of partition, no longer alienated from spiritual things and life. When we eat the bread and drink the wine, our fellowship helps us understand the beauty of a forgiven life, and the power of forgiveness and love. The love that Yahweh showed towards us, the love and devotion that Jesus showed for us and to His father, and we demonstrate the love we have for each other and for the spiritual things we share.

We show that we know, completely that the day is arriving, the day when we say, "The exile is over — its time to go home." Brethren and Sisters in Christ — the exile is indeed, almost over, just bear it a little longer, return to God now if we must, if we are already with Him, then stay close, and the day will soon come when we will **return** to our own land, to our own country and share in the power and glory of the Kingdom of God.

Bro. Michael Morrell

Study To Shew Thyself Approved

There is a thread that runs through the pages of the Scriptures as a giant beacon warning the followers of the Divine plan of certain dangers related to our fleshly desires. And that thread deals with the inability 129

of God's chosen people to accurately figure out what was happening to them during their lifetime. We see Ahab, king of Israel, confronting Elijah following a lengthy famine which the wickedness of Ahab had brought upon the people, and what does Ahab say to Elijah, the man of God?

1Kings 18:17, *"And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?"*

Well of course it wasn't Elijah who troubled Israel, but it was Ahab, and the wickedness he and his wife Jezebel had brought to Israel, which was the cause of the distress the nation was experiencing.

And we find a similar theme in Jeremiah. We see the nation of Judah after their fall into the hands of their enemies, completely destroyed by the Babylonians. And that destruction was intensified because of the failure of her Kings to obey the prophets which were sent to her.

But even then, with Jerusalem destroyed and her king carried off to Babylon, the remnant which had to flee to Egypt to escape, yet God's chosen people still cannot discern right from wrong. When the prophet Jeremiah appealed to them to worship God, this is how they answered him.

Jeremiah 44:16-18, *"As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the LORD, we will not hearken unto thee. But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil. But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine."*

No, it wasn't their failure to worship of the queen of heaven which brought about their destruction, but rather their failure to worship God *"with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;"* (Colossians 1:9).

Now when we come to the New Testament we find the same thread again. We find Paul dealing there with the same problem. The problem is that the people are in rebellion against the word of God which Paul had delivered to them. And so Paul, in his letter warns them in this manner:

1 Corinthians 4:18-21, *"Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you. But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, 130 not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power. For the*

kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?"

So here we have three different time periods. Ahab reigned from 923-908 B.C. The events in Jeremiah were probably shortly after 592 BC or 330 years after Ahab: and the apostle Paul was some 600 plus years later than Jeremiah. But all three of God's servants were dealing with identically the same problem.

The people were opposing the word of God. But the remarkable thing in this is not merely that the people were opposing the word of God, but rather that they do not appear to understand that that is what they are doing. Can we see that? These people appear on some level, to want to be doing what is right; but their reasoning is so flawed that they cannot see their way clear to understand what truly is happening to them.

Clearly this must be a great danger, inherent in human nature, if the people of God are so constantly falling prey to this problem. And a danger that we would all do well to keep in mind. But how do we avoid this problem? How do we remain steadfast in the Truth, and not swayed by all the winds of controversy which have blown over the ages. That answer, fortunately for us, is quite simple. And the doing of it only takes discipline. And that is, we study. There simply is no other way.

If we study, if we keep ourselves constantly in touch with God's words, we cannot be blown about every time some new idea is advanced, or some old idea couched in new terms is encouraged, no matter how appealing to the flesh that idea may be. Error can only survive where enthusiasm for God's word has dwindled.

Now, error must always appeal to the flesh on some level, but sometimes this statement has been misunderstood. Sometimes those advancing erroneous ideas appear, on the outside, to be so "sincere", or so "dedicated or uplifting" that it doesn't seem reasonable to refer to what they are doing as fleshly.

How can such dedicated people, from all outward appearances trying to serve God, be leading us astray?

The how, sometimes, is impossible to understand. We would have to judge an individual's motives to be able to say how, or why this happens. And we have been forbidden by God to judge each other's motives. But that it does happen we can say with complete certainty, for we were told of it, in the pages of the Bible.

There were two great controversies in the New Testament era. The one was the matter of idolatry, which the Gentile believers were bringing into the ecclesia, and the other was Judaism, which the Jews, comfortable with the Mosaic law, were trying to cling to. Dealing with the Judaizers, the apostle Paul wrote this to the ecclesia as Colossi: Col. 2:20-23, *"Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body: not in any honor to the satisfying of the flesh".* The things that the Judaizers were bringing into the ecclesia were not satisfying to the flesh in any lustful sort of way, the way we usually think about the flesh: but it was what Paul called the commandments of men. It was "will worship". In the Greek, that is just one word, ethelothreskeia, and it means "voluntary (arbitrary and unwarranted) piety, i.e. sanctimony."

It means something which is done which is unwarranted, but which gives the appearance of piety, or holiness. Paul told the early ecclesias that this was what some individuals were involved with, who were trying to destroy the truth. They were involved in will worship, appearing to be pious, appearing to be righteous, but only so far as the commandments of men were concerned.

We can virtually hear the comments from those brethren in the early ecclesias as regards these Judaizers. When they were criticized by Paul and others, no doubt they were told: *"How can this be. They are so sincere. They are so dedicated, look at their walk. They are doing so much more than we."*

But this, brothers and sisters, is not the test by which the true follower of Christ judges righteous judgment. The true follower of Christ judges right from wrong by studying. By going to the pages of Scriptures like those early Bereans did, of whom Luke wrote in Acts 17:10-11, *"And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews."*

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

This is how we avoid the pitfalls which have beset the children of God from the beginning. We search the Scriptures daily, to find out whether 132 those things were so.

Isaiah 8:20, *"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."*

This is how we keep ourselves in the Truth, brothers and sisters, and it is an individual thing. It is hard, we know. There are so many pressures placed on us from so many different angles. There is the pressure of our job. The pressure of maintaining our families. The peer pressure placed on us by friends and acquaintances, in and out of the Truth, who are not consumed with the word of God. But if we wish to have eternal life, we can never give in to such pressure.

The battle we face in our lives is not new. It is not accidental. It is a part of the divine plan. It was the plan of God that error should be allowed among the brethren so that the true believers would be made manifest. The apostle Paul knew this, and mourned, because he understood how completely unprepared the brotherhood was for the problems which they faced in the future.

Acts 20:29-31, *"For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears."*

His warning, of course, went unheeded, and the ecclesias were racked with controversy and the Truth was lost very early on after Paul's death. We are not exempt from the same things happening to us. We all tend to think that we are above this. We all tend to think that these things could not happen to us. But that is exactly what those who crucified Jesus said. The Jews of the first century knew full well what their fathers had done to Jeremiah. They had read the same chapter we read this morning of their fathers allegiance to the Queen of Heaven. Jesus scolded them with their own words:

Matthew 23:29-30, *"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets."*

The Jews comforted themselves, vowing that they wouldn't have participated with their fathers in the torturing of Jeremiah, and yet they crucified Christ. And why? Because as Jesus told them:

Mark 12:24, *"And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?"*

We said that the introduction of error into an ecclesia is a part of the divine plan. It was so from the beginning. In the law of Moses, we find this principle laid down in the form of a warning by God.

Deut. 13:1-3, *"If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul."*

So we should not think that it is strange, or unique to us, that we should have to protect ourselves from error. It is a part of the divine plan that it should be that way. And the only way to protect ourselves is to study.

Why is personal study the only way to protect ourselves from error? It's because men who teach error, those which the Scriptures describe as having "itching ears" are generally so much more pleasing to the flesh, especially the "will worship" aspect of. the flesh which we described earlier, than those who are led by the Spirit. If we are not ourselves grounded and settled in the Truth, constantly refreshed by the clear ringing sound of the gospel message; we will be forced to try to decide between two paths, and we will be without a road map.

The Scriptures tells us what path we need to be on. Without it, we are at the mercy of the thinking of others, which history over and over again shows is the path to destruction. This was the situation Paul had in Corinth, of which we are now reading. In the second chapter, Paul told them:

1 Corinthians 2:12-14, *"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."*

Now there are several very important points to notice about this verse. First, Paul ridicules "man's wisdom". And who would know the worthlessness of man's wisdom more than Paul. Paul was a brilliant, sophisticated man, schooled at the best schools available in his time. His elders respected his wisdom and intelligence and capability so much so that he was charged with the serious job of stopping the spread of Christianity.

Yes, without a doubt Paul had an excellent understanding of what man's wisdom taught. But that is not what he taught. He had it. He was brilliant by man's standards. But he put all that behind him and concentrated only on that which the Holy Spirit taught, comparing Spiritual things, with Spiritual. Why? Because, Paul says, the natural man cannot receive the things of the spirit, for they are spiritually discerned.

In all of us, brothers and sisters, we have two minds. The one we are born with, called the thinking of the flesh, and the other one we develop, called the thinking of the spirit. The only way to develop the thinking of the spirit is to totally engross ourselves in spiritual things. The only way we can learn the thinking of the spirit is from the pages of the Scriptures. The only way we can compare spiritual things with spiritual, is if we have something to compare it with. We must make ourselves completely aware of spiritual things, before we can compare spiritual things to them.

Doesn't that make sense? If we want to avoid man's wisdom, we must be sure that the wisdom we have is Spirit wisdom. But the only way to do that is by studying. If we don't study the Bible, we will still gain wisdom. But guess whose wisdom. Man's wisdom. That is the only possibility.

No, if we are going to compare spiritual things with spiritual, we must first have something to compare it to. And the only way to first have something to compare it to, is to first study. That is why Paul counseled Timothy:

2 Timothy 2:15, *"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."*

Study is absolutely essential in learning the Truth, understanding the truth, living the Truth, and defending the Truth. Apart from constant recourse to the word of God, life in the Truth cannot continue. Paul warned us:

1 Corinthians 1:25-30, *"Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see 135*

your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in His presence."

In this section, we have a warning. A warning that the thinking of the flesh is so far out of harmony with God that it can at no time be trusted. The things which the flesh despises, are the things which God has chosen. The things which the flesh says is foolish, is only there to confound the wise of the world. We can't go to the world for instruction. We can't trust it. Sometimes the worldly thinking comes to us in its true colors, appealing to the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. When this happens, it tends to be obvious to us. When we yield to it, we usually know we are doing wrong when we do it.

But sometimes it comes with "will worship". It comes dressed in artificial piety and pretended holiness. It comes speaking the serpents lie so subtly that, if we are not very well grounded in the Truth through constant study; we will not even identify it as the serpent.

This is a real danger, to those who feel that study in a weariness. To those who discount the need to involve themselves in rigorous, intense study of the word of God. Bro. Roberts gave us this warning near the end of his life, in 1896.

"Experience over a wide and constantly fermenting field shows that unless there is a resolute adhesion to the position of Divine wisdom, recovered with much difficulty during the last two generations, there is a danger of easily losing it all: NOT ALL AT ONCE, BUT POINT BY POINT—ONE POINT AT A TIME TILL ALL IS GONE."

The only way to avoid this, Brothers and Sisters, is to personally involve ourselves in Spiritual things.

We have, as a brotherhood, been tried in the past by many controversies. We have had those who taught that the Bible is only partly, or in some highly qualified way, inspired. We have been troubled many times by those who teach that Jesus was not involved in his own sacrifice for his own redemption from sin nature. We have seen division over the 136 false doctrine that only those baptized will be resurrected to judgment.

The Brethren who have gone before us have safely steered us through the various storms and kept us in the paths of Truth. But as we have seen this morning, every generation has to endure some sort of trial. And the only way we can be sure that we will remain on the narrow and confined path that leads to life everlasting, is by engrossing ourselves in the word of God.

We have the advantage of the works of our pioneer Brethren, such as "The Purifying of the Heavenly", the best collection of works on "Clean Flesh" available today. These are helps to us as we try to steer though all the controversy. But by itself, it is not enough. We need to study to survive the various tests God calls on us to endure.

The goal which has been set before us is too precious to be ignored. It is too important to be treated casually. Let us all diligently examine the Scriptures, that we may unitedly endure whatever lays before us.

Bro. Jim Phillips

DANIEL - THE FEROCITY OF THE KINGDOM OF MEN

"But the nations are to become molten brass, as well as Israel. Their brass, therefore, is also to be gathered into the furnace, that it may be melted and refined under the intense fire of divine wrath. Israel, commanded by the Son of Man, is a torch of fire in the wilderness, which not only purges them, but serves to consume its peoples. The wilderness thus converted into a smelting furnace, is that which John saw when he was carried away in spirit into the wilderness, where he saw "the Great Harlot sitting upon many waters;" which are interpreted to signify "peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues" — (Rev.17:1,15). The countries of Portugal, Spain, France, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Greece, Egypt, and, in short, all the Mediterranean and Euphratean countries, being the territories of the Four Beasts of Daniel, constitute the furnace in which the Nebuchadnezzar gold, and silver, and brass, and iron, and clay, are made to glow with fervent heat of sevenfold intensity; and in which the four men of God — the Cherubim — walk to and fro without hurt, "the fire having no power upon their bodies," as symbolised by Nebuchadnezzar's furnace..." (*Eureka vol. 1 p180*)

Our last article concluded with the sterling declaration of faith, which was given by Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. Although we have not been called upon to endure under such a severe trial, it does provide us with an example to follow in our own personal "fiery trials" which we are required to go through. As quoted in the introduction of the last article, taken from Elpis Israel, probation is an indispensable ordeal. There is no getting away from it. Life in the truth is going to be a trial of the faith we profess to have. One of the dictionary definitions of ordeal is "an experience that tests character or endurance". That is more or less what we understand by trial in the Scriptures. It tests what we are made of. It reveals whether we are really in the Truth because of our deep love for it, and Yahweh, or because we are just enjoying the social side of things. If our love and faith is strong, then it will endure the fiery trail "to which every man is subjected in the providence of God "(JT). This is necessary to purge out the dross which is in each one of us. To remove from our characters those fleshly aspects which are abominable to Yahweh. Let us realise that fully. Yahweh does not subject his children to severe trials because he likes to see them wince. He brings about and regulates trials to prove his servants - and also to improve them! We are very imperfect creatures, and the trials that Yahweh brings upon us, are designed to develop our characters after the divine image, which was seen in perfection in the Messiah. The quotation by Bro Thomas said that such trial was necessary before an individual could become fit for the Master's use. Is there any other way? The answer is "no". Even the Lord himself "learned obedience by the things which he suffered" (Hebrews 5:8).

We may declare then, or believe, we have faith, but how can we prove it? We have quoted the words of Bro. Thomas in a previous article on the subject of faith based on James chapter 2. His words are worth repeating here with the 'fiery trial' in mind:

"An untried faith is a dead faith, being alone. Faith without trial finds no scope for demonstration, or evidence of its existence. Thus, it is written, "Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, 'thou hast faith, and I have works:' show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. (Elpis Israel p7 4-7 5)

Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah literally demonstrated the words of Peter:-

*"...ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of
138 your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth,*

though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:6-7)

Such faith only increased the anger of Nebuchadnezzar!

"Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated." (verse 19)

He then commands *"the most mighty men that were in his army"* to bind the three men, *"and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace."* (verse 20)

Why the most mighty (margin - mighty of strength)? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were giants of faith, but there is no indication that they possessed any physical strength that would need soldiers to keep in check. Another question comes to mind. Why would Nebuchadnezzar want to increase the temperature of the fire to such an extent, that even his own men were slain when they were casting them into the flames? Despots of this sort often delight in drawing out the suffering of their victims. To execute them instantly would give no cruel satisfaction. Nebuchadnezzar may not have manifested such a malignant spirit of course.

The answer to these questions may be found if we again consider his polytheistic outlook and beliefs. As stated previously, he no doubt believed in Yahweh the god (small capital as far as he was concerned) of Israel. But he had his gods too! Were not they more powerful than Yahweh? - Or were they? This could be a contest!?! Whose god really was the most powerful? Nebuchadnezzar had better make sure of the outcome. First of all, these captives must be secured. Secondly, the fire must devour!

On the second point, when Nebuchadnezzar renamed the captives as recorded in chapter one, it was to exalt the gods of Babylon. One of those gods was celebrated in the name of Abed-nego. The name means "Servant of the Shining Fire." That "shining fire" god was going to have some (earthly) assistance to ensure its mission of devouring these rebels was successful! Heat the furnace – *"seven times hotter than it was ever seen heated"* (Emphasised Bible). The gods of Babylon were going to be victorious! This was going to be a contest.

Of course, there was no contest really. The great Creator can suspend the operation of His laws as easily as He put them in place. The laws of combustion were to be no exception. The bush that attracted the gaze of Moses was enwrapped in flames, but "was not consumed"; and the flames that burned fiercely around Daniel's companions failed to destroy them.

As Nebuchadnezzar looked into the furnace expecting to see the end of his three rebellious subjects, he observes a fourth person in the flames! Verse 25 tells us that he saw four men "loose" in the midst of the fire, **and** "they have no hurt"! Verse 23 informed us that the men "fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace". Obviously, the flames had consumed the ropes, or whatever had been used to bind them, but they were safe. They had gained the victory over the flames — or rather, their faith had. When they came out from the furnace, there was not "a hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them". Such is the power of the God of Israel. No wonder the princes and governors etc. "kept gazing upon them" (Companion Bible). It was amazing. This was an evident token of the power of One far, far greater than the (supposed) deities of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar now learned that Yahweh was not only *all wise* (see the declaration of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2:47), but He was also *all powerful*.

"By the fiery furnace "wonder" (Nebuchadnezzar) was taught, that God would deliver His servants that trust in Him with a salvation which would make them invulnerable to human power, and fit to possess the kingdom "which shall not be left to other people." (Exposition of Daniel page 9)

"We can only enter the kingdom through the fire" (1 Corinthians 3:13) quoted Bro. Thomas, "but if a man be courageous, and *"hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end"*, he will emerge from it unscorched: and be presented holy, unblameable and unrebukeable before the king" (Elpis Israel page 75). "The power of victory is our firm and hearty belief of the Truth" (Eureka 1 page 322). Let us bear these lessons in mind in our trials.

To return to the "four men", verse 25 tells us that the fourth was *"like the Son of God."* This is rendered in the Revised Version,

"...and the aspect of the fourth, is like a son of the gods."

This was one of the angelic host *"that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word"* (Psalm 103:20). 140 It also reminds us of Psalm 34:7,

"The angel of Yahweh encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them."

The subject of angels is an extremely interesting one, and the presence of one here bringing the number of persons in the flames to four, reminds us of the cherubim, as indicated in the quotation at the start of this article. The cherubim had four faces; there were four carpenters in Zechariah chapter 2; and four Living ones in Apocalypse 4 verse 6. These symbols represent the saints in belligerent manifestation as they will go forth in the future to execute the fiery judgments of Yahweh (Isaiah 30:27, 2 Thes.1: 7-8). The chapter we have been considering, is a type of the future judgments that will be executed upon the nations, while Israel receives deliverance in the time of the extremity – *"the time of Jacob's trouble."* (Jer.30 : 7)

Bro. Thomas expounds this point in the Exposition of Daniel (page 9). Referring to the "impiety and blasphemy of the Kingdom of Men", he draws attention to :

- Its hostility to the people of the House of David, or the Jews, whether such by nature, or by walking in the steps of the faith of Abraham, or by adoption;
- Of the furnace of affliction through which they would have to pass in rejecting the superstitions of the kingdom of Men, and in adhering to the truth of God;
- Of their meeting with the Deliverer in their extremity;
- Of the destruction of their tormentors;
- Of their final deliverance;
- And of the ascription at last of blessing and honour, and glory, and power to the God of Israel by the assembled nations, when God's people shall be promoted to the direction of human affairs, and the Kingdom of men shall be no more.

It is possible to expand and elaborate upon these items to a greater extent. For example:

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- The image in Daniel 3:1 reminds us of the "image" in the Apocalypse chapter 13:14. It is there recorded in verse 15 *"....he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should*

both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed."

- Those who are "heating" up the furnace with their preparations for war will themselves be engulfed by the fiery judgments of Yahweh (see Isa. 66:15, Joel 3:9-13).
- The amazement of the princes etc. in Daniel 3:27 will find its parallel in the nations of the world who will stand in awe at the terrific judgments that will be witnessed in that day. (Consider Psalm 2:9-12)

The whole incident, coupled with the burning bush of Exodus chapter 3, also reminds us of the astounding miracle of Israel's preservation, despite the bitter persecution it has experienced:

"Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place." (Psalm 66:12)

"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." (Isa. 43:2)

How marvelous are the types and shadows revealed in so many incidents of the Scriptures. The events are soon to be elaborated in the Return of the Son of Man. Let us hold fast so that we may become part of the Cherubim of glory.

"It is "the day burning like a furnace", which shall consume the proud, and all that do wickedly with their Anti-Christian Gentilism, by which the peoples are deceived; but which shall have no power for evil against the people represented by Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and the one with them like the Son of God; they shall come forth unharmed, unsinged, unchanged, and inodorous of the fire. For these are the Bride, the Daughter of Zion, to whom the Spirit saith, "Arise, and thresh, for I will make thine Horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass and thou shalt beat in pieces many peoples; and I will consecrate their spoil to Yahweh, and their wealth to the Lord of the whole earth" (Mic.4:13)...Thus while Israel is passing through the furnace, under the conduct of the Saints, and are themselves being purged from dross, they are also made use of by their commanders, as a torch of fire among the sheaves, or a lion among flocks of goats (Mic.5:8 Zech.12:6) to destroy the power and kingdoms of the world. (Eur -.vol. 1 p 1 80- 181)

"O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them all. The earth is full of Thy riches." "Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory."

Here we find scope for unstinted and rational and ennobling and rejoicing praise. We contemplate the Eternal Father, who is ONE and everywhere present by His limitless and subtle Spirit. We recognise with joy and satisfaction His invisible and universal energy as the source of the latent wisdom and power we see expressed in the visible universe; and the Psalms give us suitable utterance to the otherwise inexpressible feelings that swell the enlightened heart. We praise, we magnify, we exult in the fathomless ocean of power and wisdom in which we live and move and have our being.

God's revelation of Himself by Moses and the prophets, Jesus and the apostles, enables us to do this to some purpose. Apart from this, we should not know that praise from feeble mortals could be acceptable to *"the High and Lofty One inhabiting eternity;"* nor could we be aware that He had any purpose with us beyond the fleeting life we now live for threescore years and ten. We could not be sure that we were justified in hoping for any further goodness than we experience in this mortal state. But in the light of what He has said, and caused to be written for our instruction, during those sundry times and divers manners in which in time past He spoke to the fathers by the prophets and lastly by His Son whom He hath constituted the heir of all things, the case stands very differently. We have learnt that He delights in the worship of those who are of a humble and earnest, and enlightened and obedient mind towards Himself; that to such He looks with complacence, and guides their ways, even when He seems not to do so in the darkness; and that He has a purpose of kindness towards them in Christ, according to the counsel of His own will—a purpose for which He is now preparing them, and which He will accomplish towards them in those *"ages to come"* when He will banish all evil from the earth, and confer upon them the glory of an immortality that will render them the everlasting inhabitants of a finished and beautiful earth.

Bro. Robert Roberts - Seasons of Comfort

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What Does That Mean?

"And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook" (1Kings 17:6)

Why did God choose ravens to feed Elijah since the raven was to be held in abomination by Israel? *"And these are they which ye shall have in abomination among the fowls; they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination: the eagle, and ...every raven after his kind."* (Leviticus 11:13-15) Did God use these unclean birds, or is this a poor translation?

There are several theories about this passage. Some say that they were angels in the form of ravens: others state that the word "raven" should be translated "Arabians", "merchants" or the inhabitants of a place called Oreb. All of these explanations are attempts to bring God's ways into line with our thinking, instead of examining the passage and pondering, "what is the lesson in this"? What does the Scriptures reveal about the ravens?

The simple *answer* is that God was preparing his prophet for one of the greatest tasks he was to accomplish. He would need to learn (like Peter many years later) that, *"What God has cleansed, that call not thou common or unclean."* There was a Zidonian woman in Zarephath that God had called, and Elijah would have the task of teaching her the truth about the God of Israel. Jesus says: *"But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.... And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong."* (Luke 4:25-29) They still had not understood, nor learned the lesson that Elijah was taught from the ravens.

There are other verses that talk about the raven and other lessons that Elijah needed to learn to prepare him for the work ahead of him. Christ says: *"Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them."* The very bird that Christ singles out as not having food or ability for storage for tomorrow returns every morning and evening to feed Elijah! Christ asks, "Why are you anxious about tomorrow? Are you not of more value to God than the fowls?"

Job 38:41 says, *"Who provideth for the raven his food? When his young ones cry unto God, they wander for lack of meat."* God used the very bird that is noted for not having provision for its young. What does this remind us of? There were three classes in Israel that God took particular note of because they could not provide for themselves. Special provisions were made for the poor, the fatherless and the **widow!** Elijah's job for the next couple of years would be working with a Zidonian widow woman; one who did not have enough to sustain herself or her young. What better preparation could Elijah be given than being fed by these "unclean" birds? Have we learned the lesson God taught Elijah?

