

# 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.

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CHRIST IS COMING SOON AND WILL REIGN ON EARTH

## **Ecclesial News**

**BRISBANE, Australia. — Sunday Memorial Meeting, 10:30am; Tuesday Bible Class, 7:30pm; Meetings are held in Member's homes. Bro. Ted Mingham, 1 Goodge Court, Birkdale, Qsld., 4159, Australia, (011)-617-3245-1971**

Greetings to all of like precious Faith,

In this corner of the Vineyard we have little to report, being few in number, little flock. However, we maintain in addition to our Memorial Meetings, our Tuesday Evening Bible Classes with studies on "The Parables of the Messiah" and "The Apocalypse."

Once a month we have on Saturday Evenings studies on the "Triumph of Faith" citing characters such as Abraham and David. Illness and disability has affected a few of our members, Sis. Eileen Youell in particular having had operations on her hip and leg. She continues to suffer pain and disability and the prayers and well wishes of brethren and sisters for her to continue to courageously endure will be appreciated.

The writer and Sis. Marguerite acknowledge our indebtedness to our Heavenly Father for the privilege of the opportunity to recently visit our Brethren and Sisters in Edmonton and Richard, culminating in enjoying the latter's Gathering, a feast of fat things of spiritual wealth. The theme, "Glorifying God in our Lives," gave us cause for much soul searching and refreshment in the things most surely believed and hopefully practiced among us. We are grateful for the hospitality afforded us by many Brethren and Sisters before, during and after the Gathering and including some from other parts of the brotherhood.

An invitation is extended to Brethren and Sisters to visit us here in Brisbane, Australia, where our members will be delighted to share fellowship with accommodation and other facilities to enable such visits to be rewarding physically and spiritually. If sufficient interest is aroused we will endeavour to arrange a suitable Gathering to set an appropriate tone to such a visit.

On behalf of the Brethren and Sisters of the Brisbane Berean Ecclesia,  
Bro. Ted Mingham

## **FRATERNAL GATHERINGS & ACTIVITIES**

(To be held God Willing)

**HOLLADAY FRATERNAL GATHERING ....October 6 - 7, 2001**  
194 Bro. Warren Rankin, 699 White Tail Rd, Holladay, TN 38341, 901-584-3925

## True Measurement by Divine Standards

What we enjoyed in the spiritual feast entitled "Glorifying God in our lives", during the gathering, is now a memory, very pleasant, but how beneficial, God only knows. We pray that it lasts for a long time. Now my role this morning is to try to translate what we heard in Personal Development, Marriage (Courtship and Actual), Growing up as children of men and of God, and Living the Truth as an Individual to our relationship with each other as brethren and sisters in the Lord. This can be the cream on the cake as it were, in fulfilling the theme, "Glorifying God in our lives."

You know there is a parallel between Courtship & Marriage to Wives and Husbands in the Lord with our relationship to our brethren and sisters, but with an added challenge. We will not develop the 'Eros' love (of husband and wife) and may even find it hard to share 'Phileo' love (those close personal family relationships and similar), though this surely with our common interest should be possible, but we must learn to develop 'Agape' love, the kind the Father has condescended towards us (the undeserving).

In our years in the Truth we will have found some with whom, in the world, we could never have shared friendship. Having worked on it after that initial inner glow which saw everybody in the Truth as angels (perhaps a kind of spiritual tingles), we know only too well what a challenge it was and continues to be to let irritating differences be ignored or forgiven, once we came to learn how weak and frail we all are, and how much we are all in need of God's mercy. The theme I would like you to consider this morning is "True Measurement by Divine Standards."

As we assemble here this morning we are conscious of our inadequacies as compared with the supreme example that is set before us in these emblems. He (Jesus) is our inspiration to rise above our mediocre efforts, which often cause us to bewail the failures and shortcomings, as did Paul who was constrained to say

*"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." (Romans 7: 18-19)*

Paul says much more, but suffice' it to say that he realized that it was through Christ who strengthened him and us through the Word, was he and are we able to achieve anything worthwhile? But there is no room to boast or set about to examine others by our own pitiful standards. We are here to examine ourselves, not one another, although we are obliged to draw on the

Word to encourage one another to elevate one another's thinking 195  
upon spiritual things. Let us refer to the following scriptural admonition recorded in 2 Corinthians 10:12—

*"For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves but they, measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."*

I would like to quote a few words from Bro. Growcott: -

"Expressed clearly in this way, the folly of this course is obvious. For measurement to have any meaning at all it must be according to a recognized and unchanging standard. There is no point in measuring two things against each other when the measurements of both are in question. Therefore, we can never measure one brother against another, or one ecclesia against another. Just because one exceeds the other will be no proof that either is acceptable or begins to measure up to the true standard.

There is only one true rule of measurement, and that is the standard God has laid down. It is a humiliating standard for the flesh. Many complain that it is very discouraging to measure things by this standard, but still it is the only safe and scriptural course. *"If we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged,"* Paul tells them; and James says, *' So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the perfect law of liberty"* -- the law of perfection that will bring liberty to those that love it -- (1 Cor. 11:31; Jam. 1:25; 2:12).

Let us never be afraid of facing the true measurement, but rather seek it and apply it daily, ever striving, in the power of God, to attain to the full stature of the perfect man in Christ Jesus. Let us talk no more of discouragement, but let us glory in the exalted standards God has set -- the standards to which, it is promised, we shall some day attain, if we now strive toward them and confess their truth and desirability, and do not attempt to confuse and obscure them to satisfy the flesh.

God will give us no reward we have not honestly laboured toward. He will not force perfection upon us if we do not strive after it now.

*'He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.'*

There *is* nothing to glory of outside of God; all outside of God is shame. There are only two kinds of activity -- that which is done through God and that which is done contrary to God. In the former, the glory is clearly God's -in the latter, there is no glory at all. There may appear a range of neutral ground between, but the Scriptures rule this out and tell us that what we do not consciously bring into the first category must necessarily fall into the second.

*"For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth."*

Those words of Bro. Growcott are helpful in their direction to the scriptural standard, which is the only standard. We are apt to believe that we with the best of motives have a need to direct others to our own example. This is of course not openly advocated, (in fact the flesh will carefully disguise this), but there is a tendency to speak of those virtues in which we feel the most comfortable as against those in which we have the most difficulty. The Truth is made up of a multiplicity of different characters with their different strengths and weaknesses, talents and handicaps, experience and inexperience and the vigor of youth and experience in age. None of us know what the others really have to endure physically and mentally with our different capacities to adapt to our environment and our lack or our strength in making the best use of our God given talents. It is therefore needful to weigh this up in what we expect of one another. It is very easy to apparently see the weaknesses of others and not recognize our own, and even if we could clearly see the weaknesses of others, how many of us know what efforts are made to overcome those weaknesses. Thankfully God and Christ do, and we should be confident in their judgment. We have to be careful not to steer too far to the other tendency to excuse all weaknesses and allow liberties to the indulgences of the flesh and lukewarm responses to our duties and responsibilities. With a Christ like attitude we may steer a course of judgment with mercy, particularly applying emphasis on judgment to ourselves and mercy with others. Let us reconsider the following scriptural admonitions.

*"Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." (Matthew 7:1-2)*

See also Romans 14:4; Romans 14:13; 1 Corinthians 4:5; & James 4:12.

As we consider this subject further let us use the analogy of what we expect of our own children. Most of us have some experience in this area. We find all children are different. They have their individual abilities and weaknesses. We make due allowance and whilst we set certain standards, we ensure that we do not raise the bar too high. Some we raise it a little higher for incentive to aspire for greater heights, some we might lower it a little. We usually as good parents know where to draw the line. However people in the professions such as doctors and lawyers with all their so-called wisdom have been known to expect great things from their offspring, and expect all their children to meet their own standard of excellence. There have been instances of children being driven to suicide in their vain efforts to please their parents who have not realized that genetic influences have a bearing, not

only environmental ones, in their children's successes and failures. This is not taking account of health factors, which have a bearing on some children's inability to rise, to that level either of their parent's expectation, or, to that of their siblings. Now if parents have not always realized this dreadful mistake, despite their close communication with their children, is it not understandable that we, when considering others abilities and potential, will very likely make the same mistake, especially with those with whom we have minimal contact? Now alluding to this differentiation between children we see the desirability to balance each one's capacity and potential with the tasks we set them. This is how God works with us with mercy as Christ in parable spake,

*"For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." (Luke 12:48)*

We presume every parent would subscribe to this as a way to fairly discriminate between children i.e., that the more talented children should be expected to give an account of their work in proportion to their greater ability, and those less talented in proportion to their lesser ability. Now conceding this, we need to realize that whilst we may as parents make a reasonable assessment of our own children (though some of our children in later years will point out what in their view was an unfair evaluation), we will never know how wide of the mark we may be in our evaluation of others' capacities so we are warned

*"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. (Romans 14:4) See also verses 10 & 13.*

One thing we should all have come to terms with by now is that everything we have is from God, which includes our special talents in our work fields, and our abilities in the ecclesial scene. Some in the household have a greater ability to grasp the deeper aspects of the Truth's studies. Some despite hard study and reading over a number of years have difficulty in following as closely as those whose minds are absorbent like blotting paper. Those less receptive to the deeper aspects of the Truth have been criticized for insufficient reading and study of the Word. In some cases, this may be so, but it may be a misguided judgment. The talented will tend to measure their fellow students by their own standard, not knowing the capacity or the efforts of those less endowed. Some have a better grasp of some other aspects of the Truth while some use their talents in other ways. God and Christ only know. This is not to decry diligent reading and study of the Word but to caution against the potential of discouragement. Encouragement is helpful. Some of 198 us may remember school days. How frustrating it was to see some

children breeze through their schoolwork, while some of us, for one reason or other, could not keep up. Teachers that were overly critical and unkind did not get the results they were seeking, but a few helpful kind words and suitable advice from others worked wonders. On the side of encouragement is that reading and study of the Word is calculated to have our minds cleansed and purified to withstand the influences of the world. A powerful factor to deal with is our tendency to forget unless our leaky vessels are refilled. This is the warning of Paul to the Hebrews Chapter 2 v. 1.

*"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."*

This applies to all regardless of their talents. As the words in the original convey for "let them slip", to glide away. Our natural inclinations are always going to draw us away from spiritual directions to the easy drift of the flesh. This is a diversion from our main theme, but it is needful that we do not give any impression of concession to the naturally lazy element that we all bear as a weight about our necks.

Getting then back to our original thoughts, we only have to think of the distribution of the talents in the gospel record to realise the need for caution in these areas. In summary then, we ought to be sensitive of our brethren and sisters capacities and make our assessments as if we could only see a minimal capacity with the maximum output being applied by our brethren and sisters, or judge, as we would wish to be judged by them, which is the royal law. We do, of course, need to take account of the fact that our Heavenly Father looks to us for fruit or works consistent with the talent or talents we may have. None of us can say we have none. One I believe we may not be making the best use of is the talent of the knowledge of the Truth. This may be the one, which we have buried in a napkin. Do we speak of the Truth to all and sundry or only among ourselves? Even if nothing comes of it, we have to give people no excuse to say, as we know has been used, that they have never heard of Christadelphians or their beliefs.

Let us take to heart the words from Hymn 178.

Ye who have the truth received,  
By God's grace to you revealed;  
Should you dare to keep it back,  
You the rich reward may lack.

There is another angle I would like to pursue on this subject. Have you thought about the statement concerning the comparison between Jesus and John the Baptist? Of course no one before John or since could come 199

anywhere near the standard set by our Lord. There was no doubt some musing about these two who were contemporaries. They brought different styles and methods in their work. John due to his apparent Nazarite vow was an abstainer from alcohol. Jesus not under such a vow had occasion to consume wine. These differences were used to criticize both of them, and we read of this in Matthew 11:18-19 and Luke 7:33-35. We will turn to the record in Luke.

*"For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil.*

*The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!*

*But wisdom is justified of all her children."*

This was the superficial assessment of these two great men by the Pharisee class. There was no attempt to deal with the teachings and works of these men, just an effort to present an apparent divergence in their lifestyle. This is typical of the world which in its wisdom, unable to penetrate the real issues of life, look at peripheral issues of little moment, because they hate any inference that their lifestyle and beliefs are outside of the paths of Truth. This worldly wisdom is alluded to in 1 Corinthians 1: 23-29. For the moment it is interesting to note the third verse we referred to:

*"But wisdom is justified of all her children."*

There are two ways to read this. One is that Jesus and John were the children of wisdom. This has some credence when we consider the words from Proverbs 8: 32.

*"Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways." (See also verses 33-36)*

The other explanation, as some translators have it, is that the 'children' are the result of, or progeny of wisdom, i.e. the works. These works should have been the basis for the people's judgment of these two worthy men, but the Pharisee class had no answer to these works, so resorted to their thoroughly discredited descent into childish misjudgment. Jesus referred to the games of children in verses 31 & 32 where the children imitated their adults in games of weddings and funerals. Some children wouldn't play either game and thus Christ is likening the Pharisees to them in that they wouldn't respond to John the Baptist or to Christ for perverse reasons like unto some of the children of the day. One writer succinctly put it this way, "They mocked John in his sternness as he ate and drank bread and water of affliction, as they 200 despised the Lord as He ate and drank with joy in anticipation of the

blessings of eating and drinking in the Kingdom of God. But though men may mock, the children of wisdom will live to see the day of their justification."

The other point of note with this verse is the word 'justified.' It may have been better rendered 'honoured.' In summary wisdom is honoured by its results, 'works.' This was the true way to measure these wonderful but different characters. Doubtless we will be judged by the world in a similar manner. This is typical to detract from the message, to look at some peripheral issue to show some insignificant difference to detract or distract from the real life and death issues.

Now how does this bear upon the subject with which we began? Well human nature is still part of our heritage and there is an ever present danger that we may fall in to the same error of judging our fellow servants by a superficial observation without knowing all there is a need to know before we assess our fellow travellers. Perhaps our brethren and sisters displease us by their perceived lack of discretion, their rough manner, their ill fitting clothes, their apparent rudeness or bad habits. Some of this may reflect an attitude problem or a desire to be forthright and not beat about the bush as the saying goes. We just don't really know. We, of course, do not justify bad habits or 'rudeness, but some of these observations derive from our own perceptions, not that of the Word. If we are to enter into these assessments, have we looked at what they are or may be doing in the service of the Truth? Even if we have some doubts that this class are serving the Truth, we cannot judge because in the spirit of Matthew 6:3-4 such may be doing their part quietly and faithfully.

*"But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:*

*That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly."*

This aspect is alluded to in Paul's letter to Timothy referring to hidden sins and good works

*"Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after.*

*Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid."* (1 Timothy 5: 24-25)

Let us learn to take brethren and sisters as they are, not as we would like to shape them. They are God's servants and their peculiarities and idiosyncrasies, however distasteful to our prejudices, may be just what God wants to balance His final complement of children. We can't all be talented

speakers, the intellectual, the outgoing, the enterprising, or even the most energetic. But we can all be enthusiastic, friendly, cheerful in adversity, 201 and lovers of the Truth, and embrace the range of virtues with their apex love, - agape love- which is the reflection of that of the Father.

Let us reflect on the following Scriptural guidance in our relations to one another.

*"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love in honour preferring one another."* (Romans 12:10)

*"Seeing ye have purified your soul in obeying the Truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently."* (1 Peter 1:22)

The two quotes we have read relate to that 'phileo' love of our brethren, but let us now consider that greater love exhorted to us by Peter. See 2 Peter 1:5-7 in which he shows the ascending scale of virtues the last two of which are these two loves.

*"And above all things have fervent charity ('agape' love) among yourselves for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging."* (1 Peter 4:8-9)

When we measure ourselves against the divine standard we realise how pitiful are our best efforts and how much in need of mercy and God's grace we all are, such as requires us to acknowledge that when we have done all we are still unprofitable servants.

*"So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."* (Luke 17:10)

Let all our scrutiny be by the Word and concentrated on ourselves and not others. That Word is able to divide and shine upon and break up the darkness of the mind of the flesh and radiate the light of the spiritual mind with its health-giving rays. Paul to the Hebrews Chapter 4 verse 12 expresses it this way

*"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."*

So brethren and sisters let this Word be our guide and help us as we come to these emblems this morning.

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

## Jeremiah 32

Jeremiah chapter 32 is a chapter of hope for the nation of Israel. It's a chapter of selflessness, in the prophet Jeremiah,

Now some might ask, how can this be a chapter of hope, when what we have read about has been the impending destruction of Jerusalem, and the capture of Israel's king. And the answer is, because of the promise. God promised in this chapter that he would bring Israel back to this land, though they would be carried away out of it.

For some time now, the nation of Babylon has had the city of Jerusalem in siege, and the siege has been terrible. False prophets have risen up to convince king Zedekiah to resist Babylon, though Jeremiah has taught one consistent theme, which is that Israel must be punished for wickedness, and the land must be given a rest from such idolatry as the nation has experienced.

And the wickedness has been so great that God determined that the land should rest for 70 years from the idolatry which had been committed in Israel. In the 29th chapter, God through Jeremiah had told them:

*Jeremiah 29:8-12, "For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Let not your prophets and your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed. For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name: I have not sent them, saith the LORD. For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you."*

But in this chapter, God is reinforcing His promise of deliverance to Israel. And He does it through Jeremiah. He tells Jeremiah that his cousin, his uncle's son, was coming to sell him land in Anathoth. Now where is Anathoth? Its 3.5 miles outside the city walls of Jerusalem to the north east. And who were the current occupants? The Babylonian anny!

And so this appears to be a very bad deal. Not only so, but Jeremiah has already prophesied that the captivity shall last 70 years. And how old *is* he now? Well, he had begun his ministry in the 13th year of Josiah, who reigned 31 years. Then Jehoiakim reigns for 11 years, and Zedekiah is now in his 10th year, so Jeremiah has been a prophet for 40 years, and even though he began his prophesy as a child, or very young man, to ever take possession of the land, he would have to live well over 100 years.

So in this we learn that Jeremiah knows he is never going to use that land. Why

does he do it? He does it because he loves God, he loves Israel, and he loves his people? He *is* willing to give himself up to hopeless situations to strengthen and encourage the few believers which existed in that city. And so the question comes to us, brothers and sisters: How much do we love? Are we willing to spend and be spent for our brothers and sisters? Can we do as Jeremiah, and allow ourselves to be spent with **no hope for return**; (understand that) no hope for return; just to encourage and strengthen the brotherhood? And will we allow ourselves to be spent, which as Jeremiah showed included money, but it included so much more, as he sat in the prison for his faithfulness to his calling.

And there was so little return. There were so few people at this time, who still held onto the truth in Jerusalem. Remember two invasions had already taken place by this time. Daniel had been gone for 21 years by now. Ezekiel had been gone for 10 years. Most of the righteous had heeded the warnings of the prophets which had gone before, and left in the earlier invasions. For the most part, only the most wicked and rebellious of the people were left. Jeremiah himself had been warning the few righteous in the city to leave.

Jeremiah 21:8-9, *"And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death. He that abideth in this city shall die by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth out, and falleth to the Chaldeans that besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be unto him for a prey."*

So there are very few righteous to testify to, but nevertheless, Jeremiah continues his work from the prison. And his faith is tried. *How* his faith is tried by the evil that he has had to endure at the hands of his countrymen. Terrible evil, especially over the last 10 long years. We see that in this reading of the 32nd chapter, for Jeremiah, a prophet since his youth, a prophet for 40 years is found questioning whether or not the word which he is hearing is in fact the word of the Lord.

Jeremiah 32:6-8, *"And Jeremiah said, The word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Behold, Hanameel the son of Shallum thine uncle shall come unto thee saying, Buy thee my field that is in Anathoth: for the right of redemption is thine to buy it. So Hanameel mine uncle's son came to me in the court of the prison according to the word of the LORD, and said unto me, Buy my field, I pray thee, that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin: for the right of inheritance is thine, and the redemption is thine; buy it for thyself*  
204 *Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD."*

We can only marvel at Jeremiah, and thank God that we have not been called upon to endure such a terrible situation as this great man of faith had to endure. But when Jeremiah knew that it was the word of the Lord, he went straight to his work, straight to the purpose of encouraging and strengthening his brethren, knowing full well the hopelessness of any personal gain from the matter, and paid 17 shekels of silver for the land.

Why 17? Because 17 is a number of prophetic deliverance. Joseph was 17 years old when his dreams came to him, how that the 11 sheaves in the field should bow down to him, and how the 11 stars and the sun and the moon did obeisance to him. And this dream prophesied of Israel's deliverance.

And Jacob lived in Egypt, after he went down to live there because of the terrible famine for 17 years. And he died in Egypt, but his bones were carried back to the land of Israel to be buried, for he did not wish to be buried in Egypt.

So seventeen spoke to Israel as the number of deliverance from oppression, and life under the chosen of God. It spoke to Israel of the same things that Jeremiah was speaking to them about, the fact that Israel would eventually be delivered from the hand of the oppressor, and Israel would eventually come back to the land. And so Jeremiah paid 17 shekels of silver, for the land in Anathoth.

And we know, brothers and sisters, that we have seen many of the signs that Jeremiah spoke about. And we see them continuing to happen today. And they do not happen as quickly as we would like. We were all quite anxious at the prospect of the last Russian elections this summer, that perhaps a more nationalistic, a more militant individual may be elected to start the great conflict which we with Jeremiah know will come upon this earth. And we were somewhat let down that it didn't go as we thought it might.

And when we think this way, brothers and sisters, we need to be thankful that we are permitted to speak and live in the lap of luxury, remembering the terrible years of torment and torture Jeremiah had to endure, waiting for the king of the North to come down upon the land of Israel. And how he was persecuted for his testimony. We, in this Laodicean age, are simply looked upon as an oddity for our testimony. No one really cares.

But as Jeremiah knew, the word of God is sure. God testified that Israel would return in 70 years, which of course they did under the government of the Medes and Persians. But he prophesied much, much more.

Jeremiah 32:39-40, *"And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children 205*

*after them: And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me."*

God spoke to Israel of an everlasting covenant. This was not the covenant that he had made with them that he would return them in 70 years, only to be destroyed again by the Romans. It was not the covenant that he made with them through Ezekiel, that they would be planted again upon the mountains of Israel, only to be destroyed by the Russians.

The everlasting covenant is the one made to those of us sitting here this morning. It is the one made through those 17 shekels of silver paid by Jeremiah, that Jacob would again live in the land.

*Jeremiah 32:42-44 , "For thus saith the LORD; Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them. And fields shall be bought in this land, whereof ye say, It is desolate without man or beast; it is given into the hand of the Chaldeans. Men shall buy fields for money, and subscribe evidences, and seal them, and take witnesses in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, and in the cities of the mountains, and in the cities of the valley, and in the cities of the south: for I will cause their captivity to return, saith the LORD."*

It was the promise that Jeremiah had, that the land of Anathoth may in fact, someday, be his. Not in this lifetime of course. But in that age to come which these men believed so firmly in that they were willing to endure all the difficulties to attain it. And it's there example, Brothers and Sisters that we need to concern ourselves with.

Anathoth means, the echo. It was a land of canyons used for rock quarries. And we get the idea that it wasn't the metropolis of Israel in those days, but rather a land which was somewhat desolate, hence its name. The best crop, was large rocks. What are we willing to pay, Brothers and Sisters, for the rock quarries of Anathoth in the age to come? Is there any price too large to pay to live in the kingdom with Jeremiah, and Jacob, and Joseph? Is 17 shekels too steep a price? When we lose focus on the kingdom, and become concerned with "making it in this world." When we begin to seek our own interests, over the interests of God, then we say that 17 shekels is too great a price.

# Thoughts Gleaned By The Way

## By A Wayfarer

*"But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Timothy 6:9-10).*

Let us note here that the apostle is not speaking of the effect of the possession of riches, but the effect of the pursuit of riches. The possession of great riches, as Jesus taught, is an almost certain bar to faithful service to God.

But Paul is speaking of that desire for wealth and the love of money which may dominate the life of a person whether they actually possess it or not. It is a craving for money and the things money can buy, the pursuit of which may occupy the time, energy, and affections of the disciple as to dwarf, and even to destroy his interest in divine things, causing him to "err from the faith."

"Ye cannot serve God and Mammon," is just as true today as when spoken by the Lord. How much idleness in the Lord's vineyard; how much lack of interest in the study of the Truth; how much carelessness and unconcern about preserving the Truth in its purity; how much spiritual weakness in general is attributable to a greater desire for material wealth than for the true riches!

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When anyone loves the Truth will all his heart, loves it because it is the Word of God, he suits his actions to his words and is willing and ready to make any sacrifice – stand alone, or even die, rather than make one compromise with error or surrender to the influences, the "good words and fair speeches," of those who would corrupt the faith.

The Truth to such an one is a precious gem, a priceless treasure which he guards jealously, lest he lose it or allow it to become stained or marred by careless handling. Any other attitude, whatever the excuse for doing otherwise, is in itself evidence of shallow soil and weak faith, or the presence of the briars and thorns of fleshly influences having a stronger hold upon one than the Truth of the gospel. And the test is in the actions, not in the professions of those who claim to be true disciples of Him who chose us to be his soldiers.

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*"Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope"* (Romans 15:4).

Divine principles never change because they are founded upon the wisdom of the eternal and unchanging Creator of all things. Therefore; good is good and bad is bad in every age and generation. Changing human thought and customs do not alter divine principles. The teaching of Jesus Christ and his apostles was based upon the teaching of divine principles "written aforetime" in the Old Testament.

The word of God "liveth and abideth forever;" unchanging and unvarying, it has been, and still is the only reliable source of information in every age on what is right and what is wrong; what is moral and what is immoral; what will lead to eternal life and that which leads to eternal death. Man can neither change it nor add to it, neither depart from its teaching except at his own peril. •

It teaches us patience and gives us comfort and hope that we in these latter days can, by living in accordance with these same age-old principles, reap the same reward promised to Abraham and all the ancient worthies whose salvation have been made sure.

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*"Ye shall know them by their fruits"* – Jesus.

When any person expresses a firm conviction in any doctrine or course of conduct, it is right and proper that his word be accepted as it was expressed. But, having been put to the test, and one fails to abide by such convictions; such failure to do so cannot be harmonized with honesty, sincerity, and courage of convictions. There is a wide difference between one who says and does, and on who says and does not.

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In contending earnestly for the faith, let us keep in mind that discouragement and disappointment will often be our lot. For, the stronger we set forth truth, the stronger and more vigorous will be the opposition from those who hate the truth and love pleasing lies; and the more vigorous and active we are in exposing error, the more we will be hated and despised by those who are seeking to teach or conceal error. The most hated of all men were the greatest preachers of truth and the most outspoken exposers of error – Jesus and his apostles.

The only way we can make the Truth pleasing to some people is to water it down and mix it with flesh-pleasing ideas. But in doing this, we would not be contending earnestly for the faith.

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We may dream of having faith to "move mountains," but the crying need just now is enough faith to move us to such an extent that we will be impelled to do the things we can and should do.

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It is common to hear proposals for something new as a remedy for any and every evil. We even have suggestions that the world needs a new religion. Unquestionably it needs some kind of a change; but when Israel went astray, they sought something new in the ways of the heathen, and the inspired prophet admonished them to "*ask for the OLD PATHS, where is the good way, and walk therein*" (Jeremiah 6:16).

We are told that the Athenians "*spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear something new*" (Acts 17:21). The apostle Paul reminded them that these new things which they were seeking after were vain delusion, and that the true God who created all things was very near to all of them, whom they could serve and obtain eternal life.

When those who have known the Truth go seeking after "some new things," it is a sure sign of a falling away from the Truth.

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The minister of a large congregational church recently wrote to a magazine editor saying that one of the questions often asked by members of his congregation was: "Why is the world in such a mess, and what can we do to build a better world?"

The minister seemed to think that the editor might be able to shed some light on this perplexing problem. It is a sad commentary on modern "Christianity" and the clergy that they have no answer to either part of this question – either the cause or the cure.

They know not that the cause is the native evil tendencies of the human mind in which dwells "no good thing, " and that God is leading the nations to their own destruction, "because their wickedness is great."

They know not that God has a purpose with the earth and man upon it, and that the only remedy is the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to set up his kingdom, break in pieces and abolish the whole human system, including the apostate system called "Christendom," the very sinful system in which 209

the clergy, newspaper editors and others are seeking to uphold and fashion according to their own ideas of what the world should be, in the vain hope that, through the efforts of mankind alone, war can be abolished and universal peace and brotherhood prevail in the earth.

"When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants thereof will learn righteousness," and not before.

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One of the outstanding weaknesses of all human systems is man's lack of power and ability to accomplish even the best of his intentions and the most laudable plan, while God's plan cannot fail, because His power is limitless.

*"Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou has established the earth and it abideth. They continue this day according to thy ordinances; for all are thy servants" (Psalm 119:89-91).*

Aside from many other good reasons, it is just plain common sense not to trust in the help of man, but place all our reliance on Him who is all-powerful, and who has sent forth His word which shall accomplish that which he pleases, and shall prosper in the thing whereunto He sent it (Isaiah 55).

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One of the strangest contradictions in human nature is the not uncommon case of persons of great intelligence and wisdom in most ways, showing almost total lack of wisdom and understanding in some things. The human mind appears to be incapable of thinking wisely on all subjects at the same time.

This is one explanation which may be given for some of the utterly stupid suggestions on the subject of religion sometimes offered by the wise and great; for true religion, when approached from the one and only reliable source of information, The Bible, is one of the simplest of subjects, that even the lowly and ignorant can understand.

God has arranged it this way; to the person of humble and contrite spirit, God has made His word easy to understand, while making it appear as foolishness to the worldly-minded. There is a saying that "we are all ignorant; only on different subjects." It is no cause for shame on the part of the disciple of Christ to be unlearned in many things that form "the wisdom of the world;" in most instances it is vain.

It has often been said that one of the most pathetic sights in human experience is when a person who, having arrived at the age and condition when mind and body are incapable of earning a living, find themselves penniless and objects of charity.

But there is something more pathetic than that. It is a person with one foot in the grave, having spent his life aimlessly, facing death and *"without hope and without God in the world."*

But with the hope of eternal life and joy forever to sustain one, growing old, even in poverty, has no terrors for us.

*Bro. Oscar Beauchamp - Mar Apr 59*

## **As Ye See The Day Approaching**

*"Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? 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." (Proverbs 6:6-11)*

*"There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise: The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer; The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks; The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands; The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces." (Proverbs 30:23-28)*

Beloved Brethren and Sisters, the days are quickly flying! It is hard to believe that the first half of 2001 has already passed and is now history! Our master will soon be apocalysped from heaven to set up that kingdom for which we wait, hope and pray. That kingdom he comes to establish, with almighty power from His heavenly Father, shall never be destroyed nor left to others! Not only shall it be an everlasting kingdom, but it shall stretch to earth's utmost bounds, bringing true peace and happiness to all of mankind, once righteousness and holiness are established.

The signs everywhere around us are indicating that the time is almost at hand. The storm of Divine retribution is about to break with terrible consequence over the nations which lie in wickedness. How thankful we should be that we know these things that are coming upon the earth - all of the trouble and evil, anxiety and fear. Knowing that all of these things are working to an expected and glorious outcome gives strength and 211

comfort to us, if we are truly walking in the way toward life eternal. As the storm clouds gather and the darkness deepens, the winds of political, cultural, socio-economic and religious diversity are whipping the sea of nations into violent upheaval. The sea and its proud waves do roar! The nations are angry. At present the waters (people) cast up mire and dirt. As is the condition of the sea when in a state of agitation; so the peoples of earth, because of sin and uncleanness, "muddy" and defile their environs. Diversity and self will are everywhere causing unrest, instability, strife and contention. Indeed men's hearts are failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth. (See Isaiah 57:20-21 and Luke. 21:26)

Yahweh is also very angry. He has a controversy with the nations. It is written in Psalm 7:11: "... *God is angry with the wicked every day.*" It is also written in Jeremiah 25:30-33: "...*The LORD shall roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation; he shall mightily roar upon his habitation; he shall give a shout, as they that tread the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth. A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the LORD hath a controversy with the nations, he will plead with all flesh; he will give them that are wicked to the sword, saith the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth. And the slain of the LORD shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground.*"

Conditions grow worse day by day as the second coming of Christ approaches. HIV and the AIDS virus are at epidemic proportions in Africa and continue to spread like fire throughout the populations of the earth. It is estimated that in 2000 there were 36.1 million individuals living who had been infected with HIV/AIDS virus! Ninety-five percent of these infected people live in what is termed the developing world (third world countries). In 2000, 3 million died of AIDS. Education and change in cultural and social behavior is the only real defense. Though there are some exotic and very expensive "drug cocktails" which may help retard the inexorable, agonizing effects of the AIDS virus, DEATH is still always the end result. HIV is a blood borne pathogen (passed through blood/body fluids). Multi drug resistant (MDR) tuberculosis is also spreading wildly though out the earth. It is the leading cause of death in AIDS sufferers, as it is one of the many opportunistic organisms which take advantage of a living host who has a weakened and damaged immune system. Statistics indicate that 2 billion people - 1/3 of earth's population, have been infected with micobactirum tuberculosis! Many have been exposed to it and don't even know it! The 212 disease is an airborne pathogen (passed through the air) and is spread

through the coughs and sneezes of those infected with it to others around them. The germ of the disease may lie dormant in an individual who has been exposed to it for long periods of time before developing into tuberculosis disease. Of course, not all (only about ten percent in the USA) who carry the germ develop the disease. Education, early detection by testing and completed treatment are the only defense. but in many of the world's poor nations, testing and medication are either not available or are too costly and education is woefully lacking. Russia, for example, is suffering dreadfully from the spread of tuberculosis, as are other nations.

Hepatitis (HBV) is another disease that is spreading rapidly through the earth. It attacks the liver. One person out of three on earth has been infected with the disease! It is one hundred times more infectious than the AIDS virus, but can easily be prevented by vaccine in those not infected. Though most recover, building up antibodies, there are 400 million chronic carriers in the world. Hepatitis B is the leading cause of liver cancer and causes 1 million deaths per year. Sexually transmitted diseases (STD's), alcoholism, drugs, chemical and substance abuse and dependency are other causes of terrible pain, suffering, sorrow and death. Those diseases and conditions mentioned above and myriad multitudes of others beside, not only cause awful misery trouble and loss of life, but cost untold billions annually

Men are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. Most have no knowledge of Him or of His ways. They know not His son, the Lord and savior, Jesus Christ. They know not the glorious Gospel and hope that is set before us. The very happiness and pleasure they seek eludes them. The love of money, greed, corruption and lust have driven mankind into many evils and great troubles and misery. Men, as well as nations, war against each other, coveting and desiring what they don't have and think will make them happy. The "haves" in many cases oppress the "have nots." The "have nots:" resent and hate the "haves." Culture clashes with culture and one religious group with another. Conservative with liberal and right with left. Fear and anxiety have driven the nations to arm as never before. There was more war in the past century than in any other since man has been upon earth. Joel 3:9-10 has been largely fulfilled, though there is doubtless still some further preparation to be made by Russia as per Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39. Those verses from Joel chapter 3 read:

*"Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the **men** of war draw near; let them come up: Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong."*

Indeed the nations have been awakened! The two world wars fought in the 1900's and the others beside, brought the nations into a state of alert and readiness. Seemingly incalculable sums were spent on weapons, weapons of mass destruction and implements of war, which normally would have been spent on food production, national infrastructure and welfare, etc. The weak are saying they are strong through being heavily armed and having weapons of mass destruction in their arsenals. The organization called the United Nations may well be an instrument through which the weak are saying they are strong.

Brethren and Sisters, today we see these nations not only armed to the teeth and prepared for war, but we see their national policies being forged against Israel. They are being aligned for that audacious and presumptuous war against Yahweh, His anointed and Israel His people.

Currently we see nations surrounding Israel which formerly had been weak and divided, seemingly strong and armed with dreadful and terrible weapons of mass destruction. Israel is in the worst drought in one hundred years! This is the third year of the drought. The Sea of Galilee is so low that vast mud flats and islands are visible. The three underground pumps which provide 1/3 of Israel's water supply in normal times are about to go completely dead if the water level drops another three feet! That water from the Sea of Galilee is pumped as far south as the Negev. In normal times 100 billion gallons of water were pumped out of the Sea of Galilee per year. Now, however, pumping is down by seventy-five percent! The other sources of water from aquifers in and under mountains and along the Mediterranean coast are being drawn down much faster than the engineers feel they should. Salt water threatens to defile the aquifers and the Sea of Galilee and there is no quick or easy solution. Two desalinization plants are scheduled to come online in 2004, but will only provide five percent of Israel's water supply. Next year, Israel will be able to buy water from Turkey in barges. All of this serious water shortage comes in a time when Israel has had over nine months of intifada (uprising) and rebellion from the Palestinians!

We must awake and take heed to ourselves in light of all of these things that seem to shout out that our Master is about to appear. Let us each be prepared.

*Bro. David VanPelt*

## **The Origin of the Texas Gathering**

The following items of Ecclesial News, from the Christadelphian magazine of 1879 and 1880, will be of interest in connection with the 214 Annual Hye Texas Gathering held this past month. These

extracts describe the first and second gatherings. Local brethren will be able to reconcile the apparent difference as to the location. The gathering is still held at the same place.

**April, 1879:** Bro. J. Banta states that the brethren of several ecclesias have come to an understanding to have a fraternal gathering on Williamson's Creek in Blanco County, Texas, to commence on the 2nd Sunday in August next. The proposed place of meeting is near a stage stand, on the Austin and Fredericksburg stage line.

**Dec., 1879:** Bro. J. Banta reports that the fraternal gathering came off in August, in proper order, with beneficial results to all concerned. Nearly all the ecclesias in Texas were represented, and there were several isolated brethren from different parts. There was one case of obedience at the close of the meetings — bro. HALEY, of Blanco County, who has been reading and hearing the Truth for several years.

May, 1880: It is decided among the brethren in Texas to hold another fraternal gathering at the same place it was held last August — on the Piedernales River, in the lower end of Gillespie County. The gathering will be held the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in July at 10 a.m., at an arbor construct for the purpose.

**Oct. 1880:** A number of brethren and sisters from several of the ecclesias of Texas met in a fraternal capacity in the eastern portion of Gillespie County. The meeting was convened Saturday, July 17, and continued until the next Tuesday at 12 noon. Edifying addresses on the practical phases of the Truth were delivered, and the beloved expressed themselves greatly benefited by the meeting. At proper hours first principles were exhibited for the enlightenment of strangers.

It was agreed to hold a similar meeting in August, 1881, should the Lord not call us to the great gathering together unto him before that time.

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A knowledge of the Truth will be of no value to us if it fail to effectuate that **purification of heart** — that moral and intellectual assimilation to the Divine character which it is intended to produce in all who are called to the holy calling. Christ made the state of the heart and the character of our **actions** the most prominent feature of his teaching.

Bro. Robert Roberts

## What Does That Mean?

*"And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away; And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man:---" (Mark 1 :43-44)*

On several occasions Jesus tells someone not to tell anyone who he was. Other times he forbids people from disclosing things they had seen, that would demonstrate who he was. Why did Jesus want to keep his identity as Messiah a secret at times and publicly demonstrate who he was at other times?

Jesus had one mission to accomplish while on earth. He did not want to gain undue publicity, which would hinder his mobility and ministry to his disciples. Note the results of the leper's disobedience to the command in the next verse: *"But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, **insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.**" (Mark 1:45)*

Jesus did not want to be considered as a "miracle worker." Note that the command not to talk about what they saw or heard was usually given after he had done a miracle. Jesus did not want people to follow him just to see him do miracles, which would have been the intent of many that followed him. Note Herod's view of Jesus: *"And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; **and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him.** (Luke 23:8)* Jesus did not do miracles for Herod, nor was he interested in that type hearing about his miracles.

Jesus also had to contend with the many people who would want to "take him by force and make him a king." What more could they want than a king who could work miracles by healing people and also by providing them with food when hungry? His mission was to teach, to suffer, to serve and to sacrifice himself, not to display power. That power was only to get their attention and to demonstrate that what he said was of God. He therefore wanted that element to be kept to the small roll to which it really belonged.

The final reason I feel that he gave this instruction was that he understood that the work he had to do was on a set time schedule established by God. Note the many times that we read the words; *"because his hour (or time) was not yet come."* Increased popularity would have forced the rulers to seek for his premature death. Christ had to die on the Passover (as the slain lamb) and remain in the grave for three days and three nights (the sign of Jonah), and then be raised on the first day of the week (the eighth day). He could not have died one day sooner or one day later.

Jesus kept the outward miracles and the loaves and fishes in their proper perspective. Although many of the people put these first, Jesus put spiritual things first and used these only as a tool to further that spiritual goal. Do we have the same proper perspective in our lives?

