

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

EDMONTON, Alberta - **S. S.** & Study Class 10 A.M.; Memorial 11:15 A.M.; Bible Class 8 P.M. in homes. Bro. Douglas Luard, 117 Calico Drive, Sherwood Park, AB. T8A 5P8 (780)464-5511
Loving greetings to all,

Since our last ecclesial news we have enjoyed the company at the Lord's table of Sis. Tamar Hopper, Bro. David Humphreys, Sis. Jeanne Humphreys, Bro. Dan & Sis. Sandra Jackson, Bro. Jonathan Jackson, Sis. Annetta Jones, Sis. Beatrice Jones, Bro. Gordon & Sis. Linda Jones, Bro. Sid & Sis. Christine Jones, Bro. Ted & Sis. Marguerite Mingham, Bro. Kelly & Sis. Sandra Readman, Bro. Terry & Sis. Lisa Readman, Bro. Jim & Sis. Kathy Sommerville and Bro. Ed & Sis. Delma Truelove. We appreciated the efforts of these Brethren and Sisters in traveling to our ecclesia and thank the brethren who ministered to our spiritual needs.

We are pleased to report that on September 1, 2001 we had the privilege of assisting **Rachel Luard** through the waters of baptism. Our prayer is that our new sister will remain steadfast in the Truth until our Master's return.

Love to all on behalf of your Brethren and Sisters in Edmonton,
Bro. Douglas Luard

LAMPASAS, Berean Christadelphian Ecclesia S.S. & Study Class, 9:50 A.M.; Memorial 11:00 A.M.; Seasons of Comfort Class 1:15 P.M., Lecture- 4th Sunday 1:30 p.m.; Bible Class Wednesday, 7:30 P.M.; Fraternal Gathering, 2nd Weekend in June. – Bro. Rusty Stephen, 1301 N. Hwy. 281, Lampasas, TX 76550; phone (512) 556-6771, e-mail sstephen@n-link.com

My beloved Brothers and Sisters in the Master's name,

It is again my privilege to announce the examination and Baptism of two more of Adam's race. Sunday School Scholars, **Benjamin Darter** and **Tanya Darter** were immersed on August 25th. Our Ecclesia couldn't be happier, most especially their parents, Bro. Frank and Sis. Donna Darter. We can only hope that this act of obedience and willingness to serve our Lord and Master will inspire all others who may be putting off making this same commitment.

Also on Sunday, Aug. 26, Sis. Norma Ruth Smith, was examined and accepted back into fellowship in the Lampasas Ecclesia. We certainly welcome her and open our arms to her as she journeys with us in our wait for the return of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Bro. Pat Cassidy is back with us after his operation a few weeks ago to 218 have a pace maker installed. It is good to see him back among us. Also,

Sis. Leora Hurst had to have a pace maker installed last week and was with us yesterday as well. We wish these two a good recovery and pray that they continue to get better.

Visiting with us this past month was Bro. Bob Bent who helped out with the Word of Exhortation, Bro. Bob and Sis. Sharon Wolfe, Sis. Anne Prado, Sis. Linnie Hennig, Bro. Harry and Sis. Cindy Cassidy, as well as Sis. Jeannie Humphreys from the Richard Ecclesia. We always enjoy the visiting Brethren and Sisters.

The remaining Lampasas Brothers and Sisters are doing well, since we saw a lot of you at the Hye Fraternal Gathering and hope to see more of you at the Tennessee Fraternal Gathering, in October.

Love in the Bonds of the Truth,
Bro. Rusty Stephen,
Recording Bro. Lampasas Berean Ecclesia

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

Beloved Brethren & Sisters in the Bonds of the Abrahamic Covenant,

Nearly a year has passed since our last ecclesial news. Many things have happened during that time, which has been a mixture of sad and happy events. One thing is certain, we are nearer to the return of our Lord and Master. The knowledge of that fact should greatly strengthen and encourage us. Our trials and tribulations will end at the termination of the night. The morning will bring rejoicing and unmixed comfort and blessing. The one thing needful, is to "give diligence to make our calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10). What a tragedy to have been associated with those great and precious promises, and yet "fail of the grace of God." What agony! What indescribable remorse, and inconsolable grief at our own foolishness. We gave more time to this world, than to the one who gave his life for us. We failed to overcome in the trial of our faith. Let us then endeavor to build one another up in the Word, and follow the sound examples of our pioneers in these perilous times, so that we will not have received His grace in vain. (2 Cor.6:1)

Since our last report we have had times of rejoicing in ecclesial activities. In November (2000) we had four studies on "Songs" in Scripture. We considered the 'Song of Moses' (Exod. 15); the 'Song of Deborah' 219 (Judges 5); 'A Song *for* the Sons of Korah' (Psalm 87); and the 'Song of the Lamb' (Apocalypse 15:3).

In December we had a Family Day, when the beauty and wonder of snow was considered, with an examination of various Scriptural references. It was also viewed as providentially affecting the course of history in the time of Napoleon and in the Second World War. In the Spring (2001) we had four studies on women in the Bible. These were 1) Rachel and Leah, 2) Ruth and Orpah, 3) Hannah and Peninnah, and 4) Martha and Mary.

We were uplifted in these beautiful contemplations, and would like to take this opportunity of inviting any who are able to attend our Spring Gathering at the Brecon Castle Hotel. It will take place, God Willing, on the weekend from 22nd March to 25th. The theme will be "The Beauty of Holiness".

We also enjoyed the Sunday School programme which was held in January. It never ceases to amaze everyone just how quickly the year rolls round, and we pray that the important work of Sunday Schools everywhere will bring forth fruit to the glory of Yahweh.

We are pleased to record that we have had visitors from other parts of the world. Bro. Lynn Osborne met with us in November, and in the following Spring we had the company of Brethren Jim Coye, Paul Garvey, Wayne Johnson, and Jim Sommerville. Their time with us was refreshing and went all too quickly. We thank Bro. Lynn and Bro. Paul for providing us with words of exhortation during their respective visits; and Bro. Jim Sommerville for giving the public Lecture entitled "The Second Coming of Christ".

We pray that the return of the Lord may be soon, and that we will be ready to meet him with joy.

On behalf of the Brethren and Sisters of the Hengoed ecclesia,
Bro. Phillip Hughes

FRATERNAL GATHERINGS & ACTIVITIES

(To be held God Willing)

HOLLADAY FRATERNAL GATHERING October 6 - 7, 2001

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

HENGOED FRATERNAL GATHERING March 22 - 25, 2002

Bro. Phillip Hughes, 25 Hoel Y Gelli, FForchneol Parc, Godreaman, Aberdare, Mid Glam., UK CF44 6LN; phone (011) 441-685-870254

The Words of the Days

We are reading together again the book of the Chronicles. So far it has been all of genealogy and apparently dry and meaningless. Now, all Scripture is profitable, we are told. This is an essential part of the divine message of life's demands. And there are interesting facts amid the genealogies that

clearly show us that they were meant to be read. If we are really godly-minded and spiritually-minded, we SHALL be interested in all of Scripture, because of the consciousness that it is the Word of God, the Word of Life, and these genealogies are included.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, Chronicles comes last in the Old Testament. It is important to understand its purpose. I and II Chronicles, in the Hebrew Scriptures, are one book. It was the Septuagint translators who divided it into two. It is a summary of the whole Old Testament given from an entirely God-centered point of view. It reveals God's idea of the relative importance of things. Its Hebrew name means "*the words of the days*"—a beautiful and significant title, for each day leaves its word in God's book, when all else is forgotten.

Surely the whole Bible is of God—the book of Kings is as much as the book of Chronicles. All that is recorded is important. But this particular book is a summing up at the end, in broader perspective—an analysis and an explanation of the whole. Everything is ascribed to the hand of God. God is seen in everything. This is BASIC. As soon as we leave God out of anything, we are wasting our time; we are beating the air. This is why all the mighty works of men are meaningless and futile, as Solomon makes so clear.

Chronicles constantly refers to the activity of God in rewarding good and punishing evil. It shows the power of the love and the Word of God. How God draws near His people in it; how He constantly oversees it and enforces it. It is simply and plainly, but reverently written—solemn and spiritual in tone, always conscious of God in the background. We shall note as we read through these books, how the chronicler points out simply and directly, the spiritual lessons of events. Its spirit is both admonition and encouragement.

It was apparently written for a new beginning in Israel, after the return from the Babylonian captivity. It covers the entire period from Adam to the proclamation of Cyrus and the return from Babylon. It appears to be one book with Ezra, for it ends with exactly the same three verses that the book of Ezra starts with. Its latest genealogy, that of David straight through Zerubbabel, goes to about 425 BC—the latest events in the Old Testament Scriptures. Therefore, Chronicles covers a period of about 3500 years, about half of the 7000 of the whole purposed.

It has always been ascribed by tradition to Ezra, and it has all appearances of that fact—the time, the circumstances, the terms used for Ezra and 221 the position that he held in Israel at this time. He is the logical author. The modern view, of course, rejects this, as it rejects all else. It tries to make it much later, endeavoring to discredit the Scriptures and bring them down to man's low, weak level.

The Chronicles are unlike any other book in the Bible, for they do not undertake to cover any new period not already covered. Rather, it is a summary of the whole. It brings out more clearly than before the Messianic

promise made to David. It largely covers the same period as Samuel and Kings, but from more specifically, divinely and religiously centered viewpoints. It is a history with a special purpose. It leaves out very much that is not directly connected with the central movement of the divine purpose, and it greatly expands the religious sequence—the temple services and the Levitical arrangement and the religious reforms of the good kings. It hardly mentions at all the northern 10-tribe kingdom, except where it is absolutely necessary to give the picture that it is dealing with. In all, it emphasizes the fact that anything that strays away from God loses all meaning and importance, and becomes near animal and worthless.

What is the Chronicle's primary purpose? Why did God consider it necessary to give a parallel account of ground already covered? It seems to have both a nearer and a broader purpose. That is, an immediate purpose for its time and a long range purpose for all times. As to the immediate purpose, it appears to have been given especially for the needs of those who returned from the Babylonian captivity. Both for the material and practical reestablishment of the framework and organization of the nation, and also to unify and to inspire them spiritually and religiously—to teach them their highly privileged position before God with its great responsibility—to give them a strong link with the past and an understanding of the present, and an interest in the future—to give them stability and a national purpose based upon the covenant to David and the temple service—to re-establish the Levitical pattern—to emphasize the religious aspect of their life and their history—to resettle them according to their old estates—to magnify God before them and give Him His right place as the center of the nation—and to teach the vital importance of the true worship of God according to the pattern set down by God, as nothing else is acceptable, no matter how well meaning.

When we think of this people brought back after 70 years of captivity, their whole previous national life destroyed and this long wait, we can see how desirable and necessary was this book to review the past for them and set them on the right path. Obeying God, seeking Him, praying continually to Him, recognizing His activity on behalf of His people, and His judgment for good or evil—these constitute the theme of Chronicles.

It appears to have been, as mentioned, the last written book of the Old 222 Testament, together with Ezra and Nehemiah. Final—intended to complete the whole of the dispensation before Christ. It has four principle characteristics. First, its emphasis on worship and the temple arrangement—religious reformation and the religious state of the nation through its history. Second, its genealogical background, lists and names—to give stability and reality and unity with the past. This is very important and where so many are drifting astray today. We must maintain our awareness of and harmony and continuity with the sound foundations of the past. We don't keep beginning again. Third, its history built around the House of David—the covenant to

David—Israel's link to the glories of their future. And fourth, its ascribing every event, great or small, directly to God's hand and providence. This is another vital lesson. The more we can see and recognize and realize and remember that everything in our lives, great and small, is directly of God, and that He misses nothing and neglects nothing, the easier it will be to accept, and the better we shall react to it.

The two books of Chronicles are divided into four general parts, two in each. In I Chronicles, the first part, chapters 1-9—genealogies down to the return from captivity. Chapters 10-29-20 chapters, 1/3 of the whole two books on the reign of David. A book covering 3500 years and 1/3 of it is on the reign of David—very significant, with special emphasis on the preparation for the temple and the Levitical arrangements.

The second book is similarly divided between the first nine chapters, which are on the reign of Solomon, and chapters 10-36 on the Kingdom of Judah—Rehoboam to Zedekiah, the division down to the captivity. So, 20 chapters in the first book and 9 chapters in the second book are for simply David and Solomon. As an illustration of this emphasis, the four reforming kings: Asa, Joash, Hezekiah, and Josiah are given 13 chapters of the second half of II Chronicles, and there is much detail of their reform. The other eleven kings together are given 13 chapters. Again, the emphasis upon religion and religious reform.

In contrast to the book of Kings, there is much more about the temple service than there is about war and profane history.

In the genealogies, only the line of David and of the high priests are carried beyond the exile—the royal and priestly lines are the only ones that mattered. Many literal events are strangely interspersed through the genealogies, mainly to emphasize the hand of God in rewarding good and evil. For example, in chapter 4, in a long and apparently dry list of bare names, suddenly in ch.4: 9-10, we read, "*And Jabez was more honorable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow. And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve* 223

me! And God granted him that which he requested." This is worthy of much meditation. This is how God sees history. In a seemingly dreary list of father to son in the plodding forward of the divine purpose, in spite of human indifference, suddenly a name stands out brilliantly like a jewel in a dark cavern. Jabez "*was more honorable*"; he "*called on God,*" and God gave him his request. His mother had named him Sorrowful. That was her view of things. It is the common view, and it is true of all natural things at the last. But Jabez finds the only true and eternal joy. He changes his name from Sorrowful to Joyful. And God stops in the midst of a long genealogy to point out him for the instruction of generations to come. Let us remember Jabez, and how, in faith, he broke out of the animal pattern of his fellow men and made contact with God.

In chapter one, we begin the history of the world. The history of God's purpose—Adam to Abraham, and Abraham's miscellaneous descendants—Ishmael, Esau, etc. From Adam to Noah-1600 years—in the first 3 verses. Three verses for 1600 years; 20 chapters for David. And 10 names in this list, the barest thing, the crown of darkness of much interesting human history and accomplishment, a time as long as from Constantine down to the present, but meaningless to God, except for a few righteous men aligned with His purpose. Mankind got worse and worse, more and more violent and evil, and doubtless more scientific and learned. And finally God blotted them all out. We are told the last days will be the same. And we see it coming to pass on earth with ever increasing momentum. "*As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be at the coming of the Son of Man.*"

Verses 5-23—the nations from Noah's sons. This is from Genesis chapter 10—the basic framework of the division of the nations of the earth. Young's Concordance calls Gen.10 "the table of nations." It says that it is one of the most remarkable and unique documents in all literature. It points out that 19 names of people and places in it, mentioned no where else in all known writings, are identified by archeological research. This is the foundation—the beginning point of all TRUE history and geography. This is dependable. This is the Word of God, as contrasted with all the vain and pompous theorizing of the wise of the world. It is very interesting and significant that many of these names of the original distribution of mankind occur again in the prophetic picture of the end of man's national history upon the earth. The great crisis of Armageddon described in Ezekiel 38—Gomer, Magog, Tubal, Meshech, Togarmah, and also Tarshish, Sheba and Dedan—names from the very beginning—the beginning of the divisions of the nations. Surely, this tells us to apply these names given by Ezekiel on a broad world-wide pattern, as at the beginning of the nations. The Scriptures many times tell us that all nations 224 will participate in the final conflict.

Of the three divisions of mankind from the sons of Noah, the descendants of Japheth populated Europe and West Asia—all to the north. The descendants of Ham populated Africa to the south, and also at the beginning, Palestine, Babylonia and Assyria. The descendants of Ham were clearly the early leaders of the world. Nimrod, the Hamite, founded the great cities of Babylon and Nineveh, and the other great original cities of Mesopotamia. Archeological research has shown these are the oldest known cities and that the original inhabitants were not, as later, Semetic. At first, in accord with Gen 10, it was the Hamites in Mesopotamian and in Egypt that dominated the world. Then, the Semites—Babylon, Assyria, Persia, Israel—became dominant. And finally, the Japheth nations—Greece, Rome, and the European nations—spread over all the earth. This is the root of all history, according to Genesis and Chronicles.

Verses 24-28, of chapter 1, extend the line to Abraham.

Verses 29-37—the descendants of Abraham other than Isaac.

Verses 38-42—the previous inhabitants of Edom—the Horites. Seir, who gave his name to Mt. Seir, is not called a Horite here, but in the parallel record in Gen 36, he is. These were not Semites. They were part of the original Hamite rulers of this area. Now, why is this information given about the original inhabitants of Edom? Especially, these details concerning a people who were absorbed and died out, disappeared from history. First, all real history must have a practical framework and background. The Bible is real history. It is by genealogies that it is interrelated and interconnected. Until the BC-AD system of dating all history from one central event was invented in the 6th century AD, and gradually adopted by all nations, unifying history, there was no way of tying history together and relating its parts except by lists of people and events—genealogies. Much if not all of the meaning of Bible events would be lost, if we did not know what order they came in and how they were related to each other in time. We may not see the value of some particular items of this record—like this list of the original inhabitants of Seir, or Edom. But we can see that the record as a whole is vitally necessary. And we often come to see the value of a part that previously seemed valueless.

This list here is a perfect example. If we look at any Bible dictionary, older than about 30 or 40 years, we shall read that *Horites* means "cave dwellers", that they were just a local group and that nothing is known concerning them. I would like to read from two Bible dictionaries: One dated 1885 and one 1960. The particular people are not very important, but the principle is very and vitally important. It is typical of how God's Word has been repeatedly confirmed in the face of skepticism. And how what seems meaningless takes on a meaning. It gives one very good reason for this obscure reference and our careful study of them.

The Imperial Bible Dictionary of 1885 says of the Horites: "Horite –from *hor*, an opening of any sort; a cave. A Horite was an inhabiter of caves, instead of houses. It appears to have been especially appropriated to the earlier occupants of Mt. Seir, as being peculiarly distinguished for that mode of life (Gen 14:6). The original inhabitants, or Horites, distinctively so called, were afterwards dispossessed by the Edomites (Deut 2:12). Nothing is known as to the origin of that primitive race..."

Unger's Bible Dictionary of 1960, on the Horites: "This unknown people used to be thought of as a very local and restricted group of cave-dwellers, named 'Horites,' being thought of as derived from Heb. *hor*, cave. The Horites remained completely obscure, not appearing in extra-Biblical literature (anything outside the Bible). Within the past forty years, however, archaeology has brought to light evidences of the Hunians (the Biblical Horites), who now occupy a prominent place on the stage of ancient history. This ethnic group is now known not only to have existed but to have played a far-reaching role in ancient Near Eastern cultural history. Thousands of clay tablets were uncovered at Nuzu. Remarkable parallels from Nuzu tablets concerning marriage, adoption and social customs, such as those that prevailed in the patriarchal period of Genesis, occur. Scholars are still busy translating. As this material becomes accessible, the puzzle of the Biblical Horites is becoming solved." For two thousand years, only the Bible knew about them.

We should immediately be reminded of the similar story of the Hittites. How, for long, the learned scoffed at the Bible references to them. For instance, ridiculing the statement in II Kings 7:6 that the Syrians could be frightened away by such an insignificant people as the Hittites, which they thought was just a local tribe. Again, the Imperial Bible Dictionary of 1885 on the Hittites: "The Hittites – one of the tribes that possessed the land of Canaan at the time of the conquest. Their chief settlement seemed to have been in the south in the neighborhood of Hebron. The tribe, as a whole, long retained a distinctive place and possessions though probably of limited compass." That was all they knew about the Hittites.

1960, the Unger's Bible Dictionary about the Hittites: "A people mentioned frequently in the Old Testament, 47 times under their own name and 14 times as descendants of Heth. These various Biblical allusions used to be treated with great skepticism, but the Hittites offer an example of archaeology's resurrection of an ancient people. The center of Hittite power was in Asia Minor. There, an empire that once vied with Egypt and Assyria, but had been long forgotten, has been discovered by modern archaeologists. 226 Many scholars consider the Hittites as the third most influential of

ancient peoples of the Middle East, rivaling the Egyptians and the Mesopotamians."

So, when we come in our readings to these obscure and apparently meaningless and useless genealogies, let us not neglect nor despise them. They may hold very interesting treasures, waiting for the proper time to be revealed to the confusion of the wise of the world.

Verse 43 to the end of chapter 1—the kings that reigned in Edom before there were kings in Israel. Again we wonder, why is this recorded? What is the significance in a book covering such a long period? Not only is it in Genesis, but the writer of Chronicles inserts it in full in his very brief summary of world history leading up to the story of Israel. *Edom* is the same word as *Adam*, red, earthy, fleshly. Edom had much to do with Israel from the beginning to the end—still has. The Herods, their last murderous kings, were Edomites. Edom stands for the flesh. Edom is to be desolate when the world rejoices in the Kingdom of God. The Edomites were famous for worldly wisdom. Solomom, as an extreme measure of his wisdom, was said to be wiser even than the wise men of Edom. The Edomites had kings, national pride, and unity long before Israel did. They were warriors, conquerors; they scorned agriculture and peaceful pursuits. They were the glamorous elder brother—the man of the field—the idol, to which the fleshly in Israel looked. Their cities were impregnable, deep in the mountains hewn in solid rock, up on the precipices in the narrow cliffs. At the time the Chronicles were written, that is at the time of the return from Babylon, the Edomites had lost much of their power. But they were now a greater danger in a more subtle way. With the emptiness of the land of Judah during the captivity, they had moved west into the southern part of Judah and had mixed with the remnant there. Hebron had now become their capitol. Edom had rejoiced greatly at Israel's destruction and captivity by Babylon, persecuting the remnant and feeding on the spoils. The prophets refer to this. When Israel returned in struggling weakness to rebuild, Edom was still an enemy. They were finally subdued by the Maccabees and incorporated into Israel. But the fact that with Roman support, an Edomite line of Herod became rulers of Israel's last days, shows the extent of their evil influence and power.

So, we can trace interesting and meaningful and significant events throughout these genealogies.

Chapters 2-8 –The children of Israel, largely Judah and Levi, because of the kingdom and the priesthood. It is narrowing down now to the main purpose. Chapters 2-3, and most of chapter 4, deal with Judah's genealogy and history. And much of it, 37 verses in chapter 2 alone, regarding one man—Caleb, apparently tracing his line from three different wives. This extreme permanence of Caleb is very interesting and must be significant. He was apparently not in the direct line. At the time, Nahshon, in the direct 227

line of Judah to David, was a prince of Judah. But the direct line is not elaborated, just carried singly to David in a few verses, while many times as much space is given to the line of Caleb. This does not appear to be the Caleb of Joshua's time, but there does seem to be a connection. The latter Caleb appears almost certainly to have been a Gentile, adopted into the tribe of Judah. He is spoken of as a Kenezite, and God gives special command to Joshua that he be given a portion in Judah. This would not have been necessary, if he had been of Judah by birth, or if the family had been. In all, Caleb's line is 47 verses, while Asher, Naphtali, Issachar, Mannaseh, and Reuben only 37 all together. And Dan and Zebulun are not mentioned at all.

This clearly illustrates the character of the book of Chronicles. It is concerned with things from God's point of view. Mighty nations are dismissed without a word—not even mentioned, or mentioned very briefly. Single faithful individuals have many chapters, IF they are part of the Purpose. There is a big lesson in all of this. IF we have the wisdom to make ourselves part of God's purpose in the earth, we will endure in the record. We shall be of value and meaning and importance. We shall be noticed and preserved. We shall be part of eternal reality. IF NOT, we shall perish with the perishing world, soon to be swept away, leaving no record behind.

The final verse of chapter 2, verse 55 concerns the Kenezites or Recabites. Here is another interesting puzzle. The Kenites and Kenezites are mentioned as inhabiting the land at the time of Abraham, and they seem to be closely related. Caleb was spoken of as a Kenezite; Jethro, a Kenite. The Recabites, a faithful family in Israel, who kept separate from the corruption's of the nations and to whom God promised continuance, are here spoken of as Kenites and seem to be traced through Caleb the Kenezite. The Kenites, not of the stock of Israel, appear to have been nomads, living in tents, not sowing the land, with no fixed abode. They appear at different times in different parts of the land. But, they were faithful to the God of Israel—more faithful than Israel itself. All this emphasizes the adoptive and Gentile aspect; the fact that God's Kingdom was never exclusively national, but faithful Gentiles were always welcome to attach themselves. At the time of the regathering according to families and inheritance, the special position of the Kenites would need to be recorded, that they should find their place. And though Gentiles, they were the seed of Abraham by faith and obedience. And their names we find written in the great divine book of "the words of the days."

Bro. G. V. Growcott

Forgiveness - Repentance - Release

"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as 228 God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Ephesians 4:32

Sometimes there can be a little bit of confusion concerning Christ's requirement to forgive one another. Because of the strict commandments placed on us concerning our behavior, and because sin can so easily overtake each of us, we could slowly get caught up in getting very picky with each other about each other's sins. We may take upon ourselves some of God's work in extending forgiveness to each other for sins against God. Whether or not we have power to do so will take some research into what the Bible teaches concerning our forgiveness requirement.

We know brethren in Christ are required to forgive. It is a principle that we cannot shirk or make light of. When we pray to God, we say "forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." If God were to not forgive us our debts to Him then we would surely be doomed. But as we walk in the light each day, we make statements to God about our sins. We verbalize in our prayers to Him that we have sinned. 1 John Chapter 1 talks about this:

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us [our] sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1John 1:9

Because of our sinful nature and predisposition to sin each day, and because this sin would separate us from God, people needed a method by which to correct their position with God. This correction is accomplished by a release from those sins, and then freedom to walk away from them. It's a system that has been designed and granted to us by God. Following this means of a forgiveness is a commandment to then start walking in the correct direction towards God's Kingdom.

Forgiveness is a part of the essential method established by God to make us right with Him. There are many other aspects of His plan that we will not talk about today. But forgiveness, being a Key solution offered by God to us, is also a requirement that He has put on us to our fellowmen.

"But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses." Mark 11:26

Jesus also taught us to not judge one another.

"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

*"Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: *forgive (apoluow), and ye shall be *forgiven (apoluow):"* Luke 6:37

On the other hand, Jesus also makes a commandment. John 7:24 Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

In addition to the forgiveness requirement are questions concerning how to correct our fellowservants in Christ if they are behaving improperly or doing things that may offend us in some way.

So this morning we should think about forgiveness and judgment, repentance and release.

Forgiveness - Read Matthew 18:21-35

"Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took [him] by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

What kind of trespass are we allowed to forgive? If we are required to practice forgiveness so that we can be like our Father in heaven, we just know exactly what that means.

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving* one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:32)

* [5483 Strong's] - carizomai - to grant as a favor. - to show favor or kindness, to oblige or gratify a person, to be pleasing or agreeable, court favor, to offer as a free gift. If we are to be like God we must forgive. If we are to be kind to each other we must forgive. To understand forgiveness we must read the parable. In the parable a person owes someone a debt. To 230 truly end the debt is a two step process.

First the Legal Requirement or contract must be destroyed, torn up. Then the person must verbally be told they are allowed to leave, they are free and can leave. They are sent away.

This is expressed as the Greek word AFIAYMEE. afihmi. This word is used in various places in the Bible and other Greek writings to mean Remit from an accusation or acquit.

The other word is apoluw, this word means to set free. To allow them to leave. ACQUIT FROM THE DEBT - TELL THEM THEY ARE FREE TO GO AWAY.

Think of the parable - think of the requirement.

If you want God to forgive You, you must practice forgiveness, every day, every situation. In fact, when Peter asked Jesus how many times he must forgive 7 Times? Jesus said no, 70 times 7. It may have been a common practice to forgive 7 times only. Whether it was or not, Jesus explained that you must forgive and then keep forgiving.

Try to remember that in contrast to the few dollars worth of debts, pennies really of aggravation that people may cause toward us, it is nothing compared with the \$10,000,000 worth of debt that our sins against the Word of God have indebted us to him. If we think of Christ's death as a redemption from the debt of mankind's sin, then think of that incredibly large price.

Jesus was a perfect man. He was sinless. He suffered in so many ways. He gave up so much that each of us takes for granted. Each of us looks forward to our short term goals each day. Jesus looked forward to not only the Kingdom not coming for many centuries, but to all of the suffering he had to face in the short term. He also would know of the suffering his followers, many who were not even born yet, would have to suffer down through the ages. It was the hope set before him that got him through this. It was because of this hope that he endured the shame and bore the suffering of the cross. It was because of his suffering that we can have our sins forgiven.

If we decided to stop practicing forgiveness we would treat the accomplishment of God in Christ as nothing, as a light thing, as something that we don't truly believe in. But we do believe in it. We have proclaimed to all around us - We believe in what Jesus Taught - we believe in him, we believe in practicing forgiveness.

To forgive, we need to first define what it is a person may actually owe us. On the simplest of levels, let's say they owe us money. For example, maybe we sold them a book. We said here is the book, it is slightly used as I already used it for a few months, so it will cost you \$15.00. We tell them they can pay us in 3 weeks and they give us a short note saying they will do so - an IOU.

We know they really need it now and won't have the money for a couple weeks. That was 6 months ago. We asked once about it and have gotten nowhere. It has caused a rift between us.

They stay in touch in a funny kind of way because of this debt. They finally come to us and tell us they are having a bad problem paying us back. We decide to forgive them this debt. The two steps required are one, to give them back the IOU that was written out and to sign it as debt canceled or something to that effect - stating plainly that the debt has ceased to exist and is no longer on record in any way. Secondly, we are to tell them that all is fine between us. They are free to come and go with complete freedom as far as the two of us are concerned from now on. This freedom of movement is important. If it is not plainly stated, then we might be holding a grudge against them.

A law in Mosaic account that can help understand the canceling of the debt and the release and freedom is the law regarding the year of release every seven years. The way this law worked was that every seven years, there was a year called a year of release. All debts were canceled on the first day of that year. The law also required that you must still loan money or other things even if it were only a day or two before the year of release. If you said, I will hold off on loaning right now because this loan will be invalidated next week in the year of release, then you were sinning.

"At the end of [every] seven years thou shalt make a release. And this [is] the manner of the release: Every creditor that lendeth [ought] unto his neighbor shall release [it] ; he shall not exact [it] of his neighbor, or of his brother; because it is called the LORD'S release." Deuteronomy 15:1-2

This release was to occur regularly, every seven years. It did not mean that any given debt could last seven years, it meant rather that there were years proclaimed to be years of release and all debts ended on the first day of those years.

"If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, [in that] which he wanteth. Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the LORD against thee, and it be sin unto thee. Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto. For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open

thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land."
Deuteronomy 15:7-11

So, what do we learn from this. We learn that debts between people **MUST CEASE TO EXIST**. This requirement was placed upon Israel. Maybe Peter was thinking of the 7 times because of the 7 times referred to in the Year of Release every 7 years. We don't know. But we do know that Jesus referred to the 70 times 7 times that we must forgive - and release the debts of our brethren. Debts between brethren cannot continue. We must release them. The rules haven't changed, it's just that the requirement to release them has increased.

IF THE DEBT IS GREATER and NOT TO US. If even legitimate debts to us must be released, then how could there be other cases where we might allow problems that separate brethren to continue. Say we have some problem with a brother. We feel he is sinning. Jesus says that we should drop what we are doing and work at trying to recover that sinner. The means by which we do so are many. It involves a lot of patience, kindness, forbearance and love on our part. Soft answers that turn away wrath may be required, attending to some of their worldly needs and extending hospitality may be required. But, when the day comes that they confess with their mouth their sins and ask for acceptance and restore all, then we must grant it.

But if they refuse, then we must keep trying and trying with several others. If all this fails, maybe the whole ecclesia would be needed to help regain the brother and a return to basic preaching to them would be needed.

But, the trap we must not fall into when their debt concerns a sin against God, is the trap of feeling that we are forgiving them of a debt between them and God. In that case all that we can offer them is acceptance and fellowship and other types of help. But we cannot forgive their sins. Only God or his representative in Christ could do that.

We can forgive debts to us. We can free someone of their obligations to us. We can correct them and help them to overcome sins. After they repent we can offer them warm acceptance and fellowship to help them avoid the same sins again and again.

Our obligation to forgive in order to fulfill the law of Christ is really stated in one simple phrase. *"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thou lovest thyself"* This verse means to think of in your free and hopeful imagination, how would you like to be treated. When you get the answer, treat the other person that way.

You would want to be forgiven of deals you couldn't keep. You would want to be accepted after you have repented of various sins. Because that is what you want so much, then that is what you must do to others. Christ did it for you remember. He died a miserable and painful agonizing death on 233

the tree for our sins. That is what we are remembering this morning. The bread and the wine are simple and powerful reminders that we believe in this death, we believe in the Gospel of the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. We believe it, we were baptized into Christ and now we walk together in the same light as Christ because we have been set free from the bondage of sin.

Acquittal and granting freedom. A final thought about freeing people and releasing their debts is given in Isaiah which we can close with this morning.

"Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? [is it] to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes [under him]? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD? [Is] not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? [Is it] not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy reward." Isaiah 58:5-8

Relieving one another burdens, canceling debts, freeing and loosing. These are the activities of healthy brethren and sisters in Christ. Let's walk in the light together and practice forgiveness and acceptance each day of our lives.

If we can always remember the forgiveness we want from God, and the forgiveness Christ obtained for us when he died for us, we can become those who love to forgive, and love to keep forgiving wrongs done to us so we can be more like our Father.

Bro. Michael Morrell

DANIEL - 'THE MOST HIGH RULETH IN THE KINGDOM OF MEN

"The fact that there is so little wisdom among mankind, and so much order in the world, goes to prove that God rules among the kingdoms of men, has a certain purpose to accomplish, and men know not what that purpose is. Those who have the government of the world in their hands seek to establish their own policy. If they were to establish their policy uncontrolled by God, God's purposes would be subverted and perverted. But He over-rules them; for we see things tending to the development of a 234 certain declared purpose, and as mankind are the agents employed

in the development of the events that are to lead to that crisis, and are profoundly ignorant of what that crisis is, it follows that God is making use of them, and shaping their rebellious policy to the accomplishment of what He has determined." (The Book Unsealed page 7)

In the previous article we considered Daniel chapter 3. We noticed at that time, not only the literal narrative of events which took place in the days in which Daniel and his three companions lived, but those same events illustrating in symbol the purpose of God with the nations. Hence, the four men seen in the furnace of fire, became the symbol of the fire of Yahweh's wrath, as it will be manifested in the four faced cherubim of glory, executing the judgments on the world of darkness and wickedness.

The fourth chapter of Daniel can be studied in the same way. On the reading of the chapter we are able to observe profound lessons in the further experiences of Nebuchadnezzar. Lessons which mankind has yet to learn, and never will learn until God's judgments are made manifest. Lessons that will be of benefit to us - if we take heed to them.

The chapter also contains the deeper things of the Spirit, revealing the beauty of the prophetic word in the symbols portrayed in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar.

In this article, we will look at the literal events which took place, and which can be summed up in the words of Proverbs chapter 16 and verse 5:

"Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to Yahweh."

The word in the Hebrew is "*towebah*" and means "*something disgusting, an abhorrence*". Strong says it is the active participle of "*ta'ab*," a primary root meaning "*to loathe, detest*." It is a word particularly associated with idolatry, and evil practices. Consider the list of evil things enumerated in Leviticus chapter 18. The Canaanites practised these "disgusting" things as verse 27 informs us. Yahweh referred to them as "abominable customs" (verse 30), and the employment of the word in that context, gives us some idea of the kind of word Yahweh has chosen to indicate His feelings on pride. He hates it!

We might be tempted to think that pride would not be in the same category as the evil customs associated with idolatry. True, we have feelings of repugnance at the man or woman who saunters around with a high and flamboyant opinion of themselves. How could we possibly like that sort of person. That is detestable!

However, the more refined and polished pride is not so bad, and much more acceptable. Is it? The world actually inculcates pride in us all, and we often just accept it as the norm. "Be proud of your abilities;" " take pride 235

in your achievements"; "you ought to be very proud of what you have done, worked for..." etc etc.

However, Yahweh does not assess degrees of pride. To Him, there is quite simply no room for it. A few moments reflection will demonstrate the evil character of pride. The use of the word in relation to idolatry is right at the root of the matter. The worship of an idol, be it gold, wood, stone or the host of other "modern" idols which we can take pride in, deflects the adoration from the only One to whom it is truly due.

"I am Yahweh, that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images" (Isaiah 42:8)

When we engage in pride, no matter how trivial and small it may appear to us, we are manifesting a characteristic that Yahweh hates. I once heard the comment "I'm humble, and I'm proud of it"! It brought a smile to those who listened. However, it indicates to us just how deceptive this sin of pride can be. Even when we "appear" to be humble, we may be priding ourselves in what we are doing in some way or another. True humility as Bro. Growcott once said, has to be striven for. It is not a natural attribute. Another writer said "even an inferiority complex has its roots in pride".

Bro. Growcott wrote the following:

"The pride of the flesh is so ingrained that it colours our speech without any conscious effort." Be ye Transformed, vol. 1, page 42

"Be humble, and then God will not need to humble you. Having to be humbled is very unpleasant (though wholesome). With wisdom, it can largely be avoided, by getting there first voluntarily. Of course, if you are not God's, He may not bother to humble you, He may just let you run out your animal course in pride. But if you are His, humbling must come, one way or the other." Search Me O God, page 73

The above quotes bring our minds back to Nebuchadnezzar. He was in the position of "having to be humbled." The first three verses of Daniel chapter 4 reveal that the process had already taken place. The words come from a chastened man. Success had "gone to his head." He had become proud and arrogant. Twice he had received warnings designed to impress him that there was One greater than he. Now personal suffering would bring it home.

Once again Nebuchadnezzar has an unusual dream which troubles him (verse 5), and once again he calls for the "wise men" of Babylon. Once again they fail to interpret the dream when it is explained to them (verse 7). "Howbeit <at the last> came before me Daniel." (verse 8) (Emphasised Bible) Nebuchadnezzar refers to him as "Master of the Magicians." This appellation 236 was no doubt as a result of his previous experiences.

Nebuchadnezzar then explains to Daniel that he had seen a tree the "height " reaching unto heaven, and the sight "to the ends of the earth." (see verses 10-11) The leaves of the tree were fair, and the fruit "abundant" (Emphasised Bible). The "beasts of the field" found shade beneath it, and "among its branches dwelt the birds of the heaven." (Emphasised Bible)

However, the king sees a "watcher" who makes proclamation to "Hew down the tree," but to leave the stump of the roots in the earth bound with "iron and brass".

The tree is obviously Babylon, which was at the zenith of *its* power. The wars it had previously engaged in were now over, its conquests complete. It derived great revenues from its vassal kingdoms, making Babylon prosperous. Being located in the Fertile Crescent, its wealth was increased from the abundant crops harvested. The extent of its branches indicated the scope and power of Nebuchadnezzar's rule. It was the "universal kingdom" of the day. Under its shadows the conquered nations dwelt.

However, this magnificent tree was not to continue, and Babylon was to be overthrown - or "cut down." The symbols contained in verse 15 are highly instructive and interesting. In our next article we will consider these (God Willing).

The dream however, had a dual application. It also concerned Nebuchadnezzar himself. Verse 16 reads,

"Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times (a Hebrew "time" is a year of 360 days) pass over him. "

And when Daniel reiterates the dream, he adds:

"It is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth." (verse 22)

The interpretation is subsequently given to the king:

"O king, this is the decree of the Most High, which is come upon my lord the king: That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." (Verses 24-25)

And so it came to pass – but not without a sober warning being provided by Daniel:

"O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity. " (Verse 27)

However, Nebuchadnezzar forgets the admonition. At the end of 12 months as he was walking in the palace of Babylon, feeling very pleased with his realm, he declares:

"Is this not great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty." (Verse 30)

Nebuchadnezzar was not exaggerating! Babylon was approximately 200 square miles, and was surrounded by walls 85 feet wide, and 335 feet high. It had the famous hanging gardens, comprising an artificial mountain, raised upon arches, and planted with all sorts of trees. It truly was a majestic place, but what man can boast before the One who hath *"stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth"* (Isaiah 51:13). It would have been wiser for him to have raised his head upwards and voiced the sentiments of the Psalmist who said after observing the wonderful canopy of heaven *"What is man, that thou art mindful of him....0 Yahweh our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! "* (Psalm 8:4,9)

Nebuchadnezzar had forgotten the words Daniel had spoken to him at the time he had his dream of the Image, viz., *"the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory."* (Daniel 2:37). How soon man forgets. How typical are the words of Nebuchadnezzar. Bro. Thomas commenting upon man wrote in *Elpis Israel*:

"Man...is the being that claims the independent sovereignty of the globe. He has founded dominions, principalities, and powers; he has built great cities, and vaunted himself in the works of his hands. He repudiates all lordship over him, and claims the inalienable and inherent right of self government, and of establishing whatever civil and ecclesiastical institutions are best suited to his sensuality and caprice." (page 1-2)

Man's correct position is also described by him in the same section:

"His crimes rather than his virtues, have illustrated and distinguished him with an unhappy pre-eminence above all other created things. His heart is evil; and, left to its uncontrolled impulses, he becomes licentious, merciless, and more cruel than the fiercest beast of prey."

Interestingly, the spade of the archaeologist has verified the Scriptural account. A writer has drawn attention to an inscription that has been found among the ruins of Babylon. It reads as follows:

"I finished the great twofold wall of Babylon. I made strong the city with bricks burnt hard as stone, and piled high as huge masses of mountains. I made inside Babylon on the eastern bank of the river such fortifications as no king before me had ever made. I excavated the ditch; with bricks and mortar I bound its bed; I built above the strong rampart; I adorned its gates; the portals 238 and pillars I plated with bronze. Against presumptuous enemies, the foes

of Babylon, I made use of great waters like that of the seas. Thus I made strong the defences of Babylon. May it last forever. Babylon, the city which is the delight of my eyes, which I have made glorious..."

Nebuchadnezzar was certainly proud of his achievements. However, *"while the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee."* (Verse 31). The God of Israel, who had allowed the king to obtain such power, would now withdraw it. "*<Immediately> /the word/ was fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar.*" (Emphasised Bible) He was driven from men *"and did eat grass as oxen"* (verse 33), a condition medically described as "lycanthropy." Thus the judgements fell upon him, as Daniel said they would, and cuneiform inscriptions actually record a period of at least 4 years when there was no activity on the throne of Babylon.

At the end of this period, Nebuchadnezzar lifted his eyes up unto heaven, as he would have been wise to do before. He has personally been made to recognise the power and majesty of Yahweh.

"Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgement: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase." (Verse 37)

Nebuchadnezzar had learned that Yahweh was all wise (Daniel 2). He had also learned that Yahweh was *all-powerful* (Daniel 3). He now learned the He was *supreme*.

"By the sign of the Tree, and the wonder, of which he was the subject in his own person, he learned that the rulers in the kingdom of Men, could not do as they pleased; that those who attained to high places in it, were such as He sets up as the most fitting instruments to work out his own purposes." (Exposition of Daniel page 9)

What a comfort to *"know that the most High ruleth in the Kingdom of men.*

Bro. Phillip Hughes

A LAMB

A lamb in the Apocalypse does not represent a lamb, but a man whose name comprehends the attributes of innocence and sacrifice for sin, "a lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the Spirit's of God sent forth into all the earth," (Apoc.5 : 6) represents that same Man as once dead, but alive again; and henceforth the depository of the unmeasured Spirit of God, by which (in the time of the vision) he is almighty and

seeing

over

all.

23

What Does That Mean?

*"The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner."
(Psalms 118:22)*

In Ephesians 2, Christ is called "the chief corner stone" but in Psalms 118 he is called "the head stone of the corner." Are these the same stone? If not, what is the difference?

The chief corner stone and the head of the corner are two very different stones. They play two very different but equally important roles in the construction of a building. Both of these stones are essential in holding the building together. Some stones may drop out of the middle of the building, and yet the building will stand; but if the corner fails, then the whole structure gives way. *"And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead"* (Job 1:19). The corner stone preserves the house because it is the strongest for bearing the weight and supporting its strength.

Christ is the corner stone. Once the master builder sets the chief corner stone then under workers can proceed with the rest of the building. The corner stone sets the pattern. All the other stones must be laid level and even with that; not further out or in, higher or lower, but all fitly framed together, based on the chief corner stone.

Whereas the corner stone is the *first* stone of the building, the head of the corner is the *last* stone to be placed. It is like the keystone of an arch. It is the stone that is used to tie the building together. It is the final piece that unites the building as one structure and gives it strength. The stone that the builders passed over as not having any place in the building turned out to be the very stone needed to tie the building together, *"The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvellous in our eyes"* (Psalms 118:22-23).

Christ is called the "root and branch" the "alpha and omega" the "first and last" the "author and finisher." When using the metaphor of a building, he is "the chief corner stone" (first) and "the head of the corner" (last).

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:19-22)

Throughout our lives we grow and build on that structure. Are we building according to the pattern of the foundation stone? Are we careful to only lay upon it things that strengthen it, and are suitable to it? Paul gives this warning, *"Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon"* (I Corinthians 3:10).