

# 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

DETROIT, Mich. — Memorial, 10am; S.S., 11:30am; Meetings held at 20116 McKishnie, Clinton Twp, MI 48035, Bro. Tim Stinchcomb, 46093 Rex Ct, Chesterfield Twp, MI 48051, 810-598-3996

Dear Brethren and Sisters,

Loving Greetings in the hope of Israel,

This year we have been blessed with visitors: Bro. Johnny and Sis. Mary Phillips, from Canton; Sis. Annetta Jones, from Richard; and Bro. Paul and Sis. Jo Neely, from Lampasas. We appreciate them coming. It is very encouraging to be with those of like precious faith.

Our whole ecclesia was able to attend the Northeast Gathering in Tennessee in the lovely setting of the Montgomery Bell State Park and benefit from the wonderful talks and association there with other brothers and sisters. The studies regarding the Tabernacle were very interesting, accompanied by a scale model and pictures. We thank the Holladay Ecclesia for such a great Gathering.

With the world in such an upheaval at the present time, we know that we are witnesses to those last perilous times before Christ returns. We pray that we will hold fast to our faith until he comes.

With Love to all our brothers and sister,  
Bro. Tim Stinchcomb

## FRATERNAL GATHERINGS & ACTIVITIES

(To be held God Willing)

**HENGOED FRATERNAL GATHERING ..... March 22 - 25, 2002**

Bro. Philip Hughes, 25 Hoel Y Gelli, FForchneol Parc, Godreaman, Aberdare, Mid 244 Glam., UK CF44 6LN; phone (011) 441-685-870254

**HYE FRATERNAL GATHERING ..... July 22 - 28, 2002**

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

## Identification And Participation Part I

The horrific events of Tuesday September 11<sup>th</sup> AD 2001 caused the world to suspend it's self centered, Godless activities to mourn, lament and fear, what for many was an incomprehensible evil. A generation for which the memories of war times cruel inhumanity is a fading irrelevance, the enormity of this atrocity and its suddenness was not in their experience. It 290 was beyond understanding and those who performed it an anathema.

For the household of faith, the consequences of the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> may be seen to have both immediate and long term effects. Yahweh has already in one of the most remarkable elections in American history providentially brought to power a President and administration suited to current and unfolding events. Likewise in Britain, Russia and Israel leaders have been providentially elected to fill key positions in the unfolding drama. The evil of September 11<sup>th</sup> may providentially be used to abruptly align against the nations usual political agenda, circumstances to Yahweh's predetermined plan. A Divine plan which no nation, including so called super powers will have envisaged, a scenario not contemplated, political allegiances not imagined and a result that will eventually stop every mouth.

The immediate effects of September 11<sup>th</sup> will be the continued isolation of Israel from her "friends." An isolation that will eventually, via as yet unforeseen, sudden and horrendous events witness Israel abandoned (as the British government did in 1948) to her fate. Her "friends," at "the time of the end," will be ensconced in the ancient territory of Sheba and Dedan as a threatening, though because of political self interests, an all too passive onlooker of that series of terrifying events which will make Jerusalem the crucible of the ages. What cataclysmic events will be needed to alter the natural tenor of world politics to bring the nations to this point are not fully revealed. The full force of Israel's retaliation at the time of the end will unleash an ancient bitter hatred which will not be understood by the fearful world which witness it. Before the prophetic climax world "peace and safety," will increasingly be understood by all governments to rest with the resolution of the age old question of Jerusalem.

Dramatic events are often needed to cause equally dramatic reversal of policies and opinions, to draw as it were by hooks in the jaw of implacable enemies to fulfill the Divine purpose. A purpose the nations are not inclined to follow because of the obvious consequences and though they may strive to withstand the Elohim's Divine commission (Daniel 10:13-14) Yahweh's purpose will be achieved within the parameters He has set His Immortal Agents to work.

So it is, we may well be witnessing a further dramatic stage of that long and arduous process of what will constitute the "peace and safety cry," (a term which had application to events prior to AD 70 and the time of the end). A process which no doubt will not be reached until bloody revenge has risen to its intolerable zenith which threatens to go beyond the confines of the Jewish and Palestinian conflict. A transient and tenuous "peace," between the Jews and Palestinians will be hammered out on the anvil of political expediency. This result will be influenced by foreign powers with their own self interests in mind, but will not resolve adequately the question of Jerusalem, which shall be reserved as the catalyst to bring 291

all nations to her to fight and with that Yahweh's sudden destruction shall strike the Image power and break it to pieces.

*"The world wants peace, that it may find respite from the judgements of God for it's iniquity; and that it may enrich itself by commerce, and enjoy itself in all the good things of life...It is the cry of the world, which echoes in tones of thunder in the ears of the true believers. It is a cry, in the providence of God, which is a great 'sign of the times;' announcing that 'the Lord standeth at the door and knocks,' [Rev. 3:20] and is about quickly and unexpectedly to appear. It is the world's cry, as the cry of a woman in travail, which has been extorted by sudden and tormenting pains. It blows a trumpet in the wise and understanding ear, sounding the approach of 'the day of the Lord as a thief in the night,' for 'so it cometh; and when they shall say, Peace and Safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." [I Thess. 5:1-3] [Elpis Israel].*

The rising crescendo of the "safety cry," will become the all absorbing motive to forge a lasting "peace," in the Middle East, thus guaranteeing as the nations suppose world security. The unprecedented coalition of world powers in their quest for "peace and safety," will attempt to obliterate terrorism but more significantly hasten the integration of Russian and European security forces, further preparing the way to that great battle of God Almighty. Indeed the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> may with the progression of years be seen as causing some of the greatest political impetus towards Russian and European economic, military and religious integration since the end of the cold war and the collapse of communism. This process will in time negate the purpose of NATO and marginalise a humbled, distracted and self absorbed United States so far as its European influence is concerned. World terrorism, having been linked to Israel's conflict with the Palestinians, may temporarily abate with the decreased tension and the distancing of Israel's national "friends," from the Jewish State. To the horror of an isolated, friendless Israel when the maelstrom of the ages finally overtakes her, she will find in her midst a Palestinian enemy which in the day of her grief will prove as every bit as treacherous and murderous as the Edomites during the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70.

One of a myriad of journalists commenting on the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> wrote, "Evil may be hard to express and to comprehend, but you know it when you see it." The tragedy of this age is that people do not know it when they see it. They do not see "evil," as the divine punishment of sin [Isa. 45:7]. "Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it?" [Amos 3:6]. Man does not see himself, nor his work associates or his neighbors or his country as a hideous, unrecognizable deformity from that which God created as very good before sin entered the world. The danger 292 for the household is that we do not see the deplorable state of the

ecclesia nor comprehend our personal failings urgently enough to do something about it. Our disposition, what we do and don't do, may belie the fact that prior to the advent of the "Son of Man," upon an unsuspecting world, "judgement must begin at the house of God." [I Peter 4:17].

The world does not see evil [i.e. adversity, affliction, calamity, displeasure, famine, misery, sorrow and vexation] as the Lord's doings.

*"War, famine, pestilence, flood, earthquake, disease and death are the terrible evils which God inflicts upon mankind for their transgressions. Nations cannot go to war when they please, anymore than they can shake the earth at their will and pleasure, neither can they preserve peace, when He proclaims war. Evil is the artillery with which He combats the enemies of His law and of His saints, consequently there will be neither peace nor blessedness for the nations until sin is put down, His people avenged and the truth and righteousness be established in the earth."* [Elpis Israel]

The great danger for the household is that in this Laodicean Age, this mode of thinking, these spiritual sentiments are no longer clearly understood, nor fervently believed, nor articulated and consequently the ecclesia may no longer constitute a witnessing community.

Whatever form the outcome of the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> will eventually take we may be sure that these things are Divinely intended as a harbinger of judgement for the household of faith. The household of faith around the world were struck by the sheer magnitude of the scene conveyed in newspapers and every form of modern media. Shocking scenes and unspeakable stories made the heart reel and fill the eyes with tears. Yet our immediate reaction of sympathy for the families who lost mothers and fathers, our desire to enter into the feelings and sufferings of others was tempered in the bitterness of our fragile human experience by the words of "koheleth," and through him the Eternal Spirit.

"The words of the wise are as goads, yea as driven nails, their well ordered sayings, given from one Shepherd...For every work will God bring into judgement with every hidden thing whether good or evil."

Judgement is the constant, sobering reality of Ecclesiastes. Koheleth [one who assembles] concludes the whole matter on this great truth. In so doing he draws the ecclesias' mind to the "One Shepherd," and the eternal Christ Spirit which moved all the prophets to write things they themselves agonized to look into and perceive the time of which the Spirit spoke. In the Apocalypse the "One Shepherd," orders and wonderfully gathers Moses and all the prophets. All the Inspired voices of the ages and yet one voice - His voice, the word of God into a cry of triumph, like that cry from the cross in the eeriness of that unnatural darkness, "It is finished." The triumphant, apocalyptic cry as that from the "One Shepherd," on the cross, is the declaration of God's righteousness in the judgement of the 293

power of sin. To the household of faith it is a revelation of goads, driven nails and judgement. Goads are not gentle instruments. They are a device used to urge stubborn creatures forward. The nail revelation [Isa. 22: 33] is the constant refrain of the Apocalypse in ever keeping before our eyes the Lamb of God and the "sure place," of eternal fellowship He has secured for the bride "who hath made herself ready."

"Judgement," is the apocalyptic goad which ought at this time to urge the ecclesia forward to renewal and fervent effort that individually we may constitute the nails of the sanctuary of Living Deity never to be removed, in Jerusalem our everlasting quiet habitation, Zion the city of our solemnities. [Isa. 33:20]

To participate eternally in this glorious vision we must now identify ourselves with this revelation of apocalyptic judgement.

*"Lo! I come as a thief!"*

Can we truly identify ourselves with this One Who comes as a thief and the purpose for which He comes? That purpose in the pouring out of the 7<sup>th</sup> vial is that for which the "One Shepherd," urged Himself relentlessly, unerringly, perfectly on, culminating in that cry on the cross, the words of which pierced the darkness of the ages, its refrain not yet extinguished, is suddenly taken up by the Divine messenger.

*"And there came forth a loud voice out of the sanctuary from the throne, saying It is done! [It is accomplished!]" And there came to be lightnings and voices and thunders; and a great earthquake, such as had never taken place since men came to be on the earth, such a mighty earthquake so great; And the great city became divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell; and Babylon the Great was brought into remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the wrath of His anger ..."*

The horrendous number of casualties from the New York Trade Center disaster was made up of peoples from over 70 different nationalities. It was a microcosm of all cities around the world. Can we identify ourselves with the work of the Divine messenger of the 7<sup>th</sup> vial whose judgements will be expended on the cities of a guilty world? To answer this question we must go beyond a purely academic inquiry of who the noun "I," refers in the sudden pronouncement "Lo! I come as a thief!" We must now with fervent desire mentally and morally empathize with this "I," of the apocalyptic drama. In so doing, we are not intended to be spectators only, but by the mind of faith become participants in the declaration of the righteousness of God, in the judgement of the sin power, with all the deep seated emotion that will entail.

This "I," of the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter is the "He," Who comes with clouds of that 294 first monumental chapter of the Apocalypse. This critical 1<sup>st</sup> chapter

establishes the spiritual methodology of how the rest of this revelation is to be correctly interpreted. The "I," of chapter 16:15 refers to the same personage as the "He," of chapter 1:7, Who we are informed "had been pierced." He then directly refers to Himself as the "Alpha and Omega," "the God Who is and Who was and Who is coming, the Almighty," Therefore the "He Who is coming," is "The Almighty." This does not refer to Christ personal but to Deity in manifestation - to Christ and His glorified bride as the embodiment of Eternal power. "*The Almighty,*" - "*One like unto the Son of Man,*" [1:13] which is depicted in this opening chapter of the Apocalypse gloriously and victoriously arrayed prior to the beginning of the Millennium. The "I," of 16:15 is one and the same as that mighty messenger of the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter which descends out of heaven having the rainbow upon his head triumphantly depicted with "his right foot upon the sea and his left upon the earth." This mighty messenger is seen 1<sup>st</sup> as victorious over Gog at Armageddon and then over Rome and all the area surrounding the Mediterranean including all the Middle East. Then, afterwards in relation to his left foot he stands on the territory of "the beast of the Earth," or Catholic Europe - thus will He tread down in the midst of His foes and "put all enemies under His feet." The 16<sup>th</sup> chapter and 15<sup>th</sup> verse depicts the coming of the multitudinous Christ upon a fearful, unsuspecting world, just prior to the beginning of that process of judgement which is summarized under the 7<sup>th</sup> vial. The 10<sup>th</sup> chapter depicts this manifestation of the Sons of the Deity triumphant over all the power of satan after the judgements of the 7<sup>th</sup> vial have been expended. The vision of soft, healing, rejuvenating showers of millennial blessing, beginning to fall is presented to us in this 10<sup>th</sup> chapter. The light of Divine truth refracted in all its prismatic glory through the medium of an "innumerable multitude" of immortal messengers, cause the world to behold the wondrous manifestation of Yahweh's covenant of peace in the ruling heavenlies.

Moses, being typical of God's greater servant, the Lord Jesus Christ, in his blessing upon Israel, comforts the people before his departure with a vision of the thief like coming of the multitudinous Christ in terms of an accomplished fact, calling those things which be not as though they were.

"Yahweh from Sinai came near, Yea He dawned out of Seir upon them, [Israel] Yea He loved the tribes; all His Holy ones were in Thy hand: yea they were encamped at Thy feet; each bare away some of Thy words." [Deut. 33]

This remarkable prophecy is a part of the basis of the apocalyptic visions of Rev. 16:15 and Rev. 10. The immortal saints are the right hand from which proceeds the fiery law of Divine judgement, corresponding with the Rainbow Angel's little open scroll of thunder judgements. All Yahweh's Holy ones are depicted as being in His right hand and bare 295

away at the command of the rider of this glorious cherubic theophany, some of His words. Instructions of judgement which in the confines of Sinai were given to each to perform when as a thief they burst upon the nations of the world. They will go forth as embodiments of the righteousness of Yahweh because in the days of their probation they bore away in their hearts God's Holy words which transformed them into the image of Him Who loved them and gave Himself for them. The word to some extent had been made flesh in regard to their own lives and now they were inseparably connected as the chariots of Yahweh and the horseman thereof.

As we have noted in the hand of the mighty messenger of Rev. 10 is a "little scroll which had been opened." It contained the terrible "7 thunder," judgements which John saw brought utter catastrophe upon the kingdoms of men. This little opened scroll says Dr. Thomas, "is the most important fragment of the Apocalypse." "It is the finishing of the mystery of the Deity." John as our representative in this drama was commanded not only to take this little opened scroll but "to eat it up." He was not only to acknowledge the righteousness of God therein displayed but to allow its contents to permeate his very being. He was to identify with the mental and moral manifestation of Divine righteousness and in his digestion of it, let it become an integral part of his being, so much so, that in his participation of the "judgements written," [Psa. 149] he is inseparable, indistinguishable from the head of this mighty messenger - One "like unto the Son of Man." Emotionally the attitude, the disposition of both Yahweh and the Lord Jesus Christ was his experience.

John's practical experience in eating of this little opened scroll was a sweetness in his mouth but in the process of digestion he experienced bitterness. Each Sunday we gather around the table of the Lord to identify with the declaration of God's righteousness as symbolized in Divinely appointed memorials. These bring to remembrance the circumstances of our Lord's unimaginable intense and unrelenting life of selfless sacrificial perfection, in the body of sin, which was daily crucified. This process of crucifixion culminated in the torture of body and soul, by the cruelest and most shameful of deaths. The memorials bring to remembrance the supreme holiness of Yahweh, which makes the mind reel, at the extent to which our Heavenly Father deemed necessary for our Lord to endure, that Yahweh's righteousness could graphically be manifested, so that some impression might be made in the hearts of a few, who bother to meditate on the principles of salvation as the basis of a life transforming experience. For a few the memorials bring to remembrance their own pitiful attempts of gratitude, their all too often feeble efforts, inconsistencies and selfishness. Nevertheless in the humility of this confessed weakness, the 296 conviction that Christ can dwell in their hearts through faith, is

cradled in their "inner man," by the love of God. A remembrance which week by week energizes the belief, that against all the apparent impossibilities, God is able to do super-abundantly above all that they ask or think to help them grasp firmly the love of Christ, and at last be filled with all Divine fulness. [Eph. 3]

In our remembrance week by week we are called upon by our Lord not to just "take," the emblems but to "eat them up." In so doing we taste the sweetness in our mouths of these Divine truths, it moves us to articulate the righteousness of God, the unsearchableness of the breadth, length, depth and height of His love and compassion. Inevitably however, as we are called upon to digest these principles in the practical manifestation of them in our lives, we experience bitterness. This bitterness is a Divine response to the circumstances in which God's righteousness is revealed in the fight against and triumph over, the power of sin. This bitterness will be the experience of him, "who is like unto the Son of Man," when the opportunity of the household's weekly remembrance has finished and they themselves will be called to remembrance. For after the process of personal judgement the rejected will be exiled from the presence of the Lord and His Holy Elohim [Matt. 13:49-50] into the territory where the "sealed up," terror of the "7 thunder judgements," will consume Gog and Babylon the Great. It will be those, whom John represents, in the day of Yahweh's fierce anger, who will execute these judgements on the rejected and on the guilty world. There will be Divine bitterness in this work, for the prophet Ezekiel as a Divinely appointed watchman, warns the household that God takes no delight in the death of the wicked but would have all men come to repentance. For us to enter into the feelings of John, so necessary in our desire to both identify and participate in the Divine Theophany of, "He Who comes as a thief," we need to further investigate what Ezekiel had to undergo, when he prophesied to the household of faith at a terminal epoch, the experience of which forms the Divine basis of John's participation in the apocalyptic drama.

## **Blessed Is He that Watcheth and Keepeth His Garments**

Our title from Revelation 15:16 speaks to us of blessing and watching and clothing, and of nakedness and shame. Blessed means happy—permanently, spiritually happy. This is God's guaranteed recipe for happiness, and there is none other, as most of the world learns too late.

### **WATCHING**

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There are four words for "watching" in the New Testament, and they are interesting. The principle, most common one is *gregoreuo* (gray-gor-

yoo'-o). The name Gregory means *watcher*. This is the word here in this verse. Its literal derivation is *to be awake*, and its meaning is *vigilance*.

The second word for "watching" is *tereo* (tay-reh'-o). That is the word in this verse translated "keep," as it usually is throughout the New Testament. But sometimes it is translated "watch." This word means *to keep the eye fixed upon something*, as to guard something valuable or to follow a guide carefully.

The third word is *agrupneo* (ag-roop-nee'-o), and literally it means *to chase away sleep*, from *agreo*, to chase, and *hupnos*, sleep, from which we get the word hypnotism. It implies forcing the mind and the senses to be alert, despite strong physical desire for rest and relaxation. This is a very instructive word. It is the one Jesus used when he said, in Luke 21, "*Watch, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy.*" If we don't, we won't. And Paul of his tremendous labors, "*in watchings often.*" (IICor. 11)

The fourth is *nepho* (nay'-fo), which literally means *to abstain from wine*, and therefore, to be sober, to be clear-minded. "*Watch thou in all things, and endure affliction*" (II Tim 4). "*Let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith*" (I Thess 5). The "wine" to be abstained from are the things of this life—anything that takes our mind from eternal reality, that gives a temporary false sense of well-being and pleasure, that affects our judgment and discernment and stability.

The reality is that we must all soon stand before the judgment seat of Christ, that this life is very brief, and that everything to do with it is very unimportant. While eternity is very long, and everything to do with it is very important.

The watching required is not so much the external watching for the Lord's return and for the signs of it, rather it is the watching of one's self and one's own duties and responsibilities, so as to be ready and acceptable, whenever the Lord returns. A watching, too, for the welfare of the ecclesia and of the Body, and for individual members' needs, both natural and spiritual. Christ will ask each one of us at his return, "What have you done for me and my little ones?"

All that We do, all day and every day, must be consciously done in the light of his return, and with a view to its being a joyful occasion, bringing approval and blessing and eternal love and communion. This requires a constant watching—a constant self-reminding and redirection of the mind and actions.

By nature, we tend to drift with the immediate present—that which is pressing in on us—with comfort and desire and all the passing little animal interests that make up ordinary life. There must be a strong underlying 298 love for God that will motivate memory and desire. Remembering is

easy for love. If **love** is strong enough, it takes absolutely no effort to remember. It is impossible to forget.

*Where* the effort is required is in developing and sustaining this love at a strength that will override all other loves and desires and interests. This is a spiritual thing, and can never come naturally without effort, because by nature we are fleshly. And our natural desires are all related to present, tangible, fleshly things. This is the mind of the flesh—the natural ordinary mind that we all have and are.

The mind of the spirit is something introduced from without—something put into our minds by study and meditation upon the Word of **God**. It is an educating of the mind to something higher, and more satisfying and more substantial, than the brief things that all end in the grave. It is the truest kind of education. In fact, it is the only real education at all—from ignorance and death to knowledge and life. All natural education is merely an embroidering of the dying flesh, for the sake of the flesh.

There will be no mind of the spirit to bring Christ's acceptance, if there is not a consistent and large-scale application to the Word. This applies to brethren and sisters alike, and equally. God requires that we fill our minds with His Word, so that the mind is transformed from natural rubbish to divine riches. Twenty minutes a day doing the readings is useless of itself, without a strong effort at concentration, and a determined endeavor to subsequently think about and meditate upon what was read, and to put into practice what has been learned. Doing the readings should be our most alert and intense daily activity—our basic **watching**.

The commands of God apply to every moment of life. They are a total new way of life—a way of directing our thoughts and conduct at all times and in all circumstances. We should do nothing without a sound reason that has a relation to the purpose of God. We should never just drift thoughtlessly, following natural desires. We should always be spiritually alert—watching—moving forcefully and purposefully up the tide toward our glorious goal. Life is very short.

This applies with equal force to all of the natural and necessary activities of life. They must be made integral parts of a consistent God-directed, God-centered whole—a complete life of purpose and meaning. No part of our life can be left out of this transforming process. Everything we enjoy (and we should enjoy everything) should be within the conscious framework of constant thankfulness to God, and must be limited to such things wherein we can have confident assurance of His blessing and approval.

All time not required for the necessities of life must be devoted to the things of God—to spiritual growth and activity, not simply as duty 299

or obligation, not as a chore or a burden, but in the eager thankfulness of love and desire. There are such people.

This is what we must learn to want. It is a growing up process, like learning anything else. It takes effort. Very few in the world ever grow up at all. They are just children, wanting to play and to be amused, and to have toys—all sorts of different kinds of toys.

We must force ourselves to put away as dangerous impediments all things not related to life's main purpose—all of the flesh's childish playthings. All the activities of life must be consciously directed to this one great purpose—union and unity with God. This is the meaning of watching—being sober, forcibly keeping awake to the eternal reality, keeping the whole mind and all activities directed to the right things.

There are many warnings in scripture about **watching** and the urgent need for it. All present things pull in the opposite direction, which is pleasant but deadly. Christ speaks of them as the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches. That is, both our needs and our possessions pull us away—take our time and attention. "Riches" here means anything, possessed or desired, beyond what is necessary and useful for our life and service in the truth—the many toys that man hoards and plays with.

Christ warns in Matt. 24 about watching and of being found, at whatever moment he may come (or death may terminate our period and activities, which is the same thing for us), of being found doing the Lord's work and serving the Lord's people.

He speaks of us as "purchased," "servants," and "stewards" in His household. Everything we have is His. We have no right ever to be doing anything but His work. And this warning is immediately followed, with a connecting "then," by the parable of the Ten Virgins in Matt.25. The whole central point in this parable is the oil in the lamps. The oil is the Word of God, absorbed and constantly replenished—not only an inner absorption but also an outer shining force in good deeds and a wholly God-dominated life. *"Ye are the light of the world."*—A very high calling. *"Let your light so shine that men may see your good works and glory your father in heaven."*

"Oil" in the scriptures is light and warmth. Oil's light is knowledge, and its warmth is love. Certainly it is not knowledge alone in that glorious verse in II Corinthians 4, *"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."*

Paul said in Ephesians 6, immediately following his exhortation concerning the whole armour of God, *"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching—watching thereunto with all 300 perseverance and supplication for all saints."* It will be noted that

there are four "ails" in this brief watching command—always, **all** prayer, **all** perseverance, **all** saints. A very intense verse, after Paul's usual style.

To him, these things were terribly urgent and important. He speaks of warning night and day with tears, of writing with many tears, and of weeping as he wrote. Paul took the things of God very seriously, and he sadly knew that so few gave the truth the urgency that was needed to gain them eternal life. And it was a tragedy.

"**Watching**," here, is again *agrupneo*—*chasing away sleep*. It is clear from this verse as elsewhere that Paul considered continuous persevering prayer for one another as essential to salvation. Even to the loss of sleep, as he himself is a worthy example, for of himself he says, "in *watchings* (*agrupneo* – self-forced sleeplessness) *often*" (II Cor. 11), because of the care of all the ecclesias—not just the ecclesias as organized units, but each member of them. "*Who is offended, and I burn not?*"

Prayer for others—we **do not do enough of it**. We never could do enough of it. We are too self-centered. But we can, and we must, gradually train and condition ourselves in this direction. Prayer is not necessarily the closing of the eyes and formally articulating specific words of address. We must train ourselves that prayer becomes a continuous frame of mind—a continuous, conscious seeking for help and guidance at all times and under all circumstances. God doesn't need words. He knows what we need far better than we do ourselves. It's best to leave that to Him. Prayer is a matter of looking constantly to Him, and keeping the line of communication continually open, of keeping the mind fixed upon God. That is living prayer.

The guidance is through the Word. Prayer is a mockery without continuous study of the guidance and instruction that has already been lovingly given. It is like trying to pass by giving the teacher an apple without doing the lessons. It's childish—folly. But on the other hand, study by itself is useless without the consciousness that everything we are and do depends entirely upon God's help and blessing. Our relationship to God and His Word must be intensely personal and alive, not just scholastic and doctrinal. It is so easy to contend for the truth just because we enjoy contention, without ever getting the spirit of it.

Paul says that prayer must be for others—for all saints. This is divine wisdom. No man "*liveth to himself*" because such living is not living at all. Prayer for self, at its very best and highest, has some element of selfishness, or at least of self-centeredness, even if it is sincere prayer for the ability to help others. The flesh enjoys having and manifesting ability. Prayer for others eliminates this flaw. We shall never enter the Kingdom alone. If we have not helped others to enter, we shall not enter at all. And woe be unto us, if we have done, or failed to do, anything that has caused others to stumble or not to enter.

Paul prayed for others and asked them to pray for him. This is the beautiful oneness and interdependence of the Body. This is how a man can lose his life and save it. He prays for others and works for others, and leaves it to God's providence that others will pray and work for him. If we do not, as a body, attain to this mutual self-suppression and dedication to the service and welfare of others, then we are not the Body of Christ at all. For this, above everything else, is its badge of identification, whatever knowledge we may have.

Jesus said, in the moment of his greatest agony, to those three men who were closest and dearest to him, *"Could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation."* He was not concerned for himself, but for them. Their love for him should have kept them awake and attentive in constant prayer for him. But it was not love for him that was lacking here. They had that in full measure. It was lack of realization of their own personal need for vigilance and prayer.

When Jesus said, a little before this, *"All ye shall be offended because of me this night."* Instead of the humble wisdom of believing and heeding his warning and doing something about it, Peter presumptuously and directly contradicted him. "You are wrong, I know better, I will never be offended." He had no need to watch and pray. And when Jesus repeated his warning in even stronger and more specific terms, *"Thou shalt thrice deny me."* Still Peter flatly contradicted him to his face. *"He spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I should not deny thee in any wise."* And it was not just Peter, but *"likewise said they all."* They thought they were being very noble and loving in these protestations. But they completely missed the point. They had no realization of their weakness and need. The warning was very, very clear. *"**Watch** and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."* For then, it may be too late.

Christ makes much of his servants being faithfully **watching** and alert at the moment of his return. This is not in the sense of by chance being caught out, as in musical chairs or something, but in the sense of day-in, day-out consistency and constancy. If we are not spiritually minded at all times, and ever abounding in the work of the Lord, then our service and spirituality is just a part-time hobby and a sham. Unless our life is a totality of **watching** and prayer, we are not **watching** and praying enough.

So many act as if they have their salvation all sewed up and guaranteed, and they can engage in all sorts of unnecessary enterprises and activities, and still easily make it. Can we possibly be so foolish in the face of scripture, when eternity is at stake? Are we so sure of our salvation? Doesn't just plain common sense wisdom demand that we give the race for life every possible ounce of effort and attention? So much to learn; so 302 much to do. This attitude is understandable with the shallow religious

there are four "ails" in this brief watching command—always, all prayer, **all** perseverance, **all** saints. A very intense verse, after Paul's usual style.

To him, these things were terribly urgent and important. He speaks of warning night and day with tears, of writing with many tears, and of weeping as he wrote. Paul took the things of God very seriously, and he sadly knew that so few gave the truth the urgency that was needed to gain them eternal life. And it was a tragedy.

**"Watching,"** here, is again *agrupneo*—*chasing away sleep*. It is clear from this verse as elsewhere that Paul considered continuous persevering prayer for one another as essential to salvation. Even to the loss of sleep, as he himself is a worthy example, for of himself he says, "in *watchings* (*agrupneo* – self-forced sleeplessness) *often*" (II Cor. 11), because of the care of all the ecclesias—not just the ecclesias as organized units, but each member of them. "*Who is offended, and I burn not?* "

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world, with their easy substitute magic carpet salvation, but brothers and sisters of Christ SHOULD KNOW BETTER.

*"The righteous shall scarcely be saved,"* says Peter. *"When ye have done all, say, We are unprofitable servants."* What shall we answer at the judgment seat, if we have not done all? If we have frittered away our time? Jesus said of the ecclesia at Sardis, **"Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain."** Here again is responsibility for others—for the Body as a whole. Are we each individually strengthening the things that remain, as our conscious purpose in life? Can we ever feel we have done this enough? And the things that remain are all nice and strong, so that we have time for other unnecessary things. Are we (and this must sadly be admitted of some) not only not strengthening the things that remain, but actually weakening them, criticizing and gossiping about those whom Christ has commanded us to pray for and to help in the spirit of sin-covering love? It may be replied, "I have tried that. They don't deserve it. They don't appreciate it. It does no good." We could slough off any divine command with that kind of unworthy excuse.

To speak ill of others in the Body (sadly true though it may be) is a worse sin than any weakness that we may be condemning in them, because it is an ugly shriveled sin of the spirit. Truly, there are proper times and occasions when some things must be constructively discussed with a loving prayerful view to helping in or dealing with the weaknesses of others. But we must first have consistently manifested by our actions toward them and by our entire course of life that our motive in what we say is purely love toward the erring. Anyone can brandish the sword of destruction in zeal for the Lord. This can be very satisfying to the flesh. Truly, it is sometimes sadly necessary, as a very last resort. But it must be done with extreme reluctance and anguish and humility. If we find that this is the first and natural reaction with us, let us greatly suspect it is the flesh and not the spirit.

If there is true love for all the brethren and sisters, weak and strong (and without it we are dead), then there can only be sorrow and pity for anything that mars the fullness and beauty of that love. Let us never speak evil of a brother or sister, especially to those outside, even if it is true. This is of the flesh.

Love seeks with all its power to cover a multitude of sins—not to obscure, or condone, or ignore them—but to bring about their wholesome covering in a Christ-like way. There must be a close and affectionate oneness and mutual protection among us, such as the world could never know. Or, we just do not have the truth, and we are not the children of God. There must be a mutual recognition of weakness and a mutual desire to strengthen and help, and not to expose and condemn. There must be no fleshly antagonism. All problems must be handled in the spirit 303

and according to the Law of Christ. There must be the quiet, peaceful, beautiful unity of mutual love and self-sacrifice. If we cannot rise up to this of our natural fleshly selves, if we do not have the wisdom to subdue the flesh, and discipline and train ourselves to this, then we do not have the mind of Christ, and we are none of his.

So frequently, we need the exhortation in scripture: take heed, **watch**, always be aware, alert, observant, thinking, meditating, contemplating about the important things—the spiritual things. Take heed for every danger and pitfall, from within ourselves and from without, not in fear and timidity, but in wisdom and enlightenment, always walking carefully according to the light. *"If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light. If a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him."* We have no light in ourselves.

Whenever we are not carefully **watching** and observing the divine light, and following it, we are stumbling, though it may seem we are sailing along very smoothly. For we are following the flesh, and there is no good in the flesh—no light. Every act, every word, every thought involves purpose and motive. That purpose and motive must be either carnal or spiritual. There is no neutral ground. We have no spiritual momentum of our own. It must come continuously from without, by continually following the light. The moment we forget, we revert to the flesh. Therefore, the exhortation, **"Watch and pray always."**

## THE GARMENTS

Beside underclothing, there were in New Testament times, usually three common articles of clothing. First the *chiton* (khee-tone'), usually translated in the Authorized Version as "coat," but really resembling what we would call a long tunic put on over the head, very much like an old-fashioned nightshirt. It came somewhere between the knees and the ankles.

Second, over that, was the *himation* (him-at-ee-on), or "cloak"—a somewhat heavier garment, more like what we would call a housecoat, open down the front and about the same length as the *chiton*. This term *himation* was also used for clothes in general, and it is usually the original where "garment" or "raiment" appears in the Authorized Version.

Third, the girdle, or sash, around the waist—a very important item because of the general looseness of the clothing. It was useful for carrying things, either rolled up in it or hung from it.

Another garment, the *stole* (stol-ay'), usually rendered "robe," was longer to the ground and more ornate. This was the garment of dignity, office, and authority, as a royal robe or a priestly vestment. It is the original where "robe" occurs in the Revelation, as being giving to the redeemed—not just clothing as such, but honor and position. This is the 304 word used in the parable of the prodigal son. *"Bring forth the best*

robe," (literally, the first robe, the chiefest, preeminent one) *"and put it on him."* The greatest dignity, the highest honor—such is the Father's love to those, who coming to themselves turn humbly to Him, in total unreserved repentance and submission, as the erring son did. And as their action is total, so is His. Naturally speaking, it is not to be wondered that the elder son was very annoyed.

Scripturally, clothing is used symbolically with five varieties of applications. First, covering of the natural and fleshly, which is nakedness and shame. This is the sense in the passage before us in Revelation 16.

Second, the ornament and adornment of pleasing qualities and characteristics—not outward adorning but *"the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit"* (I Peter 3). *"Get wisdom...an ornament of grace and a crown of glory"* (Proverbs 4).

Third, dignity and authority—the cases just mentioned, the prodigal son and the redeemed, and Joseph, and Daniel, and the High Priest. *"Awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem"* (Isaiah 52).

Fourth, armor and defense—the whole armour of God. *"He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation on his head"* (Isaiah 59).

And finally, any strong and overpowering motivation— *"the garments of vengeance for clothing and clad with zeal as a cloak "*

The first is the primary use—a covering of nakedness, of the flesh, of sin. Here, there are two aspects—our own duties and responsibilities, and the covering provided in Christ. We must perceive both, and the harmony between them. To depend wholly on the first is to make the mistake of the Jew—seeking righteousness through works of law and personal accomplishment. To depend wholly on the second is to make the mistake of the churches of the world—the delusion that Christ has done everything, and we, not only need not, but cannot do anything to contribute to our own salvation. We can, and we must do much with God's help.

The Protestants generally, and especially the Evangelicals among them, react violently to any suggestion of the necessity of works—of doing something ourselves for our salvation. It's a reaction of the perversions of the Catholic Church; but it is a wrong reaction. The Scriptures make it very clear that there must be both—total effort ourselves and total dependence on Christ.

We cannot earn salvation. Our very best and fullest efforts are utterly inadequate and powerless in this respect. It is wholly of God's grace, and love, and mercy, and gift, or none would attain life. BUT, our efforts will determine whether or not we receive and retain that grace and gift and mercy. There is so much solemn scripture in this direction that the 305

world's churches either ignore or pervert. John says, "*He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar*" (I John 2). There must be patient continuance in well doing—works, unto the end, before there can be eternal life (Romans 2 and Matt. 24).

Paul commands the Philippians, "*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God that worketh in you.*" The second part does not cancel the first, but intensifies it. If God is graciously doing His promised part within us, or willing to, we certainly must do that part commanded us. Both aspects are essential and inseparable. We are not saved by works, but the best works of obedience that we can render are necessary to being saved, because that is the specified condition upon which God makes His gracious gift. And it is a very reasonable condition.

Christ supplies the garment of righteousness to cover our natural, naked, sinful fleshliness, but only—only on the condition that we will repudiate and energetically fight that fleshliness. That's **works**.

It is we who must put the garment **on—works**. And keep it **on—works**. And keep it clean—works. And this is only done by the most intensive effort of careful obedience, constant prayer, and seeking of cleansing through forgiveness. Because of the weakness of the flesh, there is a continuous defilement, and there must, therefore, be a continuous cleansing that at any given moment the raiment may be in God's sight pure and spotless, or we cannot stand before Him.

In this life, we shall never be perfect, either in quality or in quantity of service and obedience. But perfection in both quality and quantity must be the continuous goal and the object of continuous effort. For we must be accounted perfect to be accepted. And we certainly shall not be accounted perfect in Christ, if we are not at least striving with all our might to be perfect. Perfection will not at the end be forced upon us, if we do not value it, and realize its urgent importance, and strive continually for it.

The king in the parable of the marriage supper came in to see the guests and found one without the required wedding garment (Matt. 22). He was cast forth unto outer darkness. The man had failed to put on the covering garment, or having put it on, he had failed to keep it on. The method of putting the garment on is clearly specified. "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.*" (Mark 16). "*As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ*" (Gal. 3). "Put on" here is literally *clothed with*, and is so translated elsewhere, as "*clothed with camel's hair*" (Mark 1).

Christ himself is the glorious garment we must put on. It is a very living, personal relationship, and must be very real to us. Putting on Christ is not the mere ritual of baptism, essential as that is, as God's only 306 appointed doorway to salvation. Putting on Christ is putting on his

character and his total God-centered love and submission and life-long service.

As to keeping the garment on, Jesus said in John 15, *"Abide in me...If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth...and burned."* *"If we walk in the light (that is, as long as we walk in the light), the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin"* (I John 1).

Walking in the light is walking according to the commandments—specific obedience—works. The spirit of Christ says in Isaiah 61, *"God hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness."* The righteousness and salvation of Christ was the work of God in him—The man he made strong for himself (Psalm 80). And Jesus said, *"I can of mine own self do nothing."* *"The Father who dwelleth in me, he doeth the works."* (It is God that worketh in you.) This was true. But there was the equally true other side

*"He continued all night in prayer to God."*

*"Not my will, but thine be done."*

*"For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross and despised the shame."*

*"He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to' save him from death and was heard in that he feared."*

*"Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience—obedience—by the things that he suffered."*

*"I do always those things that please him."*

Here, clearly, was no passive inert instrument in God's hands, but an intensely striving and agonizing man. As the Head was perfected, so must the Body be.

There was complete submission and loving, voluntary obedience, even unto death. He was indeed God-strengthened in the awful struggle. But still he could himself truly say, *"I have overcome the world."* So must it be with us.

He is our example, not our substitute. He said to the ecclesia at Laodicea (Rev. 3), *"Buy of me white raiment that thou mayest be clothed."* He must supply it. They could not themselves create it. We note that he was addressing an ecclesia. Presumably therefore, his hearers had once had the garment, but they had it no longer. They thought they still had it, but it had slipped, unnoticed, away from them. How common! How tragic! *"Thou sayest thou hast need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art naked."*

There are two aspects of the Christ-supplied garment—present and future. Clearly, in the foregoing passage, it refers to the present— 307

the present covering, by and in Christ that makes us children of God and acceptable to Him, presents us faultless before Him. The wedding garment that the unacceptable guest lacked was obviously the present aspect of the Christ-covering. In Rev. 3:4-5, both aspects appear: Verse 4, "*Thou hast a few names which have not defiled their garments*"—the present probation and dispensation. Verse 5, "*He that overcometh shall be clothed in white raiment*"—the future aspect—the garments of salvation—the complete change of raiment of the spirit body.

The two aspects appear again in Rev. 7, "*Whence came they?*" (v. 13) "*They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*" (v.14) That is the present overcoming, here, looked back upon. But their state as portrayed in verse 9 is the future. They "*stood before the throne...clothed with white robes and palms (that is, a victory) in their hands.*" "*They came out of great tribulation.*" (also v.14)

The verse under consideration in our title, Revelation 16:15, "*Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments,*" is obviously the present, probationary, Christ-covering that must be preserved spotless by continual prayerful washing. But in Rev. 4, the white raiment of the twenty-four elders, who are shown seated on thrones before the throne of God and crowned with golden crowns is necessarily the spirit nature. And so is the fine linen, white and clean, in which the host of heaven in Rev. 19 are garbed, who follow the king on white horses to subdue the world-character-perfecting first, and then nature-perfecting.

Symbolically, the girdle is a very important part of the raiment of Christ-covering righteousness. "*Gird up the loins of your mind.*" This is the tightening of the girdle and a pulling up of all the loose flowing ends of the garment into it for rapid travel or strenuous labor. This takes effort and determination. It does not come naturally and easily. The easy way is to please the flesh. We must be strongly impressed with the necessity of effort and strongly motivated to it by the love of God. "*We must through much tribulation enter the Kingdom.*" (Acts 14)

The tribulation is in crucifying the flesh, and always abounding in the work of the Lord, when the flesh wants to follow its own inclination. Paul said (I Cor. 9), "*I keep under my body, lest I should be a castaway.*" "Keep under" is a most feeble and inadequate translation. The Revised Version is a little better: "*I buffet my body.*" But this is still too weak. Rotherham comes closer: "*I beat my body under.*" The context and the language show that Paul is using the figure of boxing. "Fight" in verse 26 should be "box." It's *pukteo* (pook-teh'-o), from which we get the word pugnacious. The root is fist. Not boxing as it is today, but as it was in the stern Roman day. The word here for "keep under" is *hupopiazō* (hoop-opee-ad'-zo) and it literally means *to punch beneath the eye, to strike 308 violently in the face.* It is a boxing term for knocking out the

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opponent. Roman boxers in the arena did not use soft padded gloves for mere entertainment. Their hands were wrapped in leather thongs with metal knobs. A writer says, describing them, "One wonders how any human being, no matter how strong and powerful, could stand the blows from such weapons." They were accurately called limb breakers. Boxing, in the Roman arena, was a bloody conflict unto death. This is the figure Paul uses of the conflict of his own flesh, and for him it was literally true. As a direct result of his faithful, fearless walk and teaching, he was stoned and left for dead, scourged with whips, and beaten with rods repeatedly. He permanently bore the marks on his battered body, as we read in Galatians. These are harsh realities intended to make us think.

We are not likely to be called upon in these soft, easy, treacherous days to endure these things for the sake of the Truth or the brotherhood, as so many of the faithful have been in the past. The test for us is just the same—whom we will serve, to what extent of faithfulness and completeness we will render that service, and to what extent we will please the flesh?

The concept, for a divinely provided covering for nakedness and sin, goes right back to the beginning. Adam and Eve, conscious of their sin and shame, sought to cover their nakedness with little aprons of fig leaves. But God in His mercy made them long coats of sacrificial skins. The word for "coat" here *kuttoneth* (koot-to'-neth) indicates a long garment. The word for "apron" is usually translated girdle—that is, a waistband.

The Son of Man similitude in Rev. 1—the Multitudinous Christ is clothed with a garment down to the feet—completely clothed—completely covered with the Christ garment of righteousness and immortality, and securely girded with a golden girdle of faith perfected through trial.

The clothing of the king's daughter in Psalm 45—the Bride, the Lamb's wife—is *"wrought gold."* That is gold refined and purified and hammered and shaped for beauty and usefulness

The promise in Psalm 132, *"I will clothe her priests with salvation."* Here is the future eternal garment of immortality and glory.

*"Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame."* It is very possible to loose the garment once it has been acquired—the garment of salvation. The fleshly concept of "once saved, always saved" is the very opposite of the truth of God. *"He that endureth to the end shall be saved."* But keeping the garment is more than just retaining it. It is keeping it spotless and shining white, by constant, prayerful, repentant washing in the blood of the Lamb.

Jude speaks of hating the garment spotted with the flesh. And Paul, writing the Ephesians, about the love and care of Christ for the ecclesia, his Bride, says that he sanctifies and cleanses it with the washing of 309

water by the Word, that it might not have spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but should be holy and without blemish. The garment figure is not expressed here but it is clearly implied in the language. And here is the second medium of cleansing, beside the blood of the Lamb, and it only operates through our familiarity with the scriptures—the washing of water by the Word.

In the Song of Solomon, Christ says of the Bride in the same relation, *"Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee."* And again, from Jude, *"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory."* And Paul to the Colossians concerning Christ's work in us, *"To present you holy and unblameable and unreprouceable."* These are terms of perfection—not spot, faultless. We are dealing with very exalted things—with perfection and eternity. We are presuming to approach in intimate communion unto the Eternal and glorious Majesty of the universe, Who cannot for a moment look upon sin or folly. We must stand unblameable and perfect in His presence, or be destroyed by the effulgence of His glory.

We cannot ourselves attain to this perfection. It is through Christ, mercifully imputed and implanted, on account of our faith that works by love. But it is very holy ground. We must be deeply impressed by the infinite seriousness of our position. Carelessness or negligence can mean destruction.

God said, when he blotted out Aaron's two eldest sons by a bolt of divine fire, *"I will be sanctified in them that draw nigh unto me."* Only love—pure total all-consuming spiritual love—can walk these precincts without incurring annihilation. *"The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men...to the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness."*

We see from this, as elsewhere, that love one toward another is the only path to holiness and to safety in the awful presence of the Eternal Creator. How often, and how strongly, is this essential characteristic—this badge of discipleship—emphasized by Christ and the apostles

*"Love one another, as I have loved you."* (John 13:34)

*"Ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."* (v. 35)

*"This is my commandment, love one another."* (John 15:12)

*"I command you: Love one another."* (John 17)

*"With brotherly love...preferring one another."* (Romans 12)

*"Owe no man any thing, but to love one another."* (Romans 13)

*"By love serve one another."* (Galatians 5)

*"Forbearing one another in love."* (Ephesians 4)

*"Have the same love, be of one accord, of one mind."* (Philippians 2)

*"Be knit together in love."* (Colossians 2)

310 *"Ye are taught of God to love one another."* (I Thess. 4)

*"Let brotherly love continue."* (Hebrews 13)

*"Love one another with a pure heart fervently."* (I Peter 1)

*"Love the brotherhood."* (I Peter 2)

*"Love as brethren."* (I Peter 3)

*"He that loveth not his brother is not of God."* (I John 3:10)

*"He that loveth not his brother abideth in death."* (v. 14)

*"Beloved, let us love one another."* (I John 4)

*"If we love one another, God dwells in us."* (v. 12)

*"Love one another."* (II John 5)

And these are not all. Two things stand out very clearly: One, that this is the most vital aspect of discipleship. And two, it is a matter that is considered to call for a tremendous amount of divine emphasis and repetition. Obviously, it is not something that will develop naturally, or that will take care of itself. It must be reiterated over and over, so that the dull fleshly mind may at last, hopefully, be impressed.

The flesh tends to pettiness and antagonism and criticism and touchiness and pride. But God has called us to spiritual things. Regardless of what anyone else does or does not do, this is the personal responsibility of each one to each one, for which each one will have to answer. What others do will be no excuse for our failure. God has put us in the Body with the weak and the strong, and told us what to do. Our life's task and duty is crystal clear.

**And so, Paul marvelously reveals the divine mystery to the ecclesia at Ephesus, "God hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."**

*Bro. G. V. Growcott*

## DANIEL - THE WRITING ON THE WALL

*"Babylon was the greatest of cities — greater in relation to the world at large than London is at the present time — greater in her imperial consequence — greater in her architectural wonders — greater in topographical extent — greater perhaps in her population — a city of mighty walls, of military greatness, of princely pomp and commercial importance and prosperity. Where is all this greatness? Where is all the glory and the bustle and the prosperity? Go to the banks of the Euphrates today and receive the answer in the wilderness of rubbish mounds that stretch away in miles of silent desolation where great Babylon used to be."*(Further Seasons of Comfort page 173)

Our next study in the Book of Daniel is in chapter five. Daniel is now about 83 years of age. Nebuchadnezzar is dead, and Belshazzar the last king of mighty Babylon is on the throne. Belshazzar was an arrogant and blasphemous king, who rested in the strong walls of his great city. His name means 'Bel protect the King', and he no doubt believed the pagan gods of Babylon would render the city impregnable to all intruders. He had yet to learn, as Nebuchadnezzar before him, that Yahweh is Supreme, and He alone rules in the Kingdom of Men. The strongest defences are ineffective and powerless before Him. If He decides a city, or Empire is to fall, nothing can prevent it.

Actually, Belshazzar was a joint ruler of Babylon. The Bible record does not say he was, but the promise to Daniel in verse 16 of being "third ruler in the kingdom" contingent upon his interpretation of the writing on the wall indicates that such was the case. This circumstance provides some interesting thoughts on the veracity of the Bible, proving again the folly of the critics. The following extract from the March edition of 'The Christadelphian' for 1873 illustrates the point:

*"The Hebrew prophet gives the name of Belshazzar to the last of the native kings of Babylon, and says that he was slain at the time when the Persians took the city. But the Chaldee historian, Berosus, gives the name of Nabonnedus to the last native king, and says that he was absent from the city at the time of its capture, but was afterwards taken prisoner, and treated with much kindness by Cyrus. These conflicting accounts have given sceptics occasion to say that Daniel's account of Belshazzar is a pure invention. Since he contradicts Berosus, his account must be false: a Chaldee historian must, of course, be believed in preference to a Hebrew. This difficulty was so great, that Sir Isaac Newton was driven to resort to the hypothesis of two downfalls of Babylon. But in the year 1854, it was ascertained, from documents disinterred from the ruins of Ur of the Chaldees, that Nabonnedus, during the last years of his reign, associated with him on the throne his son Belshazzar, and allowed him the royal title. Thus all disagreement disappears. This recent discovery, moreover, furnishes a satisfactory explanation of an expression which occurs twice in the fifth chapter of the book of Daniel. The promise made to him, as a reward for reading the mysterious handwriting on the wall, was that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. But why the third? Why not the second? As he seems to have been under Nebuchadnezzar? Plainly, because, there being two kings, father and son, the second place in the kingdom was not vacant. But this expression was a puzzle which could not be explained until the key to it, buried for centuries in the sands of the Euphrates, was dug up. "*

But to return to the scene of the palace of Belshazzar, we find that a 312 "great feast" was taking place. Belshazzar had invited the lords of his

kingdom, and with his princes, wives and concubines, revelled in the pleasures of the flesh in an intoxicating stupor. How flesh loves to cast off restraint and give itself over to the baser instincts. Flesh does not change. Pleasure, enjoyment, entertainment, having a good time - it is the same the world over. They are the motivating principles of the world, which is enmity against God. It is the world in all its naked deformity. It is not the pleasure for which man was divinely created. In Genesis chapter 1 and verse 26 we are taught that man was created in the "image and likeness" of the Elohim. That is, our bodily shape is like the Elohim, and, more importantly, our mental capacity is like them. We are capable of reciprocating the character and mind of the Deity; an attribute far above the animal intellect which were created on the same day. However, as Bro Thomas observed "in proportion as generations of mankind lose their intellectual and moral likeness to the Elohim, and fall under the dominion of sensuality, so the sympathy between men and women evaporates into mere animalism".

So it was in the palace of Belshazzar, on the very eve of its destruction; and added to all this revelry and drunkenness, Belshazzar added the crime of blasphemy. He *"commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple, which was in Jerusalem....and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them"* (Daniel 5:2-3). The principles of faith (gold) and redemption (silver) find no place in the darkness of worldly entertainment and pleasure. Yahweh is not mocked, and Belshazzar, who should have known better, had reached the limit of his evil ways, and Babylon (as an Empire), the end of its career.

Suddenly, the noisy laughter and mirth, the impious conversations and boastings, were halted. There came forth fingers of a man's hand and wrote on the wall! The Emphasised Bible renders verse 5:

*"<Immediately> came forth the fingers of the hand of a man, and wrote over against the chandelier upon the plaster wall of the palace of the king – and II the king II saw the part of the hand which was writing"*.

What a change took place in the frivolous party which had been in "full swing." Belshazzar was suddenly seized with fear at this terrifying spectacle of a hand writing on the wall:

I I his bright looks I I changed in him

I I his thoughts I I terrified him

I I the joints of his loins I I were loosed (Compare Isaiah 45:1)

I I his knees I I smote one against another. (Emphasised Bible – verse 6)

Isaiah had prophesied of these events well over a hundred years previous to this time:

*"My heart panted, fearfulness affrighted me: the night of my pleasure hath he turned into fear unto me". (Isaiah 21:4)*

As is usual in times of great fear and trembling, men and women frantically seek for help, or something to assuage the terror flowing in their veins. They often become "religious" in times of calamity.

The king sought refuge in his "wise men"; but despite the offer of being clothed in "scarlet", having a "chain of gold about" the neck, and being "the third ruler in the kingdom"

*"they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof" (verse 8)*

It is interesting to trace through the book of Daniel, the phrases "make known" (or just the word "know"), "shew me", and "interpretation". Time and again we are taught the total inability of the world's "wise men" to understand the things of the Truth; while those who hold the Truth, are able to understand and discern the unfolding of God's plan and purpose.

*"none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand" (Daniel 12:10)*

*"Surely, the Adonai Yahweh will do nothing, but he revealeth his secrets unto his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7)*

In the incident at Babylon, the wise men where once again shown to be incompetent. However, to be fair, they were disadvantaged! At least, if we understand verses 24 and 25 to indicate that the hand was actually *covering* the writing. Verse 24 appears to indicate that it was when the hand was *removed* that the writing was revealed. This is supported when we consider how it might have looked if we were watching this mysterious event. In English, we are taught to write from left to right, and as we write, the words we have written are seen as we move across the page. In Hebrew, writing is from right to left. So when the (right) hand writes, it actually covers what has been written until the hand has moved sufficiently across the page, or a new line is started. So no one could see what the hand had written! Who could tell the king what all this meant?

There was *some* wisdom in the kingdom. "The queen" came to the "banquet house". This may have been Belshazzar's mother or grandmother. She informs the king that there was a man in his kingdom, in whom was the spirit of the holy gods (verse 11). Daniel had obviously been forgotten, but the queen points out to the humbled king, that the man Daniel had been able to interpret dreams, etc. Daniel is sent for without delay, and offered the same rewards that had been extended to the wise 314 men of Babylon. Daniel refuses the gifts and honours of a

blasphemous regime on the eve of its destruction, but he does agree to read the writing and make known the interpretation. He first of all however, reminds Belshazzar of how Nebuchadnezzar had been humbled (compare chapter 4). This fact had been ignored by the proud Belshazzar:

*"And thou his son (the word can also be used for grandson), O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven .... and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified" (verses 22-23).*

The interpretation Daniel gave was quite simple – Babylon was doomed. It was to be given to the Medes and Persians (verse 28). This joint military force was about to overthrow the pride of Babylon, and we hope, God Willing, to consider the events in more detail in the next article.

However, we would be losing a great deal of exhortation if we left this scene without considering the lessons for ourselves. There are a number of thoughts arising from the incidents of this chapter, which provide *comfort* and *warning*.

Let us take *comfort* first of all. If we are truly setting our hearts upon the future, striving to develop the mind of Christ, and waiting patiently for the Return of our Lord, then we may well find the circumstances of the times demoralising and depressing. We may find the time of waiting long, and seemingly never ending. The sudden fall of Babylon in a night (!) can encourage us. The present will give way to the glorious deliverance, which we are expecting. The words of Bro Roberts quoted at the start of this article were prefaced by the following remarks:

"These (present) circumstances are apt to impress us with the idea that they are established and that we shall never get away from them. They seem so real and lasting that though in theory we would admit they are only for a time and that a short time, we are apt to be burdened with the feeling that they will never come to an end, and that things will always be as they are; and these things being evil things, such a feeling concerning them is liable to have the opposite effect. A consideration of the things brought under our notice in the reading of the Scriptures, help to dispel this dreary illusion and to exhilarate with the enlightened perception that "the world is passing away and the fashion thereof".

Secondly, the chapter provides words of *warning*. Babylon was an immoral city with masculine women and feminine men. It was a materialistic city, characterised by a general seeking for prosperity and secular education. A fever of building projects gripped the city, and things seemed very permanent. The details are familiar! But the Empire only lasted for 70 years. A lifetime of pleasure, followed by eternal death. 315

We are the generation that "see the writing on the wall". We have seen more fulfilled prophecies than any other generation. Are we awake to the signs of the times? Or are we imbibing the intoxicating doctrines and pleasures of the world around us? Let us ask ourselves some questions in an endeavour to evaluate our spiritual health:

- Are we becoming accustomed to the signs of the times?
- Are we losing our zeal and love for the things of God?
- What do we talk about?
- What do we read?
- How do we spend our leisure time?
- Where is our treasure?
- How much time do we give to the Word of God?
- Will we be "weighed in the balances and found wanting"? (Daniel 5:27)

The Kingdoms of this world are about to fall before the Lord Jesus Christ, as Babylon did before Cyrus. Are we ready and prepared? We need to be alert and on our guard. Herodotus was an historian at the time that Babylon fell. He records some words from the address of Cyrus to his army just before the battle for Babylon and the supremacy of the world:

*"Now let us go up against them. Many of them are asleep; many of them are intoxicated: all of them are unfit for battle."*

*Bro. Phillip Hughes*

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

Beloved Brethren and Sisters in Christ Jesus, the events of September 11th shook many of the governments of the world - Especially Western governments. It can truly be said that the world *powers* shook in fear and anxiety that day and since, over the potential for catastrophic evil at the hands of terrorists. Those powers (military, political and financial) are still reeling in the aftermath of the attacks. The fear and anxiety can be clearly observed and measured by the actions of legislative bodies in many nations around the globe and particularly in US legislation over the past three months. The costs in money and lives is absolutely staggering! The United States is in an undeclared war against terrorism. Many nations have joined with the US in a coalition against terror. It is very interesting to see England standing staunchly in alliance with the US. The coalition is fragile at best, especially as regards some of the Islamic nations participating in it. Money set aside for the war by the US alone is \$40 billion! One hundred and ten billion dollars has been earmarked for the rebuilding of the World 316 Trade Center complex: and I am not sure if the clean-up costs are

contained in that figure. Also, I have seen no published figures of how much will be needed for the repairs to the Pentagon. That figure is doubtless secret and very high. The rebuilding and repairs will take years to accomplish, both for the Pentagon and the World Trade Center and surrounding buildings. The US government has approved a \$15 billion bailout package for the airlines industry to help the nation's struggling air carriers. Airport security is another costly upgrade coming down the pipeline. Costs to the American Postal Service are out of sight due to the Anthrax contamination. Unemployment is up considerably over the past three months - 700,000 job losses! Travel and related industries such as hotels, restaurants and tourism are being heavily hit. Just a day or so ago, the US passed a \$318 billion defense bill. It would be hard to put a dollar amount on the loss of lives and the changes caused in peoples lives as a result of 9/11.

Afghanistan has been under heavy aerial precision bombardment by the Americans since October 7th. War is being waged on the Taliban regime which the US faults for harboring Osama Bin Laden, the wealthy, Saudi terrorist mastermind and members of his Al Qaeda terrorist network. Al Qaeda is a worldwide web of highly trained terrorist operatives. Al Qaeda al sulbah - the "solid base", as they (the organization) define it, had training camps throughout Afghanistan. They also have extensive military caches in the cave systems in Afghanistan. One such cave complex is called Tora Bora, not far to the south of Jalalabad in southeastern Afghanistan. Terrorist cells of Al-Qaeda operate in many countries across five continents. They have been linked to horrible acts of terror.

Afghanistan is a country roughly the size of Texas and is very rugged. It is quite mountainous and mostly arid, especially in the long period of drought they have been experiencing for the past three years. Winters there are brutal in the upper altitudes of the mountainous regions. The country has known nothing but war for the past twenty-two years. Most of the people live in abject poverty with not much more than the clothes on their backs. The cities are in ruins. Houses, buildings and roads are bombed out mud hovels! The ravages of war have taken their toll. Millions are without adequate food. The cities are squalid and clean water is scarce. The Taliban imposed and maintained radically strict, fundamental Islamic law; forbidding music, television and radio. Women were forbidden to leave their homes without the accompaniment of a male relative. They had to wear a burka, a covering reaching from head to toe, with a grid netting at the eye level. Women found in violation of a law were beaten and spit upon. They were denied education and could not be employed outside the home. There were very few exceptions to this.

The Taliban and Al Qaeda are now on the run. The major cities of Mazar-I-Sharif, Herat, Kabul (Afghanistan's capital), Jalalabad

and Kandahar have all fallen to the Northern Alliance forces. The withering US bombing drove the Taliban and Al Qaeda forces to either surrender and give up their weapons or slip away with them and blend into the general population. They are fleeing from north to south and also east. Some have doubtless made it into Pakistan through mountain passes or wilderness areas, as the border with Pakistan is very porous. Many of the Al Qaeda and Taliban leaders and chief military men have gone into the mountainous regions of the south and east, such as the Tora Bora cave complex mentioned above. That area is under extremely heavy bombing by US forces and Northern Alliance forces are combing the caves in search of the enemy.

What is the reason for all of this terrorist activity? The radical elements of the Islamic world are at war (Jihad) with the US, which they see as the corrupt and vile supporter of Israel. They see the whole Western world as infidels. The acts of terrorism they commit are intended to drive the US, as well as Western influence and culture, out of the Middle East. They especially want to drive Israel out of the land. They feel that Palestine is for the Palestinians and the Middle East for the peoples of that region. They see Jerusalem as an Islamic city and holy place. How interesting and marvelous that tiny Israel (which has only been a state since 1948) has drawn all of this hatred, trouble and strife! They know not the plans Yahweh has for Israel! *The sea and the waves do roar! (See Lk. 21:25) The nations are angry! (See Rev. 11:18)*

*"...The Lord hath a controversy with the nations..." (Jer. 25:31)*  
*"Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it In that day, saith the LORD, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness." (Zech 12:2-4)*

Israel has been experiencing terrible trouble at the hands of the Palestinians who have been in an uprising against them since September of 2000. During that time they have suffered more than 1,600 terrorist attacks. More than fifty of those attacks have been suicide bombings! They are rapidly approaching the time of trouble, mentioned in the prophecy of Daniel, such as has never been since there has been a nation. (See Dan. 12:1) Trouble is on every hand. the nations are being prepared for the gathering into the valley of Jehoshaphat for judgment. *"Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all 318 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. Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O LORD. Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. (Joel 3:9-14)*

As that time of trouble draws ever nearer, we must be diligently watching that we be not caught off guard. This war in Afghanistan is right in the soft underbelly of the former Soviet Union. We know that Russia in the time of the end will thrust southward, taking many countries. When this begins to happen, England (Tarshish) will doubtless move to fulfill her roll. In Bro. Thomas' writings on the subject of Tarshish in *Elpis Israel*, he writes:

"But the lion-power of Britain has not yet attained the limit marked out for it by the finger of God. The conquest of Persia by the Autocrat will doubtless cause England to conquer Afghanistan, and to seize upon Dedan that she may command the entrance to the Persian Gulf, and so prevent him from obtaining access to India either by land or sea. Possessing Persia and Mesopotamia, the apprehension of his pushing still further southward, and perhaps establishing himself on the north-eastern coast of the Red Sea, and so taking them in the rear and gaining access to India by the straits of Bab-el-Mandeb, will also be a powerful motive for the merchants of Tarshish and its young lions to take possession of all the coast from the Gulf of Persia to the straits, and thence to Suez, by which the lion-power will not only become the Sheba and Dedan, but also the Edom, Moab and Ammon, of "the latter days"; for in speaking of the events of these days, the prophets refer not to races of men, but to *powers* on *territories* designated by the names of the people who anciently inhabited them. Hence, for instance, the lion-power planted hereafter in the ancient territory of Moab, becomes the Moab of the latter days; so that when the countries before-named are possessed and settled by the British, they will be men of Dedan in Muscat, men of Sheba and Aden and Mocha, and Moabites, Edomites and Ammonites in their several territories. Thus, the prophecies concerning those countries in their latter-day developments have regard to the power to which they then belong, and which, I have no doubt, will be the British; which, together with the Autocrat's, though henceforth always rival dominions, will

*May we obtain mercy and salvation in the day of Christ's coming.*

*Bro. David VanPelt*

## What Does That Mean?

*"If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep." (Exodus. 22:1)*

Can you explain the difference requirements in the penalty for theft? Ex. 22:1 says the thief was required to pay "five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep" but verse 5 of this same chapter says that "If the theft be certainly found in his hand alive, whether it be ox, or ass, or sheep; he shall **restore double**", while in Leviticus. 6:5 we are told the penalty was, *"he shall even restore it in the principal, and shall **add the fifth part more thereto, and give it unto him to whom it appertaineth.**"* If a sheep was stolen does the thief pay back 400%, 200% or 120%?

The answer to that question depends on the circumstances under which the thief came forward. Ex. 22 gives three different scenarios under which a thief was caught. If the thief was killed in the process of the robbery, then he forfeited his life for the theft; there is no penalty to either party (verse 2). If the thief took the sheep and killed or sold it, then he was required to restore four sheep for the sheep (verse 3). If the thief was caught with the sheep still alive, then he was required to pay double (verse 4).

The account in Leviticus is not dealing with a person who had committed a robbery and got caught, but one who had gotten away with it and was convicted by his own conscience. In this scenario the thief came forward, confessed and made restitution. He would receive the lightest penalty: simply restoring and adding the fifth part to it. He, of course, was also required to offer a trespass offering as well.

In ancient times, laws of retaliation could be very cruel and brutal. However, in Israel the law was actually merciful in that it prevented undue retaliation and limited punishment to that which was just. Jesus introduced a better law for us to follow — *better*, but far more *difficult* for us to follow. He requires that our response be in love and that of returning good for evil:

*"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." (Matt.5:44)*

