

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

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

Dear Brethren and Sisters,

Loving Greetings in our Master's Name and Service,

As we endeavour to occupy fully until our Master calls us to the Judgment, we are mindful of the trials and tribulations of others. It is difficult from a long distance to always appreciate the trials that different ones have to bear, but we are conscious that we all need these, as part of the chastening from the Lord, which all true children are required to endure.

Here, we are very happy to report that we had the company and sweet fellowship of Sister Kaye Yuen from Vancouver, Canada, at the end of September for a couple of days. It was indeed an uplifting time for our ecclesia in a time of turmoil. Visitors to this part are very scarce and so their company means much.

Our Sister Eileen Youell still suffers and needs all the help we can provide, which is very limited. She is in a nursing home some distance away. We would ask for her to be remembered in our prayers.

How we all long for that coming of our Lord when all the present distress will be lifted for those who faithfully endure. May we all, in the mercy of our Heavenly Father, be found in that great day approved and have a small portion in that glorious kingdom and be able to ascribe all glory and honour to Him who is worthy of all praise.

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

FRATERNAL GATHERINGS & ACTIVITIES

(To be held God Willing)

LAMPASAS FRATERNAL GATHERINGJune 7 - 8, 2003
Bro. Ricky Hurst, P.O. Box 1381; Goldthwaite, TX 76844, 915-938-5109

RICHARD FRATERNAL GATHERINGJune 27 - 30, 2003
Bro. Sid Jones, RR #1, Richard, Sask., SOM 2P0 Canada, 306-246-4468

HYE FRATERNAL GATHERING -July 21 - 27, 2003
Bro. Curtis Hurst, Rt.1 Box 40, Mullin, TX 76864, 915-985-3868

DETROIT FRATERNAL GATHERING... Oct 18 - 19, 2003
Bro. Fred Higham, 20116 McKishnie, Clinton Twp, MI 48035 586-790-2156

"Hear my prayer O Lord" (Psalm 39:12)

First I am going to start off with the main point I want to convey this morning...and it is this...Prayer is a **VERY, VERY** important subject!! Prayer is the closest approach to God we can make during our mortal probation. Find out all you can about prayer, study it, consider it in great detail and learn as much as possible about it, because our use of prayer (effective or ineffective) will probably be the difference on whether we get into the kingdom, or not. Why? Because that is how powerful prayer is. If you get nothing else out of this exhortation remember these 3 points:

- 1) **There is nothing too small to pray about.**
- 2) **We probably all should pray more often.**
- 3) **Do not underestimate the power of prayer!**

(A statement by Bro. Growcott sums up all three of these. He said, "Everything is worth praying about, if it is worth doing, or even worth thinking about. If you can't pray about it, that's a sure sign not to do it.")

"*Hear my prayer O Lord*" We have David recorded as saying those words ("Hear my prayer O Lord") at least 14 times throughout the Psalms as he approaches God in prayer. David says it in a couple of different forms — he says, "*attend unto my prayer*", "*give ear unto my prayer*," "*hear my prayer, O God*" but he appeals to God in this way many times. So that made me think...how do we get God to "hear our prayer?" Because if God isn't hearing us, what good are our prayers? Or if the words we direct to God are mindless or misguided, they may even be doing us harm.

The first point to make, with resounding firmness, is that having God to hear our prayers is a tremendous privilege...and we had better recognize this fact, and we had better consider the consequences of treating it otherwise. In Proverbs 15:29 we read, "*The Lord is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous.*" And not only does he hear their prayers, we're told in that same chapter that "*The prayer of the upright is his delight*" (Proverbs 15:8). But if we take prayer for granted, and use it like a last minute run to the grocery store for some item we accidentally forgot, then we're wasting our time, and mocking God. Lazy, impatient, thoughtless petitions to God are sinful.

There isn't really a long list of specific, rigid rules that we are to follow regarding prayer, and this allows for individual application as the need for prayer arises. However, we have been given some very important 311

guidelines – and we'll look at some of them this morning.

First it's interesting to note that we have an account of the disciples asking Jesus how they should pray ("Teach us to pray?") So it is a wise man/woman that seeks to know the appropriate way to pray. Throughout Scripture, we are given general instructions on the matter. We have directions both on how NOT to pray, and also some instructions on how TO pray. We'll look briefly at both. -

First we'll look at some of those things we're NOT to do regarding prayer:

We're told **"Use not vain repetitions as the heathen do, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking"** (Matt 6:7) – Prayer, to be acceptable to God and edifying to men or women, must not consist of a mechanical duplication of certain empty phrases, over and over, in the same prayer. This is foolishness, and lacks understanding. How do you feel when someone tells you the same thing over and over as if you were deaf or dumb? It's insulting to mortals, and it certainly is not pleasing to God. To clarify this point, it doesn't mean we can't ask for the same thing more than once, or pray about the same situation more than once – to the contrary, we should pray repeatedly and continually for many things...this vain repeating refers to such that repeat the same phrase over and over (like saying "Hail Mary" 10 times, or 15, etc) thinking that just by saying the same words over and over, it will be beneficial.

We're told **"[Pray] not as the hypocrites...that love to pray that they may be seen of men"** (Matt. 6:5); **"and for a pretence make long prayers"** (Matt. 23:14) – If we're praying to gain recognition, or to make a show, or impress people, we are far from where we need to be.

Solomon tells us in Ecclesiastes 5:2, **"Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter Ea thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon the earth; therefore let thv words be few."** Prayers are not to be rushed, and they're not to be long and pretentious. We are not to lecture God, and we are not putting on a fancy display for others to hear us. The apostle Paul's comments on speaking in an unknown tongue could be well applied to prayer. He says in I Corinthians 14:19, **"I had rather speak five words with understanding ... than ten thousand words without understanding."** If your words are without meaning, without heart or sincerity, and are just a faithless utterance, then they are worthless no matter how long, or how well, you speak. For those of you who are parents, when your child comes to you with a request, do you respond more lovingly due to how long the child speaks and how well the words come out, or rather is the response according to the sincerity of 312 their plea? God is no different, and we are his children. But by the

same token, if your child comes before you to make a request, and does so with disrespect, or in a hurry as if they need not put much thought or effort into it,, how then do you respond to their plea? And again, I say that God is no different, and we are his children.

Another overriding and critical element to prayer is how we stand relative to others. We cannot pray if we are not right in our heart with others. Christ says, **"And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against ma: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you"** (Mark 11:25). We often include in our prayers the phrase, **"forgive us our sins as we forgive those that sin against us."** It may be well to say it, but in our hearts, are we angry with anyone? Are we harboring bad feelings or thinking ill of a brother or sister, or anyone else? If we do, how do we honestly ask God to forgive us? This is one element of what it means to have a pure heart. If we're holding something against someone else, then we are not of a pure heart.

Another thing we must avoid in prayer is doubt. Christ tells us to ask, and doubt not in Matthew 21. And we are reminded **"without faith it is impossible to please God."** This principle certainly and absolutely applies to our prayers. If we go to God and make petitions, doubting all the way, then how must He feel? Christ says, **"When ye pray, believe that ye receive {those things ye ask for}, and ye shall have them"** (Mark 11:24)⁴ And in Matthew 21:22 **"And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."** Faithless prayers, however eloquent they may be, and however Scripturally based in composition, are of no profit. Paul tells us in Hebrews 4 (v. 16), **"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."**

We looked at some Scripture addressing how not to pray... now let's look at those things we should do in prayer: A few specifics we'll briefly try to address are: How should we pray? For what and for whom should we pray? And when should we pray?

How should we pray? David's words are most fitting to answer this. **"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? ...He that hath clean hands and a pure heart."** (Psalm 24:4) Posture, nor place, nor time, is nearly so important as having clean hands and a pure heart. This means our conscience needs to be clear, not that we're perfect, but that we're truly trying our best; and secondly, that we're not holding offenses/grudges with others. We addressed that just a moment ago. However, we will add one more point to the "how" of prayer... it should be with utmost reverence and sincerity. And this applies equally true whether offering a prayer in silence by oneself, whether leading a group/assembly, **or as a listener in** 313

the assembly. We are all praying together when a brother leads us in a prayer, it is important that we appropriately participate and maintain the right frame of mind and give the same reverence and honour to God in the way we listen. As another brother wrote somewhat cynically, "The time of prayer is not the most appropriate period for people in a meeting to relieve their nostrils and do all their coughing, or put their spectacles up, or adjust their dress; but rather it is the time to forget everything and close our eyes to everything but God, to whom we let our souls ascend in un-distracted thankfulness."

And, how much effort are we to put into prayer? New Testament phrases are strong on this point. Epaphras "laboured fervently in prayer" for the Colossians (4:12), Paul "night and day prayed exceedingly" for the Thessalonians and for others, and we know that Christ went all night in prayer. Clearly these men of faith expended as much energy and effort in prayer as if they were doing a hard job of work. Prayer, as we've already mentioned, is not designed as an activity for mindless, or lazy, or halfhearted effort. If we treat it so, we will lose the privilege, and our prayers will fall on deaf ears.

For what should we use prayer? --(In all things) – we really answered that in the beginning – nothing is too small for prayer. Certainly we need to be careful so that we do not "ask amiss", as James warns. He says, "*Ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*" We shouldn't ask for things that we know are contrary to God's will, or things that are purely from a selfish, lustful desire. But if you find yourself wishing to pray about something, and the subject matter creates uncertainty within you, then I think the best advice would be to go ahead and pray about it, but as Christ did, conclude your prayer with, "not my will Father, but thine be done." "**For [God] knoweth what things [we] have need of, before [we] ask him.**" (Matt 6:8) He knows what's best for us, but we must recognize this, we must believe it, and we must submit to His will, as did our elder brother.

For whom should we pray? In fact, there are no limits, but rather we're told by the apostle Paul to make "*supplications, prayers, and intercessions ... for all men*" (I Timothy 2:1). We're specifically told to pray for our brothers and sisters, we're told to pray for our rulers, whether kings/presidents/magistrates/etc; we're told to "*Pray for them which despitefully use you*"; and we're even told to pray for our enemies. Do we pray for our enemies? Do we pray for those people that do us wrongly? Most of us probably don't, yet we're commanded to. Stephen did it as he was being stoned, and Christ did it as he hung on the cross – both praying for their murderer's sake. That's a test of love for our fellow man that few 314 of us would pass... "*To love our enemies.*" But we must try. Jesus

prayed on behalf of rebellious disciples, he prayed for the Jews, for little children, for friends, and as mentioned, for his murderers. Paul prayed for the ecclesias, for the father of a Roman official, for the passengers and crew of the ship that was carrying him as a prisoner, he even prayed for them that forsook him in Rome in his hour of greatest need (II Timothy 4:16). The lesson here is unselfish motives; forgetfulness of self, and thoughtfulness of others; this is as powerful an influence in shaping one's spiritual character in prayer as in any other experience in life. We're told in Job chapter 42:12 that "*The Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends.*" And what of the poignant prayer of Stephen as he was being stoned, he prayed, "*Lord, lay not this sin to their charge...and then he fell asleep.*" (Acts 7:60) Those were Stephen's last words...praying on behalf of those people who were at that very moment lifting stones and beating him to death ... he was praying on their behalf. That has always been one of the most remarkable pictures in all of Scripture to me. At this moment, I would fail that test, I'm afraid...but hopefully one day soon we'll all develop the character that would pass such a test.

What a spiritual influence and power we might wield if we prayed more often and more earnestly for one another in sickness or in health, in prosperity or in adversity, in times of difficulty getting along with one another or during times of gentleness and peace. Can a brother or sister who regularly seeks and finds communion with God and Christ, hate another person, or use the destructive weapon of gossip or a bitter tongue. We could achieve so much more in the way of unity and serenity if we learned how to better utilize the power of selfless prayer.

When should we pray? In Psalms 55:17 David says, "*and at morning, and at noon will I pray...*" We know that Daniel kneeled three times a day and prayed. I believe it's a good idea to have a few set times each day to pray. Good habits become the source of better habits over time. Before we go to bed and when we awake in the morning are good times for prayer, for it's then that the mind is most pliable and impressionable, but there are certainly other times that are suitable and beneficial for prayer.

As a kid growing up I recall three particular times prayer was regularly offered...there were many other times of course, but these three always stood out in my mind when growing up:

- - Each night before bed (typically in bed) – this started when I was very young, around 5 years old. I remember my father giving me the words to say (I can't recall if I asked him to help, or if he

just gave me the words and suggested that I pray each night) 315

– but either way, I did that most every night and have kept that habit to this day – and I think it is a GOOD idea for children to pray!

- - Before going on road trips out of town (usually on holidays to see relatives, or on the way to gatherings). I especially remember how good I always felt about it when either my father or grandfather would do that – it was usually in the car, just before we pulled out of the driveway. And as a kid, it made me feel totally safe, secure, and confident that we would arrive perfectly...and thankfully we always did. And I still like to say a prayer in the car as I depart on road trips, and it still makes me feel good, and at ease.
- 3rd - Of the three most impressionable regular prayer times, saying the blessing before every meal stands out most profoundly. Whether at home, or at a restaurant, or wherever – we would offer thanks, without fail. I'm convinced the food tastes better. It's a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord.

Scripture extends prayer to more than a few set times though. We're told to pray "often", to be "instant in prayer", "to pray without ceasing", and "to pray always". You might ask what does it mean to be "instant in prayer", or "to pray always"...how is that possible? I think it just simply means that any time is a good time for prayer, and many opportunities arise, literally in a moment, or in an instant, and that in those instances we should not hesitate, but look to God and offer a prayer in time of need. Let's look at some Scriptural examples that I think qualify as being "instant in prayer".

Examples in scripture:

- Jonah prayed while in the belly of a fish (Jonah 2:1)
- Paul prayed on the deck of a ship during a storm and his prayer saved all the passengers (Acts 27:35)
- Nehemiah prayed during a conversation with the king (Nehemiah 2:4)
- Hezekiah prayed on his bed of sickness with his face turned to the wall (Isaiah 38:2)
- David prayed amid the ruins of a ravaged city in a moment of defeat and despair with his followers threatening to destroy him (I Samuel 30:6)

- The disciples prayed in the open, upon the sea-shore (Acts 21:5)
- Daniel prayed in the privacy of his house with his face turned towards Jerusalem (Daniel 6:10)
- Peter prayed on a mountain (Luke 6:12; 9:28)
- Samuel prayed on a battlefield (I Samuel 7:9)
- Hannah prayed in public, silently (I Samuel 1:13)
- ETC - And there are many, many more that could be listed.

We noted the power of prayer earlier, – so, can we really influence God for our sakes, or for others? Let's again just look at a few short examples in Scripture.

- Elias prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it didn't for 3 1/2 years; he then prayed for it to rain and the heavens opened and it rained and the earth brought forth its fruit (James 5:17) That wasn't luck, it was God's power and it was specifically because Elias asked.
- When Hezekiah was sick unto death, the Lord told him to set his *"house in order"* for he was going to die. But Hezekiah *"turned his face to the wall and prayed."* (II Kings 20:1-2) And due to that very prayer, 15 years were added to his life.

- When the children of Israel complained in the wilderness (Numbers 11:2) and when they made the molten calf, God had decided to destroy them all, but *"Moses prayed therefore unto the Lord"* (Deut. 9:20), *"and the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do..."* (Exodus 32:14) With that prayer Moses saved his people – those he loved! [If our fellow brothers and sisters were working evil in the sight of God, and in our presence (just as Moses witnessed), would we diligently and affectionately turn our prayers to God on their behalf to save them from destruction? Or would we say, "It serves them right". We need to think about that when we find ourselves in a position to "justify" putting people out/disfellowshipping them. We should pray for them and try to save them first. 317

- And what of Samson, who after miserable failings, was in his final hour, when weak, blinded, and downtrodden, he turned to God in prayer, and because of his sincere request, God heard his prayer and gave him strength, and that hour became his finest victory.
- And what about Daniel in the lion's den, that has to be a favourite

of everyone – the vicious hungry lion's mouths were shut and not a

scratch was upon him. And there are countless others. But looking just at these...what if Moses hadn't loved his brothers and sisters enough to pray for them when God was wroth with them; or what if Samson, Elias, or Daniel had doubted whether God would hear them and answer their prayers? I believe the outcome would have been very different in every case. And thus my opening statement that our use of prayer (either effectively or ineffectively) will probably have much to do with whether or not we enter into the kingdom...We have ample evidence that it affected the outcomes of many people's lives throughout scripture, and I promise it will have an impact on ours, one way or the other. Hopefully we will be of the class of people that falls within the description given by James when he says, *"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."* James 5:16

Maybe the trouble is that while we believe, we do not believe deep down in our hearts. Then pray as did the man responding to Christ in Mark 9:23-24 *"Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief "* We all have so much to learn, so much for which to pray. *"This is the confidence we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us." "All things are possible to him that believeth, if thou can just believe."*

And a final thought, regarding prayers being answered - I'm sure we have all had prayers that seemed to fall unnoticed and things that didn't work out how we had hoped, in spite of having prayed about them. The judgment seat will doubtless reveal to our astonishment and to our great pleasure, many wonderful results of fervent prayer that we just couldn't see at the time. And at that moment it will be overwhelming to realize God's wisdom & love in it's fullest on our behalf...that he really did know what was best, all along. What a blessing to be a part of that realization!

In closing, and to draw our attention to the emblems, we bring to mind one of the more moving scenes in the bible, and perhaps the best example of a prayer both of sincerity and in earnest...Christ in the garden of Gethsemane. His feelings of grief are expressed unto the disciples there with him when he says, *"My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death."* And then he went a little farther and fell on his face and prayed saying, *"O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt."* Was his prayer answered? Absolutely! - Perhaps not from the human/mortal perspective, because the cup did not pass from him. But God's great wisdom, and Christ's perfect submission to the will of the Father, brought about a far better and more glorious outcome – for by him was the hope of redemption extended to all who would hear the message. Christ's prayer in the garden of Gethsemane was a perfect prayer ... and it was perfectly answered. Let us *be "instant in prayer"* with his example ever before us.

DANIEL - THE COMING OF THE ANCIENT OF DAYS

"The coming of the Ancient of Days is a great event in this prophecy. He is said to sit, and one like the Son of Man to be brought to him, after which He is said to come. When the prophecy was delivered He had not manifested Himself in the flesh — the Son of Man had not been born; hence that peculiar representative mode of expression: but he has since been born, or manifested, and gone into a far country, where the manifested Son has appeared in the presence of the Ancient of Days, or the Father, for the purpose of receiving from him "dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, and nations, and languages, should serve him; and all rulers obey him" (Dan 7:13,14,27 Luke 19:12,15). Though these things are promised to him, and though he is the heir of them all, he has not received them....But when the time appointed arrives, as the Ancient of Days embodied in the holy spiritual nature, he will come, having received power and authority to take the dominion, glory, and kingdom, promised him. Thus the Ancient of Days comes, and sits in Jerusalem, the Holy City, to judge all the nations round about (Joel 3:12,16). (Exposition of Daniel pp 15-16)

In our previous articles, we have traced the historical development and manifestation of the "Little Horn" of the Fourth Beast. We have been able to discern how the eleventh horn was "diverse from" the others (Dan.7:24), being an ecclesiastical rather than a purely secular power. In the words of Bro. Roberts, "The Pope did not belong to the order of kings. His appearance in Europe was a new political phenomenon"(Christendom Astray).

We will pause now to consider the character of the Little Horn before recommencing our exposition of the other details in this seventh chapter. It is important for us to do this, as we must recognise the Roman Catholic system in its true light. In the media, we are frequently shown the benign figure of an old man, who reaches out to the masses with benevolent eyes, and smooth words emanating from his mouth. A deeply "religious" man who ostensibly desires the peace(!) of mankind. The representative of a system that seeks the good of all!

The Scriptures, however, reveal a completely different picture, and we need to keep this in mind. We need to have the Word of God uppermost in our minds to counteract the impressions the media tries to make upon us, and remember the descriptions that the Word places on this disgusting system of iniquity. The intoxicating fumes of the Roman Catholic apostasy, with its doctrines and philosophies, permeate every aspect of society as it seeks to grow once again in influence and power. It is a 319

deadly upas that we must avoid like the plague. Our beloved pioneer brethren were never duped by the harlot of Rome and correctly identified the "eyes" and "mouth" of the Papal Belshazzar as belonging to a system which is directly opposed to Yahweh, His Truth, and His servants. We wish to quote from Christendom Astray to let Brother Roberts comment upon the "eyes" and "mouth."

Eyes like the eyes of man.

"The eleventh horn had eyes: it could, therefore, see the other horns; while the other horns being without eyes, could not see it. What political peculiarity of the Papacy corresponds with this symbol? Obviously its priesthood. The institution exists in the territory of all the other horns, and by means of it Rome is made privy to the concerns of every power in Europe; while these powers are unable to penetrate the secrets of Rome, on account of the fidelity which the priesthood have always maintained to their ecclesiastical chief. History affords perpetually recurring illustrations of the political power which Papal Rome was enabled to exert in all the realms of Europe. It is remarkable that the papal Power should be known in diplomatic language as "The Holy See"(page 374).

A mouth speaking great things.

"The horn had a mouth. This indicates that it would in some sense presume to speak to the others, and the speaking could not be for the purpose of mutual deliberation, because the others had no mouths, and, therefore, no conversation could take place; the speaking, therefore, could only take the forms of legislative dictation: the eleventh horn would presume to make law to the others..... The words it spoke were "great words against the Most High," not words in the verbal sense: "words" here has a more comprehensive signification than the dictionary meaning. It imports the policy of the power spoken of as represented and expressed by its utterances over the whole period of its existenceIn the Scriptural sense, everything uttered against the truth is uttered against the Almighty, though it may be couched in the language of allegiance (page 376).

The political intrigues of this Little Horn is referred to time and time again in history, as the influence of Rome grew to a dominant power. Her character is summed up by Bro. Roberts on page 377:

"She is well styled "MYSTERY," and more appropriately still, the 320 MYSTERY OF INIQUITY (2 Thes.2: 7) . She has been (and still is)

iniquity mystified – iniquity veiled – iniquity dressed in a robe of religious pretence – iniquity tricked out in the splendid paraphernalia of regal pomp and civil authority – iniquity of the deepest dye, draped in holy garments – a whited sepulchre of mystified iniquity, showing a beautiful exterior, and inviting all nations to worship at its cursed shrine of "rottenness and dead men's bones" The LITTLE HORN imposture – this proud, wilful, stout-looking pretentious, audacious, blasphemous, saint-killing power, which has prevailed against all divine things for twelve centuries, in accordance with the words of Daniel – this depraved, hypocritical, corrupt, iniquitous, tyrannical, and murderous Church of Rome, with which it is now becoming fashionable at religious meetings to bandy compliments, and speak respectfully of and which blinded and becrazed "charity" would make room for, and deal liberally with, as an institution "doing good" in its own way, and "advancing the cause of Christ under the banners of the Catholic religion"; this execrable mistress of witchery, whose cunning arts of simulated kindness, and ornaments of learning and fascinations of venerable pedigree ,are, in England, entrapping thousands upon thousands into the bondage which it was the boast of this country to have escaped 300 years ago – this system of unmixed iniquity is further introduced to our notice in Revelation 17:3,4 as a gaudy, becrinketed, whorish woman, drunk with the blood of saints, and having in her hand a cup of abominable liquor, with which she intoxicates kings."

Such is the system that professes to be "Christian"; that appears to the eye of flesh as "*a lamb*," but which speaks as "*a dragon*" (Revelation. 13:11). Its actions have soaked the earth with the blood of God's servants and witnesses. No wonder Daniel was "grieved" in his spirit. He was "troubled" by the visions of his head. (Daniel 7:15). When we read of the atrocities the Harlot has committed in the name of Christ, the blasphemies, murders and tortures, we too are troubled by the existence of the drunken whore who has been the paramour of the kings of the earth (Revelation 18:9). Want of space prevents us from referring to the copious amounts of blood shed by the Papal Belshazzar's henchmen, who through the centuries (correctly termed the dark ages) have enlisted the common herd, inciting them to commit the most heinous crimes under the banner of the cross! Sufficient material is available that condemns this filthy system of falsehood and iniquity, and it does not go amiss to remind ourselves from time to time of the catalogue of crimes that one day will be brought to account at the time when Rome will be hurled into the abyss.

What a relief it must have been for Daniel to see that the system had a termination point. He was able to see that the earth would not always be cursed with such a blaspheming counterfeit. The prophecy revealed 321

that the day would come when the world would be emancipated from the evil machinations of the Little Horn power, whose doctrines have spread the veil of "strong delusion" over all nations (Isaiah 25:7). The persecuting power would only prevail until the "*Ancient of Days* came" (Daniel 7:22).

Even after the revelation of the Beast's destruction, Daniel declares "*my cogitation's much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me.*" The Revised Standard Version renders it "*my thoughts greatly alarmed me, and my colour changed.*" Daniel was greatly affected by this prophecy.

Nevertheless, the promise of the judgement ultimately being given to the saints (Daniel 7:22) must have been a comfort to Daniel as he continued to meditate upon the revealed will and purpose of God. This has been the source of great comfort to the saints throughout the ages who have held fast to the Truth, and correctly identified the Man of Sin power (2 Thessalonians 2:3). It is the source of our own rejoicing to contemplate the removal of a system so hateful to the Deity, especially as we live on the very eve of its perdition. Bro. Thomas wrote in Eureka:

"How can wrath cease against men, so long as the earth is cursed with the presence of Catholicism, and its kindred abominations. The divine indignation can only be appeased by their extirpation total and complete." (Volume 2 p.390)

The Ancient of Days

But who is the "*Ancient of Days*"? The phrase is referred to in verses 9, 13, and 22.

The answer to this question introduces us to the subject of "God Manifestation". This is a subject of sublime beauty and interest to every servant of the Deity. Brother Thomas deals with it superbly in Eureka volume 1 (pages 87-118). It is one of the great themes of the Word of God, and one that helps us to understand the plan and purpose of Yahweh in its fullness. It gives us a greater insight into many verses we find "difficult," particularly in the Gospel of John.

Our first thoughts on the phrase now being considered, is to apply it to Yahweh Himself, especially as this is an Old Testament quotation. The words 'Ancient of days' also suggest to our minds, one who has been in existence for a considerable length of time; even the One who "only hath immortality." In the book of Job, Elihu declared:

"Behold, El is great, and we know him not, neither can the number of his years be searched out." (Job 36:26, see also Psalms 41:13 and Psalms 102:24-27).

322 However, the Scriptures frequently teach us that the Lord Jesus

Christ is "God manifest in the flesh." For example,

"Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14) (i.e. "God (El) with us" – see Matthew 1:23).

"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." (2 Corinthians 5:19).

"Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifested in the flesh." (1 Timothy 3:16).

Words and phrases that refer to the great Uncreate, can, and often are applied to Christ. An example of this is found in Isaiah 9:6 – a prophecy which will find *its* fulfillment in Christ when the Kingdom is established, and Christ occupies a supreme place therein:

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God (El), The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

Another example of the principle involved is found if we compare Genesis 32 with Hosea 12:4. In Genesis we have recorded the incident of Jacob wrestling with "a man" until "the breaking of the day" (verse 24); and we note what is said in verse 30:

"And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God (Elohim) face to face, and my life is preserved."

Hosea tells us that Jacob "had power over the angel."

When the angel appeared to Moses at the bush in Horeb (Exodus 3:1-2), he is referred to as Yahweh:

"And when Yahweh saw that he (Moses) turned aside to see, God (Elohim) called unto him out of the midst of the bush." (v4)

Angels often bore the name and glory of Yahweh. Moses himself was told by Yahweh that he would be a God (Elohim) to Pharaoh (Exodus 7:1). The Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, the Son of God was a greater, and in a most unique sense, the manifestation of Yahweh – the "brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person" (Hebrews 1:3). He was the Word (*Logos*) made flesh, as John records:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.....And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:1,14).

It is not our purpose to digress and enter into an exposition of this subject. The few quotations above will hopefully help us to get the idea which, as we shall see, form the basis of the meaning of the phrase the "Ancient of Days."

The words from the Exposition of Daniel at the head of this article will also expand our understanding upon the use of this expression. Contemplating Bro. Thomas' words we are led to the following exposition of the phrase in this seventh chapter of Daniel.

Verse 13. The Son of Man (after ascending to heaven) appears in the presence of the Deity Himself, who is referred to as the Ancient of Days - the Father. This is for the purpose of receiving the "*dominion and glory and kingdom.*" In the words of Luke 19:12 "*A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.*" The hosts in this verse appear to refer to the angels.

Verse 22. Here the Ancient of Days "*came.*" The Lord Jesus Christ having received power and authority returns to wrest the kingdoms of this world from the hands of men (Psalms 2:8).

Verse 9. He (the Lord Jesus Christ) then "*sits*" in (Jerusalem), to judge the nations. In this verse we note the similarity to the multitudinous Son of Man as referred to in Revelation 1, verse 13 to 16, and the Cherubic manifestation of Ezekiel 1:16, 26-27. The symbols are pregnant with meaning and are an exposition in themselves. We can only make brief allusion to the wonderful ideas expressed therein. The ideas and imagery referred to here relate to our own salvation, and to which we look with eager anticipation.

"*garment white as snow*" - The white speaks of righteousness as it will be seen in the Redeemed (Revelation 3:18; 19:8).

"*hair of his head*" - Christ is the Head of the body, and will be seen to be so in the day of his glory and honour, as the "*chiefest among ten thousand*" (Song of Solomon 5:10, 1 Corinthians 11:3).

"*fiery flame*" - A graphic description of the wrath of Yahweh as it is outpoured in scorching judgements on the nations (Isaiah 30:27-30).

"the *wheels*" - Here is a reference to the Cherubim; the Chariot of the Deity (the vehicle of the Spirit - Psalms 18:10). Bro. Thomas comments as follows:

"They are the "*redeemed out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation,*" raised from the dead, in consuming and destructive motion against the body and horns of the Graeco-Roman Dragon.....tormenting all the adherents of the Beast and his Image with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy messengers and in the presence of the Lamb." (Revelation 14:10; 19:19-21) (Exposition of Daniel p. 16).

May it be our privilege and blessing-to be among that glorious multitude, whose honour it is to "*execute the judgements written*" (Psalms 149:9).

Signs and Events

In the day when My people Israel dwelleth safely...

During President Bush's speech calling for the removal of the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat; he announced "For the sake of all humanity, things must change in the Middle East". This is no news flash to us. We know things must and will change in the Middle East according to God's plan. So how does President Bush's vision of "peace and security" fit into the picture? He has made it perfectly clear that the US is standing behind Israel, and urging "full normalization of relations between Israel and the entire Arab world". With America's help Israel may soon be living in a state of apparent safety, without walls, bars, or gates (Ezekiel 38: 11).

It's interesting that in a recent poll "36% of Americans believe that the Bible is the word of God and is to be taken literally", and "36% of those polled who support Israel say they do so because they believe in biblical prophecies that Jews must control Israel before Christ will come again." Couple that with the events of Sept 11, not to mention the Jewish vote itself, and we can easily see why President Bush is so determined to implement and sustain peace in Israel. It is precisely this sort of peace that we've been waiting to see in Israel!

It's also important to note India's ties with the US. The US obviously realizes that India would be of great strategic importance (she guards the eastern boarder of the Gulf region) if there was to be war in the Middle East. Hence, the US has switched allegiances from Pakistan (who is constantly at war with India) to India. India has always had strong ties with Britain (still the largest investor in India). We know it formed part of the British Empire at one time. In 1 Kings 10:22 India seems to be the source of ivory, apes and peacocks brought back by the ships of Tarshish in the days of Solomon. Therefore it seems very reasonable to assume India is one of the "young lion" countries that will oppose Russia and Europe during Armageddon.

So you can see why we would like to draw your attention to India's increasingly close ties with the US. We should also take note of India's growing strategic ties with Israel. At one time India actually sided with the Palestinians, but their equally devastating problem with Moslem extremists has brought the two countries together. These changes in political allegiances are precisely in line with prophecy. There is no denying, we are fast approaching our Master's return!!!

Zechariah's Sixth Vision

Good morning brothers and sisters. This morning our exhortation will be on Zechariah's sixth vision. Six represents the flesh, and wickedness. We see this in Revelation, where the number is repeated three times for the familiar 666. All of the visions up to this point have been encouraging. This vision begins to address the fall of Israel.

In Zechariah the 5th chapter, beginning the I verse, "*Then I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a flying roll.*" The vision is no longer centered on the future. He turns back from the future to his own day.

The 'flying roll' is later called 'the curse that goeth forth.' It is moving because it would travel to punish who were corrupting the Truth, whether they were in Israel or scattered into the surrounding nations. Even though they were in foreign countries, they were still responsible for following God's law. Israel were not allowed to think they were exempt because they could not see the Temple. They were to follow the Law.

God is always watching over us. We, too, at times do things in our own lives we know are not right. We may think, in our subconscious minds, "Who will ever find out?" We are all guilty of this, at times in our lives, as we block out the consequences of our sins, and fall in a moment of weakness.

Now, imagine we had to live our lives as Zechariah saw in his vision. Everywhere we went there would be a flying Bible right behind us. It would always be there to punish the moment we had sinned. This would make us a little more aware of the sins we were committing. Even though we all know the good and bad we do in this life will be written down, and we will have to give an account. We cannot afford to say, "Well, at least I'm doing better than so and so." We will each have to give an account. The flying roll (God used to punish) showed they had rejected Him, and replaced Him with the things of the flesh.

The Temple cubit was approximately two feet. This would make the scroll forty feet by twenty feet. Imagine if we had a Bible that size following us around, always ready and would punish us as soon as we sinned. We would be much less likely to think our sins are going unnoticed.

Verse 2: "*And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll; the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits.*" The twenty by ten cubits is the measurement of the Holy 326 Place in the Temple. The Temple was a symbol of God's law, and it

was where they went to offer sacrifices when they had sinned.

Verse 3: *"Then said he unto me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth: for every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side according to it."*

We sin, and fail. There has been only one who has been perfect. But we must never give up; we must not let sin run our lives. Let us pick up ourselves, renew the walk, and learn from our mistakes. What mistakes do we make? We do not swear - we do not steal. These are the sins for which God was going to punish Israel. If we take these for our example, it is easy for us to say, "How can anyone steal from God?" However, this may be one of the most common and often repeated sins we commit.

We may not be like Achan, blatantly taking away things from God, yet, do we tithe ourselves; do we figure how much God will receive from all the blessings he gives to us? Do we give what is left over from what we have spent on ourselves? Do we take God's part off the top, making sure He receives the full amount?

What of the people we meet? Do we speak the Truth openly, or do we hide it in the backs of our minds? Anyone whom we meet may be a future brother or sister. If we do not speak of the Truth, we may be stealing followers away from God.

Work is another area where we have a tendency to steal from God: whether working late where we miss a class, or work so long we are stressed out and cannot concentrate upon the Memorials. Think of what would happen if we went to work one day and the boss told us we would not be paid for that day's work, but we had to work anyway. Would we? Yet, we may not think twice of going to Meeting while frustrated from every day life; or even miss Meeting because of something else we might have to do. What do we value more in our lives – God or money? We would not be so tolerant when not being paid, be we might justify missing meetings.

This is for everyone to decide for himself, but each time we miss class, show up late for a meeting, or attend with our minds elsewhere we are stealing from God. We will be held accountable.

God sent a curse upon all Israel that covered the whole earth. As we know, the Jews have been taken into many nations and afflicted. This should be a sign to us. God told them if they would not obey, they would be cursed. Jeremiah goes into this with a little more detail. (Jeremiah 29:18-19) *"And I will persecute them with the sword, with the famine, 327*

and with the pestilence, and will deliver them to be removed to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, and an astonishment, and an hissing, and a reproach, among all the nations whither I have driven them: Because they have not hearkened to my words, saith the LORD, which I sent unto them by my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them; but ye would not hear, saith the LORD."

This was the punishment meted out upon the Israelites who stole God's glory and took it upon themselves. Just as they wanted to kill Christ because of the miracles he had performed before the people, and they began to follow him instead of their leaders. Let us look at John chapter 11 verses 47-51, *"Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation;"*

Christ also told a parable of the nation in Matthew 21:37-38 *"But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance."*

They were looking out for themselves, what was good for them and robbing the people. It did not matter where the people were; they would all be punished.

God tells Zechariah this, as they begin to rebuild. He tells him Israel would again turn to their wickedness, turning from God to follow the other nations. He was not to become discouraged, as this was all part of the plan.

In verse 4, we read: *"I will bring it forth, saith the LORD of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name: and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof"* "I will bring it forth" – the wicked will be punished. God will make sure it will come to pass. The margin refers us to Leviticus 14:45, *"And he shall break down the house, the stones of it, and the timber thereof and all the mortar of the house; and he shall cony them forth out of the city into an unclean place."* This is speaking of the leprosy in the house. Leprosy is a symbol of uncleanness. We must make sure our house is free from leprosy, 328 or we will have to deal with punishment God has prescribed.

Verses 5 and 6: *"Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, LO up now thine eyes, and see what is this that goeth forth. And I said, What is it? And he said, This is an ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This is their resemblance through all the earth."*

"This is the resemblance." The ephah was the Jewish measurement, which is equivalent to a bushel. It shows Israel had turned their religiousness into a way of making money. Let's look at Malachi 1:10 *"Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand"* Israel would do nothing for God, unless it was for their own gain.

Christ also similarly condemned Israel. Mark 11:15-17, *"And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves; And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple. And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves."*

Verse 7: *"And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead: and this is a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah."* The lead lid on the top of the ephah shows the contrast of the last vision of the golden candlestick. The lead was an abomination to God, where gold represents tried faith. Once the lid was removed, he saw the woman, which represented wickedness.

Proverbs 2:16, *"To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flattereth with her words;"* and 5:3-4, *"For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a twoedged sword."*

She was 'sitting.' The Hebrew word implies 'settled down comfortably' in the ephah. We see the wickedness was comfortable. We must make sure this does not happen to us. We must be constantly fighting off fleshly thoughts, never allowing sin to enter in to our life, never allowing sin to become part of our lives.

Verse 8: *"And he said, This is wickedness. And he cast it into the midst of the ephah; and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof"* This woman was in a very comfortable position. The common people did not realize her presence. Paul warns that she is already present in II Thessalonians 2:7-8, *"For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:"*

Zechariah was shown what Israel would be. He saw the heart of them, and he said, "This is wickedness." Christ, when he revealed the wickedness of the Jews told the people exactly what kind of hypocritical generation they were. The wickedness was out of hand, proven by their destruction in A.D. 70.

Verse 9, *"Then lifted I up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came out two women, and the wind was in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork: and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven."* Two women: Jeremiah explains who these two women were. Jeremiah 3:6-10, *"The LORD said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot. And I said after she had done all these things, Turn thou unto me. But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it. And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also. And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks. And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD."*

Israel and Judah both left God for the pleasures of the surrounding nations, and were destroyed for it. The wind represented the war that would drive Israel from the land.

Jeremiah was speaking of both Israel and Judah. The stork was an unclean bird, as it migrated from country to country. This bird represented Israel after A.D. 70 – as they were scattered through the whole earth, going from country to country because of persecution.

We see, soon after the death of Christ, the error that crept into the ecclesia. It does not take very long for error to creep in. Acts 15:1-2, *"And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question."* And in Galatians 2:4, *"And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:"*

After the overthrow of Jerusalem, some of the traditional Jews were 330 taken into the Catholic Church, which not only combined the Jewish

and Christianity faiths but also added them to pagan beliefs. This was the start of the little horn in the papacy.

Verse 10 and *"Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah? And he said unto me, To build it an house in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base."* The land of Shinar – Shinar is the 'enemy of the truth'. This, then was the land of the enemy of the truth's teeth.

The fourth beast – Rome – is described as having great teeth in Daniel 7:7 *"After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns."* This was Rome who overthrew the Jews in A.D. 70.

We see in the vision that money took precedence over God, and they were destroyed for it. Israel was to tithe themselves a tenth. Do we come close to putting aside this for God? Or is spending fifty or sixty dollars on something we think that we need much more easily done than putting it in the collection?

It is not how much money we put in that matters, it is all in comparison to what we could have put in. We know this from the parable in Mark 12: 41-44. *"And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living."* She gave all that she had. What would we have done in her position?

I Timothy 6:10, *"For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."* The love of money is the root of all evil.

Where does God rank in our lives? Do we have our priorities right? We must make sure we are not stealing from God. Every person we meet that we do not speak the Truth to, every second in Meeting with our minds wandering, every day that we are just too tired to do the Readings we are stealing from God. If God were to open us up to read our heart, what would He find? Would he find us as Israel and Judah so closely knit with this world that He would consider us part of them? Or do we stay 331

separate from the world?

This is what will happen at the Lord's return: all our small, little sins that we may have blocked out of our minds will be brought up, and we will have to give account. We must confess our sins, pray for forgiveness, and try to do better tomorrow, next week, next year if we are given that time. We do not want Christ to find sin sitting comfortably in our lives.

Bro. David Sommerville

THE CHASTENING OF THE LORD

We must never forget that the present life in its best state is a state of exile from Eden; therefore a state of separation from divine fellowship and perfect blessedness. Reconciliation and return are in process of accomplishment, and the foundation of the work was laid in the promises and institutions appointed first in Eden and afterwards with the fathers; but, until the work is actually brought to its completion, the effect of separation will and must continue. Out of evil, and by means of it, God is bringing great good, but till good arrive, evil will remain the characteristic of our present experience. It is this that gives point to and enables us to pray the prayer of the man of God in Psalm 110;

"Return, O Lord, how long? And let it repent Thee concerning Thy servants. O satisfy us early with Thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days wherein Thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil" (verses 13, 15).

This prayer will be answered, perhaps in measure now, but not in its final form till the appointed time, even the day of the manifestation of the sons of God, till which *time*, as Paul remarks,

"Even we ourselves groan within ourselves waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

We shall make a mistake in looking anywhere for unmixed good till the proclamation is heard,

"Behold the tabernacle of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:3).

332 Most people will readily admit that we must not look for unmixed

good till this time arrives; yet there is a tendency to overlook the constitutional evil of the present order of things, and a tacit assumption that evil cannot be among the experiences of those with whom God is pleased. The fact is that the very best experience at present is only a state of divinely regulated evil, and that the occurrence of evil is one of the necessities involved in the development of saints from a race of unjustified sinners. All are: sinners more or less, and,

"Wherefore doth a man complain for the punishment of his sins?"
(Lamentations 3:39).

While all are sinners, more or less, some are forgiven sinners—those who fear and obey God, confessing their sins and forsaking them. All things work together for the final good of this class; but amongst these *"all things"* evil itself has a place. God is the judge of when and how much it is needed. In this light,let us rightly interpret our lives and not imagine ourselves God-forsaken if we are called upon to drink perhaps many a bitter cup. In everything consider the end. The end will be joyous and gladness unutterable.

Bro. Robert Roberts – Ways of Providence

Hymn 182

The days are quickly flying, and Christ will come again.
We all speak of how time flies. When we think of that,
Do we couple it with thoughts of Christ's return?
And how soon that could be?
With all His Saints attending triumphant in His train.
To be counted among His saints will indeed by triumphant!
When every eye shall see Him, and every tongue confess,
The glory of the Father, in Christ our Righteousness.
"All the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord."

O day of Exaltation! O day of God's Elect!
Sweet day of consummation that longing hearts expect.
Can you truly say that your heart longs for that day?
When every conflict ended, and every sorrow past.
Think of it! Every—every—conflict ended
Those within us, those among us, and those around us.
And every sorrow past—behind us!
A cry goes up triumphant, The Lord has come at last.

Lord, come then in Thy Kingdom, set up on earth Thy throne.
"And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come."
And, lest Thy sheep grow weary, come take them for Thine own.
Do we grow weary of waiting?
Remember the days are quickly flying.
Now when the night seems darkest, come in Thy glory bright.
"And let him that heareth say, Come."
Come to redeem Thine Israel, and turn our faith to sight.
O glorious, sweet, exalted, triumphant day, when we shall see him!
"Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Rightly Dividing The Word

The workman who preaches the word is to divide it rightly. No workman is approved of God who doth not do this. he is to "study," to divide the word of truth rightly. It requires study,, and much study, too, or its right division cannot be discerned. If this be neglected, the preaching, or writing will be mere confusion, and the word quoted unintelligible.. .

To rightly divide the word of truth is first to study it without bias, or subjection to uninspired authority. . .attend to what is written, as a child listens to a story. Study history, and ask questions, and be thankful for all the information you can get. . .it is the result of much time and labour to become adequately proficient for a right division of the word. Men who do not understand the prophets, have no scriptural pretensions to workmanship in the word. They can neither preach it, nor divide it.

When a man comes to understand the gospel of the kingdom, believing and obeying it, he has then qualified himself to lay the foundation of faith in others. Let him go on to perfection. Let him dive into the testimony, and let it dwell richly in him, with all wisdom. If he have ability to state intelligibly what he understands, then let him work away, as unto God, and not to man. Let him search out . . . the Word of Truth. . . . knowledge is to faith, what light is to the eye.

"The people perish for lack of knowledge," says Yahweh; therefore knowledge should be prized as life itself: for "this is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent" - and they only know God and Jesus, who know the testimony they have given.

The Deep Things of God - Providential Presence

The word providence is derived from the root, provide. In Biblical context it expresses the principle that Deity will provide all that is necessary for the outworking of His plan and purpose with this earth and man whom He has placed thereon (Genesis 22:8; Hebrews 11:40; cf. Acts 24:2).

We may think of providence as having primary reference to the Heavenly Host working with the nations throughout history in order to bring about events which culminate with the re-establishment of God's Kingdom. We may also look to the raising up special men and women for a Godly purpose as being providential. Here, the Lord Jesus Christ is the preeminent example. But the Scriptures reveal much more. The Lord's providence operates in the lives of all His people, both for the time present and in the Age to Come.

There are many ways in which Divine providence can be present in the lives of believers. Among the most profound is the rod of correction. We should find great comfort in the promise that Deity will issue this loving provision of discipline when needed. David expressed this sentiment when he wrote, *"Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word...It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes"* (Psalms 119:67, 71). The arm of the Lord did indeed inflict great suffering upon the King. Yet such brought forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness as he was rightly exercised thereby. In the end David could say, *"Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Lord, according unto thy word"* (vs. 65).

Often it is difficult to recognize the hand of providence in our lives. But we must endeavor to do so otherwise we may not obtain the precise spiritual benefit that God desires. Some difficulties that we experience may not necessarily be providential; instead these may simply be the hard knocks we receive from such things as social interaction and self-inflicted wounds. Certainly all of this, when endured with a proper spirit, will contribute overall to the building of a Godly character. However, when searching for substantive provident presence in our lives, we might ponder the more serious problems that arise, then prayerfully search for a connection between these and our present behavior.

For a good lesson in the relationship between providence and behavior we might look to the life of the Apostle Paul. In 2 Corinthians 12:7, we are informed that he was given a thorn in the flesh in order to control the pride of life. This should tell us that the Lord may employ any number of methods to help correct our many human foibles. Our responsibility is to understand the hand of the Lord moving in our lives, and to be willing to conform to Divine wisdom.

Let us be truly thankful that God, in His mercy, has supplied all that is necessary for us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Our heavenly Father has graciously provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. With His help, through Jesus Christ, may each of us inherit the most precious provision of all: Life everlasting in the approaching Kingdom of God.

What Does That Mean

"A bruised reed shall he not break and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth." (Isaiah 42:3)

Isaiah uses this statement prophetic of Christ, and Matthew in chapter 12 verse 20 quotes this in reference to Christ's actions. What is meant by a "bruised reed" and by "smoking flax" in this verse?

Both of these comparisons teach the same lesson, that of the tenderness of Christ toward the young converts or weak believers.

I have read two different concepts about the "broken reed." The first defines the reed as "a reed pipe", a frail little instrument made of two reeds bound together, hollowed out and with holes on the side. A shepherd would play many tunes on it and thus pass the hours alone with his sheep. It is of little value; a new one could be easily made and the bruised pipe discarded, but the shepherd does not treat it accordingly. He has feelings toward his frail instrument and tenderly repairs it when it breaks.

The other possibility is that Isaiah is referring to the stalk of the marsh weed, a valueless plant. Weak and lowly persons are compared to a reed because they are worthless with respect to God, whom they cannot profit; and in the view of affluent men, who reckon them as nothing; and in their own view, as they judge themselves unworthy of the least of His mercies. These people are like a "bruised" reed that is squeezed, and almost broken, and so are of no use -broken in heart, cognoscente of sin and unworthiness. On these Christ does not lay his iron rod, but holds out the golden sceptre of his grace to them; he does not call them to service and sufferings beyond their strength; but strengthens; supports, and upholds them with the right hand of his righteousness. He binds up their broken hearts, he encourages them in their application to him for salvation, and manifests his pardoning grace, restores comforts to and revives them.

"Smoking flax" refers to the wick of a candle that is just going out, which gives very little light, produces a lot of smoke, and is generally useless. A little clay lamp with its wick floating in olive oil will smoke when the oil is burned out. We would probably say, "Throw out the old wick, replenish the oil and replace the wick." But God knows that with enough oil, the wick can burn brightly again, and therefore he doesn't discard the apparently useless materials.

There are times when each of us feels that the pressures of this life have caused our light to grow dim. **Like the smoking flax, we produce very little light, yet Christ will not extinguish our "pitiful" effort, or suffer it to be extinct. He does not discourage small beginnings or "despise the day of small things." He causes our lamps to burn brighter, increases our spiritual light and knowledge, and supplies us with the oil of grace, available to us through the work of Christ.**

The meek, who are like to a bruised reed, shall not be broken; and the poor, who are *as* obscure as flax (or as a lamp ready to go out), shall not be extinct.