

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

NEWTON, North Carolina; Memorial Meeting Sunday 10:30 AM; Bible Class following; Bro. Mike Murphy, 347 South College Avenue, Newton, North Carolina 28658; phone (828) 465-6779; e-mail skydvrm@twave.net

Dear Brethren & Sisters,

We would like to announce the baptism of Mike Murphy of Newton, North Carolina. Our new Brother has been welcomed into the Berean Fellowship after his excellent confession of faith and immersion on December 14, 2002.

He was offered the right hand of fellowship at a memorial meeting on Sunday, December 15 by representatives from several Berean Christadelphian Ecclesias including Boston, Lampasas and Tennessee. Brother Murphy is starting an ecclesia in Newton, North Carolina.

Brother Mike already has two Bible students he is teaching using the Key Bible Lessons. We are planning, God willing, to have a Bible Study Day in Newton, North Carolina, on Saturday, March 8, 2003. All are welcome to attend.

Attendees must make their own hotel room reservations for the weekend, and Sister Leslie and Brother Michael of Boston have made arrangements at a local hotel near Newton for meeting space and overnight rooms at a discounted rate. The Study Day and Sunday Meeting will take place at the hotel. Please contact Brother Michael or Sister Leslie Morrell-Norwood at (978) 897-0054, or via e-mail at morrell@morrellcom.com for details.

The mailing and meeting address for the Newton, North Carolina Ecclesia is:
 Brother Mike Murphy
 3475 South College Avenue
 Newton, North Carolina 28658

Love in Christ, Brother Michael Morrell-Norwood

FRATERNAL GATHERINGS & ACTIVITIES

(To be held God Willing)

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

RICHARD FRATERNAL GATHERING..... June 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

THE PERFECT ECCLESIA

It is a blessing to be able to meet each year in this fashion on the banks of the Perdenales River for the past 120 years. When we go away to our homes at the end of the week here, we are rejuvenated and refreshed in the Word and have the best of thoughts and intentions of how we are going to transform our lives in the coming year. This was one of the benefits of the Feast of Tabernacles for Israel – a renewing of hearts and minds in the ways of the Lord so that we may strive closer toward that perfection of character and betterment of the ecclesia.

A truly perfect ecclesia cannot exist this side of the judgment seat, as the truly perfect ecclesia will only exist in the Kingdom age when we are perfected and can unite as one with Christ, when he said, "I will drink it new in the Kingdom of God."

During this age, what is termed a blameless ecclesia may exist, however, it is doubtful that any has truly existed due to the weakness of the flesh, personal ambitions, and the lust of the flesh. Although such an ecclesia may not have existed in the past and may not exist now, yet it is the duty of each and every member of the Lord's household to contribute all he or she can towards the establishment of such - we are to strive for perfection. To do this is to follow the precepts brought out in the Commandments of Christ and which we agreed to at baptism - "All that the Lord hath said we will do." It sounds like an easy formula, but for those of us who have been in the Truth for some years, we find this is most difficult to do.

The greatest work that we have in the Truth is to bring every thought and act of the heart and mind into harmony with the will of God, thus making the mind and heart of each child of God obedient to the mind of the Spirit. This work accomplished in each one would make all of one mind and one spirit, a true reflection of the divine mind as revealed in the Word, and would bring us close to a blameless ecclesia. There would be no ambition for ruling over the ecclesia, no backbiting, no slanderous speech, no selfish interests to be promoted, no wrongs inflicted, no bitterness or disputes over diversities of doctrines and practices. Instead, there would be humbleness of heart and mind, brotherly love, kind words, a zealous working for the interests of all, guarding our tongues and actions against the infliction of any wrong, and perfect harmony of doctrine and practice.

In such an ecclesia, the Word of Truth would permeate our hearts to love one another - all our brethren and sisters - not just the lovable. The Word, would surround, fill and spring forth from each and every heart in a

unified joy. All would be as one, thinking according to the Spirit, acting according to the Spirit, living according to the Spirit and helping each other on the road towards the Kingdom.

When we listen to the following scriptural language, we see that it is applicable only to members of an ecclesia which possess these characteristics; -

"Do all things without murmurings and disputings; that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world." "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another." "Where envying and strife is there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy- to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile and hypocrisies and envies, and all evil speakings, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby."

"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." "Seeing ye have purified your hearts in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another with a pure heart fervently." "He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him." "Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one towards another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one towards another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense no man, evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men."

Brethren and sisters, the things listed above were written concerning the one body - the ecclesia of Christ, and portray what constitutes a blameless ecclesia in the sight of God. These are qualities that we all need to improve on while there is time remaining in our pilgrimage.

We can imagine the joy, comfort and peace of mind that we would have to be members of such an ecclesia. It would be a beautiful picture of

the time to come when we are able to be presented before Christ at the marriage supper of the Lamb. But will we ever see such an ecclesia this side of the Great Feast? We may not expect it, yet each one can and should contribute his or her individual share of faith and practice towards producing such an ecclesia, and which the Truth demands from each one as a reasonable service of faith, hope, love and practice.

Between the world and the ecclesia of God, a great gulf is fixed in faith and hope and practice. The world is cold and selfish and can only love its own. To come out of the world is to leave its empty hope and practice. To enter the ecclesia of Christ is to lay hold of the faith, hope and practice set before us in the gospel message. One is a life of hatred, selfishness, and death. The other is a life of love, humbleness and eternal life. Into the world we are born naturally. Into the Truth we are born by faith and obedience of the gospel.

As spiritual beings we cannot be both of the world and of Christ. From the attempt to mix the two, arise troubles that work against the establishment of a blameless ecclesia. There is no affinity between the two. Every attempt to mix them detracts from the purity of the ecclesia, and shows that some making the attempt are still in the flesh (morally) and not in the Spirit as the gospel requires. If we all were spiritual and none of us carnal, a blameless ecclesia would be full of joy, comfort and peace for each and every member.

Every Christadelphian should be longing for this condition. We should not be disheartened when those around us are not doing the same, but we should take courage that we know we are doing what is right and pleasing. At times we even suffering wrong knowing that our labor is on behalf of his household. We have only to read from Bro. Roberts' work, The Final Consolation, to uplift us and realize that the reward is a tangible crown that we shall receive if found acceptable.

Those who are pure in heart will not see evil in a brother who is striving to make his calling and election sure, but the selfish and evil individuals are ever seeking out real or imaginary faults in others so that they may have something to accuse them of before the ecclesia. We should be hesitant to receive or circulate an evil report concerning a brother for we could wrongly accuse a brother and do disservice to the ecclesia as well. A fault or wrong on the part of a brother, and unknown to the world, should be held confidential within the ecclesial framework of Matthew 18 so we may redeem an erring brother. The Truth is about redemption, not punishment. God will handle the punishment at the judgement.

The following language is very clear and forcible: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

meekness, temperance; against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another. Brethren, if a man be overtaken with a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." We see the Spirit of Christ in these words. If all of our brethren and sisters followed these words, we would be in a much better position. Envy, malice, tale bearing, faultfinding, misinterpretation of motive, should find no place in any ecclesia. Each of us should consider each other as we labor unselfishly for the general welfare and promotion of the Truth.

Read carefully the prayer of Christ shortly before he was offered up as a sacrifice for the sins of his people. That prayer was for the complete ecclesia, and also for it in its perfect state. Read the following from the words of Christ before his suffering; "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us. . . Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me."

Do we think that any one who falls short of producing in this life the duties laid down in the Scriptures we have quoted can have a part in the glories to come? Let us look into our hearts and call up in mental review our past faith and hope and practice, as members of the body of Christ, and judge where we stand in relation to that wonderful prayer of our loving Saviour.

In calling us all to that personal self-judgment, I also call myself to taking a person inventory. How do I stand? Have we injured our brethren? Have we done disservice to the Truth that has called us to salvation? Have we worked at all times, through the grace of God, towards the establishment of a blameless ecclesia? If not, and we are still at fault, let us put ourselves in harmony with the Scriptures quoted, and with that prayer of love that our Lord and Master gave.

We may deceive others. We may even deceive ourselves. But there is an eye that cannot be deceived, and that searches the secret chambers of every heart, bringing to the light every secret thought and act and before the scrutiny of that eye we must all stand, even before the one who uttered that prayer of love to his Father. The words of the following poem strike us all as to our preparedness.

Bro. Fred Higham

At the Judgment Seat

I stood before the Judgment Seat. Head bowed with bitter shame.
Within my brain words echoed loud. I had myself to blame.
I'd seen the King, and standing there, Beheld his glorious face,
And just aside my friends supreme, saved by his grace.

Engulfed in grief, alone, afraid, my pleadings all in vain.
The works re-echoed louder now, and burned within my brain.
"Come now!" And so I went before the one I'd longed to see.
Said angels standing near the throne, "The Master calleth thee"

To give account of what I'd done. One reason I was asked,
"Why I'd neglected things of God and hurrying by them passed?"
I then recalled how oft I'd said, "oh dear, there is no time,
I'll do it! Well another day." That had been my crime.

I answered not! Dumb, full of grief, but Jesus knew, and said,
"No time to kneel in daily prayer, or wait till Him you'd heard?
No time to pause, or mediate, upon the riches of His Word?
No time to visit poor and sick? No time to smile and give,

The stranger in your gates, a word of hope, that he might live?"
"No time to weep with those who weep? No time to joy with one,
Whose victory over human sin, was well and truly won?
But you had time for menial tasks and time to exercise,

Your mental powers on common things, your home to supervise.
You found the time to read and talk of things that mattered not,
But things that mattered most to God, you spurned, or just forgot.
That was enough! I heard no more. Those words continued long.

My talents lay neglected there, to him they did belong.
But I'd forgotten they were his – I'd cast them to one side,
And now before the throne they lay. I then my face did hide.
The saints remained there on the right, safe in the Saviour's cleft,
But I was thrust among the ones, put on the Judge's left.

Those words which burned within my brain! Verdict on guilty crime!
No place! No hope! No righteous crown! "For you I have no time."
A dream you say! But oh how real! And what relief to wake.
To find I still had unspent time, ere judgment morning break!

For me the Saviour scourged and scorned, up Calvary's hill did climb.
What shall I say when he shall ask, "How hast thou spent thy time?"

Hymn 2

ALL PEOPLE THAT ON EARTH DO DWELL,
SING TO THE LORD WITH CHEERFUL VOICE,

This could be taken as a command to do this, or a statement that it is done,
or will be done, in the Millennium. Certainly, then and only then, could this be
said of all people.

HIM SERVE WITH MIRTH,

Mirth is "joyfulness, gaiety, or merriment, especially when characterized
by laughter," according to Webster. Laughter most certainly is a gift from
God.

HIS PRAISE FORTH TELL,

"Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised."

COME YE BEFORE HIM AND REJOICE.

"Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again, I say, Rejoice."

KNOW THAT THE LORD IS GOD INDEED,

Yahweh is El, the Almighty.

WITHOUT OUR AID HE DID US MAKE:

He is Creator of all; man—though one of His greatest creations—is
nothing compared to Him.

WE ARE HIS FLOCK, HE DOTHS US FEED,

AND FOR HIS SHEEP HE DOTHS US TAKE.

John 10: The Good Shepherd, Jesus, and we are his sheep. Verse 14 – "I
am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine."

O ENTER THEN HIS GATES WITH PRAISE,

APPROACH WITH JOY HIS COURTS UNTO:

"Rejoice evermore."

PRAISE, LAUD, AND BLESS HIS NAME ALWAYS,

Webster says "laud" is praise, or a song or hymn of praise.

Psalms 34:1 – "I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall
continually be in my mouth."

FOR IT IS SEEMLY SO TO DO.

Praise—continually, at-all-times, heart-outpouring praise—is the only
sensible and practical and mature frame of mind. (GVG)

FOR WHY? Why should we do this? Because...

THE LORD OUR GOD IS GOOD,

Psalms 34:8 – "O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man
that trusteth in him."

HIS MERCY IS FOR EVER SURE;

"His mercy endureth forever."

HIS TRUTH AT ALL TIMES FIRMLY STOOD,

"He changeth not."

AND SHALL FROM AGE TO AGE ENDURE.

From aion to aion—preAdamic to the Kingdom and beyond.

James 1

Dear Brethren and Sisters, we have recently been reading together the epistle of James, and our thoughts this morning are on his first chapter. The writer of this book was almost certainly James, the Lord's brother, the spokesman and leader of the ecclesia at Jerusalem. This epistle is generally considered the earliest, written, it is thought about 45 AD, although some date it a little later than that. It was written to Jewish believers of the dispersion outside of Palestine throughout the Roman Empire.

It is very similar in its form of teaching to the teachings of Christ. There is more imagery from nature than in all of Paul's epistles put together. We know that was a method by which Christ taught.

God uses different instruments for different purposes.

James gives very concise expression to basic principles and problems of character. Certain typical passages will come to mind to illustrate this, of which his book is full. He had the faculty of expressing basic truths very forcibly and strikingly. He goes right to the heart of things. His words are fairly simply, but actually very deep. His tone is positive and decisive. This short book contains over 50 commands.

After a brief salutation of just one verse, he begins his message with an arresting command. Verse 2 – “Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.” Now, trial expresses the meaning better, as the Revised Version and most modern versions have it. “Count it all joy”—rejoice, be thankful when you are tried, “knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience.” And this MUST happen, if we are to be accepted by God. He here goes immediately to the root of the purpose of our present mortal dispensation—the development of character by trial.

Patience is a very beautiful thing. It is intelligent self-control and self-discipline—doing what is right and not what we desire. It is the triumph of the wisdom of the spirit over the evil of the flesh. “Let patience have her perfect work,” says James. Patience is character. It is the only true strength. Impatience is weakness, babyishness, immaturity—lack of strength.

In verse 5, James tells us that God will give wisdom liberally—abundantly—to any who seek. This wisdom, of course, is the Spirit guidance in the way of life. We can profitably connect this promise with what he has just said about patience. He has counseled joy and patience in every problem and trial, because that is wisdom.

The wisdom God will give is the wisdom to understand these things and to manifest the joy and the patience to be spiritually developed. We see that the spiritual lesson here is the same as that which the book of Job is designed to teach us—joy, patience, and spiritual wisdom, lovingly

bestowed by God who understands and controls everything. The process sometimes is very hard, but the result is beautiful.

This leads James to a warning in verses 6-8. It is as if some had said, “We have tried this and nothing has happened. We are just the same as we were before. We are no closer than ever to the joy and patience and wisdom of the spirit.” James says, “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.” Such receive nothing from God. Only those receive whose eye is single—who seeketh with their whole heart. Those who face the great decision—the things of the world, the things of the flesh, the things that we desire OR the things of God—and having made the decision, faithfully hold to it, their course unshakably established. These alone are NOT double minded. These alone receive the wisdom. They are the only ones in whom God works, building them unto Himself in holiness and grief.

Verses 9-11 – The natural conditions of men in which they find themselves—rich and poor. This aspect of life is incidental. The Truth and the Eternal Purpose is so great that it entirely eclipses all natural differences of condition. They are absolutely unimportant. The time is so short. Let the poor glory in His great exaltation and the limitless riches of infinity and eternity to which he is related, as a son of God. And, let the rich glory in that he has been taught the emptiness of the present—the meaninglessness of position and possession in this life, and the wisdom and beauty of the humiliation that sees man as a perishing creature of dust for all his pomp and pride. Both have had their eyes opened to the true wisdom that shows them that present position in life means nothing. This life will be looked back on as but a brief flash of time, in which the only thing that mattered was the development of character. Therefore, our external circumstances do not justify either disappointment or glorying.

Verses 12-18 concern temptation—what it consists of, where its roots run, that all evil is from beneath—from within—and all good is from above—from without. “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation.” For him, there is a crown of life at the end. This crown of life, says James in verse 12, is for those that love the Lord.

What is the connection between loving the Lord and enduring temptation? Only those who love will be able to endure, because love is the only power that can overcome and control evil. Every effort—no matter how noble or how determined or how agonizing—will fail, if it is not based upon love. The crown is just for those who love the Lord with all their hearts.

Verses 14-15 of this section describe the basis of evil more simply and concisely than we find anywhere else. “Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”

The Apostle Paul says in connection with the memorial bread and wine, “Let a man examine himself.” And here is one of the basic tests to examine ourselves by—one of the basic insights that teach us what we are and why we act as we do and what we must do about it.

James’ figure is very striking. As soon as lust is embraced in the mind, conception of something begins. It is the beginning of bringing something to birth. Then, it grows within us—growing upon our own life blood for its development. And so sin comes to a birth. And sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Finished, here, means mature or fully grown. The sin, to which we give birth, itself at last gives birth, and its offspring is death. This is the inevitable course of development. And it all comes from the first concession to lust. The beginning is the important thing.

Continuing in verse 16 – “Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above.” There is nothing good from beneath, or within. All good is from God. “Do not err.” Do not be deceived. In the flesh—in the natural mind—in what we think naturally, there is no good thing. It’s all suffering. All good must come from without—from above—from learning what God has said. God stands waiting before our course.

Verse 18 – “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.” Here is the same figure of conception and birth used for the other side of the picture. Here is the spiritual birth unto holiness and life. Of His Own will, He begat us. The Word sown in the heart begins the conception of the new man of righteousness within us. God Himself has begun all this within us for His Own holy purpose.

“Wherefore,” continues James, verse 19, seeing that God has initiated a glorious process within us, by bestowing His Divine Word in our hearts by the enlightenment of the Gospel, “let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak.” The thought is the same as in Ecclesiastes 5:2 – “God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore, let thy words be few.” God is above; we are beneath. God knows everything; we know nothing. Our purpose in life is to learn and to develop—to grow in knowledge and in godliness.

Let us clearly perceive the apostle’s point. “Be swift to hear, slow to speak.” Realize your abysmal ignorance; realize the vastness of God’s wisdom. Earnestly fill your time with the true learning that you may modify just a little the depth of your natural ignorance—that you may be of some use and pleasure to God. As we are naturally, we are absolutely of no use to Him.

The words of a man of God will be few, cautious and well weighed. He would always be examining himself, checking his own knowledge, very slow to form opinion, very slow to be dogmatic, seeking and crying for the wisdom of God with all his heart and soul, never trusting his own thoughts.

To “slow to speak” James adds, “slow to wrath.” This naturally follows. For among other things, anger is an assumption that we know everything. If we think it over, we will realize it is true. Anger is an assumption that we are in possession of all the facts and are qualified to judge.

“The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God,” he says in verse 20. What depth of meaning there is there! What countless evils have been committed under the cloak of what is called righteous indignation! Human anger is a presumptuous evil, and evil can only breed evil. It is never good.

“Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness,” verse 21. Let us not just skip over this, because of its strange wording, or because we assume it refers to some excess of evil we have nothing to do with. Let us stop and try to find out what James really means, because it is clear his exhortation up to this point has been a general one to all, based upon the basic evil of all flesh.

Filthiness refers to everything that is defiling to holiness. We may not regard ourselves as filthy, but in our natural state, God does. Unless we are cleansed by His Word, we are filthy. James has just drawn a contrast between the motions of sin—the natural reactions of the flesh—all the filthiness of human evil, anger, and presumption (self will)—and the Divine good that is engrafted from above. He has shown that anger is foreign and defiling to the process of godly self-discipline and control.

Superfluity of naughtiness – when the Authorized Version was translated, naughtiness meant wickedness. Words gradually weaken with use. Superfluity seems to refer to a malignant growth, or a destructive fungus that will, if permitted to get a foothold, at last destroy all power to resist, and finally, life itself. Cancerous, or parasitic growth, of wickedness is the meaning here of superfluity of naughtiness.

“And,” he continues, verse 21, “receive with meekness the engrafted word.” The spiritual meekness contrasts with the natural anger, which he condemned. The engrafted Word is a beautiful contrast to the life sapping cancer of wickedness, against which he warns. Here also is something which once engrafted into the fleshly tables of the heart will grow and grow until it permeates and transforms the whole body. But this time the process is life-giving and beneficial, not destructive.

Verse 22-25 deal with the doing of the Word instead of hearing—just passively believing and offering but lip service to godliness. The exhortation is again emphasized by a striking figure—a man looks into a glass, and sees himself very clearly, just exactly as he is. While he confesses the truth of what he sees, and then immediately goes on his way and completely forgets? He forgets. Do not we do the same, time after time after time? We become engrossed in something else, and right away we forget. We forget that the basic purpose in life is spiritual development and self-discipline, and nothing else—not self-pleasing or self-comfort. We forget that we are only growing spiritually while we are consciously doing as unto the Lord whatever we are doing, to please Him, and not to please ourselves. It is possible to be deeply engrossed, even in the work of the Truth, and still be completely forgetful of the basic purpose of our life—why we are doing the work.

Verse 25 – “Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty; and continueth therein...this man shall be blessed in his doing (middle margin).” What is the perfect law of liberty? The sense in the original is expressed a little better by rendering it as the Revised Version does, “the perfect law, the law of liberty.” In chapter 2, James terms it, verse 8, as the royal law, and defines it as, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” He again uses the term law of liberty in connection with it in 2:12. We know this law in its fullness, as Jesus expressed it, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and mind and strength and soul, and thy neighbor as thyself.”

There is a law of liberty in many ways. It is contrasted with the law of bondage—Moses’ law, which was given to bring all under condemnation and to teach men their hopelessness and need. It is the law of liberty from the slavery of the evil motions of the flesh, but by it God gives a spiritual way of life and the power to walk in it. It is the law of liberty from the law of sin and death—the general constitution of evil that comes in the train of Adam’s sin.

Verse 26 – “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain.” Unless the tongue is bridled, religion is vain. James does not mince words. His teaching is blunt and straight forward. No amount of religious activity and zeal are of any avail or have any meaning or value, if there is not a true and real control and direction of the tongue within the framework of divine instruction. When we talk without thought, we are sinning, that is without spiritual thought. James returns more fully to this basic and serious problem later in the epistle. Nothing could be more plain spoken and decisive than his words here.

There is much instruction in the Scripture concerning the use of the tongue. The Scriptures speak of grace and praise and meekness and sobriety and gravity and wisdom and gentleness and kindness of the tongue. And on the other hand, there is evil-speaking and clamor and bitterness and foolish talking and jesting and worldliness and ungodliness. James’ strong words show us here that it is preeminently a case of obedience being better than sacrifice.

“In the multitude of words, there wanteth not sin.” Realizing the propensities of the flesh, the quick untamed wildness of the tongue, and the requirements God has laid down in various places concerning the bridling, or proper use and control of the tongue, we can see how true this statement must be. In the multitude of words, there is bound to be sin. Unless words are carefully chosen, they are bound to be sinful, because they are naturally of the flesh.

The man of God will, therefore, be marked by great reserve and carefulness of speech. He will constantly re-examine himself to see if the fountain is flowing with sweet water or bitter—wisdom or foolishness, spirituality or natural fleshliness. Knowing that upon the answer will be determined whether or not his show of religion is a vain and empty shell.

Verse 27 – “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” Another wonderful example of James’ Spirit-guided ability to express great divine truth in simple, striking, graphic words. Here he sums up all that is a true and living religion. He does not, as some argue, preclude belief of the Gospel, of baptism, and breaking of bread, and all the other pattern of divine instruction. He concisely sums up the purpose and principle and inner heart.

All good to others is embraced in the first phrase, “to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction.” All self-control and spiritual self-development in the second, “to keep himself unspotted from the world.”

The beauty of these teachings is in their limitlessness. We never fully plumb their depth nor fulfill their requirements. But if we grow in grace and spiritual knowledge, we find the engrafted Word gradually expanding in our hearts and lives. More and more, we shall find the gentle pressure of the growing Word within us. More and more, it will purify our hearts and reactions and motives and desires and the expressions of our tongue. More and more, the divine picture will unfold. More and more, the beauty of holiness will impress us, the ugliness of all that is natural to the flesh, the beauty of that transforming way of good that is entirely from above. “Let patience have her perfect work.”

Bro. G.V.Growcott

James 4

James chapter 3 ended with James saying, “The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.”

In our study of chapter 4, he deals with the exact opposite—those who make war. Now there are times when true brethren and sisters must stand up and resist evil and its influences on the Brotherhood. James had just stated in chapter 3, verse 17 that “the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle.....”

When the doctrines of righteousness are attacked, whether from within or without the body, they must be defended. Jude exhorted believers to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints.”

But in chapter 4, James is not referring to defending the Truth, but rather to promoting oneself. Sadly, sometimes those who want self-promotion use the battleground of the Brotherhood for their theater of operations. The common practice of these troublemakers is to pick out a minor or secondary aspect of the Truth that may have various meanings and insist their interpretation is the only correct one. That would be fine left to itself, but when one or more members sow the seed of discord, emphasizing tiny insignificant differences instead of promoting the glorious, beautiful doctrines of righteousness that bind us together, the trouble begins.

Now James refers to this behavior as warfare, because it can end up in two opposing factions. This type of divisive behavior is not limited to large groups. It can be cultivated with as little as two or more members, as long as the flesh raises its ugly head.

We have now come to the part of James' letter where he uses dramatic metaphors to drive home his points. We might wonder why James, and thereby God, uses such strong language in representing bodies of believers. He uses this language to help us see the long term effect of our actions. Also to help us understand God's view of unnecessary infighting. As God told Samuel, “For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.”

We also know that man has a tendency to excuse himself of wrongdoing and does not like to see sin in himself for what it truly is. As Paul said, “that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.” If by our words and actions we discourage people from the Truth, (it's true, they will be responsible for their action) but we will have to answer for our contribution to their downfall. Therefore, we can understand James in verse 2 referring to it as killing someone. More importantly, the result can be eternal death.

Examining this chapter closely, we will read in verse 1 – “From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?”

Two different words for war are used here. The first can mean just a controversy; the second means ‘to serve in a military campaign.’ Perhaps James does this deliberately to demonstrate how a difference of opinion can become controversial when insisted on. This can cause others to want to join one side or the other. Before long, the schisms in the body that Paul deplored have arisen.

Verses 2 and 3 continue – “Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.”

This is a clear example of cause and effect, where someone is out of order in their thinking. Not getting their way or what they want, they refuse to leave it alone. The RSV translates it as a process of continued frustration. “Ye desire, and do not have: so you kill, and covet and cannot obtain: so you fight and wage war.”

Ezekiel referred to this very thing in chapter 34, verse 31 – “And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.”

In Matthew chapter 15, Jesus refers to this problem and helps us understand why prayers under these conditions, will not be answered. Verses 8-9 – “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

Continuing with verse 4 – “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” The word adulterers is absent from some manuscripts. Therefore, James seems to be calling these people the unfaithful bride of Christ.

As to the phrase enemy of God, do we genuinely believe what it says? IF we are participating in worldly activities, do we really accept the concept that God is not just unhappy with us, but considers us his enemy?

Jesus tells us our loyalties cannot be divided, in Matthew 6:24 - “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”

James 4:5 – “Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?” This seems to be a poor translation. It may more correctly be understood to mean that God is envious of the Spirit of truth He has given us. In light of what James said in 1:18 – “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.”

DANIEL – CONCLUDING REMARKS ON CHAPTER 7

James continues this thought of God's jealousy for His own and adds that God is willing to give grace, or undeserved kindness, to His children that repent. Verse 6 – "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."

Peter agrees with this in I Peter 5:5-7 – "For God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."

Verses 7-8 demonstrate positive parallel effects when we submit ourselves to God. "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded."

Experience has shown us that the less time we spend thinking about or engaged in the things of the world, the less interested in them we are. Resisting the Devil is unnatural, it takes effort. What a wonderful promise that God will help us in this struggle, if we approach Him for support and fellowship.

Starting in the middle of verse 8, James lines out the process by which we can position ourselves closer to God, which will provoke greater love toward us—cleansing ourselves with an increased knowledge of His Word—using God's Word to purify our heart and purpose with one goal of serving Him.

Verse 9 teaches us that we must grow up in the Truth. God expects us to be sober-minded and take our vocation very seriously.

Here again in verses 10-12, we are reminded of the root cause of separation from God—lack of humility, speaking evil of others, and judging them unfit for the Kingdom of God, even though the one lawgiver, Jesus Christ himself, has not spoken yet. If we condemn someone through our speech, like Job's friends and Christ accepts that person, we are not in harmony with God's law.

Verses 13-16 define for us a state of mind—acknowledging that of our own selves, we can do nothing. Discussing future plans that leave God out, James calls "evil boasting." God is insulted when we refuse to acknowledge that He is intimately involved in our lives.

We conclude with verse 17 – "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Could simpler words be written that demonstrate that enlightenment or knowledge brings a responsibility to act on that knowledge?

One day we will find ourselves standing before the judgment seat of Christ. Jesus said to the seven ecclesias, "I know thy works."

James gives us clear standards as to what is expected of us. Just as he said before, "Be ye doers of the word."

Bro. John Phillips

"The Holy Ones that slay the Graeco-Roman Dragon, destroy its body in the burning flame of their power, and take away the dominion of the Lion-Man, Bear, and Leopard, are persons who have attained to immortality as a part of the reward promised in the gospel of the kingdom to all "who walk in the steps of the faith of Abraham", whose faith was made perfect by his works (Romans 4:12 James 2:22). These immortals are called holy ones, because they attain to immortality on account of their previous holiness "without which no one can see the Lord"...What did their holiness consist in?...This is a question answered in the following words by the Spirit of God: "The saints are they who keep the commandments of Deity, and the faith of Jesus" (Apocalypse 14:12). Hence it is written, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life."...The faith of Jesus is explained as being "the testimony of Jesus" – what is taught of Jesus Christ (Apocalypse 12:17;19:10); and "the testimony of Jesus" is the spirit, or import, of the prophecy. "The words I speak unto you", said he, "they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63); that is, the words I speak, believed, make alive. The doctrine taught by Jesus intelligently and heartily believed is spirit, from which as the germ of a new existence, holiness unto eternal life originates." (Exposition of Daniel – page 20-21)

A few remarks remain to complete the consideration of the seventh chapter of Daniel, before moving on to consider the details of chapter 8. These will be considered under three headings.

1. Holy Ones, High Ones, and People of the Holy Ones. A full explanation of this analysis can be found in the Exposition of Daniel, page 18 et seq. and provides another example of Bro. Thomas' keen eye for detail in the study of the Scriptures. In this section Bro. Thomas refers to three phrases found in chapter 7, which he points out are associated together in executing judgement upon the Beasts. These are:

1. The High Ones (rendered in the Authorised Version in the singular number as "the Most High" - verses 18, 22, 27).
2. The holy ones (rendered in the Authorised Version as "the saints" - verses 18, 21-22, 27).
3. The people of the holy ones (rendered in the Authorised Version as "the people of the saints" – verse 27).

The High Ones are the Deity and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The word in Chaldee, which this part of Daniel is written in as opposed to Hebrew, is 'elyonin'. It is a plural word, not singular as presented in the Authorised Version. This is very interesting as it connects up the ideas associated with the "Ancient of Days" and "the Son of Man" which were briefly referred to in a previous article.

The Apostle John declares that "the word (Logos) became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). He also said in verse 1 that "the Word was with God, and the Word was God," or as Bro. Thomas expressed it "Theos was the Logos, that is, Deity was the Word." (Eureka Vol.1 page 101).

Bro. Thomas in this section of Eureka elaborates upon the principles of God Manifestation in a most comprehensive manner, and after referring specifically to the Word becoming flesh asks "Was the product, therefore not Deity?" How would we answer that question? We perhaps would feel uneasy answering the question in the affirmative, in view of the Trinitarian apostasy. We may answer that the Lord Jesus Christ was not Deity, and begin to point out the verses showing that Yahweh in One, and not part of a triune God. That would of course be quite correct. The doctrine of the trinity is part of the foolish thinking of the flesh, which unenlightened man invented as far back as Nimrod.

However, while the Lord Jesus Christ is not the Deity, (that is the Uncreate who as the Apostle says "only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see") (1 Timothy 6:16); we can go too far the other way, and deny the Divine side of the Anointed One. In our defence of the Truth against the Trinitarian views, we can miss the vital teaching of the Scriptures that declare that "God was in Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:19). Bro. Thomas answers the question as follows:

"Did the union of spirit with flesh annihilate that spirit, and leave only flesh? Was the holy thing born a mere son of Adam? Or "the fellow" and "equal" of the Deity? (Zechariah 13:7 John 5:18 Philippians 2:6). The latter unquestionably." After this manner THE ETERNAL POWER, or Yahweh, became flesh; and commenced the initiation of his promise, that He would be to Israel for Elohim. The chief Eloah was now born; and as the STAR OF JACOB cradled in a manger, received the homage of the wise, and the acclamation of the heavenly host....Isaiah styles him Yahweh and Elohim, in his prophecy concerning John as "The Voice" that was to herald his manifestation; saying, "Prepare ye the way of Yahweh, make straight in the desert a highway for our Elohim" (chapter 40:3). The Father was one Eloah, and Jesus was another; so

that in this unity were developed two, who, in the Hebrew plural, are termed Elohim. Here, then, was a practical illustration of the phrase, so often occurring in the Scriptures of the prophets, "Yahweh Elohim," most incorrectly rendered in the English Version "Lord God."

This is a very beautiful and profound subject that should engage our attention constantly, as the principles of God Manifestation occur throughout the Word. In the phrase under review, we can see the reason why Bro. Thomas highlighted the fact that the phrase was plural. Yahweh and His Son are the High Ones (plural) "to whom the holy ones belong" (Exposition of Daniel page 18).

Who are the holy ones (again plural) who take possession of the kingdom? These are referred to in the quote from Exposition of Daniel at the start of this article. They are the faithful brethren and sisters of Christ who are declared to be such after inspection at the Judgement Seat in Sinai, and who are rewarded with the wonderful gift of Eternal Life. They are those who will comprise the Rainbow Angel of Apocalypse chapter 10 and who will "execute the Judgements written", slaying the Graeco-Roman dragon and destroying its body in the burning flame of their power. They are part of "the name of Yahweh that cometh from far, burning with his anger" (Isaiah 30:27), who will wrest the kingdoms from the hands of men, and share in the rule of the nations for a thousand years.

We often refer to them as the saints, as rendered in this chapter in Daniel, but there is great significance as describing them as "holy ones," because, as Bro. Thomas points out "they attain to immortality on account of their previous holiness." Holiness is a vital characteristic that we must each possess before we can inherit the Kingdom. Each one of us has to look carefully at our individual lives to ascertain whether we can be regarded as "holy." The word has the idea of something or someone being separate or living separately. A person or thing under the Law could be set apart for divine use. That describes the position we occupy when we are baptised into Christ.

Gesenius defines holy as "pure, clean, free from defilement of crimes, idolatry, and profane things." We live in a world that is the opposite of this, and is defiling in so many ways. Conversations, newspapers, dress, and even adverts that promote (for example) basic household commodities are not free from the corrupting influences of the flesh. It is an evil world, and it takes extreme effort to avoid and keep clear from those things which "spot" the garments of the saints. The danger for the saints (or holy ones) is that with the continual increase in these evil trends, they can become almost oblivious to it. We become accustomed to the ways of the world,

and we cease to be horrified by the things that take place. The various media available today, is pumping filth, corruption and violence into society at an alarming rate. There is nothing too evil that cannot be made available by 'down loading' or 'switching on' - right into the "family" home! The governments of the world are now alarmed at the evil that is being injected into society. But what have they done to prevent it?

Once again we have the situation where men and women's hearts are evil, and that continually (Genesis 6:5). We can be so easily effected by these things in some way or other, and the need to fill our minds with God's Word is becoming more and more imperative. The task of developing and maintaining holiness is getting harder and harder. But if we are going to be part of the "holy ones" then we must succeed in manifesting holiness (1 Peter 1:15-16). We need to close the doors of our homes to shut out the world; strive to keep the Word burning within our lamps; value our ecclesias and actively contribute to them by spiritual discussion; and value the pioneer writings.

We will next consider the people of the holy ones. Who are they? The answer to this question reminds us of the Israelitish character of the Kingdom of God. The kingdom to be set up when Christ returns has been in existence before! It is the Kingdom of Israel restored (Acts 1:6). The people of Israel, for so long despised and trodden down by the nations, will at last submit to the Divine will, and become the greatest nation on earth. The prophet Micah declares in chapter 4 verse 8 "And thou, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem." Bro. Thomas comments on the phrase as follows:

"These are the twelve tribes of Israel, who, under the government of the holy ones, possess "the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven." They possess these in the sense in which a nation is said to possess such things, while at the same time it is only the princes and rulers of the nation who possess the glory, honour, majesty, and high offices of the kingdom. The holy ones, and their Head the Most Holy Prince will possess these with immortality, which pertains to them exclusively; while the Israelites who constitute "the people", or subjects of the kingdom, will stand related to the holy ones as the subjects of all other nations do to the nobility and government of their kingdoms" (See Micah 2:12; 4:6-8, Zephaniah 3:14-20, Zechariah 2:10-12, Zechariah 8:3-8,22-23, Hosea 1:11, Ezekiel 37:22-25).

A careful examination of the Word shows that Christ and the Saints will Marshal the people of Israel so that they become Yahweh's "battle

axe and weapons of war" (Jeremiah 51:20). We are then able to understand how these three phrases are associated together in executing judgement upon the beasts.

Hence verse 27 would read "And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people (Israel) of the holy ones (the saints) of the High Ones (Yahweh and His Son)."

2. A season and time. This is the second item to receive comment. The words are found in verse 12, and the question is, how long is this symbolic period. It is the period during which the lives of the first three beasts are preserved (or prolonged). The answer of course is a logical deduction as Bro. Thomas shows in Exposition of Daniel, page 21:

1. There is a time when the national distinctions among mankind have an end (Jeremiah 30:10-11), after retaining them during the Millennium.
2. The saints reign for a thousand years over the nations as we learn from Apocalypse 20:1-6, after which the kingdom is delivered up to the Father.

Points 1 and 2 are we know of coequal duration, and the period represented by "a season and time" is therefore a thousand years. The following comments from the Doctor are also of interest in considering this phrase:

"A season and time, then, is 1,000 years, or two times of 360 years each; and a set time of 280 years; or nine months and ten days of years, 280 days being a set time, or period of gestation (Genesis 21:2). For this season and time of 1,000 years the holy ones possess the world as theirs. At the end of that time, sin being eradicated, death is abolished, and their priesthood necessarily ceases. They therefore reign no more as priests; but the Deity is all things in all the dwellers upon the earth." (Ibid. page 22)

Stamped the residue with the feet of it. This is the final verse to be considered in the seventh chapter of Daniel, though doubtless much more could be written. A significant amount of what has been considered in the development of the fourth beast (which takes up the most of Daniel's attention in this chapter) has been historical. It will be interesting therefore in conclusion to bring our thoughts up to the present by understanding what these words mean. Again we resort to the detailed analysis of Bro. Thomas:

"The two metals being inserted in the symbol suggest the power it was designed to represent - a dominion constituted of the Greek and Latin elements. Has such a dynastic form of the Kingdom of

Babylon ever existed? The history of the nations of the Mediterranean countries from B.C. 65 to A.D. 395, shows that such a dynastic manifestation not only existed, but “devoured and brake in pieces,” as predicted it would; though it has not yet “stamped the residue with its brazen-clawed Feet”.... It had ten horns.... These ten horns thus conditioned, with the brazen-clawed feet, represent the same things as the iron-clay feet and toes of the Image. When the Russo-Greek elements (clay and brass) are combined with the Gomerians (iron) in the Gog confederacy, the feet of the Graeco-Roman Dragon will be manifested; and it will then “stamp the residue with the feet of it”. Hitherto the Dragon has destroyed with its “great iron teeth”; hereafter it will use its feet and claws. The Feet of the Image, and the Feet of the Dragon, have yet to be formed out of existing elements; and it is the King of the North’s mission to accomplish the work.” (Ibid. page 14)

To help our understanding of what is being said, we need to remember that each succeeding beast in this seventh chapter absorbed the dominion of the former one. The Fourth Beast in this sense would contain the Lion, the Bear and the Leopard. However, as Bro. Thomas explains in Eureka, the “Roman Empire has never yet embraced within its jurisdiction the 127 provinces of the Medo-Persian Bear, which it is necessary it should have done that its Leopard Body (Apocalypse 13:2) might “bear rule over all the earth” and that it might stand upon its Bear-Feet, and with those feet “break in pieces and stamp THE RESIDUE”. John’s Sea Monster with the Bear-Feet and Leopard-Body, represents Daniel’s Fourth Beast in its amplest development of the last days. It answers to Nebuchadnezzar’s Image at the crisis of its demolition by THE STONE.....The residue that yet remains to be stamped, are the “many countries” to be “overthrown,” inclusive of Turkey, Egypt and part of the Glorious Land” (Eureka Vol.3 page 191-192).

We are living in the days when these developments are about to take place. How thankful we should be to the Deity that he has revealed these great Apocalyptic visions to us, through the hand of Bro. Thomas. These symbols in Daniel and the Apocalypse are not “mysteries”, as theologians would regard them. Neither are they descriptions of hideous monsters which have captured the imagination of filmmakers, terrifying the hearts and minds of the deluded multitudes. While they will shortly bring terror in the unfolding of the things they represent, to an unsuspecting and intoxicated world, they are a great source of comfort and joy to the saints who read these things and wait for the consummation of Yahweh’s plan and purpose, when He alone will be exalted, and “the loftiness of man shall be bowed down” (Isaiah 2:11,17).

Bro. Phillip Hughes

Signs and Events

Signs of Christ's Return

BLAIR ORDERS UK ARMED FORCES TO PREPARE FOR IRAQ ATTACK

Tony Blair has ordered British forces to be prepared for action against Iraq if Saddam Hussein fails to comply with demands to disarm.

The Prime Minister has told the British Forces Broadcasting Service that the Government is making all the preparations necessary in case a strike against Iraq becomes inevitable.

Mr. Blair said he apologised for the uncertainty facing those now being mobilised: "I'm sorry about the uncertainty. I'm afraid it's inevitable though, because at the moment we simply don't know whether Iraq will be found in breach of the United Nations resolution.

"And if it is, and if we discover they have been refusing to cooperate properly with the UN inspectors, then we have always made clear that we will go back to the security council, that we will be prepared to use force in order to ensure they are disarmed of all chemical, biological or potentially nuclear weapons."

He went on: "The key thing at the moment is to make all the preparations necessary, and to make sure that we are building up the capacity in the region - both the Americans and ourselves - and that we are able to undertake this mission if it falls to us to do so."

Mr Blair said of any decision ultimately to send forces into action: "These are the hardest decisions because you are aware that you are putting people's lives at risk and that's why we should never undertake conflict unless we have exhausted all other options and possibilities.

"But it's also the case as we have seen in the fight against international terrorism, as we have seen in situations like Kosovo, as we have seen when we are dealing with someone like Saddam Hussein, unless you do have the capability to use force if necessary, it's very hard to make the world a more secure and peaceful place. "Sometimes the best way of avoiding war is to be prepared for war if you have to have it."

Tony Blair presses ahead with all his worthless plans, totally oblivious to the knowledge that "the most high ruleth in the kingdoms of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Daniel 4 v 22). Jeremiah the prophet proclaimed: "O Yahweh, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. (Jeremiah 10:23). PM Tony Blair and President George Bush are fighting a losing battle if they think that they will bring about world peace and stability. 6,000 years of man's rule (the kingdoms of men) has brought about diverse troubles and this troublesome position, we know, will remain unchanged until the

'kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ' (Apocalypse 11:15).

WILL BRITAIN BE EXPELLED FROM THE EU? In the meantime, Britain's support of US policy, is straining her relationship with other European members. In the Daily Telegraph on 6th December, under the heading "Britain could face expulsion from EU" an article appeared setting out the European Union's vision of a new constitution, which proposed sweeping changes, calling for the abolition of the national veto in every area of policy, and the setting of "European taxes." It proposed a "Secretary of the European Union" who would represent the EU and the UN "in an attempt to turn the EU into a world power". The Daily Telegraph submits, "Britain could be expelled from the European Union if it refuses to accept a fully-fledged European government with powers to launch military or police actions on British soil, according to a draft constitution unveiled by Brussels yesterday."

We know at the time of the end that Europe will be a superpower, headed by the Russian armies. It is truly both remarkable and thrilling to view how the relationship between Europe and the UK is shaping up for the final battle!

ZIMBABWE ~ "WHO WILL FEED MY CHILDREN NOW? On the subject of man being incapable of ruling, we note some of the events occurring in Zimbabwe, under the cruel and horrific leadership of President Mugabe. An ethnic cleanser, Mugabe's international policy means that many in his country are starving to death. As a result of the way in which he has willfully seized farms from white owners, his citizens no longer have food (the new farm tenants are unskilled in farming and agriculture) and millions are seriously suffering the affects of malnutrition. The following was submitted by the BBC world news service: -

"On the edge of a dry, dusty field, 30 miles east of Harare there is a small collection of mud huts. It is home to 200 farmworkers. Five months ago, they worked in the surrounding tobacco fields for their white employer but the farmer has been forced off his land and the crop he planted has withered in the ground. The self-styled "war veterans" who surround his empty farmhouse refuse to let these people work. They are guarding this farm for their new tenant. President Robert Mugabe claims land like this has been confiscated to assist the resettlement of landless peasants. But the selection process is controlled by committees from the ruling Zanu-PF party and the main beneficiaries are party officials, "war veterans", and card-carrying members of the party, some of whom have no background in farming.

Zimbabwe ~ Broken Nation The tenant of this farm has yet to make an appearance. In the faces of these former farm workers is a nation broken. Cowed into submission by their indifferent masters they sit and wait. But

as they wait the stomachs of their children grow bigger, swollen by malnutrition. "We have no food, no work and no money. Who will feed my children now," says 37-year-old Grace. Her 10 children are given one meal a day. Through the hot afternoons, under a baking sun, they scavenge in the nearby woods for roots and fruit. Already two people from this village have died. One from chronic diarrhoea, the other from Aids.

Zimbabwe ~ Political Aid "Something like 4.6 million people in this country need food aid now", said one reporter. "By December that figure is going to rise to 6.7 million".

Whenever I hear or read these type of reports, I often think of those words on page one, of chapter one, in Elpis Israel:-

"This celestial orb, which is a world or system of itself, is styled THE EARTH. It is the habitation of races of animals which graze its fields, lurk in its forests, soar through its atmosphere, and pass through the paths of its seas. At the head of all these is a creature like themselves, animal, sensual and mortal. He is called MAN. He has replenished the earth and subdued it, and filled it with his renown. His crimes, however, rather than his virtues, have illustrated and distinguished him with an unhappy pre-eminence above all other created things. His heart is evil; and, left to its uncontrolled impulses, he becomes licentious, merciless, and more cruel than the fiercest beast of prey.

WAR FEARS ~ Report by the BBC World Service: In Jerusalem, there are hardly any signs that the elections are just weeks away.

I have seen a few buses with Sharon signs painted on them. But that is about it. In fact people seem more caught up by the threat of war against Iraq - and a possible strike against Israel - than they do by this election.

This shows that Israeli citizens live in fear every day of their lives, but prophecy (Ezekiel 38) seemingly indicates that they will dwell in peace before Armageddon.
Bro. Stephen Male

The Deep Things of God - The Perilous Grapevine

A few years ago, I had an experience that would have a profound affect upon how I view information that circulates among brethren. It seems that a wayward brother, who I had known for many years, had officiated at a wedding.

The ceremony, held in a Protestant church, was for a recently fallen-away brother and a non-Christadelphian woman. This information had been passed along to me by a Christadelphian who I had also known for a long time.

I was told that after the marriage, the newlyweds were meeting at the site of their wedding, Fellowship Bible Church -- a congregation that holds similar beliefs to the Southern Baptists. Later, I was informed that the couple had

been asked to leave the church because they could not afford to pay tithes. Apparently, the church needed the money and had located a prospective member who was able to provide financial support. Where the couple went from there was not known.

All of this was enough to both shock and sadden everyone who knew the parties involved. Except for one thing. It was subsequently discovered that much of this was untrue. Was there a wedding? Yes. A fallen-away brother to a non-Christadelphian? Yes. Was it held at a church? Yes. The above mentioned? No. Were they married by the brother? No. A wayward brother? No. Any brother? No. Were they later asked to leave a church for the reason cited? Yes. The aforementioned church? No.

It is not known precisely how this story began. There was certainly a seed of truth, but as the account was passed from one individual to the next, it became increasingly distorted. Finally, by the time the story reached the last person on the grapevine, it bore little resemblance to fact. And a brother was falsely accused in the process.

Many of us could cite similar cases wherein falsehoods have circulated among brethren and sisters. Perhaps even situations where we have been a link in the gossip chain. In virtually all instances we have no idea that the information is incorrect. And so, it continues to spread.

Such cases should serve to demonstrate how vital it is that all information be verified before we contemplate passing it on to another. Why? Because if we do not check all of the facts, there is a likelihood that brethren will be falsely accused by our words, and their reputations ruined within the Body. That it may be done unknowingly is not an acceptable excuse, nor does it alter the fact that damage, possibly irreparable, has been done.

Our Lord Jesus Christ provides ample guidance for us. He declares that we should never accuse our brethren falsely (Lk. 3:14). The Apostle Paul writes that we must not be false accusers or slanderers (Tit. 2:3; 1 Tim. 3:4). Why? Because false accusation is not God's way (Jn. 17:17). Because how we treat our brethren is also, in effect, how we treat Christ (Matt. 25:40-46).

And so, with this exhortation in hand, how should we proceed when we hear something passed along the grapevine? We could, of course, refuse to listen to it. But this is really a cop-out. The responsible course would be to heed Paul's exhortation. He states: "In the mouth of two or three witnesses, shall every word be established" (2 Cor. 13:1). Who, exactly, is a witness? Not one on the grapevine. On the contrary, it is a person who has firsthand knowledge. And there can be no better firsthand information than that obtained directly from the individuals who are being talked about (Matt. 18:15).

This approach may present the best opportunity to heal that which is wounded, set matters straight, and put a stop to the gossip.

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

“Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?” (Zech. 7:5)

In Zechariah 7 we read of a delegation sent to Zechariah to ask if the nation should continue keeping certain fasts. We do not read of Moses commanding observance of such, and from the above verse, it sounds like they were only kept for the seventy years of captivity in Babylon. Zechariah 8:19 outline the four fasts in question: “The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth.” What were these fasts?

(1) The fast of the fourth month was to commemorate the breaching of the wall by Nebuchadnezzar. “And on the ninth day of the fourth month the famine prevailed in the city --- and the city was broken up”. (2 Kings 25:3)

(2) The fast of the fifth month was the most important one, as it commemorated the destruction of the temple. “And in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month---he burnt the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire.” (2 Kings 25:8 & 9)

(3) In the seventh month, the nation mourned the murder of Gedaliah (2 Kings 25:25).

(4) The last fast in the tenth month commemorated the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem. (2 Kings 25:1)

The specific question regarding these fasts is, “Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years?” (Zech. 7:3)—that is to say, “should we keep these fasts now that the captivity is over?” It seemed inappropriate to maintain the fasts of affliction, as it was obvious that the nation was experiencing great blessings. They had returned from exile, great progress had been made in the rebuilding of the temple, and they had just received a bountiful harvest. They, therefore, wanted the prophet to get God's decision on this dilemma.

God's answer was that they were not keeping the fasts for Him, but they were mourning their own losses. This is as much an exhortation for us as it was for those to whom he spoke. The prophet very plainly brings the seriousness of their position to their attention. Whether or not to keep the fast was not the issue God wanted them to focus on. He shows that it is not the external observances that God is concerned about, but it's the internal attitude to divine ways that makes all the difference. God is not concerned about the outward show of fasting, per se. These calamities were the result of their own sins. God's desire was not to punish, but rather to restore and bless if only His people would love righteousness and live in obedience to His word.

Christ gives us the same lesson: It is not the outside of the cup that needs washing, but the inside. In other words, our hearts and minds must be right with God.