

# 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

**WANAQUE, New Jersey** - Memorial Meeting 11:00am on the first day of the week - Bro. David Van Pelt, 224 Conklintown Road, P. O. Box 355, Wanaque, New Jersey 07465 - (973) 831-8815.

Dear Brethren and Sisters,

Greetings of love in our Master's name. It has been quite some time since our last writing: so, here is an update. We are very thankful and joyful that our firstborn daughter, Rebekah Naomi Van Pelt gave a good confession of her faith and belief of the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ! She was baptized in Bro. Wayne Wolfe Jr.'s tank down in Lampasas and was given the right hand of fellowship that same day, Sunday, September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2002. She was a member in the Lampasas Ecclesia for a while longer, but has now returned home to Wanaque. We are very happy to have her home again, not only as our daughter, but now as a sister in Christ Jesus. She is a welcome member in this ecclesia.

We feel the loneliness of isolation here in Wanaque, but have often been refreshed by visits up to the Boston area Ecclesia, which meets in Dedham, MA, and by visits from those brethren able to come our way. Over the past year and a half we have had visits from Bro. David L. Sommerville (who fell asleep just above a year ago - February 26, 2002). He spent a couple of months with us before moving up to Northborough, MA where he lived until his demise. We so enjoyed those months with him here enjoying especially, reading and discussion of the Word. Bro. David is Lois' father and my father-in-law. He is sorely missed. His sleep will be short, as we see that the day of the Lord's coming is very near, indeed! Others who visited us through that period are Bro. Jim and Sis. Kathy Sommerville, Bro. Stephen and Sis. Sharon Osborne and Bro. Jeremy Osborne and Bro. Mike and Sis. Leslie Morrell-Norwood.

Though we missed the Hye Fraternal Gathering this past summer, we did enjoy our trip down to visit the brethren and sisters in Lampasas in September and as mentioned above, witness the baptism of Rebekah. We were also thankful to be able to attend the Northeast Fraternal Gathering up in Devens, MA. We count these times of fraternal visitation and gathering as oasis stops along the way through the spiritually dry and desolate wilderness through which we are passing. Any who can come this way are most welcome. May Yahweh bless and keep all of the household of faith unto that perfect day which cannot be far off in light of all we see around us.

Your brother in Christ,  
David C. Van Pelt

**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,

We are pleased to learn of news from other ecclesias of their growth and activities. It is therefore with some reluctance that we have unhappy news that we are bound to share with our brethren and sisters elsewhere. It has been necessary for us, after long and constant appeals to our brother, to withdraw our fellowship from Bro. Paul Rabjohns for long continued absence from the Memorial Meetings. Also, sadly, due to conduct unbecoming of a sister in Christ we have had to separate from Sis. Denise Small. We pray that our brother and sister will see the need to return to the One Hope of our calling before it is too late.

This news has been difficult to report, and also a huge blow upon our ecclesia, and we appeal to all Bereans as did Macedonia of old, "Come over and help us!" A very warm welcome is assured to any who may be able to travel to Australia. The brethren and sisters here send their greetings to all of the brotherhood.

Your brother in Christ,  
Ted Mingham.

## 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

**Study Class Topics:** 1 Peter and 2 Peter – Daily Bible Readings - Discussion Monday, July 21 - The Stone That Smote the Image Became A Great Mountain and Filled the Whole Earth – Dan. 2:35 "The Kingdom of God" - Daniel prophecies about man-made governments being crushed by Christ as He sets up God's kingdom to fill the whole earth.

Tuesday, July 22 - A Wise Man Builds His House Upon A Rock - Matt 7:24 "The True Gospel is Vital to Know, Understand, and Obey" - The foundation we must build on is the truth of Jesus' sayings.

Wednesday, July 23 - He is the Rock: A God of Truth - Deut 32:4 - "The Father" - God is our rock, our fortress, our deliverer, our strength, the horn of our salvation, and our refuge.

Thursday, July 24 - Some Seeds Fell Upon a Rock - Luke 8:6-13 - "Man is Sinful, Prone to Temptation, & Totally Mortal" - Man's nature is sinful, prone to temptation, and totally mortal - redemption through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Friday, July 25 - A Precious Corner Stone - Isaiah 28:16 "The Christ of the Bible" - Christ is the corner stone, foundation, core, and nucleus of God's promises to mankind.

Saturday, July 26 - There Will Not Be One Stone Left Upon Another - Matt. 24:2 - "The Signs That Christ's Return is Near" - Prophecies regarding the destruction of the commonwealth of Israel and Jerusalem and the Temple in AD 70, as well as their future restoration as the Kingdom of God is established.

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

## FORGIVING UNDERSTANDING AND FORGETTING

Our subject is divided under two headings; one is "Forgiving through Understanding," and "Forgiving and Forgetting."

We read recently that there is a proverb that the French use, which translated into English, is 'to understand is to forgive.' This gave us some food for thought.

Some among us bear problems in our lives, which we may choose to not share with others or maybe with only a few. These trials may give cause to behavioral traits of impatience, short temper and other nasty outbreaks, which can lead to offences. For those in the know there will be some measure of tolerance and perhaps sympathy—those for example, members of the immediate family. For those not in tune with some background to the one giving offence, there may not be the same tolerance. Irrespective, we all need to realise, just as we may have factors which may cause us to act out of character, others most certainly will too.

To understand others, we need, as was quite aptly pointed out to us in our discussion on James recently, to set ourselves to developing good ecclesial relationships in our day to day lives over and above that accorded to us at the Memorial and other ecclesial meetings. How much or little do we know of others' difficulties? Are our lives outside immediate ecclesial activities devoted to our families and ourselves? Should we not be sharing this also with those of our ecclesial family?

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Perhaps this word understanding bears some thought. Let us turn it around to standing under. Do we stand under the problems of others—as in

helping to carry those weights borne by them? Paul exhorts us in this very direction.

“Bear ye one another’s burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ.” Gal. 6:2

This burden—‘baros’ in the Greek—is the burden we can bear by help and sympathy. Coming then back to this matter of forgiveness, is it not true that as we understand one another’s weaknesses and strengths—and they ours—that we will tend to be more tolerant of those weaknesses and be more ready to forgive any trespasses, realising we have our weaknesses? Sometimes these trespasses are mere irritations, but given enough—a cause for real offence—a stumbling block will or may arise. Hopefully they will be quietly and quickly forgotten. Human nature, however, being as it is—we may need some scriptural medicine to remind us of our duty when forgiveness appears difficult.

Our Lord left us with words that cannot be misunderstood when answering Peter’s query, “Lord how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?” Jesus saith unto him, ‘I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.” Matthew 18:21-22

Jesus proceeded to illustrate his point with a parable in which a certain king took account of his servants, and showed that because of the enormous debt we owe to our Heavenly Father, that we ought to always forgive those who offend us. This is summed up in the following words from our Lord—

“So likewise shall My heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.” Matthew 18:35

Let us then, brethren and sisters, try to discover what may be at the root, giving rise to these offences, and if we are unable to discover anything obvious, imagine that every one who offends us personally has a hidden problem that has caused him/her to commit an offence, and with understanding, to forgive as our Father in heaven forgives us, for our constant offences against Him. Remember Christ forgave those who crucified and vilified him when he said,

“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” Luke 23:34

Stephen said, in his agony, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” Acts 7:60

This is the attitude we need to have if we claim to be followers of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Yes, understanding does lead to forgiving. Understanding ourselves and our weaknesses, helps us to understand those of others. Even Christ could understand the deep-seated forces at work in human nature, which could lower itself to what it did to him. This is true understanding. Let us also realise that the Father in His great compassion, understands us. This is so wonderfully  
89 brought out to us in the Psalms.

“The Lord is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

He will not always chide: Neither will He keep His anger for ever.

He hath not dealt with us after our sins; Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

For as the heaven is high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.

As far as the east is from the west, So far hath He removed our transgressions from us.

Like as a father pitieth his children, So the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust.” Psa. 103:8-14

On the subject of forgiving, we sometimes hear a response to the asking for forgiveness, “I will forgive but I won’t forget.” Whilst the hurt may be of such a nature as to make it hard to forget, there is no merit in offering this half-hearted gesture of forgiveness. The attitude is wrong, indicating that a conscious effort will be made to store the incident in one’s memory. This may be a problem on both sides of any fallout among brethren and sisters. It is not reasonable to expect someone to promise to forget the incident which may have caused much pain, but the one the subject of the pain ought to be able to assure the forgiven one that every effort will be made to forget it. There is such a thing as doing everything possible to highlight in one’s mind the virtues of the one forgiven to crowd out the past misdemeanour. Unfortunately, sometimes the forgiven one commits the same or a similar incident, which then has the effect of restoring the memory of the previous incident or incidents. Again the offended, in forgiving the offender, has to resolutely embark on a dulling of the memory of this further incident.

Sometimes, whilst there is no verbal expression by the offended brother/sister, of any intended retention of this incident in their memories, there can be an attitude shown in subsequent dealings between the two parties, that all is still not well. It could have been because the one offended has decided that he/she, because of the previous incident, cannot trust the offender. This ought not to be. True reconciliation involves a restoration to the previous relationship of brother/sister and all that goes with being brethren and sisters in Christ. If the previous relationship has been a little frosty, there is a case after the extension of forgiveness, for the opening of a new and better relationship in the future. There is nothing like a generous spirit of forgiveness, even in aggravated circumstances, to break down previous barriers of misunderstanding. We know of a couple with a seemingly testy neighbour, who had to endure some tense and angry confrontations, even receiving advice that the neighbour couldn’t sleep one night thinking how she might dispatch one of the two. After the neighbour suffered a serious stroke, the two set out to help her as best as they could, and offered an apology for anything they had done that might have contributed to her health problem. 90

She was so taken back that she couldn't refuse to accept the help and the apology, and gradually the true neighbourly spirit was engendered. Now a firm friendship has been formed, which goes to demonstrate the virtue of the advice of Paul borrowed from the Proverbs in writing to the Romans.

“Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.” (Romans 12:20)

Proverbs 25:21-22 adds, “And the Lord shall reward thee.” Surely this spirit is the best way to deal with offending ones, do good to them, and ignore their offences, in the spirit of forgiveness extended by the Lord to his enemies. Or as Paul goes on to say,

“Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”

We ought also to remember that forgiveness sought by us from the Father can only be granted if we forgive those who trespass against us.

“And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive your trespasses.” Mark 11:25

“And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.” Ephesians 4:32

“Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.” Colossians 3:13

There is also the factor, that we ask God to remember not our sins as in the following scriptures—

“Remember, O Lord, Thy tender mercies and Thy lovingkindnesses: For they have been ever of old. Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: According to Thy mercy remember Thou me for Thy goodness' sake, O Lord.” Psalm 25:6-7

“O remember not against us former iniquities: Let Thy tender mercies speedily prevent us: For we are brought very low.” Psalm 79:8

“Be not wroth very sore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see, we beseech Thee, we are all Thy people.” Isaiah 64:9

How would we feel if God responded to us, to say that He would forgive us, but He would not forget our sins? Would we feel assured of ultimate forgiveness under this cloud?

Another thought comes to mind with this aspect of forgiving and forgetting. There is a word used to describe the act of reconciliation, which occurs where two persons settle their differences. Although this word is usually used by courts or governments to describe their act of forgiving, its meaning and derivation is interesting. The word is “amnesty” and one, which 91 carries the meaning of pardon as with political offenders, and has the idea

of an act of oblivion. Now another word with the same derivation is “amnesia” which means a partial or complete loss of memory. So there you have the idea of memory lost, and how wonderful to see the idea of forgiving linked so positively with forgetting. If the words forgiveness, pardon, amnesty are so linked with forgetting who are we to dare separate the two ideas? Yes, we must forgive and forget! Words are nothing on their own, we know, but words come from ideas and are chosen not for effect but for deliberate expressions of what we mean. Let us say what we mean and mean what we say, and as we were recently encouraged, do not say it meanly. Yes in expressing forgiveness do as the word means to give with force and unreservedly. Meanly given is a holding back. Let it be a gift, which is an expression of generosity. The Lord loves a cheerful giver, and we can be sure He has in mind all aspects of giving which includes forgiving. Let us look at that Scripture more closely.

“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.” 2 Cor. 9:7

First of all when we decide to forgive another, (the one forgiven may never know there has been an offence), it is done with purpose in the heart, or motivation for good, so we should never feel that we have to do it as a matter of necessity, which aggravated circumstances may incline us to respond to, nor should it be reluctantly conceded, if we are to follow Paul's words here. To add weight to this, consider Paul's words to the Romans.

“Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.” Romans 12:8

He that extends mercy can fit the one who forgives another, so never should he do this reluctantly, as sometimes occurs, when one is possibly forced into such a step for fear of the consequences of not forgiving, because it is expected or demanded by others. It is far better to delay forgiveness until the right spirit accompanies its extension, and avoid the circumstances as in the case of those who think they can by a few well chosen words, not from the heart, deliver the qualified forgiveness, with a statement that they won't forget, or in their heart say this to themselves, or even worse still confide this to others, as if they wanted to maintain their point that they had been unjustly done by and would continue to harbour resentment.

There is something further which should control our attitude to those who may offend us. That is the spirit of “love” which is agape love as extended by the Father to us. That is love even to the undeserving, a reaching out love, and one without reservation. Much is written on this topic, but none better than that of 1 Corinthians 13.

“Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;” 1 Corinthians 13: 4-5 92

In other words as bearing upon our topic of forgiveness and forgetting, love is patient and kind, and is not easily provoked and thinks no evil. With all these virtues operating because of love, why would one construct an evil motive, and even then why would one be readily provoked, and having a patient disposition and kindness as well, why would one respond to any act of evil, other than to turn the other cheek and pass on. Peter tops this off with his thoughts—

“And above all things have fervent love among yourselves: for love shall cover the multitude of sins.” 1 Peter 4:8, See also Proverbs 10:12

Does this sound familiar? It should, seeing it was Peter who asked how often he should forgive his brother—and what was the Lord’s response? — Not seven times, but seventy times seven—yes, a multitude of sins.

Notwithstanding the best efforts of many, there will be instances in which all the efforts in the world will not rectify a fall out on either side of such efforts to forgive or be forgiven, and Bro. Roberts has a few words of advice for us.

“There will come times in everyone’s experience—even in the relations of the best friends, when a divergence of view on some little matter may cause a hitch. If your friend is a moral Buckramite (buckram is a coarse linen cloth stiffened with glue—perhaps one who is unyielding would be a good description—our comment)—or you yourself happen to be so, which, of course, is not impossible—or worse still, both—the hitch is ‘ungetoverable.’ A breach in base metal cannot be repaired. The Buckramite, once off the rails of good fellowship, can never be hoisted on again. He is formal and unfriendly for evermore. The true man is different from this. He forgives, and starts again, as the law of Christ requires. He works by that law in all things. His friendship does not so entirely depend, as the other’s, upon the qualities of those to whom it is extended. It is based in great part upon divine considerations. It is drawn from a deeper source than the friendship of the carnal man. It is drawn by an invisible process from the deep profound of God. He is consequently not easily discomfited. He pursues his steady way without deviation. He will be found in the path of duty, whatever may come, whatever disruption may arise, whatever evil winds may blow—alike through evil as through good report.

This is the characteristic of Christ’s true people. It is easy to make a profession of the truth. This is a day of religion-professing, and a man may as easily profess one religion as another. Let us have the true disciples of Christ, walking in the light as he was in the light—men of benevolence, men of patience, men of high honour, men of righteous practice, men of disinterested aim, and unflinching obedience—men who live now for Christ. This only, or something near it, will suffice for eternal life. The truth puts us in the way. It puts us into a position in which we may be saved. It, as it were, secures our 93 “entrance” in the list for the race. This is a great thing in a day when so

difficult of achievement. But let us not rest upon it. We must work out our own salvation, running with patience the race set before us. We must all at last stand before the judgment seat of Christ; and it is the mode of running that will then be in question. The subject of enquiry will not be how much of the truth we have. The thing to be brought into account will be “works,” which embraces all that pertains to the character of a man.”

These words of Bro. Roberts point to the need to get on with the positive work, which there is for us to do. If we are of the mind of Christ, we will be encouraged by his example, who forgave even those who crucified him, and never allowed his adversaries to interrupt his work, which was going about to do his Father’s business. Let us also be about this business and take courage at the example of His dear son, our great High Priest above. We should see, brethren and sisters, how needful for us to exercise greater effort to understand our brethren and sisters in a meaningful way. Sufficient understanding will avoid needless offences and less need for forgiving and forgetting them.

Bro. Ted Mingham

## Out Of The Abundance Of The Heart

I would like to spend a few minutes talking about 10 words, - "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Matthew 12:34

Here we have 2 organs, approximately 1 1/2 feet from each other. Have we really stopped and thought about this verse? This commentary by Christ?

"Heart" in Strongs is "Kardia", english Cardio. Explanation in Strongs is "The soul or mind as it is the fountain and seat of the thoughts, passions, desires, appetites, affections, purposes, endeavours". You can, in other words, know a person by their conversation; after all, this is what Jesus was getting at. If one's interest is automobiles, the conversation will surround cars, trucks, engines, prices, trade-ins, what's hot, what's not, etc. By a conversation, quite often you can tell a person's occupation, or hobby quite quickly.

So far, what I have said is not wrong - I mean, it is not wrong to talk about the things you love. After all, Jesus continues his discourse by saying "A good man out of the good treasure bringeth forth good things." Good man - Strongs "Good": good constitution, or nature, useful, pleasant, agreeable, joyful, happy, excellent, distinguished, upright, honorable.

There you have it - if we have a good constitution or nature we will talk only about good things. So what are the good things? Family, work, friends, brethren and sisters, the ecclesia, things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the things concerning the name of Jesus Christ, the future hope?? Yes, all these things can be good; after all, it says to do ALL to the glory of God.

The opposite things to good would be evil things and Jesus has something to say about this also. Vs 35. "And an evil man, out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." Evil man - Strongs evil: full of 94

labors, annoyances, hardships, pressed and harrassed by labors, bringing toils, perils - of a time full of peril to Christian faith and steadfastness, causing pain and trouble, bad nature. What a contrast to a good man.

So what becomes evil? Mark 7: 21-23. Well - at least we don't have to worry about that now, do we? I do!! Take for example the fire we recently had at Straitline. Was this a trial brought upon us by our Heavenly Father, to see our reactions or to shape us in a way he could see we need shaping? Jeremiah 17:9-10 says that God does work with us because he knows the heart.

Did we look at it this way? Not really. I pointed the finger, felt we knew who did this terrible thing to us, and spoke nothing but evil of the man who terrorized our lot, and our life. This not being enough, a week and a half later, we had windows smashed and stereos stolen.

Didn't learn the first time? Try again. I believe that is where these thoughts came to me for this exhortation. The world is a very wicked place, and will only get worse. We live in it, and we deal with it every day. We also know that it will only get worse, so why speak evil of the things that directly affect us? We have to learn to turn things around, not get so stressed about the evil, and make it something good. What lesson can I learn from this? Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. I don't know who lit the fire for sure, so until then, I should not complain or point fingers.

It's not only the fire, but I believe throughout our life we are faced with many things that cause us to react instantly, without much thought as to what lesson I can learn from this. Often our quick reactions bring evil thoughts and evil conversation. Gossip as well is quite frowned upon.

In Paul's letter to Timothy he says people learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not. Speaking - to use words in order to declare one's mind and disclose one's thoughts. If we take a few moments and hold back our first reaction, we might ask this question: what can I learn from this? It only takes 2 seconds to ask in your mind, yet it might take longer to answer. If it does then our first response may not be the best response, and reflecting back on our reaction, we may regret it horribly. Or we may realize our hearts spoke evil instead of good. You see, this is the whole reason why Jesus spoke those words - "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh". It says in vs 25 "and Jesus knew their thoughts."

We are taught from Sunday School that God is everywhere - he knows the thoughts and hearts of all men. And as Jesus said in Matthew 15: 19 - "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts." Jesus completes his thoughts with resounding warning to us. Vs 36: "But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgement for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

When we are faced with a challenge, or a trial, give it a lot of thought before reacting. It is a maturing in the Truth. Our goal is to bring honor and glory to God in all that we say and do and think and if we can say amen to that, then we must take particular care in what proceeds out of our heart. Perhaps what is presently in our heart needs to be examined as we partake of these emblems. Do people know we are a religious people by how we live day to day? Can we look in the mirror and say yes, my heart contains good thoughts and intention? Out of the abundance (that which fills the heart) the mouth speaketh. Let the daily reading, the private meditations, the exhortations, the hymns, directly affect our heart for the good, and push out all evil.

We all know the day is approaching, when all thoughts will be made known and we will have to stand before our judge and give account for all we have spoken. Let us be able to stand confidently before Him, knowing we have done our best to speak only good, and to fill our hearts with joy and peace. Hebrews 4:12-16.

Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

Bro. Dan Jackson

## Brevity of Life

As we grow a little older, we are made very aware of the brevity of life, and how critical it is to spend our resources on the things that will last. Some of us who are older will know exactly what that means, but it is harder to fully realize this when we are young and have so many opportunities ahead of us.

In this world we live in, it sometimes seems that we are cocooned in a man-made world where perception is reality and perhaps reality is perception. We are continually bombarded by the media flickering with a mixture of reality and fiction—all neatly worded and pictured to get our attention and to influence us to maybe buy something, or to do something, or even think something. This is not easy to resist, and in fact, is nearly impossible to be untouched by it. Perhaps a little example will help us understand how important it is for us to recognize our vulnerability to man-made perception, and indeed, to our own perceptions.

Probably all of you have had the experience of attending the local Imax Theatre at least once to take in some of the very excellent presentations that they offer. You are no doubt familiar with the huge screen and the 16 channel sound, which wraps you in sound and picture. The effect of this is extremely moving, as anyone who has attended will attest. It is even possible to experience motion sickness, as you fly with the jet pilot, or ride the crest of the surf. This is in spite of the fact that all the while your chair is bolted securely to the concrete floor. Have you ever been able to resist the turn of your stomach, as you vault over the edge of a cliff, or bungee jump off 96

that bridge? The experience is so moving that I doubt if anyone can come out of a picture not feeling that they have been there in the thick of the action.

Now all of this is possible as long as there is an unbroken picture or sound track. If something happens to mar the clarity of the picture or sound, immediately we are vaulted back to the reality that we are simply sitting in a chair in a theater, so engrossed that the brain has carried us to an “out-of-body” experience. This is a rather simple, but hopefully effective, way of showing us how possible it is for us to perceive ourselves to be there, living in the moment, when in fact it is a skillful combination of sight and sound, operating on the brain to create an impression, which seems real, but is in fact simply a sensory experience.

It is a fact that if there is noise, and action, and all kinds of sensory input into our brains, then we are impressed. We listen and remember. We live in the moment, and we are moved. That is simply our constitution. Paul says, “Touch not, taste not, handle not,” referring to that which is physical—that which passes. This underlines how hard it is for us mortals to keep focused on things that are plain and low key, things that seem ordinary, especially things that are repeated often.

Just the other day, the earth shook so violently that buildings fell and earth slid, trapping and burying people alive. Do you think that those people were moved? Obviously, yes! Or what about the fires that swept over the hills of Sydney? Are those people shocked? Of course! Or the hurricanes that sweep over the Gulf of Mexico and push water up over the land, destroying houses and trees? A moving experience? Very much so!!!

We have a record of a man of God who experienced all of these things and because of his courage was unmoved. But when he heard the still small voice, he was afraid. Why? Because he knew that God’s angel was not in any one of these things, but He was in the voice.

So what does this teach us? It should teach us that we cannot rely only on that which is seen, heard, or felt. It should teach us that not everything that is seen or heard or felt is real; and conversely, that not all that which is not sensed is unreal. Paul says in II Corinthians 4:18, “So then the things which are seen are temporal, while the things which are not seen are eternal.”

And that leads us to some useful conclusions that impact on us right here and now. We come together each Sunday at the same time and place—often dressed the same, sitting in the same place, meeting with the same people, going through the same order of events, often using the same or similar wording, for the same reasons, and then we find that like the disciples we have trouble watching for one hour. Our minds have trouble focusing on this most important event in our week.

Once again we must underline the unreliable tendencies that we have.

97 Remember we like that which is showy, that which is emotional, that

which is novel. We are easily distracted from our better judgment by these things. Why? Because man looks on the outward appearance, not on the heart.

So then what is to be done to help us in our feeble remembrance this morning? Perhaps for one thing it might be helpful to consider the alternatives. Paul says, “If Christ had not risen, we would be still in our sins, and without hope in the world.” What a helpless, hopeless, depressing picture this would be! Nothing would have meaning, and all would revert to a mere mechanical, animal existence! And that, Brethren and Sisters, would leave us no better off than the world around us, drifting down towards death.

“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.” “But thanks be to God, which giveth us the VICTORY through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” The facts are undeniable; Jesus is risen. And because of that, we have the GOOD NEWS OF SALVATION!!!!!!

Instead of sleepy, we should be excited, motivated, gladdened, encouraged, uplifted, anticipating, living in the moment, expecting, helping, praising, praying, studying, involved, working, loving, and watching. We have the pearl of great price—the still small voice that we hold in our hands every day. How can we allow ourselves to be complacent, when our future hangs on this fact that Jesus is coming again and his reward is with him?

As we break the bread and drink the wine, we are impressed by the simplicity of this occasion. Yet, we note the meaning and clarity of this symbol. It carries us back to the instituting of this, and ahead to what it foretells. How can we allow ourselves to treat this lightly or not to discern its meaning? The things which are seen are temporal (temporary), while the things which are not seen are eternal (lasting for the age). The things which are eternal are more real than the things which we see today. They are simply held in store for those who have the confidence to wait in faith without losing sight of the goal. Let us rejoice, and again I say, let us rejoice!!!!

Bro. Gordon Jones

## Spiritual Growth

Recently while jogging on the treadmill at the health club, I got ambitious and turned up the speed to 5.5 m.p.h.—too fast for me! I stumbled and was almost thrown off the treadmill. Fortunately the controls were readily accessible.

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A funny story you might think, but here’s the point. Spiritual development is not much different from getting in shape physically. When starting out, each individual should decide on the pace he/she is capable of. Progress

comes with persistence and a consistent effort, as well as the right balance of all the ingredients that contribute to good health.

It is not uncommon in a health club environment, teeming with personal trainers and workout gurus, to feel pressured by others who are at a more advanced level. There is also a tendency for personal trainers to criticize the young student because they think he's not trying hard enough. In embarrassment he tries, fails, becomes frustrated, and never returns to the health club.

The question is, are we playing personal trainer to our younger members, telling them what speed (time devoted to study, frequency at gatherings, preference in music, style of clothing or hair, etc.) they should be able to handle when they get on the "Zionward treadmill"? Are we so anxious for them to progress that we set the speed on their treadmill so fast that they ultimately stumble and fall off, and bitterly leave the Truth?

Growth in almost all biological systems follows a common pattern relative to time. Typically it begins with an early phase of slow growth characterized by adaptation and assimilation, followed by an exponential phase of rapid growth, and finally a plateau phase where equilibrium and stability is achieved. The length of time spent in each growth phase varies according to a number of intervening external and internal factors. When it comes to spiritual growth the process does not deviate much. God does not expect us to bypass the early assimilation phase anymore than He expects us to become stagnant in the stable plateau phase.

As older brethren and sisters let us recognize that the growth process varies for each individual. Let us walk a few steps in their shoes (Nikes or Keds) and remember where we were at their level of development. Let us remember this in relation to all our siblings in the Truth. God alone knows their heart, what growth phase they're in, what their personal circumstances are, and their individual capabilities.

Let us also remember God's words to Samuel who thought of Eliab, surely the Lord's anointed is before him. "But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the heights of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (I Samuel 16:7).

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## DANIEL – THE FOUR NOTABLE HORNS

"The Ram having disappeared from view, the prophet's attention was concentrated upon the Goat, and especially upon his Horn. He saw that "when the Goat was strong, the Great Horn was broken"; that is, the power of the kingdom departed from the first king and his family,

before any reverses overtook the nation. Alexander died in Babylon from intoxication, leaving his unbroken dominion to be contended for and possessed by the strongest. It was revealed to Daniel that it should be divided into four notable sections, but that no blood relations of the first king should possess them. The divisions of Alexander's empire were represented by "four notable horns coming up in the place of the broken horn toward the four winds of heaven"; and in regard to the succession it was added (Daniel 11:4) "but not to his posterity, nor according to the (extent of the) dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up even for others (for other rulers) beside those" of his posterity. This is the meaning of "four kingdoms standing up out of the nation, but not in his power". (Exposition of Daniel – page 24)

Before considering the four notable horns in Daniel chapter 8, we will conclude the summary of the military exploits of Alexander the Great that we began in the last article. These exploits were designed to achieve world conquest, and the overthrow of the Persian Empire that prevented the realisation of that aim.

The last article concluded with Alexander's advance to Tyre, and its subsequent overthrow. The conquest of the maritime power of Tyre completely fulfilled the prophecy of Ezekiel chapter 26 as stated previously. It is worthwhile pausing to consider the significance of this wonderful fulfilment as it strengthens our faith in the Word of God. In verses 3 and 4 it is recorded:

"Behold I am against thee, O Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up. And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers: I will scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock."

Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon fulfilled part of this prophecy:

"For thus saith Adonai Yahweh; Behold, I will bring upon Tyrus Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, a king of kings, from the north, with horses, and with chariots, and with horsemen, and companies, and much people. He shall slay with the sword thy daughters in the field: and he shall make a fort against thee, and cast a mount against thee, and lift up the buckler against thee...etc." (Verse 7 and 8)

This came to pass, and Tyre was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar – but not completely. Nebuchadnezzar invaded Phoenicia and laid siege against Tyre early in the sixth century B.C. The siege lasted 13 years until the walls were breached and the city fell.

However, Tyre consisted of two parts. A rocky coast, which was a defence of great strength and a city upon a small island a half mile from the shore. This was well protected. When the Tyrians saw that resistance was 100

futile, they transferred the bulk of their treasures to the island. The old city was deserted now, and no attempt was made to rebuild it. Tyre continued to defy her enemies. She had not been broken, and grew in power again.

The critics of the Word of God would have been delighted in pointing out, what to them, would have looked like a failure of the prophecy. We can imagine their sceptical comments. The fact that Tyre had actually been destroyed as prophesied would have been cast aside as a worthless consideration. The ruins would have been referred to with comments pointing out that the prophecy said Tyre would be as bare as “the top of a rock,” and so on.

However, the Word of the Living God will never fail, and in these days of universal unbelief it is well for us to remember these ancient prophecies. Two hundred and forty years later, Alexander appeared on the scene as we have been considering. Tyrian ambassadors hastened to meet him, and were favourably received. It seemed as if the storm cloud would pass. But suddenly, the conqueror expressed a desire to worship within the island city. Tyre knew what that meant! Alexander would not enter the city alone, and once there, the Greek “visitors” would become the Masters.

The people of the island city of Tyre decided to battle it out. Alexander marched to the sea, and planned his next move. It would not be easy to gain control with such an expanse of water. His army had waded and swam through rivers before and against the odds obtained the mastery over their enemies, but the sea was different. What would the strategy be?

The means by which Alexander secured the victory over the Tyrians, would fulfil the words of Ezekiel:

“And they (the Grecian army now) shall make a spoil of thy riches, and make a prey of thy merchandise: and they shall break down thy walls, and destroy thy pleasant houses: and they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water.” (Ezekiel 26:12)

Alexander literally cast the ruins of the old city into the sea making a causeway between the mainland and the island. He scraped up the very dust and cast it into the sea, thus gaining access to the island. The Tyrians were doomed, and the prophecy was completely fulfilled:

“And I will make thee like the top of a rock: thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon; thou shalt be built no more: for I Yahweh have spoken it, saith Adonai Yahweh.” (verse 14)

Tyre today is no more. The island is now a peninsular, as sand has washed up on the causeway, making it a permanent fixture. It is even possible to see Arab fishermen drying their nets there. So much for the vain words of the critic! “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no  
101 Yahweh.”(Psalm 14:1)

After the defeat of Tyre Alexander moved towards Egypt, sweeping down the (western) coast of Israel with little, or no resistance.

Acco (about 20 miles south of Tyre) surrendered without a fight!

The Grecian army then continued to advance south, most probably along the coast to Strato’s Tower (about 25 miles south of Acco). Here the army “was undoubtedly forced to swerve east, for the coastal area was at that time still covered by swamps and sand dunes” (‘The Macmillan Bible Atlas’).

Continuing the march south Alexander would have arrived at Lod after a journey of about 40 miles, where it is believed he again turned west to the coast.

Azotus and Ascalon (cities about 20 and 30 miles respectively from Lod) both surrendered.

Another 10 miles south was the city of Gaza, but Alexander would have to lay siege to the city before it capitulated. Historians describe the resistance as fierce, and it took a two-month siege to gain control of the city. The use of “earth works” and siege machinery brought from Tyre obtained this victory. “Most male captives were killed on the spot; the women and children sold into slavery. The city was repopulated with people from the neighbouring areas” (‘The Macmillan Bible Atlas’).

(At the time of the siege of Gaza, Josephus refers to Alexander meeting the High Priest Jaddua. This is obviously not an inspired account, but the reference in Zechariah 9:8 refers to the march of Alexander, and later Antiochus, and is interesting to think about, although we do not have time to comment on this verse now.)

Alexander now had access to Egypt where he spent the winter (B.C. 332-331), and founded the well know city of Alexandria.

He now crossed Palestine once more on his return to Tyre.

From Tyre Alexander advanced to Thapsacus, approximately 175 miles north east of Tyre. From there he crossed the Euphrates, and making his way along the foot of the Armenian mountains passed the Tigris and reached Gaugamela. “Between this village and the town of Arbela waited the last of Darius’ armies, and here in B.C. 331 came the decisive battle. Darius was defeated and fled to Media and then to the Caspian Sea, where he was put to death by his own followers, a few hours before Alexander reached the Persian camp” (ibid.).

This was The Battle of Arbela B.C. 331. The Empire of Persia had been defeated in accordance with the infallible Word of the Living God. The Macedonian had led his forces to the undisputed position of World Empire. The Belly and Thighs of Brass were now the focus of the metallic 102

Image. Alexander had captured the administrative centres of Persia, i.e. Babylon, Susa, and Persepolis, and basked in the “glory” of world dominion. But the words of the greatest man the earth has ever known declares “What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mark 8:36). Alexander could only enjoy his victories for a life time at the most, and Alexander’s life was a short one! The following is a further extract from ‘The Macmillan Bible Atlas:

“Alexander advanced into the steppes of Central Asia and crossed the Hindu Kush Mountains into the valley of the Indus. In India, on his way to the Ganges valley, his army mutinied and refused to go any further. Alexander turned south to the mouth of the Indus River and returned to Babylon after much suffering, mainly in the desert of Gedrosia. The Macedonians returned in three corps: the force of Craterus; the naval forces under Nearchus; and the king’s army. In the month of June, B.C. 323, Alexander died in Babylon at the age of 32.”

Thus the career of Alexander the Great came to an end, or as Daniel chapter 8 verse 8 records the fact:

“...and when he was strong the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones towards the four winds of heaven.”

On the death of Alexander, his four generals took control of the Empire. These were the four “notable horns” and equate with the four heads of the Leopard referred to in Daniel chapter 7, and verse 6. This is another remarkable fact. The prophecy of Daniel had indicated that not only would the Empire be divided up into four (itself another testimony to the veracity of God’s word), but in chapter 11 it states that after the death of the “mighty king” (Alexander), the dominion would not pass to a relative:

“And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside those.” (Verses 3-4)

Once again we see the Scriptures verified in minute detail!

The four generals that succeeded Alexander were Ptolemy, Lysimachus, Seleucus, and Cassander. They each administered a separate part of the Grecian Empire as follows:

- The kingdom of the south comprising Egypt, Libya, Arabia, Coele-syria and Palestine (administered by the Ptolomies).
  - The kingdom of the north-west, comprising Thrace, Bithinya, or Thraco-Macedonia (established by Lysimachus).
  - The kingdom of the north-east, comprehending the rest of Asia, including
- 103 Babylon and its precincts, extending beyond the Euphrates to the Indus.

(India beyond that river revolted, and so the Indus became its boundary). This was the Macedo-Babylonish kingdom of the Selucidae (referred to as the king of the north).

- The kingdom of the west, embracing Macedonia and Greece (administered by Cassander).

Of the four parts, two particularly affect the Promised Land (Syria and Egypt), and are referred to as the kings of the North and South respectively in Daniel chapter 11. Two verses from that chapter are quoted to illustrate this (although they are not directly related to what we have been considering, and refer to historical details anterior to the days of Alexander and his generals):

“So the king of the south shall come into his kingdom, and shall return into his own land” (verse 9)

“For the king of the north shall return, and shall set forth a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come after certain years with a great army and with much riches.” (Verse 13)

Although we do not intend to make many comments at this point on Daniel chapter 11, the following extract from ‘The Exposition of Daniel’ will provide an interesting comment upon the introduction of the four horns of the eighth chapter, showing the connection with chapter 11. It will also start to help us with the understanding of the detailed prophecy of Daniel 11, which is not particularly easy to “digest”. Furthermore, it connects us with the days in which we live, because we anticipate the movements of the latter day King of the North, (i.e. the Gog of Ezekiel 38, or Russian Empire), when it makes its grand bid for world domination. The quote is as follows:

“In the eighth chapter nothing more is said about the four horns. They were only introduced into this vision because of the dynasty that was to succeed them as the heir of the Babylonian power, which was to make its appearance in the east “out of one of them.” The eleventh chapter, from the fifth to the thirty-first verse, treats of two of them, the northern and southern horns in their struggles with one another for ascendancy in the Holy Land, and consequent lordship over Judah; and thus the treatise fills up the interval between the foundation of the horn kingdoms and the incipient intervention of “the breakers of Daniel’s people” who should exalt themselves to establish the vision. Besides this, two of the Goat horns were indispensable to the representation of the solution of the Eastern Question of our day, called “the Time of the End”. They are therefore introduced again in the fortieth verse; and one of them, the northern, is kept in view to the end of the chapter, being inseparable at last from the Little Horn of the Goat which came up out of it and merges into it; so that the fate of the one becomes the fate of the other, which is to be broken without help.” (page 24)

Bro. Phillip Hughes

## Signs And Events

### THE GREAT EARTHQUAKE (Eureka, Bro John Thomas)

“And there was a Great Earthquake, such as was not since that men were upon the earth so mighty an earthquake and so great” As a consequence of this shaking of all the nations, the Great City is resolved into thirds, hai poleis, and, the cities, or states of the nations fall. They fall, because in the shaking, the Lamb and his staff with their army cast them down. The idea is expressed by Daniel in the words, “the thrones were cast down” (ch. 8:9). In other words, the Lamb and they that were with him conquered the Ten Horns, and took possession of their kingdoms. The kingdoms of the world became, Yahweh’s and His Christ’s. As to the “three parts” into which the Great City Babylon is divided by the shocks of this great earthquake of nations, we are left without positive information. From the subsequent parts of the prophecy, however, it would seem that the Dragon might be reckoned as one third; the Beast, the Ten Horns, and the False Prophet, the second third; and Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and the East, the third third. This eastern third would be the first to fall under the dominion of the throne in Zion: “unto the daughter of Zion shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem”. And the Ruler come forth from Bethlehem shall be the peace, when the Assyrian (Gog) shall come into the land. Then the anointed ones shall waste Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof; thus shall He deliver Israel when the Assyrian invades their land (Micah. 4:7, 8; 5:2–6). Then, after the conquest of Assyria and Egypt by the Saints, “there shall be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the land: whom Yahweh Tz’vaoth shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance” Isa. 19:23–25

It is interesting to note the current positions of the ‘United Nations’ in relation to Bible Prophecy. We know at the time of the end, Russia, France and Germany will lead a coalition against the rest of the world, headed up by Russia, when they descend upon the mountains of Israel to ‘take a spoil and a prey’

Look at ‘who is on Russia’s side –vs- who is on the side of Britain and her allies.

For: Spain, Bulgaria, US, UK

Against: France, Russia, China, Germany, Syria

From this we see that things are shaping up preparatory to Armageddon. Christadelphians for upwards of 150 years have looked for the unification of Russia, France and Germany (and we know too that Syria will not be an ally of Tarshish [Great Britain] in the great Battle) and this uniting is shaping up before our very eyes!

Reading the details of the events unfolding in the Iraq crisis is both startling and exciting. More and more, Britain’s relationship with the U.S. is strengthening, whilst at the same time, her relationship with Europe is drifting.

The following article, relating to an interview with Britain’s ex-premier, is astounding!

### MAJOR WARNS SADDAM COULD ‘CREATE ARMAGEDDON’ IF ATTACKED

John Major (ex-Prime Minister of the UK), has issued a grim warning that Saddam Hussein could try to “create Armageddon” if he is attacked by Britain and America.

Mr. Major who led Britain in the 1991 Gulf War, said there is a danger Iraq may try to drag the whole Middle East region into a conflagration by attacking Israel.

He said Saddam had not used his weapons of mass destruction in the last conflict because the Americans had made clear the consequences for his country if he did.

However this time, with the Americans threatening his overthrow, he may decide that he has nothing to lose by using them.

“This time of course, he is threatened, he is at bay, he knows that at the end of this war he is likely to be dead, or fled or on trial.” Mr. Major told BBC1’s Breakfast with Frost.

“It is a possibility that on this occasion he may use all his arsenal and he has many targets that he could use them on. I think it is quite likely that he will try to create Armageddon.”

He suggested Iraq could try to draw Israel into the war “in hope that it would create a wider Arab coalition, muddy the water and create the maximum amount of chaos.”

Mr. Major said that he broadly supported the stance taken by Britain and the U.S. on Iraq, however he warned that the difficulties would not stop once the fighting was over.

“The problems of winning the peace are going to be much more complex and probably take much longer that I think most people are yet imagining,” he added. (BBC News, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2003)

Could Mr. Major have been more correct? The world has not even begun to imagine the conflict and bloodshed that will be caused by Israel. Why Israel? It is obvious that Israel is at the heart of this conflict. Why did the Al Queda target America in their terrorist attacks on Sept 11<sup>th</sup>? Because they support Israel. It is the reason why all Muslims detest Americans. It is what has triggered this war on terrorism.

It is also this hatred for Israel that is driving Europe away from Britain and America. It may not appear so on the surface, but the facts reveal that the UN has given financial support to the Palestinians in the past. France, Russia, and Germany have never supported Israel, and a great deal of anti-Semitism still exists in these countries. They have huge aspirations to have control over the area of Israel, which is strategically advantageous, so chances are they would support any Arab attack to overthrow and overtake Israel.

So what happens if America and Britain go to war without UN backing? If they are successful with their efforts in Iraq, will that demolish the UN? After all, if they can do it alone, why waste time and money trying to convince Europe to support their actions. The UN would be of no use. Will Tarshish and her young lions form a strong alliance against Europe?

However, what if they fail miserably in Iraq? Then the UN will gain status. Will this be Russia's rise to the leading Super Power of the world? Will we finally see her assume her position as Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal?

Only time will tell how events will unfold. On the other side of the coin, this conflict with Iraq could blow over peacefully. Things may continue on as they have with friendly alliances between Europe, America and Britain. This may be a real time of trial to the saints. Let us make sure if this is the case, we do not find ourselves asking "Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." We may never see the time of Jacob's trouble. We may never see Israel dwelling in safety. We may be called away at any moment. Therefore, the real challenge is not necessarily to spot the signs of the times in the news, but to be faithfully waiting and watching for our Bridegroom's return, having on our wedding garments with lamps well trimmed with oil, and burning brightly!

Bro. Stephen Male

## THE MANNA IN THE WILDERNESS—A LESSON FOR US

"This manna was "like coriander seed, white: and the taste of it was like 107 wafers made with honey." It was cooked in various ways (Exodus 16:

31; Numbers 11: 8). The taste of it was like the taste of fresh oil. The people tired of it, which was natural. They said,

"Our soul is dried away; there is nothing at all beside this manna before our eyes."

Their discontent was so strong that—

"The people wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat?"

"Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent; and the anger of the Lord was kindled greatly; Moses also was displeased" (Numbers 11: 4, 10).

There is something about this that yields one or two considerable reflections. There is a self-manifest truth about it; for had invention been at work in accounting for Israel's subsistence in a barren land, invention would have done the right and creditable thing, while about it, and would have given us a picture of God, in His partiality for Israel, supplying in lavish abundance, every good thing, by stupendous miracle, from day to day—roast viands of all sorts, fruits, and confections, and every desirable dainty, consumed in a chorus of thankful praise. Whereas here is the meagrest fare compatible with life, and a chronic discontent in the whole assembly. What is the meaning of it? The first meaning is, it happened; for nothing but its happening could account for such a narrative. Its second meaning we get in answer to the question, "Why did God, who could have fed them much otherwise, put His people upon such prison rations?" Moses answers this question in his rehearsal at the close of the forty years:

"Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness . . . He humbled thee and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know, that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of Yahweh" (Deuteronomy 8: 2-3).

A spiritual result was aimed at in this ascetic rigour. Israel was made to know experimentally that men have not been brought into existence merely to indulge their appetites; that these appetites are but means; that they are only in their place when they are ministrant to the ultimate end of being: that this ultimate end is to serve the Lord with gladness in the worship of His greatness, and in the exercise of mercy and truth to fellow-man. In this employment of created life, God, the Creator, receives pleasure, and man, benefit. The taste for such an employment of life is liable to be blunted, and finally destroyed, in the possession of abundance. Israel, luxuriating in plenty, would never have learnt the lesson which prepared their second generation for entering the land of promise as an accepted worshipping nation. In poor, but sufficient living, they came to perceive that not bread alone, but the words and worshipping of Jehovah were a staple in truly civilised life; that bread 108

alone made a man a barbarian, and left him without hope for the beyond; while the words of Jehovah, added to scanty fare, added nobility to his humility, and super-added the hope of that higher life from which Adam was excluded in Eden; after which, there is a lingering aspiration in every normally-constituted human breast; but of which nature “bread alone” contains no promise; and which is only to be obtained by the word of Jehovah known, received, rejoiced in, and obeyed.

These principles have a present application. They were intended for such—as Jesus makes manifest in his quotation of these very words, in answer to the suggestion of his tempter that he should eat when it was wrong for him to eat. They furnish a general key to the, at first sight, inscrutable fact that Christ calls his brethren from among the poor and not the rich, and subjects them to suffering in their present experience, instead of according them the gratifications of prosperity. They are a valuable aid to us in our endeavours to obey his command to “Labour not to be rich,” and (if God commit riches to our trust) that we “make to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness;” by using it liberally in the divine service (the dissemination of the truth and the help of the poor) as “good stewards of the manifold grace of God,” instead of following the example of the world around who hoard everything away in faithless store for themselves or their families.”

May we, brethren and sisters take the lesson to ourselves, if and/ or when we are inclined to chafe at our ‘prison rations’!

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Bro. Robert Roberts – The Visible Hand of God

## Hymn 56

IF THOU BUT SUFFER GOD TO GUIDE THEE,  
AND HOPE IN HIM THROUGH ALL THY WAYS,  
HE’LL GIVE THEE STRENGTH WHATE’ER BETIDE THEE,  
AND BEAR THEE THROUGH THE EVIL DAYS;  
WHO TRUST IN GOD’S UNCHANGING LOVE,  
BUILD ON THE ROCK THAT NOUGHT CAN MOVE.

God is our only real source of strength. In times of difficulty, anxiety, and trial, He is the one we can count on. Let us look to Him for help and not rely upon our own devices.

WHAT CAN THESE ANXIOUS CARES AVAIL THEE,  
THESE NEVER-CEASING MOANS AND SIGHS?

WHAT CAN IT HELP, IF THOU BEWAIL THEE,  
O’ER EACH DARK MOMENT AS IT FLIES?

OUR CROSS AND TRIALS DO BUT PRESS  
THE HEAVIER FOR OUR BITTERNESS.

Man’s ways lead away from God.

ONLY BE STILL, AND WAIT HIS LEISURE,  
IN CHEERFUL HOPE, WITH HEART CONTENT,  
TO TAKE WHATE’ER THY FATHER’S PLEASURE,  
AND ALL-DISCERNING LOVE HATH SENT;  
NOR DOUBT OUR INMOST WANTS ARE KNOWN  
TO HIM WHO ASKS US FOR HIS OWN.

“Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.” (Psalm 27:14) “We have ample instruction that we must be diligent and redeem the time, but in many problems waiting on the Lord is the best solution. God is in complete control; we are merely servants. We have many specific duties and responsibilities, but even in the discharge of these, waiting on the Lord plays no small part. The question, “Who shall roll away the stone?” often occasions needless care. Much of it rises from our failure to recognize our own insignificance in relation to God’s great work. God is primarily testing and preparing us, not coming to us for help. Our task is confined to doing our own small part as it comes to us, in a manner pleasing to God. All the planning and engineering we can safely leave to Him.” Be Ye Transformed, GVG, pp.195-196.

ALL ARE ALIKE BEFORE THE HIGHEST  
‘TIS EASY TO OUR GOD, WE KNOW,  
TO RAISE THEE UP, THOUGH LOW THOU LIEST,  
TO MAKE THE RICH MAN POOR AND LOW;  
TRUE WONDERS STILL BY HIM ARE WROUGHT,  
WHO SETTETH UP AND BRINGS TO NOUGHT.

We have all fallen, been impatient, unable to wait, have taken control away from God, regrettably.

SING, PRAY, AND KEEP HIS WAYS UNSWERVING,  
SO DO THINE OWN PART FAITHFULLY,  
AND TRUST HIS WORD; THOUGH UNDESERVING,  
THOU YET SHALT FIND IT TRUE FOR THEE  
GOD NEVER YET FORSOOK IN NEED,  
THE MAN THAT TRUSTED HIM INDEED.

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May we all learn from our mistakes and overcome our weaknesses and failings, and in the day of judgment receive of His mercy and forgiveness.

## The Deep Things of God – Communion in Mind and Nature

One tenet of present-day Unamendia suggests that our Lord Jesus Christ was born into a state of alienation from His Father. "How could anything born of sin's flesh not be 'alienated' from God?" is the common rhetoric heard in certain quarters. Such reasoning, however, is more specious than true. While it is quite correct that our Lord was made in all points like unto his brethren, that is, of the constitution of sin, it does not, therefore, follow that he was alienated at birth from His Father.

The word "alienated" occurs only twice in the New Testament. Both are from Paul's writings and in each instance the Greek signifies, "to alienate, estrange, to be shut out from one's fellowship and intimacy" (Thayer's). Indeed, the Apostle so uses the word in this precise manner: "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works..." (Colossians 1:21). "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Ephesians 4:18). Such language could never apply to Christ. Not at his birth. Not at any time.

We have it on Old Testament authority that our Lord had a very special relationship with his Father, even from the womb. This is clearly set forth in a prophecy of Messiah in Psalms 22. Here David writes: "I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly." The New Testament is not silent either. In the Gospel of Luke we read: "And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." In neither of these texts is there the slightest hint of alienation. On the contrary, to be born holy is to come forth as one set apart by the Deity for a special purpose: in this case, the Only Begotten Son of God.

Although in the days of his flesh Jesus' communion with his Father was limited by mortality, at no time was he shut out from God's fellowship and intimacy, for both he and his Father were of the same mind. Once the One Great Offering was effected and he was made consubstantial with El, the communion between Christ and his Father was then complete, not only in mind but also in nature.

As we walk down the probationary path, our communion with the Deity is incomplete. We now have only limited access and that is through our Great High Priest, even the Lord Jesus Christ. If we make every effort to put on the mind of Christ, through God's mercy we, too, shall become partakers of the Divine nature and the communion for us shall be complete. May we, therefore, look unto him who is able to keep us from falling and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

## WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

"And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast." (Matthew 9:15)

Do the above words of Christ mean that we should practice regular fasting in his absence?

Fasting is an open sign of mourning and sorrow. Jesus said that the fasting would occur when he was "taken from them." The words "taken from them" imply violent or forceful removal. When the disciples saw their Lord crucified and placed in the tomb, that was a time of great sorrow, mourning and concern. But forty days later when "he was parted from them and carried up into heaven, ...they returned to Jerusalem with great joy." (Luke 24:51-52) This is the very reverse of the mourning which fasting represents.

The obvious explanation is that the disciples did not consider the bridegroom to have been taken away from them when he ascended into heaven. Christ reassured his disciples just before he ascended into heaven, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20), and in Hebrews 13:5 we are reminded of his words, "For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

If we were to practice regular religious fasting, this would be a public proclamation that we lack the present sense of closeness for help and comfort from our Lord. We would be declaring that he has departed from us and was "taken from us" instead of realizing that he is actively working on our behalf as a constant mediator in time of need.

Believers would perhaps do well to undertake fasting-afflicting their souls only in times of extreme perplexity or tribulation as a means of reinforcing special prayers offered to God in such circumstances. It can be an exercise conducive to spiritual susceptibility. Jesus, when asked why the disciples could not cure the lunatic child, answered, "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." (Matthew 17:21) The disciples had not properly prepared themselves; private prayer and fasting can be helpful in this regard. Brother Roberts refers to fasting as a "means of spiritual circumcision."

However, private fasting is very different from the pharisaic practice requiring public fasting. If one (in private devotion) believes that he can better serve God by refraining from food, that is his choice. We should avail ourselves of everything that will be helpful in our spiritual walk.

Hymn 74 asks the question: "Why should his people now be sad? None have such reason to be glad, As reconciled to God." And in Philippians 4:4 we are told, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice."