

The Berean Christadelphian 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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ECCLESIAL NEWS	Austin, Kitui
FRATERNAL GATHERINGS	Lampasas, Richard, Hye, Detroit
EXHORTATION.....	It Is Finished.....115
EXHORTATION.....	The Vineyard in the Bible..... 116
STUDY.....	Daniel – The Appearance of a Little Horn.....125
SIGNS AND EVENTS.....	135
THOUGHT.....	Life Is The Time To Serve The Lord.....137
The Deep Things of God: Fellowship & Division.....	139
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN.....	140
B.E.N.'S PAGE	(Insert)

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

AUSTIN, Texas -- Memorial Meeting 11:00am in home; Exposition of Daniel Class, Thursdays at 8 P.M.; Bro. Jim Phillips, 14723 Single Trace, Austin, TX. 78728; phone (512) 218-0920

Lord willing, beginning this Sunday we will start rotating Memorial between Buda and Austin.

This Sunday we plan to have Memorial meeting at the home of bro.Mark & sis.Naomi. The approximate time schedule will remain the same: Sunday School 10:00 A.M. - Nazareth Revisited

Daily Bible Readings - 11:15 followed by Memorial Meeting exhortation and breaking bread and partaking of wine in remembrance of Christ our elder brother.

Love in the Truth,
Bro. Jim Phillips

KITUI, Kenya, Kitui Berean Christadelphian Ecclesia, Bro. David Njoka, P.O. Box 1, Kitui, Kenya, East Africa

Loving greetings in Jesus' Name to the household of Faith,

It has taken a while since we have communicated from this part of the world. Last year, 2002, was a hard year full of ups and downs. We are glad that we are able to see the year 2003. We, as a Berean Ecclesia, intend to show our sympathy to all our brethren and sisters throughout the world who are feeling unwell and those families which have been left by their members and all who are in trials.

We have a wonderful news to report. On 12th January, we were reminded that the living God of Abraham is still taking out of the nations a people for His Name. Gladys Muli and Anna W. David put on the saving name of the Lord Jesus in the waters of baptism after giving a good confession of their faith. Anna is a little girl, but not little in knowledge.

Our joy continued as we witnessed on 22nd February, the uniting of Sister Gladys Muli with Brother Stephen David, together with the chain of marriage. Stephen and Gladys are no longer two, but one in spirit and in mind.

It is our prayers that the two may strive to travel along that narrow path that leadeth to eternal life.

With love in the bonds of the Truth from Kitui Ecclesia,
Bro. David Njoka

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

“It Is Finished”

Dear Brethren and Sisters, the chapter we have before us this morning—
Matthew 27—is the center point of all history. Most history is utterly
meaningless and unimportant—the mere squabbles of animals in a jungle. But
this chapter records the most important and meaningful event that ever
happened.

If we read this chapter everyday and meditated upon it, it could make the
difference between acceptance and rejection at the judgment seat of Christ.
Let us not take that acceptance for granted. It is only for the very few who

give themselves wholly to God (we are told that over and over)—those who
live and think entirely differently from how they would naturally live and
think apart from the Word of God.

The attainment of salvation and eternal life is not hard. It is very easy. It is
actually the easiest possible way of life, because it is in harmony with truth
and reality. Jesus said, “My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

But, easy as it is, it does not just happen. It requires a certain specific
course of life—clearly explained in God’s book of life. It may be very easy to
get to a certain place, much easier for example than to get to some other place.
But unless we actually put our feet on the right path and move steadily along
that path, we shall never get there, no matter how easy it may be to do so.

Because God has made the way so easy, so sensible, so reasonable, is why
the judgment for neglect is so severe. “Cast ye the unprofitable servant into
outer darkness: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” The judge does
not say, “Sorry, you tried, but you did not quite make it. We’ll just put you
quietly to sleep.” No, there is no such middle ground as that. What he says is
either, “Come, ye blessed of my Father,” or “Depart, ye cursed, into
everlasting fire.”

Why no middle ground? Because the way of life is SO easy. There is
absolutely no excuse for failure. God has made every provision for success. It
116 is just a matter of finding out exactly what is required and simply doing
it—just very simple submission and obedience, as we expect and take for
granted even from any well-trained dog.

The required obedience covers many aspects—actually every act and
aspect of life. But none are too hard for the simplest mind to grasp. Such as—

“Love not the world.”

“Come out and be separate.”

“Always abound in the work of the Lord.”

“Rejoice without ceasing.”

“In everything, give thanks.”

“Present your bodies a living sacrifice.”

“Be ye holy, as God is holy.”

“Meditate on these things; give thyself wholly to them.”

“Make no provision for the flesh.”

“Let your speech be always with grace.”

“Put away all anger.”

“Be gentle to all men.”

There are, of course, many, many more. And they are all just as simple and
easy. It’s just a matter of being sensible enough to get down to doing them,
instead of doing something else.

There is absolutely no excuse for failure, for all that God ever asks is our best. He never requires anything beyond our abilities. All that He asks is everything that we have, which is perfectly reasonable, and actually, the very least that He could ask under the circumstances, for it to really mean anything at all.

The gift is so great, and what we have to offer Him at best is so utterly puny, that for Him to ask or for us to give anything less than everything would make a mockery of the whole thing—not worth bothering with.

All the things that God asks of us are the things that enlightened love and common sense would want to give anyway—would not be happy without giving.

The truly spiritual mind—the intelligent godly mind—could not possibly be satisfied with giving anything less. It is in fact desolated and embarrassed that it has so little to give to manifest its love and devotion and thanksgiving. Devotion always wants to give to its object. It gets its joy and peace and satisfaction from giving. And it is always eagerly striving to give more.

This is why the cleavage at the judgment seat is so clear cut—“Come, ye blessed,” to the wise and intelligent; “Depart, ye cursed,” to the foolish.

When we have to do with God, the issues are so great that there just cannot be any half way. If we do not eagerly go all the way, we just haven’t learned about Him at all—we are playing a game—a Sunday religion. 117

God asks nothing that we cannot do, but He asks everything that we can. The basic requirement is eager desire.

The chapter before us records the final terrible sufferings of Christ in his loving obedience to the Father. These sufferings should ever be before our minds.

I do not wish to dwell on their details this morning, but we should all be fully familiar with all the dreadful details involved in Roman scourging with a barbed whip, which tore the flesh to pieces, and with crucifixion. And we should think upon them often to keep our minds in the healthy tract of humility and gratitude and separation from the world.

There are many puzzles in this chapter—strange enigmas that give us partial hints of so much that is not revealed, as Pilot’s wife’s dream; Joseph of Arimathaea, who suddenly appeared just this once and just at the right time and never again; the thief on the cross—a manifestation of almost incredible faith and comprehension from a criminal; the deeply impressed centurion—a hardened Roman; the dark tangled picture of the traitor Judas; the dead saints who rose and appeared to many; Simon the Cyrenian, father of Rufus and Alexander, apparently men who were known to the apostles, who suddenly and out of nowhere was thrust into the very center of all history; the strange words of Christ in his agony, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken

me?”; and Pilot himself—a vile and wicked man, caught up in depths that frightened him, struggling to set Jesus free.

All these lead to both profitable and unprofitable lines of thought—profitable, if in the direction of a better understanding of basic principles, of getting closer to the mind of God, of a beneficial effect upon our own acts and conduct, but unprofitable, if just aimless, merely curious, dead-end speculation—questions with no answers.

It is to be noted from verse 3 that Judas repented. He regretted what he had done. He recognized and confessed his sin, but it was merely the repentance of despair—a natural fleshly repentance. It did not lead him to do good. Repentance must go all the way to complete change to mean anything—a new beginning. How different it was with Peter’s repentance! And how differently he was treated!

And then the strikingly hypocritical contrast between verses 4 and 6, to the statement, “I have betrayed innocent blood,” the Jewish leaders quite coldly replied, “What is that to us?” To them an utterly unimportant consideration. It was just innocent blood. But, to the idea of putting the betrayal money into the treasury, Oh no, that just could not be done. “It would not be lawful.” How easy it is for us all to “strain out a gnat, and swallow a camel.”

There is no basic logic or balance or reason to the natural human mind. “It is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” It can believe anything 118 it wishes, and it can justify anything it wishes.

Pilot—this man presents a strange figure in this confrontation. We know from Scripture and from history that he was a wicked and evil man. He came to a bad end. And yet he struggled mightily to free Christ—three times protesting his innocence.

The message from his wife was just what was needed to cause him to do what had to be done. It had to bring out those terrible words, “His blood be on us, and on our children.” “We have no king but Caesar.”

It had to bring about the choice between Christ and Barabbas. The multitude had to be aroused to a frenzy before Pilot could overcome his fears and superstitions. The Romans, who were generally perhaps the most practical and deadly efficient people in all history, were deeply superstitious about dreams and auguries and omens. Remember Julius Caesar and the Ides of March.

Pilot wanted to release Jesus. He had a nameless fear of this strange man, who claimed to be the Son of God, and of whose work he doubtless had heard much. He knew the leaders had delivered him up because of envy (verse 18)—envy, because of Jesus’ power and popularity with the people. Still again, overruling providence takes a hand in the events, to direct them the way that God wants.

This was the Passover—the greatest in the Jews’ eyes of the three great feasts, when all must assemble at Jerusalem. The whole nation was there. And it was the custom for the Romans, or at least Pilot (it could have been Pilot’s own custom), to release one prisoner to them at this time. And the time for that release had just exactly occurred.

Matthew said, we note in verse 17, “Therefore when they were gathered together”—that was to demand of Pilot the release of the prisoner—that is, the whole multitude in Jerusalem or at least as many as could possibly crowd into the available space for the occasion. The Revised Version of Mark 15:8, which is more accurate than the Authorized Version, gives the same picture. “And the multitude going up began to desire him to do, as he had ever done unto them.”

How wonderful that these events so marvelously converge! The nation unconsciously assembled to face the choice between a murdering bandit and the sinless Son of God!

Pilot clearly felt that here was a way of escape. Jesus, he knew, was popular with the people. He had gone everywhere doing good, and just a few days before, the multitude—this same multitude—had worshipfully hailed him with “Hosanna to the son of David.”

But Pilot’s scheme did not work. Now the multitude chose Barabbas, and said of Christ, “Crucify him.”

119

Why the sudden change? The chief priest and elders persuaded the people that they should ask Barabbas. But how were they able to do so?

Jesus stood before them—a pitiful figure, horribly beaten and wounded, bound and humiliated, and not doing any miracles, not saying anything. The outstanding aspect throughout is that Jesus was practically silent through the whole transaction—a meek, tempted, uncomplaining, submissive sheep.

He had boldly claimed to be the Son of God, then stood helpless and powerless. This was not the kind of king the mob wanted. They were not interested in his goodness and kindness and holiness and gentle words of love and light. “Give us Barabbas.” A leader, a real man, a fighter, Barabbas, who dared to lead an insurrection against the world-wide power of Rome. It was, as Jesus had said, the loaves and the fishes.

The chief priests thought they were saving the nation and themselves. “One man must die, lest the Romans take away our place and nation.” But, it was the Barabbas class that finally brought on the Roman armies and the desolation of the land and the awful horrors of the final siege and destruction of Jerusalem—one of the most terrible events in history.

Pilot tried in vain to stem the tide, pleading with them. But, verse 24 we note, he could see the ugly and ominous beginnings of a riot brewing. The Jews were very prone to riot.

So, he took water and washed his hands, and said again, “I am innocent of the blood of this just person.”

And the mob cried, “His blood be upon us, and our children.” So, he gave him over to their will.

In preparation for the crucifixion (verse 34), they offered him a stupefying drink to dull the mind and lessen the agony of the terrible ordeal. But he would not drink it. The cup that he chose to drink was that prepared by his Father—full, conscious, patient obedience right to the very end. There could not be the slightest degree of evading the divinely appointed task. He must manifest clear unconfused perfection right to the final moment.

The way in which he accepted this terrible torture was all important. It was for the eternal record. It was the final climaxing event of an absolutely perfect life. His mind must be clear. He had things to say, both to man and to God.

There are seven things recorded that he said on this occasion, manifesting to us perfect self control, perfect submission, perfect obedience. One moment of failure would have spoiled the whole age-long purpose of God. What a weight lay upon him! The weight of all the sin and sorrow and eternal destiny of mankind. Here is the secret of the bloody sweat of Gethsemane, and of the 120 terrible cry of “My God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

Some have scoffed at his fears and tears, pointing to others who have gone bravely and defiantly to terrible tortures and deaths. But how little they realize the real struggle—for thirty-three long years, he had walked the agonizing tightrope of perfect obedience—he never slipped. Just a few hours more, but what a battle those hours held! He must be perfect unto the end.

These seven recorded statements that Jesus spoke from the cross. No one gospel gives more than three of them, and only one of them, the central and most striking one, is recorded in more than one gospel. But pieced together, they form a remarkable and obviously intended pattern. Luke gives three, John gives three, and Matthew and Mark together give the same ones.

The first, the central, and the last ones are prayers. The first and the last addressed to my Father, the central one to my God.

The first three concern care for others; the last four concern Christ himself, although all that concerns him concerns everyone, for he is the foundation of all.

The central prayer and the last prayer are quotations from the Psalms.

The first, recorded by Luke only, is “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” This is fittingly the first, and it appears to have occurred at the beginning, when they cruelly nailed him to the cross.

They did not know what they were doing, though they should have known. They were blinded by the flesh. They had not sought the light to give them

light; they were in darkness. Many were forgiven, when they realized and repented. Peter said on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 3, “Ye killed the Prince of Peace... through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers... Repent ye therefore, and be converted.” And many did.

The second utterance, also recorded only by Luke, was the glorious promise to the thief on the cross. We are specifically told that one of the thieves was on his right hand and one was on his left, and we cannot help but feel sure that in the wisdom and providence of God, this one was the one on the right hand.

Actually, he was not a thief; it is a mistranslation. The New Testament throughout makes a very clear distinction between thieves and robbers, which the Revised Version consistently follows; although the Authorized Version, unfortunately, does not. It should be, as in the cleansing of the temple, a den of robbers, not a den of thieves.

The so-called thief on the cross was a robber, not a thief. A thief uses stealth, secretly; a robber uses violence, openly. This may seem not much of a difference, or it may seem to even make the case worse. But, it does give us a much clearer and more understandable picture.

121

Barabbas was a robber—the same word—and a murderer. He had made insurrection against Rome. He was what today would be called a terrorist, a freedom fighter, a guerrilla, and as today, these have always been a mixed and motley crew. We remember the type of some who assembled with David, when he was a fugitive—all the discontent. And as today, some are high-minded patriots and some are common criminals and some are somewhere in between.

It is most likely that the robbers crucified with Christ were part of the robber Barabbas band of insurrectionists against the power of Rome. It may have been Pilot’s revenge for their requesting the release of Barabbas to crucify two of his henchmen with Christ. We cannot, however, exonerate the repentant robber, as a pure patriot. He was a robber. He himself recognized that his punishment was due and just. So we can see the picture and background better, he quite likely had confusedly to himself justified his robbery as part of his patriotic conflict, as so many do today—going to every limit of violence in the name of freedom. One of the disciples had been of just such a band—Simon Zelotes, Simon the zealot. The zealots were a wild party of violent insurrectionists, like Barabbas with perhaps a little more principles.

It appears that this robber had first joined with the others in reviling Christ. It is possible to take the record otherwise, but only by straining it. Here is the importance of Christ’s deportment on the cross. It convinced the robber and saved him, just as it convinced the Roman centurion in charge, “Truly this man was the Son of God.”

The robber clearly knew of Christ and his doctrine. He said, “This man has done nothing amiss.” Just as Pilot testified. And he spoke of Christ’s coming kingdom. He manifests one of the most remarkable cases of discerning faith in all Scripture. When the disciples had fled in bewildered despair, and he and Christ hung dying in agony, he understood and believed.

It is a deeply sobering thought that though he repented and was forgiven by Christ and promised eternal life, still he must endure the continuation of the crucifixion, even to the barbarous smashing of his legs with clubs to make sure that there was no escape or recovery when he was taken down prematurely.

The third utterance was to Jesus’ mother and to John—loving consideration and provision even in the midst of his agony. Only John records this.

These three seem to be quite early, certainly during the first three hours before the darkness came. The last four were at the very end—at the ninth hour.

First that strange, central, key cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me,” recorded by Matthew and Mark. What did it mean? He knew all his life, from the 22nd Psalm, that this moment would come. He knew that he would make this cry.

This was the climax of the life-long struggle. From his birth, and especially from his baptism, he had been filled with the Holy Spirit. From his baptism without measure—limitless—God was in him. “God was in him, reconciling the world unto himself.” He was thus God manifest in the flesh. He could say, “He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father.”

There was a perfect oneness—a perfect union—a perfect fellowship. “I am not alone.” He had never known anything but this.

But now the time had come for a brief sundering. The time had come for the Father’s presence to leave him. It was a moment of desolation and anguish. Truly expected and braced for, but still a terrible shock in his weakened agony that called forth that bitter exclamation. But now that last hurdle was past.

He said, the fifth utterance, “I thirst,” recorded by John. What a terrible, choking, burning thirst it must have been to stand out above all the tortures of crucifixion. But he needed one last moment of refreshment—of renewal. He had two more things to be said.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all tell us that Jesus cried with a loud cry—a loud voice. The word is usually translated great—a great voice. Only John tells us what he cried, “It is finished.” His work was done—accomplished, fulfilled. The terrible thirty-three year ordeal of agonized perfection in struggle with the flesh was over. The foundation of righteousness was laid; the

way of life opened up; sin and death conquered, and their power forever broken.

The seventh and final utterance, which Luke gives us was “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” This is from Psalm 31—a psalm of both deep distress and joyful, thankful, confident worship and praise. And his next conscious moment was glorious resurrection.

Bro. G.V.Growcott

The Vineyard in the Bible

The “Vineyard in the Bible” how simple. A vineyard, I picture a vineyard, even though I’ve never seen one, as rows and rows of vines with a hint of fog in the background, green and glistening in the early morning sun. I picture, seeing bunches of ripe grapes wet with dew ready to be picked. A nice simple picture isn’t it? Simple is the key word here. How many other things in the Bible are simple. The simple act of Adam and Eve eating of the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden condemned us to death. And on the other hand the simple act of being immersed in water, combined with knowledge and faith, turns into baptism, that saves us. Both simple acts that in themselves have little meaning, eating fruit and being immersed under water, both have tremendous impacts on our lives. Simple acts of obedience or disobedience.

Simply speaking, vineyards was where vines grew and a vine was any plant that had a flexible stem that produced grapes, melons and cucumbers. Dissatisfied Israelites complained while in the Desert. Numbers 11:5 We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick.

Wine was also produced from the grapes. The first mention of wine in the bible was with Noah. Genesis 9:20

And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: Husbandman is a term for one who tills the soil, a farmer. Noah followed in the footsteps of his Father Lamech who tilled the soil. Lamech, of the lineage of Cain, was an evil man who proclaimed his independence from God by taking vengeance with his own hands. Noah unfortunately drank of the wine from the vineyard and became drunk and was exposed in his tent. Ham informed Shem and Japheth about their father’s nakedness. The latter two showed respect for their father and covered him. As a result, they received rich blessings for their descendants. Ham in turn received a curse for his descendant: Canaan. Did Noah have fore knowledge of what wine would do if drunk to excess? I don’t know. What I do know is that the first mention of vineyard or wine was in reference to Genesis 9:20

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is described in John 15.1-2,

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.”

Our Heavenly Father is the husbandman. Jesus Christ is the vine. Every branch that does not bear fruit is trimmed and thrown in the fire and every branch that beareth fruit is purged so that it may bring forth more fruit.

Who are the branches? We for one, are branches, and we are made clean by the word as it says in John 15:3,

“Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.”

We know the word that is spoken to us. The simple truth is The Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ. The simple fact that God’s Kingdom is going to be here on earth and Jesus Christ is the Son of God, our Brother, and our friend.

Are we being obedient to God? Are we bearing fruit? Are we telling people about the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ? Are we helping the poor and the needy? Or more simply speaking, are we studying, praying, and increasing our knowledge about the “Word of God,” lest we be thrown into the fire as disobedient Israel is mentioned in Ezekiel 15:1-4,

“And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, What is the vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest? Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon? Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel; the fire devoureth both the ends of it, and the midst of it is burned. Is it meet for any work?”

Israel was also described as a choice vine of pure seed that became wild in Jeremiah 2:21,

“Yet I planted you a choice vine, wholly of pure seed. How then have you turned degenerate and become a wild vine?”

Israel was also describe in Psalm 80: 8-16,

“Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river. Why hast thou then broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it. Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the

branch that thou madest strong for thyself. It is burned with fire, it is cut down: they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance.”

God heard the cries of Israel while they were in Egypt. He brought them out and planted them as a vine in the land of promise. Disobedience to God was rampant.

Israel is describe as a vineyard not producing fruit in Isaiah 5:1-7,

“LET ME sing for my beloved a love song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dugged it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; and he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard. What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have not done in it? When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes? And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and briars and thorns shall grow up; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are his 125 pleasant planting; and he looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, a cry!”

So the house of Israel was the vineyard of God. What did they do that was so terrible that would cause their destruction, for Israel to be scattered all over the world. What horrible injustice did they do? They simply disobeyed God, need I say more. Obedience or Disobedience, how simple. Do we obey God and have life eternal or do we disobey God and have life for how ever long it lasts here on this planet. Do we listen to the Word that Jesus has spoken to us and be clean or do we listen to the world and be trimmed from the vine and be thrown into the fire?

Jesus spoke a parable in Luke 20:9-18,

“And he began to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard, and let it out to tenants, and went into another country for a long while. When the time came, he sent a servant to the tenants, that they should give him some of the fruit of the vineyard; but the tenants beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. And he sent another servant; him also they beat and treated shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed. And he sent yet a third; this one they wounded and cast out. Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; it may be they will respect him. But when the tenants saw him, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir; let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours. And they cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and destroy those tenants, and give the vineyard to others. But he looked at them

and said, "What then is this that is written: 'The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner'? Every one who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; but when it falls on any one it will crush him."

How simple. Israel was the vineyard that killed Prophets and Killed The Messiah and Jesus became the stone the builders rejected. As a pot dashed against a stone is broken, and as one lying beneath a falling stone is crushed, so those who reject Jesus the Messiah will be doomed. The apostle Paul's original ministry was to the Jews but they rejected him and the Messiah, and he turned his efforts to the Gentiles.

-- Revised Standard, Isaiah 8:14,

“And he will become a sanctuary, and a stone of offense, and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.”

Let us obey God. Simple obedience. Let us not be like Aaron's two sons Nadab and Abihu who disobeyed God and were devoured by a fire from God, or Ananias and his wife Sapphira who told a lie and were stricken dead. In our present day vineyard of God where many are called and few are chosen, we 126 need to choose simple obedience to God.

There is a parable of the Vineyard Laborers in Matthew 20 that has a simple message. The owner of a vineyard goes out early in the morning and hires laborers for a denarius a day. Later on he finds idle workers and hires them and assures them that he will make their wages. He does the same at 12 o'clock, 3, and at 5. At the end of the day everybody gathers around to collect their wages. The land owner starts with the last hired and pays them a denarius and so it goes until the first group of workers are paid. They expect more wages than the ones that only worked part of the day. When they were paid the same they grumbled at the vineyard owner. When he heard this he said to one of them:

Friend, I am doing you no wrong, did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what belongs to you and go. I Choose to give to this last as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity? So the last will be first and the first last.

What is the teaching of this parable. Not every one who labors in the vineyard will receive the Lord's favor at the last. Not even forsaking houses and lands and relations or the bearing of the burden of the heat of the day will commend to God a man who is a murmurer or a grumbler or is great in his own eyes. It is necessary that a man recognize the absolute sovereignty of the Lord of the vineyard both as to what he possesses and the right to do as he will, with out regard of any wish, whim on the part of those whom he favors with employment. Simply speaking, Except a man humble himself as a little child, he shall in no case enter the Kingdom of Heaven. The Lord of the Vineyard, our heavenly ather is just and will give all that the holders of the

covenant can justly claim to receive, which is simply: resurrection. Everything beyond this is favor-grace and the Lord bestows this of His own bounty, and only where men find favor in his eyes.

Once again let us show simple obedience to God and not be trimmed from the Grapevine and thrown into the fire and be consumed. Let us be like a little child and humbly accept God's Word and his commandments and work hard without grumbling and murmuring.

127

Bro. Mike Murphy

DANIEL—THE APPEARANCE OF A LITTLE HORN

“We see, then, that Daniel treats of TWO LITTLE HORNS; the one the “Holy Roman” power of the West that came up “after” the Ten Horns; and the other, the Pagan Roman power of the East that appeared in Syria and Palestine in the latter end of the Macedonian kingdoms, and before the Ten Horns by many centuries. The Little Horns are representative of powers on certain territories, not of races. It matters not whether they be Pagan Romans, Catholic Greeks, Moslem Turks, or Greek-Catholic Russians, the power that rules in Constantinople and plants its standard in Assyria, is the Little Horn of the Assyro-Macedonian Horn of the Goat; and begins its careers by crucifying “the Prince of the Host”; destroying Jerusalem and the temple; sets up a god in Rome whom his fathers knew not; and ends by standing up against Michael, the Prince of princes, who brings him to his end, with none to help him.” (Elpis Israel – page 392)

In our last article we considered the King of the North and the King of the South, which had its basis in the “four notable” horns which emerged after the breaking of “the great horn” (or Alexander the Great”). That took us up to verse 8 of Daniel chapter 8. Before we recommence our review of this chapter we would like to connect the thoughts previously established on the King of the North and the King of the South with some verses in Zechariah's prophecy and in particular, the sixth chapter. This will be found to be of great interest as passages of Scriptures are connected together indicating the beauty and harmony of the inspired Word.

There we have recorded the last apocalyptic vision that Zechariah had. He beholds in vision four chariots emerging from between two mountains, and the “mountains were mountains of brass” (verse 1). The number four is highly significant and reminds us of the four faces of the Cherubim, the four square encampment of Israel, the four gospel writers etc., etc. Chariots are also significant as we have remarked before, and remind us of the Cherubim. The Chariots are the vehicle of the Spirit, and with the Cherubic element considered present the mind with the future

manifestation of saints in belligerent aspect as they go forth to subject the world to Christ. Bro. Thomas expresses it in the following words, “The four Chariots in motion are the called, and faithful, and chosen, in company with the King of kings, in actual conflict with the nations of the earth.” (Eureka vol.1 page 78)

While it would be beneficial to trace this wonderful subject in more detail, a sufficient background has been outlined that will give us the setting and background for what we are to say next, for it is the reference to brass that we really want to draw attention to. Brass immediately reminds us of the brazen element of the Image which Nebuchadnezzar saw. This was the third phase of the kingdom of men and related to Greece, and Greece is the Empire we have been considering under the symbol of the Goat. We concluded by connecting two of the “four notable” horns of the Goat (Daniel 8:8) with the King of the North and the King of the South in Daniel chapter 11. We remarked that the details presented to us were about to reach fulfillment when Russia occupies the position of the King of the North and invades Israel.

In the sixth chapter of Zechariah we are reminded of the same epoch, 128 and the same aspects of the North and South, as the two horns (out of the four recorded in Daniel 8:8) are seen under the symbol of two mountains of brass. The following quote from Eureka will make this plain:

“The two mountains of brass and the two thighs of brass are identical, and represent the Greek Element of the “Great Mountain that is to become a Plain before Zerubbabel, before the Two Anointed Ones, before the Four Chariots and their horses, - before Israel and the Saints. In the days of the Maccabees the two mountains were the Greek Kingdom of Egypt, and the Greek Kingdom of Syria, including Assyria and other adjacent countries; the former styled in Daniel 11 the King of the South; and the latter, the King of the North. Now, though these countries are and will be in other hands than those of people purely and simply Greeks, they are nevertheless regarded in prophecy as the countries of the brass dominion; and so designated, as in the place before us. At the epoch of the four chariots, that is, just before they are seen going forth, we learn from Daniel and Ezekiel, that there will be two antagonist dominions, the one occupying Egypt and the other Syria and the adjacent countries. The latter is the King of the North, existing on the political map in the Time of the End; and called Gog by Ezekiel: the other, the Kingdom of Egypt. These two mountains of brass will be in a state of war before the going forth of the cherubic chariots; and as Daniel tells us, the Egyptian province of the South mountain of Brass will “not escape” (Daniel 11:42). This will be the relative position of the two mountains, with the Holy Land between

them, the battle ground and bone of contention between the two powers, at the going forth of the chariots.” (volume 1 page 77).

Bro. Thomas also ensures that we understand the latter day application of these passages by going on to remark that...

“...though the rulers of the two mountains, or the dominant race, will not be racially Greek, still the North Mountain of Brass will be Greek in its superstition, or State Ecclesiasticism; and the South Mountain also Greek, in the possession of the Greek islands of the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas: being, therefore, Hellenistic, ecclesiastically or geographically, or both, they are dominions of brass, occupying in relation to the Holy Land, the same political status as the two kingdoms of the Ptolemies and Seleucidae in the days of the Maccabees.”

The appearance of a Little Horn

We will now return to Daniel chapter 8 and verse 9 to consider the “Little Horn”, with a reminder once again that this is not the same (ecclesiastical) “Little Horn” that we considered in Daniel chapter 7, although there is a connection.

One of the prominent features about the “Little Horn” in Daniel chapter 7 is that it had eyes and a mouth. The “Little Horn” of chapter 8 has no such characteristics. However, as a horn is a symbol of power, we must look to the emergence of a political power (as opposed to the ecclesiastical aspect) posterior to the Macedonian kingdom. The basic exposition of the Image dream of chapter 2 would lead us to expect the iron phase, or the development of the Roman Kingdom, and such is the case as we shall see.

First of all we are told in verse 9 that it came out of one of the four horns (of verse 8), and that it “waxed exceeding great toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land”. We have already considered in previous articles the “exceedingly great” power and influence of Imperial Rome. We have previously noted the highly disciplined army of Rome, and the calibre of its generals. These became too powerful for even the Grecian phalanxes.

Secondly, we know that Rome exercised authority and rule over the “pleasant land,” or Israel (see Psalm 106:24, Jeremiah 12:10).

Thirdly, when we consider the details outlined in the chapter, coupled with historical facts, we are left in no doubt that this was the Roman Power.

Bro. Thomas defined the Little Horn in the following way:

“The Little Horn then, is representative of the dragon’s power in the East – that is, of the Roman; which was planted on the Assyro-Macedonian Horn B.C. 65, when it became a province of the dragon empire. It continued to wax exceeding great in these countries until it

established its dominion over Syria, Palestine, part of Arabia, and Egypt. The tenth, eleventh, and twelfth verses, represent the part it was to enact in the overthrow of the Jewish State; and the twenty-fifth, outlines its ecclesiastical policy, and its exaltation against the Prince of princes in “the last end of the indignation,” when it “shall be broken without hand”- that is, by the Stone of Israel when he smites the Image on the feet.” (Elpis Israel page 392)

This Little Horn of the Goat then can be traced historically, and as we progress through the eighth chapter, prophetically, as it confronts the Lord Jesus Christ when he returns as the Prince of princes.

Tracing the historical position first the following is a reminder of the historical developments on Rome’s path to world domination:

- B.C. 148 Macedonia fell to the Romans.
- B.C. 146 Achaia (southern Greece) fell to the growing power.
- B.C. 133 The last ruler of the Attalid dynasty of Pergamum, which had broken from the Seleucids of Syria, bequeathed the province of Asia Minor to the Romans. Pergamum became a free city under Roman control.
- During the 60’s B.C. Rome abolished the Seleucid (Syrian) 130 monarchy, and Judea was annexed to Syria.
- B.C. 40 The Roman Senate appointed Herod king of the Jews, who succeeded in overthrowing the last Hasmonian ruler in B.C. 37. Herod was totally loyal to Rome, and subject to them.

Thus the Roman power fulfilled this part of Daniel’s prophecy waxing great in the “pleasant land” of Israel, and taking possession of it without engaging in battle. But further developments were to take place which would again see Jerusalem subjected to a fearful siege, terrible destruction, and copious bloodshed - “by reason of transgression” (verse 12). Judah had been filling up the cup of their iniquity, and manifesting religious hypocrisy as evidenced by the Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees and lawyers. They were roundly denounced and condemned by the Lord Jesus Christ. Like the Pharisees, they were all “blind leaders of the blind” (Matthew 15:14). The cup of their iniquity however, was full when they delivered up the Son of God to shame and contempt. “His blood be on us and on our children” (Matthew 27:25). What awful fulfillment those words have received!

Verse 10 provides more details regarding this subjugation of the “pleasant land”. Here we read that the waxing great was even “to the host of heaven,” some of whom were “cast down”. Israel in Exodus chapter 12 and verse 41 is referred to as “the hosts of Yahweh”, and verses 10 to 12 certainly show the overthrow of the Jewish State by the Romans as pointed out by Bro Thomas in the quotation above.

“The Stars”, or ruling powers of Judah were cast down “to the ground and stamped upon” (verse 10), as the mighty hand of Rome swept through the land, crushing all opposition with its vastly superior army. “An host was given against the daily sacrifice” we read in verse 12. Rome was that host, and we note that they were really unable to do anything against Judah, unless Yahweh permitted it. He “rules in the Kingdom of men” (Daniel 4:17). In the parable of the marriage of the King’s son the judgement is given against Judah who “entreated” the servants of Yahweh “spitefully and slew them”:

“When the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their cities.” (Matthew 22:7)

The destruction of Jerusalem, and the Temple by Titus in A.D. 70 saw the end of the “daily sacrifice” (Daniel 8:11). Despite the efforts of Titus to preserve the Temple, it was set alight and destroyed. Thousands either perished at that time, or were taken into captivity. The horrors of the siege, as detailed by Josephus, are harrowing to read. The “place of his sanctuary was cast down” (verse 11).

Rome also “cast down the truth (the law and covenant of Sinai – Elpis Israel page 393) to the ground.”

131

The power of Rome had even “magnified” itself “even to the prince of the host” (verse 11), a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. Pilate, as representative of the Little Horn power, consigned Jesus to be crucified, even though he found “no fault” in him (Luke 23:14).

There was ample indications in the Old Testament of this tragedy, as well as the words which came from the Lord Jesus Christ. Sadly only a few took heed to the warning. It is the same in every age. Let us be warned!

We would like to conclude this article in the form of a summary taken from Exposition of Daniel, which also makes an interesting point regarding the northern horn, and the time of the end:

“In the latter time of the dominion of the northern and southern horns of the goat the transgressors in Judah were fast arriving at maturity.....the Iron Men of Italy began to appear as a distinct power to the north of Judea by the progressive incorporation of the provinces of the northern horn with their more western empire. This advance of the Roman power eastward was preparatory to the use Yahweh was going to make of them in the crucifixion of Jesus, the punishment of Judah, and the abolition of the Mosaic system...The disappearing of the northern horn for a long series of ages, and the substituting of the Roman power in its place, was represented to Daniel by the coming of a Little Horn out of one of the four horns.....By the absorption of the northern kingdom into the Roman empire, a union

was formed between it and the Graeco-Babylonian power of the Seleucidae; so that as these were heirs of Alexander’s kingdom of Babylon, the Romans inherited it from them. Hence the power peculiar to this territory, styled “the whole earth” may very properly be called the Romano-Greek Babylonian; or the Latino-Greek Babylonian. This name is descriptive of it in its relation to the Holy Land, in all its future phases until its utter destruction by Messiah the Prince and his holy ones. The Ottoman nation is more Greek than Turkish, with but little of the Latin element; but when the Latins and Greeks come to form a confederacy under Russia as the fragile medium of combination, the Latino-Greek Babylonian power will be in full “blossom”, when the sour grape is ripening for the vintage (Isaiah 18:5 Revelation 14:18). In this vision of the Ram and Goat the Babylonian power in its Roman manifestation is represented by the Little Horn of the Goat, which is not to be confounded with the Little Horn with Eyes and Mouth. At the time of the end, the powers signified by these are confederated with the Goat’s Little Horn, and with it as their chief invade the Holy Land and besiege Jerusalem, and take it.” (page 25-26)

132

Bro. Phillip Hughes

Signs & Events

THE CRY FOR PEACE During this time of war and trouble, with the divisions between ‘Europe and Russia’ vs. ‘America and Britain’, the signs of Christ’s appearing seem so obvious that it hardly seems necessary to point them out. However, just as a quick refresher, I thought it might be useful to look at the ancient countries mentioned in Ezekiel 38, and remind ourselves of which present day areas they refer to:

Nations with Russia & Europe

Magog - Central Europe
 Ros - Russia
 Meshech - Moscow
 Tubal - Tobolski
 Persia - Iran
 Ethiopia - Ethiopia
 Lybia - Lybia
 Gomer - France, Holland, and Belgium
 Togarmah - Caucasus Regions

Nations with Tarshish

Sheba - Yemen
 Dedan - Oman
 Tarshish - Britain
 Young Lions - Commonwealth countries

Gog is actually a title (like emperor) as opposed to a nation.

Now, replace the ancient names in history, with the names that we are familiar with in our generation, and we can see how the relationships of the nations are shaping up before our very eyes.

I found it extremely interesting this week, that the BBC News reported that Saddam Hussein may not be dead, but is actually being hidden in a Russian Embassy, reportedly as part of a deal between the Russian Premier and Washington, a deal in which Russia would take Saddam Hussein from the American's hands. Would Britain, America or any of the young lion countries want Saddam Hussein in their countries? Certainly not! But we can be sure that many of the countries listed in the left hand column of our table would be more than happy to take Saddam on board. We know that it is a dictator of greater magnitude who will eventually bid for world domination and descend upon the mountains of Israel.

We cannot be sure that this particular situation in Iraq will lead immediately to Armageddon, but events are certainly breaking down alliances and setting up barriers that must be in place before "the King of the North" will begin his fruitless endeavour to conquer the world. Therefore, we know the pleading for war to end is to no avail. 133

So in this article we've decided to focus our attention more on the demands and demonstrations for peace taking place all around the world. We, as Christadelphians of course, do not get involved in politics, and as conscientious objectors never want to get involved in fighting, but what we do have to recognize is that war is God's instrument. It is the way in which He will shape and reshape the political/ecclesiastical relations of countries according to His "sure words of prophecy". Bro Roberts brings out the point that not all events are influenced by the hand of God, some are just the results of man's own actions and wickedness. Concerning the general running of affairs, Paul testified in Acts 14:16 that Yahweh "in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways". However, he explains that what may seem spontaneous or perfectly natural may actually be the result of divine interference or angelic guidance. I would like to take a quote from The Ways of Providence, pg 110:

"The application of the same principle in political affairs is obvious. God "ruleth in the kingdoms of men, and giveth it to whom He will" (Daniel 4:17). So it is testified, "that he putteth down one and setteth up another". In view of this we are enabled to recognize a special providence in these political and military events that lead to changes in the governments of men. The movements of these governments stand related to the purpose He is working out in the earth. Therefore they are held in the lines and channels of His plan. The programme of their movements has been sketched in a rough and general way in the

Apocalypse, for the information of His servants (see Thirteen Lectures on the Apocalypse). The execution of the programme has been entrusted to angelic hands. Consequently the events of European politics are not the haphazard operations of human whim, nor the chance achievements of human prowess. They are the results of carefully manipulated natural causes. These causes are invisibly affected in their inception, and guided to the working out of intended effects. The results that come, in so far as they bear upon the divine purpose, are due to an invisible divine control."

So then, what do we answer to those who say, "But, I thought God was a God of love, not of war and bloodshed? Surely all this killing is a sin in his sight"? First of all, those who hold such a view, have obviously never read the Bible. There were many instances in Israel's history when they were divinely commanded to slay an entire nation of people, including the women and children. Secondly, as already mentioned, war is very necessary in shaping up world orders. I think Bro. Thomas thoroughly explains the need for war in Elpis Israel pg 110. I would like to quote some of the paragraphs from this section, but at your leisure please read the entire article: -

134

“THERE IS NO PEACE TO THE WICKED, SAITH GOD.”

“The allegorical signification of the sentence became the plan of “the foundation of the world”, under the altered circumstances which sin had introduced. It constitutes the earth the arena of a terrible strife between two hostile powers, which was not to terminate until His law gained the ascendancy over the sin of the world, and but one sovereign will be obeyed by the sons of men. The enmity He put between these parties was not a mere unfriendly verbal disputation, but one which reeked of blood. It began with the dispute which caused Abel to lose his life, and has continued unto this day. For nearly 6,000 years has this enmity made the earth a field of blood, and yet the war is not ended. The sin-power still lords it over the world, and is marshalling its forces for a last decisive blow.

But, though the scriptures of truth are so explicit with respect to the blasphemous and felonious character of the governments of the world. though they denounce the judgments of war, pestilence, and famine upon the nations subject to them; though they declare that the wicked are the Lord's sword to execute his judgments upon one another; though they most emphatically and solemnly aver that God says “there shall be no peace to the wicked”; and though men see, and profess to deplore, the whoredoms and witchcrafts of the Roman Jezebel, and the enormities of the cruel tyrants who pour out their victims' blood like water to uphold her: notwithstanding all this, there are multitudes of people who pretend to take the Bible as the rule of their faith; who claim to be “pious”, and class themselves among the saints of the Lord: I

say, men of these pretensions, headed by political and spiritual guides, are clamouring for the abolition of war, and the settlement of all inter-national differences by arbitration!

Such persons may be very benevolent, or very covetous; but they are certainly not very wise. Their outcry about “peace” evinces their ignorance of the nature of “sinful flesh”, and of the testimony of God; or, if cognizant of them, their infidelity, and shallowness of mind. Before peace can be established in the world, “the enmity” which God has put between good and evil, in word and deed, must be abolished. Peace is to be deprecated as a calamity by the faithful, so long as the Roman Jezebel and her paramours are found among the living. “What peace, so long as her whoredoms and witchcrafts are so many?” Will they destroy the divisions among powers and people, which God’s truth is ever calculated to make where it is received in whole or part? Arbitration indeed! And who are to be the arbitrators? The popes, cardinals, priests, emperors, and kings of the nations? Can justice, integrity, and good faith, proceed from such reprobates? Do the Quakers, and financial, or acquisitive, reformers imagine that a righteous arbitration could emanate from them upon any question in which the interests of nations as opposed to theirs were concerned? Really, the conceit of pious infidelity is egregiously presumptuous. If this peace mania be a specimen of 135 “the light within”, alas! how great is the darkness of that place which professes to be enlightened by it.

But the most absurd thing imaginable is that the arbitrationists profess to advocate peace upon scriptural grounds! Because one of the titles of the Lord is “the Prince of Peace”, they argue that war is displeasing to God, and that Jesus came to establish peace as the result of preaching. But war is not displeasing to God any more than a rod is displeasing to him that uses it for correction. God instituted war when he put enmity between the serpent and the woman. It is a divine institution for the punishment of the transgressors of His law; and a most beneficent one too: for all the little liberty the world enjoys is attributable to the controversy of the tongue, the pen, and the sword.

“Yes, verily, the Lord Jesus is “the Prince of Peace”; and therefore, no peace society can give peace to the world. It is he alone who can establish “peace on earth and good will among men”; for he only is morally fit and potentially competent to do it. The peace of the arbitrationists is peace based upon the transgression of the divine law; and the hostility of the covenanters to the gospel of the kingdom. It is an impure peace. Peace with the serpent power reigning over the blood-stained earth. Such a peace as this avaunt! Eternal war is better for the world than such a compromise with sin. The peace Messiah brings is “first pure”. It is a peace the result of conquest. the tranquillity which succeeds the bruising of the Serpent’s head. It is consequent upon the establishment of God’s sovereignty over the nations, by the hand of him whom he hath prepared to “break in pieces the oppressor”, and let the oppressed go free. “In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of

peace so long as the moon endures. His enemies shall lick the dust; all nations shall serve him, and call him blessed.” Then shall he judge among them, and rebuke them, and speak peace to them; and “they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

But the Father did not send Jesus with the idea of bringing about this mighty revolution among the nations by preaching the gospel; neither did He propose to effect it in the absence of His Son. When he appeared in humiliation he came to take away peace from the earth, as both his words and history prove. “Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division. I am come to send fire upon the earth; and what will I if it be already kindled?” “I come not to send peace, but a sword.” For I am come to set man at variance against his nearest and dearest relations. So that man’s foes shall be they of his own household.” This is the way the Prince of Peace spoke when on earth. The doctrine he taught is distasteful to the natural mind; and, by the purity of its principles, and astonishing nature of its promises, excites the enmity and incredulity of the flesh. Loving sin and hating righteousness, the carnal mind becomes the enemy and persecutor of those who advocate it. The enmity on the part of the 136 faithless is inveterate: and where they have the power, they stir up war even at the domestic hearth. If the believer will agree to be silent, or to renounce his faith, there will then be “peace and love” such as the world, that “loves its own”, is able to afford. But the true believers are not permitted to make any compromise of the kind. They are commanded to “contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints”, and so long as they do this, they may lay their account with tribulation of various kinds. There is a vast deal of this false peace and spurious charity in the Protestant world. Men have become traitors to Christ, and betray him with their lips. They say, “O how we love the Lord!” and were he here they would doubtless kiss him; but, like Judas, they have collocated with his enemies, and are as popular with the world as its god can possibly desire.

The truth is, judging from their arguments, the peace-mongers are not so man-loving as they pretend. The cry for peace is a piece of ventriloquism emanating from the pocket. Their strongest argument against war is based upon its cost. The taxes are burdensome because of the extravagance and warlike habits of past governments. This pinches them in the iron chest; and diminishes the profits of trade; and curtails the means of indulging the lusts of their flesh, of their eyes, and the pride of life. It is well these mammon-worshippers should feel the pinch. They are the enemies of God, and oblivious of His slaughtered saints, and, therefore, richly deserving of all the punishment the recklessness of “the powers” has entailed upon the world. Those who escape the sword and the famine groan under the expense of punishing the wicked at their own cost. Thus, the punishment re-acts upon all classes. I say, these peace-criers are the enemies of God; for with all their profession of piety, they are at peace with the world, and in high esteem and

friendship with it; and “whosoever”, says the scripture, “is a friend of the world is the enemy of God”.

It is the cry of the world, which echoes in tones of thunder in the ears of the true believers. It is a cry, in the providence of God, which is a great “sign of the times”; announcing that “the Lord standeth at the door and knocks”, and is about quickly and unexpectedly to appear. It is the world’s cry, as the cry of a woman in travail, which has been extorted by sudden and tormenting pains. It blows a trumpet in the wise and understanding ear, sounding the approach of “the day of the Lord as a thief in the night”; for “so it cometh; and when they shall say, PEACE and SAFETY; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape”. Such is the divine mission of the Quakers, and their allies the Cobdenite Reformers. Not satisfied with crying peace, they cry “SAFETY” likewise. This is a peculiar feature of Cobdenism, which urges the disbandment of regiments, and the dismantling of ships, on the perverse presumption that danger there is none! Blind leaders of the blind! The groans of nations ascending to heaven on every side; the kindling embers of war smoking in Rome, Vienna, and Constantinople—and yet ye cry “Peace and safety”; surely ye are incorrigibly demented, and ripe for capture and destruction." 137

Even the cry for peace is a sign of our Master's return, as Bro. Thomas pointed out. The lesson for us is to not to become involved in the terrible affects of war, but instead focus on the future that it is shaping. A time when Yahweh's will is done on earth as it is in heaven, and His law, and the works of His Hand, will be recognized by all those still living on the earth.

Bro. Steve Male

Life Is The Time To Serve The Lord

...Our salvation is not otherwise to be wrought out in than in fear and trembling. There is no time for pleasure-hunting. The service of Christ is now, as it has always been, a course of self denial. Analyse most men's hearts, and self -comfort, self- prosperity, self-honour, self-pleasure, in some form or other, will be the directing motive. Christ is made to wait on Mr. Self's convenience. It is a dangerous policy; for, without respect of persons, the Father, who judgeth every man's work, will shortly ask of the whole programme, "Did ye it for Me?" Christ now stands at the door and knocks. If we open to him, and take him in as our friend and counsellor, dwelling in our hearts by faith, he will become our Captain, and will direct the whole course of things for us, and enable us to render a good account in the day when the great question is put. But if we listen to other voices rather, and neglect the reading of the Word, giving heed only to demands of business, the love of

money, the claims of kindred, the wants of the flesh in houses, lands, clothes, eating, drinking, marriage etc, Christ, after a while, turns away from the door, and the Christless house, joined to its idols, is given over, at last, to desolation. Christ means to bestow immortality and a kingdom, and therefore he asks a high price, even the whole heart and life. Many no doubt, in that day, will prostrate themselves eagerly before him, as he himself tells us; but his favours will be reserved for those who faithfully serve him in his absence, declining association with a world that knew him not, taking part in the testimony of him which the world despises, and diligently observing his precepts, while all is untoward, self-crucifying, and silent. He will be to us what we are to him. In this he is like the Father, who to the pure shows Himself pure; to the righteous shows Himself righteous (Psalm 18:25).

Deny him, and he will deny us; confess him, and he will confess us; neglect him, and he will neglect us; serve him, and he will gird himself and make us sit down to meat and come forth and serve us.

138

Bro. Robert Roberts – Seasons of Comfort

The Deep Things of God: Fellowship and Division

In recent years, much has been written in other groups upon the subject of Biblical fellowship. Most of this has been quite imbalanced to say the least: usually favoring the humanist side of things, as is the fashion of the present evil day. However, of all that has been written, there is none more balanced than that from the pen of Brother Roberts. Our pioneer brother wrote many articles dealing with this vital doctrine, of which the following, authored in February, 1891, is an excellent example.

"There is such a thing as 'the Truth.' There is such a thing as 'coming out from among' and 'having no fellowship with' the indifference and error and evil that prevail, however many may have become insensible to the obligation.

"It is the recognition of these that leads to division, and not any insensibility to the advantages of union. The many are indifferent; a few are faithful. Hence the fermentation. It was Christ's understanding of men, and his foresight of the working of things among them that led him to say: 'From henceforth there shall be division' (Luke 12:51-52).

"The result is inevitable in an evil world, so long as there's any faithfulness left. It is insinuated that withdrawal from errorists is an evil thing. This is a fashionable sentiment, but it is not in accord with the mind of Christ as expressed through the apostles. Love and union are beautiful.

They are the most exquisite manifestations of intelligent life possible upon earth, and the earth will yet see their universal triumph when the purpose of God is finished.

"But meanwhile, there are other duties. The loving John says concerning those who 'bring not the doctrine of Christ' that the faithful are to 'receive

them not into their house' (2 John 10). And Jesus, in his message through the same John, commends one ecclesia for acting on this discrimination, and condemns one for not: 'Thou (Ephesus) CANST NOT BEAR them that are evil, but have tried them that say they are apostles, and hast found them liars' (Revelation 2:2). 'Thou (Thyatira) sufferest that woman Jezebel, who calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce my servants...' (Revelation 2:20).

"Schism is the result of acting out these principles, and it is a good thing, if intelligently and faithfully done. It is a painful and apparently unfriendly process: but there is no choice with those who would be friendly to God first.

"The Truth has been an obscure and weak thing from the beginning. From its nature it cannot become popular, because it runs counter to human feeling in so many practical ways not seen at first. Its true friends know this, and they are not working to obtain public success, or even public notice. They are simply carrying out orders. Christ calls for the exhibition of the Light, and they exhibit it."

For more of Bro. Roberts' thoughts on Biblical fellowship, please visit the website of this publication: www.BereanEcclesialNews.com.

139

Bro. Bob Widding

What Does That Mean?

"And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee." (Matthew 11:23-24)

The "land of Sodom" was judged back in the time of Lot and is now under the Dead Sea. In what way will it be better off in the day of judgment than Capernaum?

If Brother Sulley is correct in his view of the changes that will take place at the return of Christ, these verses will have a very literal fulfillment. The Olivet earthquake that will take place when Jesus returns will cause many changes:

"And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south...And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea...And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one...All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up..." (Zechariah 14:4-10)

From this we see that water will flow south from the Temple Mount toward the "former sea" (Dead Sea), and that this area will be "lifted up." Ezekiel further informs us, "These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed." (47:8) The Dead Sea has no outlet because it is 1300 feet below sea level. We envision this current desert area being lifted above sea level and with waters flowing through it, causing it to come alive with beauty and commerce. Thus the "land of Sodom" will see a very positive transformation.

To the north at Capernaum, we see just the opposite happening. The half of the waters from the Temple Mount that flow north will enter the area of Capernaum, 653 feet below sea level. This area will be submerged as the water level rises and flows out into the "hinder sea" (the Mediterranean).

The fate of Capernaum and Sodom will be exchanged in the day of judgment. What of our fate in that day? God will judge righteously. Will we be part of the blessing or the curse? We decide our own fate as we live out our probation.

140

Bro. Jim Sommerville