

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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God Willing, The Berean Ecclesial News will be published monthly as an avenue of providing information of Ecclesial interest to the Brotherhood. Ecclesial news and correspondence, Fraternal Gathering notices, special activities and upbuilding exhortations are encouraged. This is an effort to upbuild and prepare us in heart and mind for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

CHRIST IS COMING SOON AND WILL REIGN ON EARTH

Ecclesial News

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

Dear Brethren and Sisters,

I would like to announce the baptism of Joyce Murphy of Newton, North Carolina. Joyce has been welcomed into the Berean Fellowship after her most excellent confession of faith and her immersion on May 3, 2003.

Sister Joyce was offered the right hand of fellowship at a memorial meeting on Sunday, May 4th, by representatives from several Berean Christadelphian Ecclesia's; Boston, Detroit, Tennessee, and New Jersey. All the brethren met together Friday night for the daily readings. Saturday was the Interview and Baptism. Saturday evening all the Brethren met at our house for a cookout. During the cookout, the weather took a turn for the worse and we had a hail storm and lightning struck one of the trees in my back yard. We were all inside the house, so no one was in any danger. Later that evening, we all gathered together and read the daily readings. Sunday was the memorial meeting and Sister Joyce broke bread for the first time as a Berean Christadelphian.

I really want to remind all the Brethren that there are still people out there in the dark that are searching for the Truth as Joyce and I were. These people can be reached. Sow the seeds that can sprout, talk to people and be a workman rightly dividing the Word of Truth.

Love in Christ,

Brother Mike Murphy

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

The Parables of Matthew’s Gospel

In the gospel records we find that on many occasions our Lord speaks unto the people in parables. Why does he not speak plainly? His disciples put this to him. “Why speakest thou in parables”? He answers, “that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted”.

Bro. Roberts in Nazareth Revisited says, “Why should the teaching of Jesus have been couched in a form calculated to obstruct the light? The answer may be learned from the prophets. For a long season Israel had turned a deaf ear to God’s expostulations. There is a limit to the divine patience.”

Isaiah says of Israel in Ch. 29. “Yahweh hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes”. “Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid”.

Their superficial worship was an abomination to Yahweh, no knowledge, no feeling of love toward Him, and just a mouthing of words and actions. No wonder He says through the prophet Isaiah, “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at My word”.

And so to these the knowledge of Yahweh was couched in parabolic form so that they could neither see nor understand the meaning. This abominable attitude that Israel displayed became the attitude of many of the Gentile believers. This superficial attitude towards God by this class is shown in Revelation 3:15.

They were neither hot nor cold, and so described by the Spirit as wretched, miserable, and poor and blind and naked. Such has been the effect of this attitude toward God and His Word that Christendom 143 no longer believes what was taught by the apostles. Brethren and sisters, we are in a privileged position. However, that can so easily change, if we are not constantly aware of the importance of the reading and study of the word. We must endeavour to the best of our abilities to walk according to the principles contained in the Scriptures. Left to our own ways, there is no doubt we would end up just as those of Laodoea - blind, miserable and naked.

Let us realise the fact that no one just turns his or her back upon God and walks away from the Truth. However, through the failure of the daily reading of the Word and the attending of the meeting together with those of like precious faith we can fall away quietly. Little by little, the importance of the things of the Truth fades from our minds, and the things of the flesh cloud our spiritual perception altogether.

A rusty unused key will hardly open a lock, a neglected knowledge of the Word of God will fail to open up to us the glorious vision of the Kingdom of our Lord. And without a vision the people perish.

With these thoughts in mind let us consider the three parables that our Lord gave recorded in Matthew’s gospel record chapter 25. The parable of the “wise and foolish virgins”, “the parable of the talents”, and the parable of “the sheep and the goats”.

By considering these parables we can see now how we stand in relation to our high and holy calling. When Christ our Lord and Master returns it will be too late to amend any imperfections. In each situation outlined in the Parables, all had been enlightened, and all had become responsible to

the Judgment seat of Christ. None standing there before the judge will be able to claim ignorance.

The parable of the “The Ten Virgins” speaks of those who are wise and those who are foolish. “They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut”.

Though the foolish cried, “Lord open to us”, the Lord answered, “I know you not.” They could not enter. Why? They were not properly equipped for the wedding.

We sing in one of our hymns:

O solemn, dreadful, glorious news, the Gentile times about to close, and Zion’s King appear. Oh then, what fearfulness shall seize those virgins who have lived at ease, nor thought the bridegroom near.

What an exhortation for each of us to consider.

We then have the parable of the “Nobleman” going into a far country and giving unto his servant’s talents. These represent the abilities each one of us have, and which we must make use of in the days of our probation. Each of us has some ability, however small, that can be used in the service of our master. There are a hundred and one jobs that can be done by faithful brethren and sisters in the service of our Lord.

At the return of the nobleman there were those who had done well, and had used their talents. They were told, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord”.

But we read of one who came and returned his Lord’s talent! He also had the same opportunity as the others to do service in the vineyard, (for each have some talent however small it is). His words were, “Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine”.

“His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him, which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath, and cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Each of these parables indicates the position we will occupy when Christ our Lord and Master returns. We will either be accepted, or rejected. And once again we need to emphasise that the plea of ignorance will be inadmissible. All received the talents. All had the same opportunity to do service in the Lord’s vineyard - however small that service might be. Our Lord has not asked great things of us has he?

The third parable is that of “The sheep and the goats”. Sheep and goats are animals, which from a distance can look very similar. Yet these animals are in themselves quite different. Sheep are known to be timid, easily panicked, but never aggressive. David spoke of his people as sheep. At the time when the pestilence came upon Israel because of his sin in numbering Israel, he referred to them in sympathetic tones, “what have they done”?

Our Lord is depicted as the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world. Holy harmless and undefiled. (Isaiah 53:). “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and Yahweh hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth”.

These characteristics of the sheep must be characteristics of the faithful. Sheep chew the cud, symbolic of the faithful ruminating upon the word of God. Not just reading the word but considering what we have read. These are the attributes of those to which the Lord says in the day of his return, come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

Directed to his left hand are those of the goat class, the fleshly minded, disobedient and aggressive. They appear like sheep but only in outward appearance.

So, on the one hand we have those characterised by sheep, which overcome the impulses of the flesh and walk in the spirit of Christ; and on the other, there are those characterised by the goats. These have been guided by the impulses of the flesh, and fail to overcome. We remember the words of the apostle Paul when he said, "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his".

The reason Christ directs the sheep to his right hand is because once again those of the sheep class have done certain things, which those of the goat class, who had the same opportunity to do, did not. The goat class, therefore, cannot plead ignorance and so are sent away into outer darkness; "and there was weeping and gnashing of teeth." Let us look for a moment at what the goat class failed to do, which cost them a place in the Kingdom of their Lord to live and reign with Christ. V.34.

Bro. Roberts in Nazareth Revisited writes, "Christ is the head of the body and identifies himself with all the members of the body, and in no more forcible manner could he have enforced the fact that our ultimate acceptance with him depends upon self-sacrificing deeds of kindness of the kind that he himself exemplified, when he said, "the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." John 13:14.

What a terrible thought to contemplate all the acceptable sheep class entering the Kingdom and ourselves thrust out! The faithful had their lamps filled with the oil of the Word, and had increased the talents given them. They had built characters of sheep-like qualities, and followed "The Shepherd" in the day of trial. Now they follow him to different pastures besides still waters, while the rejected (perhaps you and I?), are being directed toward the left hand with those of the goat class, who are angry and dejected. Angry no doubt, through the realisation of how foolish they have been! Angry to think they have failed to study the Word and do those things that were well within their power to do in the service of the Master. Angry to think that they had acted like the goat class and not like the Master. They are sent back into the world that held those things they so much desired. Could this be us?

It is worth noting, that in the parable of the five wise and five foolish virgins, they truly thought they were worthy of an entrance into the wedding feast, for they cried out "Lord, Lord open to us". Christ's answer was, "I know you not".

In the parable of the talents, the man who hid his talent did not misuse it, or even lose it. He just did not do any thing with it! He made no attempt to do anything that would have brought an increase unto his Lord. He

brought it to his Lord just as it was given him. Yet he thought he could still serve in his Master's Kingdom. His Lord said, "cast ye out the unprofitable servant into outer darkness".

Once again in the parable of the sheep and the goats, we have the rejected pleading ignorance and thinking they are worthy of a place in the kingdom. However, the answer is, "forasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not unto me." And they are sent as the others, to eternal punishment.

"Our faith" says Bro. Roberts, "is the foundation, but works in harmony with what he requires is the indispensable superstructure. Much will be forgiven, but much will be required at the hands of those who would enter life eternal. Christ's commandments require us to look to bear one another's burdens. If we harden our hearts to the affliction of the afflicted, and wrap ourselves comfortably in the mantle of God's bestowed mercies, heedless of the needs of those to whom God has given less. The day so powerfully depicted by Christ in Matthew 25 will show us in terrible severity, if we never realised it before, that though we speak with the tongues of men and angels and though we have the gifts of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; if we have not the love that takes an active serving shape, we are no use to the king whose reign is to be a reign of love and peace."

Bro. Roberts words are so true, are they not brethren and sisters? In each of the parables we have seen the flesh uppermost in those that failed to enter into life. Each had the knowledge of the way, none could plead ignorance, and the warning to us brethren and sisters is, neither can we in that day.

It is our Father's good pleasure to give us the Kingdom. May we indeed be found acceptable in that day of account that we may hear those wonderful words, "Well done thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord".

Bro. Arthur Hughes

Mark 14

In our Mark Chapter 14 reading, we read of the events leading up to Christ's death. There are a number of lessons to be learned in this Chapter. Today I would like to take a moment to look at the character of a few of the people involved.

Let us look first at the woman who poured the oil on Christ's head. The ointment was (we are told) quite expensive. We are not told a great deal about her, but we can see that she was willing to give up something that was worth a great deal of money, which in that time (or this time), would translate into the effort that is required to get it. The question we must ask ourselves; "Do we spend the time or the effort in the Truth, to the point that it is even noted?" We know that we need to study to show ourselves approved (II Timothy 2:15):

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of Truth."

We are told to visit the widows and the fatherless and to keep ourselves separate from the world. James 1:27

This is not easy, it takes effort. The nature of the flesh is to turn to the world, to seek our relaxation among those that do not believe. This is the way of the world and sinful, dying flesh. Do we put out the effort to give our best to the Lord, or do we give what we have left after we have followed the flesh? Christ said that whenever the Gospel was taught from then on, that her actions would be told of as a memorial to her. Before moving on, let us each ask ourselves this, if we die before we get home, when we are remembered, will we be remembered for our generosity, our works in the Truth, our faith in times of trouble? Or will we be remembered as a person who believed in God and the Truth as we know it, only when things were to our liking and it was convenient?

Then we have Judas Iscariot, one of Christ's twelve chosen disciples. A person that Christ and the other 11 were with, almost constantly. Someone you would think you could trust. This was not just a casual acquaintance; this was supposed to be a close friend. Regardless of whether Judas thought Christ would save himself from the cross, or how he justified in his mind giving up Christ, Jesus said it would be better that he had never been born. (Mark 14:21)

Judas did not, in a moment of weakness give up Christ. He worked out a plan, and while still acting the part of a disciple, he put this plan into action. He went behind Christ's back and set up the stage for the betrayal, and negotiated the price, or reward, to come from the betrayal. And then he waited to execute the plan. This was not a moment of rage or a moment of weakness, this was just a cold blooded act of selfishness, and in Judas' mind, I'm sure that he somehow justified what he had done.

However, after he had committed the betrayal, and had time to consider what he had done, he was still not happy, so he hung himself.

Now this may seem a little far fetched for us to imagine doing to a brother or sister, but let us take a moment to ponder this. Do we speak malicious gossip about one another? Or do we go and ask for the other side of the story? When our life long friends get old, and down, or get sick, do we find a reason to be too busy to go and see them? The reason may sound good to us at the time, but if Christ was setting beside us would we be able to get it to fly? I, myself, would probably find my excuses rather lacking.

We have Jesus, who knowing that he would be betrayed, knowing that he still had time to flee, stood fast, and praying for deliverance from his fate, still having the faith to say "I will do God's will, even if it means my death and pain and suffering.

I have heard so many times in my life "Yes, but Christ knew he would be resurrected from the dead." This is true, he did know this, however, Christ was a man, just like us of sinful, dying flesh. Tempted with the same temptations that we are tempted with and feeling the same pain that we feel.

How many of us have let a tooth hurt for days or even weeks, because we were afraid of the pain of having it fixed? Christ had the same fears, and had in his lifetime, with little doubt, seen people crucified before and knew of the pain and agony that was associated with crucifixion. But still he stood fast, allowing the will of God to be done. He had true faith. And he still had the forgiveness in his heart to ask God to forgive those that wished to kill him. Christ is the mark that we are measured by. He is a mark that we will never live up to, but he is our example to strive for.

It is human nature to feel we have the right to lower the mark for ourselves and to look at frail mortal humans to judge our actions by. This is not the will or the plan of God. This is human nature that we know we must strive to overcome if we have any hope of eternal life. Blind faith in God, to do what we know is right.

Christ told the remaining eleven disciples, in Mark Chapter 14:27 "that they would be offended because of him that night." And sure enough, when Christ was arrested, they fled. But Peter was sure in his heart that no matter how bad it got, that he, Peter, would stand by Christ's side to the end. But Christ, knowing human nature, told Peter, that before the night was over, he would deny even knowing him. We are told in Mark 14:38. "The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak." It is easy to think how

we will react to a crisis, however, if we have failed to keep the Truth in our lives on a daily basis, we have little to fall back on in times of crises. And the most revealing thing is, most of us do not react, whether good or bad, in the way that we think we would. So before we take of the wine and the bread set before us today, maybe we should take a moment to look at our lives and our walk in the Truth.

Do we fall in the category of the woman who with true faith took the expensive oil and anointed Christ? It is a worldly saying, but a true one, that your heart is where your money is. Let's look at this for a moment. Does this mean that we can buy our salvation? Not hardly. Money is just a measure of the effort we put into something. Some of us may work solid hard labor, and hardly make enough to live on, while some of us may never break a sweat and make more in three months than another makes in a year. But all of us have more than enough time and skills to give to the work of the Truth in some way, and where we put our effort is where we will find our heart to be.

Have we looked to see where our heart is lately? Christ in his Sermon on the Mount says in Matthew 5:16,

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.”

Do we fall in the category of Judas? Making the rules as we go? Justifying in our hearts our wrong doings? Do we find ourselves saying, “Well, I'm sure God did not expect me to really spend all my time trying to live the Truth.”

I feel sure that none of us ever really say that, but do our actions tell us on true examination that we really feel that way?

John was commanded to write to the Laodiceans in Revelation 3:15-16,

“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.”

Are we lukewarm in the Truth? Do we have one foot in the Truth and one foot in the world?

Do we try to convince ourselves that God did not know what our trials would be? If in doubt, we should read the book of Job again.

Do we still use Christ as the bench mark to judge ourselves by? Or do we pick out a brother or sister of weak, human flesh, and comfort ourselves with the knowledge, that in our minds, we are still doing better

than they are in our walk? There is a sign at a local Church that says “The wages of sin are always paid in full.” God did not give us an option to set the example that would make us feel good about ourselves. He set Christ as the one example that we are all required to strive to follow. At times, we may not react as we think we would to everyday life. We all should feel as Peter did; that no matter what, we would follow the example of our Shepard, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Bro. Mike Neely

Hymn 126

Imagine: Mentally travel to Israel at the time of Armageddon. It is the day long prophesied, long awaited. The northern armies have overrun the land of Israel and Jerusalem. The Jews are downtrodden as never before. Most are dead; the rest taken prisoner. The country and city are in ruin. All is lost, they think.

Then suddenly, all is quiet. The sounds of war are stilled. They hear—

⁷ Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors;
and the King of glory shall come in.

⁸ Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD
mighty in battle.

⁹ Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors;
and the King of glory shall come in.

¹⁰ Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory.
(Psalm 24)

Daughter of Zion! Awake from thy sadness;

Awake, for thy foes shall oppress thee no more:

The Northern invaders have been miraculously destroyed.

Bright o'er thy hills dawns the day-star of gladness;

The Messiah has come at last!

Arise, for the night of thy sorrows is o'er.

Strong were thy foes; but the Arm that subdued them

And scattered their legions, was mightier far;

Christ and his army of saints wield the power of the ALMIGHTY.

Driven like chaff by the scourge that pursued them;

All vain were their steeds and their chariots of war.

No earthly power could match them.

Daughter of Zion! The Power that hath saved thee,
Extolled with the harp and the timbrel shall be;
Sing praises unto the LORD.
Shout! For the foe is destroyed that enslaved thee,
Th' oppressor is vanquished, and Zion is free.
And will be free forevermore.

I want to be there. Don't you?

DANIEL—HOW LONG

“In the twenty sixth verse (of Daniel chapter 8) it is written, “The ‘marah’ (Hebrew) or things seen of the evening and morning, which was told is true; wherefore shut thou up the ‘khahzon’ (Hebrew), or vision, for it is for many days.” The vision was given principally to exhibit this great object, namely, the suppression of the evening-morning sacrifice until the Latino-Greek Babylonish power should be helplessly broken by the Commander of the army of Israel. This is then the reason why the vision of the Ram and Goat is styled “the thing seen of the evening and morning,” or the evening-morning object.” (Exposition of Daniel page 27)

Our consideration in the last article of Daniel chapter 8 verses 10 to 12 indicated to us the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, which we know took place in A.D. 70. For Daniel the prophecy must have been greatly disturbing. He had lived through the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and was patiently awaiting the restoration of Judah to the Holy Land in accordance with the prophecy of Jeremiah (compare Daniel 9:2). Here, however, was a new vision that pointed forward to another desolating power that would lay the City in the dust. In summary, the prophecy we looked at stated that the Little Horn of the Goat (or Roman power) would :

- “exalt himself successfully against the long-expected Messiah”
- take away the sacrifices,
- destroy the Temple and City, and
- cast down the Mosaic institutions.

How would Daniel feel to learn of another time of trouble for his people and the destruction of the city that Yahweh had chosen to place His Name. He knew that the promises of God that had been made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the Covenant made with David, would not fail. They would all be fulfilled in due time in accordance with the plan and purpose of Yahweh. However, it must have been distressing to him to contemplate another desolation, and when would that be, and how long would it last?

In verse 13 of this eighth chapter Daniel overhears a conversation described as being between “one saint” and “that certain saint.” This appears to be a conversation between the angels, and is an interesting insight as to their understanding of the prophetic periods. Obviously the Elohim have different ranks and degrees of understanding. They are not aware of all of the plans and purposes of El. At least, not all of them are. Here one of them desired to understand the time period of the vision, and this would understandably be akin to Daniel's own desires. Hence when the answer is provided in verse 14 to a question asked in the previous verse, it is directed to Daniel. The verse reads “And he said unto me.” One of the other angels is able to provide an answer, which we will look at in some detail.

However, before we consider the answer given, Young's Literal translation of this part of the verse is interesting. It renders it as follows:

“And I heard a certain holy one (qadosh) speaking, and a certain holy one saith to the wonderful numberer (palmowniy) who is speaking”

This translation “wonderful numberer” is in accordance with the marginal alternative. If that is accepted (and admittedly it is not rendered as such in other versions), we would appear to have a reference to a specific angel known as ‘Palmowniy’, or the Wonderful Numberer. This would then suggest that there is an angel who is connected with chronological events, just as Gabriel was connected with important announcements (Luke 1:26). Michael was an angel regarded as “one of the chief princes” (Daniel 10:13). These and other references provide incidental details of the angelic community, their roles and their functions. As Bro. Thomas comments “the Elohim are a society rejoicing in the love and attachment of one another” (Elpis Israel). We sometimes have a “mechanical” view of the Elohim, but the various references throughout the Word provide a wonderful picture of their “society”. A study on this subject is most worthwhile, and extremely profitable.

To return to verse 13, the question is asked “How Long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation

to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot?” This may well have echoed the thoughts of Daniel himself as he contemplated the vision, and wondered just how long this further down treading would last.

Bro. Thomas translates the text as follows:

“Until when the vision (khahzon), the evening-morning sacrifice (tahmid), and the down-treading of the desolate, to give both the holy (kodesh) and the host a treading down?”

He further states that an answer was sought to three things, a fourth covering the whole ground. The following is taken from Exposition of Daniel (pages 27-28):

1. “Unto what period of time should the vision reach, the last incident of which is the destruction of the Lation-Greek Babylonian power? In other words, When should that destruction happen?
2. Until when should the evening-morning sacrifice be suppressed?
3. When should Judah’s rebellion causing desolation, or which had induced all these calamities, have an end?
4. How long shall the treading down of the Holy Land and the Jews continue?”

How Long? This is an expression that occurs more than once in the Word. The Psalmist asks in Psalm 89:46 “How long, Yahweh? Wilt thou hide thyself for ever?” In Psalm 94:3 we read “how long shall the wicked triumph? In Revelation 6 the “souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held...cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” (verses 9 and 10).

In times of trouble and distress, when the evil in the world surrounds us, and we perhaps feel its chilling effects upon our lives, we cry “How Long?” The day of the Lord’s Return is then to us a great desire, and so it should be.

But what about when things go well, and we feel satisfied with ourselves and with life in general, when life holds no particular worries or problems. Do we then cry “How Long”?

When the brethren and sisters of Christ in their persecutions are symbolised by the souls under the altar, we can fully understand the desire for deliverance from the bitter sufferings they were enduring, and for

retribution to be executed against those who were trying to obliterate God’s Truth. In some senses it is almost an automatic process in that situation.

But do we earnestly pray for the day of Apocalypse, for the righteousness and glory of Yahweh to fill the earth when we are not affected by evil? Perhaps our expressions for the Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in our prayers and in our conversations one with the other are not quite as urgent and sincere then. Perhaps we pray for the Coming of the Master with our lips, but our hearts may secretly feel quite happy with the way things are, and the changes which the Return of Christ will bring are not really looked forward to.

However, our hearts will cry “How Long” if, like Daniel, we have the Hope of Israel, and the restoration of his people at the centre of our lives. If we really desire the exaltation of Yahweh and His Truth in the earth we can never be satisfied with things as they exist at present. We will continue to cry “How Long” even in times of relative personal calm, if the filling of the earth with the knowledge of God’s glory has been our constant meditations and joy. We should never be content with the present order of things, when sin is in the ascendancy. Our hearts desire should be for the Kingdom, and if we have filled our minds with the Word, then this will be an automatic desire!

There is a significant amount of exhortation and heart searching for us in this little phrase “How Long”! We may greatly benefit from testing our current spiritual standing in the sight of God by seeing if we are able to sincerely echo these words.

But we must now turn our attention to the answer given to Daniel in verse 14. In answer to the question “How Long” the words in the Authorised Version read:

“Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.”

Bro. Thomas points out that the word in the Hebrew is not yahmim (“days”), but erev boker, an “evening-morning.” This is a phrase relating to the offerings under the law. For example in Leviticus 6 and verse 20 we read:

“This is the offering of Aaron and of his sons, which they shall offer unto Yahweh in the day when he is anointed; the tenth part of an ephah fine flour for a meat (meal) offering perpetual (Hebrew – tahmid), half of it in the morning, and half thereof at night.”

The evening and morning sacrifices were continual offerings and the phrase “evening-morning” relates to these. Hence Bro. Thomas says that Judah’s host for its rebellion against Yahweh was to become an evening-morning sacrifice until the end of the period referred to. This was to be a long period of 2300 years. He further states:

“During the suspension of the Mosaic sacrifices Judah is the tahmid which bleeds for its rebellion against the Lamb, slain in the evening and morning oblation from the foundation of the world.” (Exposition of Daniel page 28)

The rendering should therefore be “unto two thousand and three hundred evening morning,” expressing this period of suffering for Judah. Then the “sanctuary” would be cleansed. Again Bro. Thomas makes an important point in this study on this part of the verse:

“The word kodesh is not “sanctuary”, but holy; designating what is holy connected with Judah, such as the Holy City, called emphatically “The Holy”; and the Holy Land. Then as to mitzdak, rendered cleansed in the Common Version. This is not its meaning. It signifies, to be vindicated from injury and violence, or to be avenged. The word for “to cleanse” is tahar, and is used several times in the sense of to cleanse Judea from the putrefying bodies of the slain in the prophecy of the Autocrat of Russia’s overthrow in the breaking of the Latino-Greek Babylonian power (Ezekiel 39:12,14,16). “Then the Holy shall be avenged”, is the only proper rendering of which the original is susceptible in this place.” (Ibid page 29)

However, is the period 2300 years? Bro. Thomas renders it 2400 years in Exposition of Daniel, and refers to Chronikon Hebraikon where he provides a fairly lengthy explanation of why he adopts 2400. Bro. Thomas points out that the Septuagint renders it 2400, and commences the period from B.C. 540 giving the reason as follows:

“What is the reed or rule by which the time of a vision should be measured?...The correct rule I conceive to be this, namely: that the time of a vision must be computed from the first event seen in the vision. There can be no good reason why any of the events of a vision should be excluded from its time. In Daniel 8, the first event the prophet sees is the last horn of the Ram-Power overtopping the first (verse 3); and the last, the standing up of the Prince of princes (verse 25). The event predicted in the third verse came to pass in the third year of Cyrus, B.C. 540.” (Chronikon Hebraikon page 32)

Taking this date, the end of the 2400 years would therefore end in A.D. 1860 which Bro. Thomas referred to as a “notable year in the history of the unmeasured Court of the Gentiles,” an “epoch of woe”, which was “only the “beginning of sorrows” – the initiation of that “distress of nations with perplexity,” which signalises the appearing of the Ancient of Days.”

Other Christadelphian expositors have supported the 2300 year period and commenced the dating from B.C. 333 when the power of Persia was broken (the subject of Daniel 8:5-7) in the Battle of Issus. That would bring the date to A.D. 1967 when the Jews in the famous Six Day War liberated Jerusalem. But was the Holy avenged then?

Thus the subject of chronology presents a challenging study as the Bible student seeks to calculate chronological periods (with the Return of Christ in mind)! Whatever conclusions our studies lead us to, Bro. Thomas again makes a very important point in relations to this time period - a point which may be appropriate to other time periods as well. Sometimes the chronological calculations we are looking at end, and still Christ has not returned, but this does not necessarily mean that the chronology is wrong. It may mean that the years indicated in the prophecy having come to an end, and a period of time is introduced which will lead to the desired consummation of the purpose of God. In this particular chronology Bro. Thomas comments in that vein in Exposition of Daniel, and we also conclude this article with a quote from the same work:

“Let it be also observed, that this does not teach that the avenging of the holy is to commence immediately the last of the 2400 evening-morning is finished. It only gives us to understand that when that period is passed, the next series of events in relation to the Holy Land shall be the manifestation of things necessary to wrest it from the Gentiles, and to avenge it in their overthrow.” (Ibid page 29).

During an evening-morning of 2400...the holy shall be avenged. The Lord Jesus has paraphrased the reply in these words: “Jerusalem (the holy) shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Luke 21:24). When these have elapsed, neither Turk, Frank, nor Russian, Greek nor Latin, will be permitted to desecrate the Holy with their hateful presence and abominations; the treading down will then be terminated and the spoiler expelled; that is, then judgement is given to the holy ones at the expiration of the three times and a half, the holy land and city will be vindicated from violence and injury” (page 28).

Let us hold fast so that we may be in the mercy of Yahweh be instrumental in the avenging of the Holy Land, and witness the subsequent restoration of David's throne to his illustrious "greater son."

Bro. Phillip Hughes

SIGNS AND EVENTS

In this month's article, we wish to report three key items that show us that our Master's return is nigh at hand. A. The outbreak of SARS disease (severe acute respiratory syndrome) is a worrying problem for medical experts and scientists; B. The new Arch Bishop of Canterbury in the U.K. is striving for the unity of churches, which we know must become a reality in Europe at the time of the end (The Mother Church of Rome becoming the head once again of all the other churches); and, C. America's bid to bring about peace in the Middle East. We wish to conclude this month's submission by noting words of exhortation from the pen of brother Roberts on 'Signs and Traditions'.

POWELL BIDS TO GAIN SUPPORT FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE PLAN

US Secretary of State Colin Powell has embarked on a tour of the Middle East to launch a new peace initiative.

His first stop is Jerusalem as he resumes personal mediation between Israelis and Palestinians after a one-year hiatus.

Mr. Powell will also visit Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia to muster Arab support for new Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas, whom Washington has endorsed as Israel's peace partner in exchange for sidelined President Yasser Arafat.

U.S. President George Bush has linked Middle East peacemaking with a need for economic advancement.

He has offered to extend U.S. free-trade benefits already enjoyed by Israel and Jordan to other nations in the region within a decade.

"The Arab world has a great cultural tradition but is largely missing out on the economic progress of our time," Mr. Bush said.

Mr. Bush said he and Mr. Powell shared a vision of "two states, Israel and Palestine, living side-by-side in security, in prosperity and in peace".

He added: "The way forward in the Middle East is not a mystery. It is a matter of will and vision and action."

White House later announced that Mr. Bush would meet Israel's Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, on May 20 in Washington.

"The two leaders will discuss efforts to move ahead toward a peace settlement between Israelis and Palestinians as well as a range of bilateral and regional issues," the White House statement said.

The peace plan, known as the "road map", faces opposition in its current form from Mr. Sharon, which has given the U.S. a list of comments or suggestions for amendments.

The plan sets out steps leading to a Palestinian state as early as 2005 and gives America a key role in judging whether the two sides have met their obligations on the way.

OUTBREAK OF SARS DISEASE IN FAR EAST - SARS 'MAY PROVE MORE DEADLY THAN AIDS'

The rapid spread of the SARS illness and its potential for mass loss of life make it "one of the most serious diseases of modern times", a health expert says.

Dr. John Hubley, a principal lecturer in Health Promotion at Leeds Metropolitan University and a specialist on HIV and Aids, believes that although SARS has claimed the lives of only 265 (now over 500!) people so far - compared with the 22 million lives lost to HIV and Aids - it has the potential to wreak "absolute devastation".

Dr. Hubley, who has worked as a consultant to the World Health Organisation, recently returned from China where he was advising the British Government on a Department for International Development programme providing more affordable healthcare to poor areas.

He believes that while the risk of SARS infection depends largely on the quality of healthcare in an area, the disease is extremely virulent and poses a particular threat to a modernised society, with air and train travel helping its rapid spread.

"Though it's too early to say for sure what the impact of SARS will be, it is certainly far more contagious than Aids and the course of infection is much quicker," he said.

"At this stage only six per cent of cases are fatal, but this might well change as SARS develops. It is one of the most serious diseases of modern times and could wreak absolute devastation.

"On the one hand, it might run itself out, as many flu-like viruses do, in the warmer climate of spring, or it could mutate itself into something else that is even more virulent.

"Whichever is the case, action in the next few weeks is vital. A stitch in time saves nine, and people must be aware of the symptoms - similar to flu, with fever, chills, headache and bodily discomfort - be vigilant and react quickly if they see the signs."

The introduction of SARS into society, once again has been a source of distress to the nations, and will continue to be until a remedy is found. These diseases evolve as a direct result of the curse that was introduced into the garden in Eden as the sentence passed upon Adam resulting from transgression. As men and women continue to transgress God's law, disease and death are the results reaped from what they sow.

FOR SHE SAITH IN HER HEART, I SIT A QUEEN, AND AM NO WIDOW... REV. 18:7

With all the worldly celebrations over the Easter holiday, the one thing we could not fail to notice was the subtle efforts to unify the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England. We know that in the end, all the churches of the world, will have become the harlot daughters of the Roman Catholic Church. The news report by the BBC shows this to be happening now.

"On Thursday Dr. Williams became the first leader of the Church of England to wash the feet of churchgoers at Canterbury Cathedral for 400 years.

"The feet washing ceremony performed by the leader of the Church of England and the leader of Roman Catholics in England and Wales is a re-enactment of Jesus' washing of his disciples' feet at the Last Supper as a gesture of humility.

"He said there was a move away from symbolic ceremonies during the 16th Century Reformation, and more emphasis was placed on the written word.

Now, the Arch Bishop of Canterbury is determined to reintroduce the traditions of the Catholic Church. He is also infamous for his tolerance of homosexual relationships and women priests.

"He has angered traditionalists by saying he could "see a case" for acknowledging faithful same-sex relationships and has admitted ordaining a practising gay man in the past.

"The Rev. Andrew Price, a vicar in Wimbledon, London, who left the Church of England over the ordination of women priests, said: "His views on such things as sexual ethics are diametrically opposed to what the word of God says."

Not only is the Catholic and other churches wishing to be unified, but they want to incorporate all people, and every way of life. The FLAME (Family Life & Marriage Education) network of the Church of England was quoted as saying, "Too often the Church adopts a limited and rigid view of family life. We hope that the Archbishop will encourage and enable the Church to recognise all that is good for people's well-being and nurture within a wide diversity of family shapes. Those shapes need to embrace lone parents, aunts and uncles, grandparents, as well as acknowledging the complexity of partners and their children."

In other words, every man can do what is right in his own eyes. This was the state of the world in Noah's day, and in Lot's. It was displeasing to God then, as it is now, therefore Christ shall come in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel.

SIGNS AND TRADITIONS (From the Pen of Bro. Robert Roberts, Seasons of Comfort, Volume One).

It is profitable to remember that the basis of our meeting this morning, and of all the meetings we hold, and the basis of our hope concerning the future, is the work of the apostles in the first century period. Keeping this distinctly in view, we are able to judge our position Scripturally, and to conform it to the right model in points where it may lack. As an ecclesia, or assembly of the called, we are acceptable to God through Christ, only in so far as we are what Paul laboured to make the ecclesias in his day.

He gives clear expression to his aim in this matter in the words found in 2 Corinthians 11 v 2: "I am jealous over you with Godly jealousy; for I have espoused you unto one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."

Let us try to imagine ourselves members of the community to which Paul addressed these words, and it will help us to realise our true position as brethren and sisters of the Lord Jesus. There was no drying Euphrates in those days; there was no eastern question engaging the universal thoughts of men, and stirring actively the hopes of those looking for

Christ. The hope of Christ's appearing was before the mind of the brethren, but not as a matter of imminent expectation. Paul told them plainly, in writing to the Thessalonians (2 Thessalonians 2 v 2), that that day would not come until the development in manifestation of the man of sin power, symbolised by the little horn of Daniel's fourth beast. They had therefore none of the excitements that belong to the hope of Christ's speedy re-appearing. Their position was one of fidelity to Christ, based upon deeper more lasting considerations.

The question we must address to ourselves is: do we participate in their standing in this respect? Is our position one of "repentance toward God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ," without reference to the sensationalism of public events? It is to be feared that in some cases, at all events, the true answer would not be a satisfactory one. The nature of the times we live in exposes men more or less to the liability of being absorbed in the signs of the times from a merely political point of view, to the sacrifice of the real and lasting claims of the truth on their affections. There are, doubtless, cases in which the withdrawal of the political aspect of latter day expectations, connected with Christ's appearing, would leave the mind destitute of all interest in the purpose of God. It is for us seriously to examine ourselves on this point. Mere prophetic politicianism would be no qualification for association with Christ in the day of his appearing. The preparation of the Bride for union with her Lord consists of something much higher than acquaintance with the political symptoms of his approach. This acquaintance is, of course, a characteristic of true disciples living in our period of the world's history; but it is outside the essence of true discipleship. True discipleship existed vigorously in the days of the apostles, when as yet the signs of the times, in some of their details, had not been revealed. It is to this class of discipleship that we must conform, if the advent of Christ is to be of any advantage to us. This discipleship, while greatly interested in the signs of the times, is independent of them for its existence. Its life is drawn from sources deep and lasting as the universe itself. It depends not for its warmth and activity upon the transient phases of God's political work among the sinner of the earth. The basis of its vitality and its love is broad as the whole work of God, from the day that Adam left the garden in sorrow. It is substantial and deep as the history of Israel spread over the centuries to our own day. It is lively and real, as the power and wisdom of the God of Israel. And true and permanent as the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only abiding fact in human history, though men see him not yet.

There is a present life in true discipleship which contrasts strikingly with the state of mind which lives only on the sensations of expectation. We see the features of this life reflected in all the writings of Paul and David by the Spirit. God is an everyday fact in such a life. To thank Him and praise Him and trust Him are its everyday exercises and luxuries. Christ is a reality in such a life, as the priest who ever liveth to make intercession for us, and who is able to save to the uttermost all those who come unto God by him. His Mastership is recognised every moment, and wisdom sought in doing his commandments. Joy is experienced in the contemplation of his excellence, and sobriety and purification acquired in the realisation of his holiness. Prayer and meditation in solitude are the natural reliefs of a life based on these foundations; and the benefit of others in temporal ministration and the work of the truth, its congenial expression. All pleasure following, and politician-mongering are alike foreign to its vital bent. It finds adequate sphere in the jog-trot monotony of everyday life, enduring as seeing Him who is invisible, and "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

Bro. Stephen Male

THE GREAT SALVATION

The Kingdom of God founded by Yahweh and his Christ is to establish this great salvation in the earth ----- a thorough and complete social regeneration of the world. The kingdom is the cause, the great salvation the result of its institution in the land promised to the fathers. But the greatness of the salvation is not restricted to the future generations of the nations only; it comprehends in the magnitude of the deliverance it vouchsafes, the generations of the righteous among the dead from Abel to the coming of Israel's king in the clouds of heaven in power and great glory. It saves the cloud of witnesses of whom the world was never worthy with an everlasting salvation in the kingdom; and saves nations from their temporal miseries and degradation with a joyous and glorious redemption of a thousand years. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation" as this? Impossible; escape there is none for who are not included in it.

John Thomas – 1852 Herald of the Kingdom and Age to Come

POST MILLENNIAL HOPE OF THE MILLENNIAL RIGHTEOUS

The resurrection, termed in common speech 'the second,' occurs at 'the end when Christ shall deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father;' that is one thousand years after he ascends the throne of his father David. The righteous who are raised then are they who have died during the previous thousand years----righteous, according to the law and testimony then established as the rule of faith and practice. The hope set before them during the reign, is the kingdom under its post-millennial constitution. They walk by faith of this in hope of attaining citizenship therein, as immortal subjects of 'God even the Father,' when sin, death, and priesthood, with its appurtenances shall cease to be; but when Jesus and his brethren, though no longer priests to God, will continue pre-eminent as the cherubim, and seraphim of terrestrial glory.

The second resurrection righteous live thenceforth on the renovated and sealess earth forever, God being all in all of them as in Christ the Lord.

The word 'righteous' is applicable to two classes of the redeemed from sin and death. The first class is composed of those believers of the gospel of the kingdom who live upon the earth at the before and the coming of the King of Israel in power and great glory; the second, of those who believe and do while He reigns Vicegerent of Yahweh as High Priest upon his father David's throne. The first class are immortalized at his coming, and are consequently no more subject to death. They, with Jesus, are the rulers, or 'kings and priests to God' over the nations—the dispensers of the blessedness which is to come upon them through Abraham and his Seed.

John Thomas – 1852 Herald of the Kingdom and Age to Come

The Deep Things of God: Biblical Agape

In the New Testament, the word "love" is most often translated from the Greek, agape or agapao. Thayer's gives the meaning as: "...to be full of goodwill and exhibit the same...to have a preference for, wish well to, regard the welfare of..." With this definition in view, we may gain a deeper understanding of agape as expressed in the Scriptures.

The Apostle John declares that God is love, and he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him (1 John 4:16). To understand Biblical agape we need only look to the Deity. According to this testimony, He is agape. Thus, all of His actions are agape both in goodness and in severity (Romans 11:22).

It was a work of agape when God created the universe. When He brought His only begotten son into the world this, too, was a manifestation of agape (John 3:16). However, when He brought about the flood to destroy the wicked, was this an act of agape? Absolutely, it was. So was the conquest of Canaan. The soon coming subjugation of the earth will also be an act of agape.

Biblical agape is the Lord's holy and righteous principles in action. In all of His activities, Yahweh exhibits a regard or preference for the welfare of His creation to the specific end that all of the earth might ultimately be filled with His glory. All that has transpired since the foundation of the world -- whether good or severe -- is working providentially toward the accomplishment of this great plan (Isaiah 46:9-13).

Within the context of this plan, Yahweh has shown agape for us through His gracious offer of salvation. Therefore, we are to manifest agape to both He and all whom He hath called to the same Hope (1 John 4:11, 19; 5:3). How is this to be done? By keeping His commandments, we demonstrate our love for God. Our love for the saints is revealed when we proceed in accordance with Divine principles, having their eternal welfare always in view.

Our agapao should be of a benign character, patterned after the ways of Godly goodness. Here are two examples of how we may show our utmost concern for the eternal good of our brethren: If either a brother or sister is overtaken in a fault, those who are spiritually minded are to work toward the restoration of such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering themselves, lest they also be tempted (Galatians 6:1). Also, brethren are to take heed unto themselves, and unto the doctrine, continuing in them: for in doing this, they shall save both themselves, and they who hear them (1 Timothy 4:16; cf. Jude vs. 3, 22-23).

There is, however, one limitation. Whereas God's severe agape-actions are always completely justified and righteous, with us it is different. In this dispensation the Lord has commanded that the ecclesia take the path of nonviolence and non-condemnation. There is, perhaps, only one mildly severe action that brethren may take which is neither violent nor condemnatory.

Matthew 18:17 sets forth such a consequence when ecclesial admonition goes unheeded by an offending member.

In a future installment, Lord willing, we shall examine a second Biblical principle of love expressed by the Greek, phileo. Meanwhile may we, by our actions, dwell in agape and thereby dwell in God, and God in us.

Bro. Bob Widding

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

“Thy navel is like a round goblet.”(Song of Solomon 7:2)

I understand this statement to be a term of endearment expressed toward the bride featured in this book, but I can't imagine saying this to any woman and having her take it in a positive manner. How is this a compliment?

Some feel that expressions such as this in the Songs are better left un-discussed; however, they are given to us to study to understand how the bride should appear. The question we must answer is, can we say that our navel is “like a round goblet”...and why would we want it to be?

The navel is the only source of life for an embryo. Today medical science has learned just how important prenatal care is to the future well-being of a new child. Future health or sickness; strength or weakness is decided by what goes through the umbilical cord. In the verse before us, we see the bride having come to full age with the external sign of separation from the natural parent. Her navel had been carefully cut and sutured, leaving a round cavity “like a goblet.”

We can see the care lavished upon her at birth and in upbringing, clearly showing that she had been severed from fleshly connections and had developed that spiritual beauty, first by taking the milk of the Word, then the strong meat of the Word, reserved for those that are mature in the Truth. From this, we should clearly see the solemn duty placed on the ecclesia and the family, which is to supply proper nutrition to those about to be brought to the birth through baptism.

By extension, The prophet Ezekiel talks about two very different states of the nation of Israel's "navel": “Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite. And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee.” (Ezekiel 16:3-5) These verses graphically show the true state of Israel. It was continuing in the practices of its spiritual mother and had not stopped feeding from the pagan nations around it. Yahweh, in His mercy for Israel, cut her navel, washed her in water and cared for her, but she turned back to the natural fleshly lifeline of her mother.

How, then, do we learn from Israel's state to ensure that our navel is like a round goblet? The simple answer is in Proverbs 3:5-8: “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.”

Bro. Jim Sommerville