

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



Kimikungi Ecclesia

Dear Brethren and Sisters,

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ,

I am very pleased to announce the joining of the Mtondia_Kilifi Ecclesia by the above pictured (two Brethren and six sisters). From left Bro. Phillip Wekati, third Emanuel, Sarah, Eunice, Dorcus, Mary, Agnes, Zipporah and Fred. The others are Brothers.

I conducted interviews from 15th to 17th May, 2003. I then baptized them on 17th May and offered them the right hand of fellowship on 18th may 2003. They have been attending lectures for the last three years. May God bless you Bro. Fred and Sis. Ruth.

Yours in Christ,

Bro. Phillip Wekati – Kimikungi Ecclesia

Mtondia _ Kilifi, Kenya, Bro. Fred W. J. Omoto, P .O. Box 1177, Kilifi, Kenya

Dear Brethren and Sisters,

Greetings in the loving name of Jesus Christ,

The ecclesial committee members met on 26th May, 2003, so as to give a financial report to Bro. Phillip Wekati, who had visited us and assisted with the baptizing of the two Brethren and six Sisters. We rejoice at this good news.

We are saddened to withdraw fellowship from Bro. Onesmus for actions affecting the ecclesia. This is sad news to the brethren and sisters, but we pray for him so that he may reform and see the light in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Yours in Christ,

Bro. Fred W. Omoto

FRATERNAL GATHERINGS & ACTIVITIES

(To be held God Willing)

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

Zealous Of Good Works - Titus

“**In all things showing THYSELF a pattern**” Titus 2:7

Paul’s fourteen epistles appear to fall into five groups—

1: The earliest, 1&2 Thessalonians (and possibly Galatians) were written on his second missionary journey when he first went into Europe.

2: 1 & 2 Corinthians, & Romans during his third journey, when he spent most of his time in Ephesus. (This was at the time of the troubles in Corinth when Titus was sent there).

3: Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, Philemon and Hebrews near the end of his first imprisonment in Rome, when he was expecting to be soon released, as he indicates in several of them.

4: 1 Timothy & Titus in the period after his release, when he is back working in the same area of Greece, Macedonia and Asia Minor again.

5: Finally 2 Timothy, right at the end of his life, from prison again in Rome.

We know Titus to have been a companion and helper of Paul for a period of about 20 years, possibly longer, but he is only mentioned 4 times during that period—

1. He went with Paul from Antioch to Jerusalem (about 50 A.D.) regarding the issue of the Gentiles being circumcised and keeping the Law. Titus, a Gentile, was the test case. Paul refused to let him be circumcised, and the apostles supported him, and the freedom of the Gentiles from the Law was established. Thereafter Titus was a living symbol of that freedom, as Timothy was of not needlessly offending Jews.

2. About 5 years later (about 55 A.D.), during Paul’s 3-year stay at Ephesus, Titus was sent twice to Corinth concerning the ecclesial troubles there, as we learn from the Corinthian epistles; and he was successful in correcting the problems and reconciling the Corinthians to Paul. Due to the seriousness of the matter, and Paul’s great concern, it would appear he considered Titus his most qualified fellow-labourer.

3. About 10 years later, (about 65 A.D.), as we learn from this epistle to him, Titus was left in Crete to complete the work Paul had begun in organising ecclesias in various cities there, and setting up suitable elders and a strong discipline for guiding the new ecclesias in constructive godliness. Here again he is chosen for a difficult and important task, and when the foundations were laid, he was to be relieved by Tychicus or Artemas, who would carry on, so he could be used for pressing work elsewhere. Clearly he was one of Paul’s primary helpers.

4. Finally, a few years later in Paul’s second letter to Timothy, in his second imprisonment just before his death, he says, “Titus has gone to Dalmatia.”

According to this epistle, then, Titus was left in Crete to follow up and complete Paul’s work of forming and organising ecclesias and arranging for elders to carry them on.

Then he was to join Paul at Nicopolis (on the western shore of Macedonia) where Paul was to make his headquarters for the winter in carrying on the Truth's work in a new region.

This would be just south of the Dalmatian coast, and doubtless the labours of Paul and Titus extended there, for later, from Rome (in 2 Timothy) we have noted Paul sent Titus to Dalmatia.

There is great emphasis in this epistle on the practical application of godliness. The leading thought of the epistle is the vital importance of good works in any who profess the Name of Christ—"ZEALOUS OF GOOD WORKS" is the key expression.

Everyone is zealous about something—usually about their own interests and affairs. Some are zealous about talking about the Truth. But the important thing is to be "zealous of good WORKS"—this is enough to keep anyone both happy and busy.

The ideal presented in this epistle is of a society living and working together in the calm beauty and joy of spiritual self-control, with all the selfish, evil motions of the flesh recognised and restrained.

"Ordain elders in every city."

"Ordain" simply means to appoint, and should be so translated, as it is in some versions. The "ordination" of "clergy" in the world's churches is a later invention.

Great stress is laid (v. 6-9) upon the qualifications of bishops (elders, arranging brethren). Seventeen requirements are listed, and they are worthy of much study and contemplation, for they are not just for elders—they are the required qualifications of ALL—Titus just had to make sure the elders he chose had the necessary Christian qualities that God requires of all believers.

Most are quite clear and, like most Scripture, need not explanation but application. The practical requirements of the Truth are usually quite clear and leave no excuse for neglect or misunderstanding.

It is the theoretical aspects we like to get side-tracked and bogged down in. It's more pleasing and less demanding upon the flesh to bandy unlearned questions than to face plain commands.

Overall, an elder must be strong, firm and determined, but gentle, calm and self-controlled.

The word "bishop"—literally, an overseer—occurs only 5 times, one of them applying to Christ. In the 4 times applied to brethren, the context in all cases indicates more than one in an ecclesia, and generally identifies them

with "elders." The lordly "bishops" of modern churches have no similarity with New Testament bishops.

"A bishop must be blameless" (Titus 1:7).

An elder, or bishop, must first of all be blameless. He must be free from any grounds of criticism. He must give up and put away anything that could be a matter of question or censure, to the detriment of the Truth—anything that might trouble his brethren or cause the outsider to doubt.

A bishop is to be the husband of one wife, and his children must be believers (v. 6). It is unnecessary to point out how the Catholic Church has blasphemously contradicted the Word of God in forbidding marriage to their clergy.

"Not (soon) angry" (Titus 1:7).

Like the similar addition of the word "easily" in 1 Cor. 13 ("not easily provoked"), the word "soon" is not in the original, but is a fleshly addition to weaken the command. "Not given to anger" is the true meaning.

"No striker" (Titus 1:7).

The meaning is, "not pugnacious or belligerent, quarrelsome, contentious"—the opposite of a peacemaker.

"A lover of hospitality" (Titus 1:8).

Not just hospitable, but a LOVER of hospitality—one who takes joy in hospitality—who always reacts positively and eagerly to the opportunity, regardless of his own convenience. One at whose house all are not only welcome but also actively desired as an opportunity for service to God. One whose desire and pleasure is to help and take care of anyone in need.

"Sober" (Titus 1:8).

"Sober" is calm, balanced, restrained, thoughtful, steady-minded—nothing silly or flippant—not changeable and excitable—thinking carefully before speaking, and meaning all that is said—a spiritual quality developed only by long contemplation of spiritual things.

"Temperate" (Titus 1:8).

"Temperate" is self-controlled, self-disciplined, always acting, not according to feeling or emotion or personal desire, but according to the guidance of the Spirit and the Word of God.

"Holding fast the faithful Word as he hath been taught."

This is especially timely and important today, when there is such a tendency to innovation and seeking “some new thing.”

The sound and consistent continuity of the Truth is essential. The Truth does not change.

The true elder is not an innovator or tinkerer or speculator, but a faithful preserver of sound truth passed on by pioneers before him. That, in God’s mercy, is our position today, and it is our wisdom to be on guard against current fleshly attempts to belittle and destroy the foundations laid by past brethren.

“For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers.”

It would be pleasant if there were no such things as these in our experiences in the Truth, but these things are part of the necessary pattern of our training and development.

They are to school us both in self-control and in defence of the Truth. BOTH aspects of training are necessary. It is important that the Truth be defended, but it is equally important that it be done with the pure, calm sword of the Spirit, and not with any of the ugly natural weapons of the flesh—

“The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”

It takes no special effort or ability to criticise and condemn error. Any limited minds can do that, and enjoy the boost it gives their ego.

But it takes much self-discipline and self-preparation to confront error with a calm manifestation of personal godliness and a CONSTRUCTIVE, up building presentation of the deep beauties of the Truth.

“Whose mouths must be stopped” (Titus 1:11).

False teaching MUST be faced and dealt with. We must constantly labour to make ourselves as competent as possible in defence of the Truth, and we must confront error as it arises. Life is a continual training for God’s service and we have NO time to follow our own interests. And just going on record as objecting is clearly not a sufficient and faithful fulfilment of the command, for Paul says their “mouths must be STOPPED,” plainly showing that action of separation must be taken if persuasion is not effective.

We tend, according to our natural constitution, to go either too far or not far enough in this matter. We must try to get a full understanding of ALL the Spirit’s teaching on fellowship, and go just as far as God instructs us to go by commands and examples of Scripture.

This epistle to Titus is an important part of this scriptural picture which we must clearly get and be guided by. Some seem always looking for something to find fault with, and to glory in separation as evidence of their holiness and zeal.

Others temporise and hesitate and tolerate far beyond the point where the Scriptures call for action.

There is corrective guidance here for both tendencies. On the one hand we have a picture of a condition almost unbelievably bad existing in the ecclesias—

“Unruly, vain talkers, deceivers, teaching wrong things for filthy lucre’s sake” (Titus 1:10-11).

This is sad, but encouraging for us. We would think that all hope was gone if we faced such problems and conditions. But it teaches us there always were and always will be—problems that must be prayerfully and courageously and patiently and joyfully contended with.

Joyfully? Yes, joyfully! For ALL things have a wise divine purpose and are steps toward the ultimate glorious end. We should never regret anything unpleasant that happens to us, or wish it had not happened.

Truly we should not SEEK such things, but when they happen we must believe they have a necessary purpose in our education, and development in godliness, and we must recognise that our wisdom lies in thankfully accepting the training and seeking the purpose.

On the other hand, we are taught these things in the ecclesia cannot be tolerated or ignored, but must be faced and grappled with and brought to a faithful conclusion.

“Whose mouths MUST be stopped”—if not by persuasion, then by exclusion. These were newly formed ecclesias just drawn out of the evil world.

“Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, idle gluttons” (Titus 1:12).

This is strong language. It makes us think. It seems out of place in talking about brethren. Why does Paul use it? Would we be justified in doing so? We would, if used in the same sense and purpose and spirit.

We can never too strongly delineate the basic characteristics of human nature. We must honestly face what we are naturally, so that we can clearly realise the tremendous transformation that is needed if we are to be any use to God.

Paul is not especially singling out the Cretians. That is not his style. He too clearly saw the evil of ALL human nature.

To make a strong point, he is quoting a very appropriate and obviously well-known statement by one of the nation itself, as he used the inscription to the Unknown God at Athens, and as we quote from news sources showing in man's own words what an evil state mankind is in.

This is the raw material out of which God is calling saints—liars, evil beasts, idle gluttons—

“Rebuke them, that they may be sound in the Faith” (Titus 1:13).

“Exhort one another daily, while it is called Today.”

We constantly need mutual encouragement and mutual sharp warning, to face and combat the evils of our nature. It was this constant contemplation and realisation of what he was naturally—his natural tendencies—that led Paul to exclaim—

“O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death?”

“I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

The thanksgiving will be in proportion to the realisation—

“To whom much is forgiven, the same will love much.”

Cretians, and every one else, ourselves included, are—naturally—liars, evil beasts, idle gluttons. It's much more easy to be an idle glutton—lazy and greedy—self-centred and self-pleasing—than we like to think. It is man's normal condition.

“Rebuke them SHARPLY” (Titus 1:13).

This may seem like a contradiction to the gentleness and patience and meekness that is commanded in dealing with others (as in 3:2), but it is not. BOTH aspects are important.

It is the spirit and purpose in which the rebuking is done that is important. The faithful brother is always loving and gentle, but never weak and smooth.

A sharp rebuke from an obviously affectionate brother who has established a consistent record of personal self-control and labour for the Truth and true loving concern for all his brethren, would not need to be very strong to be effective, if anything at all could be effective.

But without first laying such a foundation of godliness, no rebuke would have power.

This command to “rebuke sharply” does give an opening for the sourness and harshness of the flesh to intrude, parading itself offensively as “righteous zeal,” but it does not justify it.

The rebuke, though sharp and clear, and followed by appropriate action if necessary, must be in patience and love and sincere concern and true inner meekness and humility, and continual consciousness of one's own shortcomings. Only God can give us this combination of gentleness and divine strength.

“Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men” (Titus 1:14).

It is the tendency of the flesh to ignore God's very searching rules of life, and to make its own self-pleasing rules, according to its own particular fancy.

We see this illustrated in its extremist form in the Jewish nation of Jesus' day—the multitude of added regulations by which they thought they served God, but by which they completely blinded themselves to the practical application and deep personal requirements of the Law.

It was all so sincere and well-meaning, and a very easy course for the flesh to slip into, and miss the realities.

Bro. Thomas may often seem over-liberal and tolerant when he opposes so vehemently all the well-meaning crotchets of his day, as anti-pork, anti-tobacco, anti-slavery, anti-liquor, etc., but it is not that he was necessarily in favour of, or defending, these things.

He could clearly see that—blown up to special issues—they were but shallow, self-glorifying crotchets that fatally diverted the mind and zeal and energies from the real transforming power of the Gospel.

“Unto the pure all things are pure” (Titus 1:15).

This is a deep and important saying, but it can be very easily misapplied to justify impurity, by those SEEKING such justification. It must, like other Scripture, be spiritually discerned by those seeking true purity. It will not mislead such, for they seek not self-justification, but constant self-examination.

The great point is that we must purify the HEART itself—go right to the root of the evil, and not veneer it over with self-satisfying external regulations. It is THEN, and only then, that EVERYTHING will be pure. It is just as Jesus said—

“Not that which goeth into a man defileth him, but that which cometh out of his heart” (Mark 7:15-23).

Paul is talking especially about clean and unclean meats and ritualistic regulations that are dangerous seeds of retrogression into legalistic Judaism—the course the majority of the early Ecclesia followed that ended with the Catholic Church.

We are commanded to break bread and drink wine in remembrance of Christ—a very simple command with a deep spiritual import: no details, no ritual.

But a host of crotchets—about what kind of wine, and what kind of bread, and how to break, and how to pour, and who takes first, and just what to say in prayer about it—have always swirled murkily about this very simple and beautiful command through all the Truth’s history.

Let us be careful we just keep to the simple command, and try with all our power to concentrate our zeal on the deep and PERSONAL application—

“Let a man examine HIMSELF—and so let him eat.”

“Unto the pure all things are pure”—a wonderful saying, a wonderful revelation—as long as we keep our minds centred on its true inward heart-searching and spiritual application.

Defilement comes from within, and purity must come from within—ever growing and pressing outward from within, rejecting and casting out all impurity.

“But speak thou the things that become sound doctrine.”

Through this chapter and the next the great emphasis is on practical, personal holiness of life, and dedication and service to God, and against getting side-tracked into theoretical questions and contentions and genealogies and strivings. The thought and contrast is carried forward from Titus 1:16—

“They PROFESS to know God.”

They make a big show of talk and argumentation and threadbare “foolish questions”—“but in works they deny Him.”

When it comes to their OWN daily activities and service and self-sacrifice, they deny God by living for themselves and their own desires and pleasures. The questions they bandy about are just a hobby and a conscience-salver.

Talking and arguing and making regulations for others is so easy: disciplining ourselves, giving up our own natural desires, bringing our own lives into full service to God, is so hard.

To keep talking about the Truth, and then to follow the flesh in what we do with our time and money (actually God’s time and money) is just hypocrisy.

Our big concern must be how we ourselves live our daily life—what we do with our time and money and strength—and whether we manifest the spiritual character of the mind of Christ: purity, patience, gravity, goodness, kindness, love.

Apparently the Cretians especially manifested a fondness for hair-splitting and arguing and a constant going round and round on the same old worn and threadbare crotchets, instead of getting down to practical day-to-day holiness and self-sacrifice.

“That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate (rather: self-disciplined), sound in faith, in love, in patience” (Titus 2:2).

“Sober,” for which the margin gives “vigilant,” means to be clear-minded, wide awake and aware, watchful, thoughtful—spiritual THINKERS, rather than, like most of mankind, mere animal FEELERS.

It is easy to drift into self-centred thoughtlessness and obsession with present trivialities—what shall we eat, what shall we wear, what shall we do to enjoy ourselves—chattering like monkeys about foolish, passing things.

The mind must be constantly disciplined and directed outward—away from present and self to the world and eternity—to the purpose of God and the service of God.

“The aged men.” Old age can either follow the usual and natural course of recession to the small-mindedness and self-centredness of childhood, or it can be God-guided into the golden age of experience, understanding and usefulness.

It depends on how we have prepared for it in earlier years. In the ideal ecclesial community that Paul portrays here, each age has its place and work—the aged to give counsel and wisdom and deep knowledge of the Word of God, the middle-aged to carry forward the work and activity, the young eager in all things to learn and to help—a healthy, wholesome, united Body of beauty and usefulness.

But we must guard against the very natural tendencies that Paul mentions that can so easily mar this picture. In the aged (Titus 2:2), patience is emphasised, and (v.3) avoidance of gossip and criticism.

Patience, because spirituality is a matter of gradual growth. Youth inclines to many things that Age has seen the emptiness of and grown out of. But Age must have patience while Youth is maturing. If there is movement in the right direction, we must be careful to encourage it, and not destroy it with fault-finding and impatience.

And Youth will be much more inclined to listen if Age can show in its OWN life that it has learned to manifest the fruit of Spirit.

We must examine ourselves—recognise how little we have really learned of godliness, and how long it took us to learn that little. This teaches patience.

“In all things showing THYSELF a pattern” (Titus 2:7).

This is the vital thing. Christ, above all that he did or said, was an example. And so was Paul. Example is the greatest and most powerful exhortation.

It is not worthwhile giving any attention to anyone who does not first discipline himself and live up to his professed faith. Regardless of any appearance of knowledge, such have nothing to offer as to useful guidance in the way of life.

Examine a man’s own life and characteristics. If he is not fulfilling the practical part of his professed faith, pay no attention to anything he says, nor to any criticism he has of others.

“That he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil to say of you” (Titus 2:8).

Here is the power of godliness, for which there is no substitute. The Truth is not so much a matter of presentation and reasoning and logic, as of manifestation in beauty and power. If we do not manifest the beauty of the Truth in ourselves, then we cannot teach it in any living way to others.

We can pass on doctrines as such, but there will be no transforming power of godliness. We must SHOW the way of life and holiness, that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed.

The way of God, truly and joyfully lived, is the greatest persuasive power on earth. But it must be lived joyfully—not as a burden but as a glorious privilege. Jesus Christ single-handedly changed the course of this evil world by the sheer impact of perfect holiness. The Proverbs say—

“The wicked flee when no man pursueth; but the righteous are bold as a lion” (Proverbs 28:1).

There is far more depth to this than we realise. Holiness IS power. We read of occasions when Christ’s opponents were ashamed before the pure brilliance of his sinless perfection. They could not stand up to him as he probed the depths of their hearts and motives.

“Exhort servants to be obedient to their masters” (Titus 2:9).

It should be, as in the New Revised Version “slaves.” Why tell slaves to obey their masters? Is not holding a man in bondage manifestly unjust and contrary to the spirit of Christ?

Yes, but so is everything else in this evil world. Paul here takes direct issue with the reformers and philosophers of this fleshly order of things, who do not get to the root of evil; and we must stand squarely with him for he represents the wisdom of God—they of the flesh.

The Scriptures tell us that “The whole world lieth in wickedness,” and God’s present purpose is not to change it, but first to develop, by means of the discipline and trials of that evil background, a purified and spiritually-minded people for His Name and glory.

If, in God’s wisdom, slavery helps prepare a man for God’s Kingdom, then slavery for him is a blessing from God. The way and theories of men are right in their own eyes, but only God knows what is best.

To the mind of the flesh, this is foolishness. Paul says the natural mind cannot comprehend these things—only those whom God enlightens.

Truly we should not seek handicaps and disabilities and tribulations. “If thou mayest be free, use it rather,” is Paul’s counsel.

But we must see—in everything that comes upon us—God’s hand and God’s wisdom. We must never regret or resent anything that happens—but always seek to learn and benefit from it.

Whatever we do, even in slavery, can, and must, be done unto God and for God, and God will gloriously accept it as such, and so we patiently and joyfully work out our salvation.

We must, like Moses, “see Him Who is invisible.” We must, in our mind’s eye, eliminate all the non-essentials, and boil the picture down to just God and ourselves. That is the only reality for us. Everything else is merely a passing background that God has provided to test and develop us.

All people and events in this background—real though they may seem—are but temporary experiences of our consciousness in the great eternal relationship of ourselves and God.

Where are all the people of 100 years ago? Completely gone from existence and reality—and most of them gone eternally. They seemed so real in their day, but time proved that they were but briefly passing shapes and manifestations that the transient vapour called human flesh took temporarily.

They can become realities by attaching themselves to the Great Eternal Unchanging Reality, God Himself, for—

“The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to ALL MEN, teaching us that—denying ungodliness and worldly lusts—we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world” (Titus 2:11-12).

This is how we achieve reality and eternity—denying ungodliness and worldly desire. What is “ungodliness and worldly desire”? Can we define these terms the Spirit uses for our instruction? It would be very well for us to be clear on this.

The Scriptures leave no doubt. “Ungodliness” is anything not connected with, and in harmony with, God, and “worldly desire” is anything to do with present passing life. These we must deny—repudiate—put away. And we must live—

“Soberly, righteously, godly.”

SOBERLY—according to wisdom and reason;

RIGHTEOUSLY—according to truth;

GODLY—in harmony and union with God.

“Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

More correctly, as in the Diaglott and RV—

“The appearing of the glory of the great God.”—as we read in Matthew: 16:27—

“The Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father.”

“Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14).

“Redeem us FROM (out of, away from) all iniquity.” Iniquity is a word that does not make a strong personal impact on us, because no one really thinks they are iniquitous. But the literal meaning is “lawlessness,” failure to submit, to bring ourselves in harmony with Divine law—

“Redeem us from all lawlessness.”

Law is beauty and order and harmony. Conformity with God’s law is the way we achieve unity with God. And the Perfect Law—the Royal Law—the Law of Liberty is, as James tells us—

“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

Anything we do that is not in perfect harmony with all God’s will is lawlessness; and Christ suffered and died to redeem us, to deliver us—lift us up—OUT OF all lawlessness, into perfect harmony with God, as he was.

“To PURIFY unto himself a peculiar people.”

To cleanse, to make pure, to remove impurity. All of the Law of Moses teaches us that the natural flesh and its thinking are unclean. To be clean we must learn and walk by the mind of the Spirit, whose fruits are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, etc.

“Purify a PECULIAR people.”

What is a “peculiar people”? The word has two meanings, both of which apply. Literally, it means “something beyond, something special or superior.” It also means a “personal possession”—a people especially belonging to himself—a people of his own—at one with him.

“ZEALOUS OF GOOD WORKS.”

This is the key and central thought in this very practical epistle. It is not sufficient that we just DO good works. Even more important is that we be zealous about it—eager, enthusiastic—that this be our pleasure and consuming desire—that we never feel we have done enough for God and the Truth, but are always striving to do more.

That is “zealous of good works.” If we do not manifest this characteristic, we are not Christ’s peculiar people. We are just ordinary, self-pleasing people, like all the rest of the perishing world.

“Good works” means helping people—both temporarily and eternally, especially the latter, but by no means ignoring the former—labouring, doing something practical and constructive, comforting and encouraging.

If we are sorry for ourselves, full of self-pity, we are USELESS to God.

We cannot even begin to fulfil this requirement of good works. For if, having the glorious gift of Truth, we have not enough faith and appreciation to be eternally and joyfully thankful to God, we are blind indeed. We just do not know God: we have never found Him.

Let us test every activity by this expression “good works.” Talking, arguing, discussing, contending, are “good works” ONLY if they perform constructive good for someone, only if they lead closer to practical godliness of life—only if they guide others in God’s Way, or deepen and strengthen them in that Way.

The flesh has a hankering for crotchets—for what Paul calls—“Foolish questions, contentions, unprofitable and vain strivings” (Titus 3:9).

Flesh prefers to avoid facing issues which have an uncomfortable practical bearing on its own conduct and character.

It would much rather argue about who was Cain’s wife, or whether the Transfiguration was a vision, or whether Christ’s temptation was “subjective” or “objective,” than to think about the personal bearing of the command to love one’s neighbour as one’s-self, or about how it uses for its own gratification God’s goods entrusted to it in stewardship, or the command to sell what it has and give to the poor.

These practical questions the flesh avoids, preferring the crotchets and speculations which do not interfere with its pleasures and self-will. But “zealous of good works” is still the clear distinguishing mark of the peculiar people of Christ.

They are too busy doing good for others to waste time and effort on barren contentions that have no practical value toward godliness.

“These things affirm CONSTANTLY” (Titus 3:8).

Keep on about them over and over and over. About WHAT?

(vs. 8-9) —

“That they maintain good WORKS, and that they avoid unprofitable, unpractical, unproductive questions.”

And finally—

“A heretic after the first and second admonition reject” (Titus 3:10).

This is the last command. A sad but necessary reminder that the way is narrow and against the flesh, that TRUTH IS important and must be faithfully defended, even to the point of separation when that becomes necessary.

May we, in God’s love and mercy, be spared from such sad duties. But may be given the wisdom and courage to resolutely face and deal with such things when necessary—in infinite patience and kindness, but with firmness

and faithfulness, realising the great and life-giving value of that Treasure which has been entrusted to our care.

Bro. Gilbert Growcott

DANIEL – THE INTERPRETATION OF THE VISION

“The prophecy concerning “the King” in the eighth chapter is evidently descriptive of the Latino-Greek power in its pagan constitution, known in history as the destroyer of Jerusalem, and Judah “the people of the holy ones;” but with a hint also of its future ecclesiastical peculiarity, as appears from the testimony that “through his policy he shall cause falsehood to prosper by his power.” These few words are descriptive of the character or nature of the power since Constantine the Great set up its throne in Constantinople to the present hour; and will be so pre-eminently, when its administration shall pass from the Sultan to the Autocrat of all the Russias. As the head of a confederacy of the adherents of the Greek and Latin churches, it will be his policy to cause their priesthoods to be respected as useful co-operators in the subjection of Europe to his will.” (Exposition of Daniel page 57)

In a previous article we have commented on the great desire Daniel had to understand the things that were revealed to him in symbol. In verse 15 of chapter 8 we are once again reminded of this exhortation when it is written that Daniel “sought for the meaning” of the prophecy. We live in an age where everything is “instant”, from coffee to pre-cooked meals!

When it comes to the Scriptures we are exhorted to “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed” (2 Timothy 2:15). The word “study” in the Greek is ‘spoudazo’ and is defined by Strong’s concordance as a word meaning “to use speed, i.e. to make effort.” Here we are given an indication of the true character of Bible study. This is not a matter of picking up the Bible and “getting through the Readings”. We are being told that effort is needed in the study of the Scriptures if we are going to be approved by God. We really need to put our minds to get to grips with those difficult passages. Concordances, and the pioneer writings need to be taken off the shelf to find out the meaning of those prophecies and symbols which just don’t seem to be very clear. “Instant” studies are available in the form of inserts etc, and these are very useful, but they are no substitute for the diligent personal study that the word exhorts us to. There has to be the exercise of our minds in the spiritual food of the Living Word, if we are going to be like Daniel, and if we are to stand with him in the great day of account.

Turning our attention to chapter 8, we read in verse 15 that Daniel sees an Angel, described as “the appearance of a man”. He had already listened to a conversation between two angels in verse 13, and is now privileged to behold the presence of Gabriel. This was the angel who appeared to Zechariah to

announce to him that his wife Elisabeth would bear a son, even though she was barren, and they were both “well stricken in years”(Luke 1:7). When Zechariah doubted that this could happen because of their age, the angel answered, “I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God”(verse 19). Zechariah was expected to believe the wonderful news from this totally unexpected visitor who suddenly appeared “on the right side of the altar of incense” without doubting. As a consequence, Zechariah was made dumb (and possibly deaf, verse 62) because the words of the angel were not believed. Such was the power and authority invested in Gabriel who now stood before Daniel.

Daniel not only sees this divine messenger, but he also hears a “man’s voice” (Daniel 8:16). He does not appear to see who this is, but it could be another angel, making the fourth in this eighth chapter. The words spoken were “make this man to understand the vision”(verse 16).

Gabriel approaches Daniel and informs him that the vision has relation to the time of the end. The words of the Authorised Version are “For at the time of the end shall be the vision.” (verse 17). It is also stated in verse 19:

“And he said, Behold, I will make thee to know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be.”

This was what Daniel would be greatly interest in. Having experienced the judgements of Yahweh upon Jerusalem and her people, and knowing now that further judgement was to fall upon his people by the Little Horn of the Goat, he would naturally be interested in the time of the end. The time when the consummation of the purpose of God would be realised; when the earth would be filled with the glory of Yahweh (Numbers 14:21), and cease to be the arena of bloodshed and wickedness.

This information is also very instructive for all the servants of the Deity who have lived subsequent to the days of Daniel – and that includes us. We are taught that the historical developments contained in this chapter are not just details of what has gone on in the past in relation to Yahweh’s people. It is not just a record of nations as they have risen and fallen, as outlined by the infallible Word of God. It is all that, but the announcement to Daniel also emphasises to us that the political arena is but the stage upon which God is steadily working out His plan to an appointed, glorious end. And the end “shall be”! There is no doubt in the fulfillment of God’s plan. The evil conditions on the earth will not be forever. They have an end. This would have been of great comfort to Daniel, and to all the faithful ever since. Even though the realisation of the plan would not take place immediately, the fact that there was an end was not in question. In the words of Bro. Thomas:

“The prospects of these things had a sickening effect upon the prophet. “I fainted” said he; “and was sick for days” (verse 27). He had been told how long the glory of Judah should be veiled in rayless night, and that deliverance should come at last: but the information only left him in blank amazement; for he says, “I was astonished at the thing seen, but none understood”; that is, at

what time the scattering power would be broken, and the evening and morning sacrifice restored. Though ignorant of this, Daniel had consolation in knowing that at the end of the time appointed in the vision “the Holy shall be avenged”. (Exposition of Daniel page 27)

The development of that plan leading to the end would indeed take place over many centuries. The prophetic time period of verse 14 would have provided a key to the duration of the prophecy (i.e. the 2300 or 2400 day/years), and in verse 18 another indication was given that the fulfillment of the prophecy would not have an early fulfillment. We read the following words:

“Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright.”

This is not an unusual experience in the lives of those who had been blessed to receive revelations of the purpose of God. Daniel experiences it again in chapter 10 and verse 9. It is also recorded that the prophet Zechariah was awoken “as a man that is wakened out of his sleep” in chapter 4 and verse 1 of his prophecy. And when John on the isle of Patmos saw the vision of the multitudinous Son of man in the midst of the seven lamp-stands, he says “And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead” (Apoc.1:17).

The sleep, which these faithful servants of the Deity experienced on these occasions, represented the sleep of death. The awakening from that sleep symbolised their resurrection. Thus Daniel was taught that the symbolical things revealed to him would take place after his death, and resurrection.

So what was made known to Daniel? Verses 20 to 22 have already been considered previously in some detail. Daniel was told that the Ram and He Goat symbolised the kings of Persia, and the king of Grecia respectively. He was further informed of the great horn on the Goat (Alexander the Great), and the four kingdoms that should succeed the breaking of that horn.

We also considered the Little (eastern) Horn that emerged from one of the four horns that “waxed exceeding great” (verse 9). This was the power of Imperial Rome. In the angelic interpretation of the vision we read in verse 23:

“And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up.”

This is not the “latter days” we are looking forward to when Gog comes against Israel as a cloud (Ezekiel 38:16); when the Image is broken to pieces by the Stone power (Daniel 2:28); and when “the mountain of Yahweh’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains” (Isaiah 2:2). This is the latter time of the kingdom of Greece, when Rome would finally absorb the Macedonian kingdom. The period probably was from B.C. 168 when Macedonia was reduced to a Roman province to B.C. 30 when Egypt finally fell.

This period was characterised by transgression as far as Judah was concerned as indicated previously when commenting on Daniel 8 verse 12. It

was this generation that filled up the cup of its iniquity when it called for the crucifixion of Christ. Matthew chapter 23 records the following words:

“Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell.” (verses 31-33)

Bro. Thomas refers to verses 23 and 24 of Daniel chapter 8 on page 26 of The Exposition of Daniel in the following words:

“The Little Horn of the Goat power is described by Daniel as “a king of fierce countenance, and understanding an intricate tongue; whose power shall be mighty, but not in his own virility: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper and work; and shall destroy multitudes, and the people of the holy ones”. Speaking of the same, Moses says to Israel, “Yahweh shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand; a nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favour to the young. And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until all thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst throughout all thy land which Yahweh thine Elohim hath given thee” (Deuteronomy 28:49, 50, and 52).

The strength of Rome was unequalled. It did “cause fearful destruction” (Revised Standard Version). However, it was not “by his own power” in the sense that it was Yahweh that allowed and guided the growth of Imperial Rome. He alone “ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will” (Dan.4:17).

Verse 25 provides the details, which helps us to understand how the prophecy extends to the time of the end, with the “hint of ecclesiastical peculiarity” that Bro. Thomas refers to in the quotation at the start of this article. The verse reads as follows:

“And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many; he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes: but he shall be broken without hand.”

The reference to “his policy” in this verse points to a succession of individuals. As Bro. Thomas points out in the quote already referred to “these few words are descriptive of the character or nature of the power since Constantine the Great set up his throne in Constantinople to the present hour”. It will be recalled that Constantine transferred the civil and military administration to Constantinople, which became the headquarters of the Little Horn of the Goat.

Craft is a reference to the ecclesiastical policy of the Constantinopolitan Autocracy as it developed with such Emperors as Justinian and Phocas, who accelerated the development of the “religious” power of the papacy. This ecclesiastical element is “enlarged upon in the...eleventh chapter of Daniel”

(Exposition of Daniel page 57) which we will look at in a future article, God Willing.

But what are the circumstances leading to this power standing up against the Prince of princes (i.e. against the Lord Jesus Christ), and being broken without hand? The following quote from Elpis Israel beautifully describes the symbolism at the end of this chapter using an illustration which we believe will be helpful in understanding the symbolism:

“Suppose we were to take a goat’s horn, and with a fret-saw were to cut out a small piece of its surface. Then fix this piece upon a spring, the lower end of which should be fixed inside the horn itself. Now if pressure be applied to the small piece it would be brought down to a level with the general surface of the horn. In this state, the horn would represent the Assyro-Macedonian kingdom under the Seleucidae; but remove the pressure and the small piece of horn would start up to the height of the spring’s length. Let this represent the Little Horn upon the Goat’s horn, and we have the symbol of the power which prevails from the conquest of Assyro-Macedonia, BC65 until “the time of the end.” But if pressure be afterwards applied to the small piece, it is brought down to a level with the surface of the horn, and it again appears like one horn, for by the pressure the Little Horn is merged into it. This last action and its result will represent the merging of the Little Horn power of Constantinople into the Assyro-Macedonian, or Russian, Horn of the Goat in the time of the end; so that the Constantinopolitan, and Russo-Assyrian, powers become one horn, as before the Little Horn arose. In the time of the end, the Horn of the North, in its enmity against Israel, plays a similar part to that it did of old by the hand of Antiochus Epiphanes in the days of Judas Maccabeus. Therefore, he may be fairly taken as the type of Israel’s last and greatest enemy, who shall come to his end, with none to help him.” (page 405-406)

Thus we are living at the time when the Horn of the Goat will again become prominent, emerging in the power of the Russian autocracy, as it will be seen in the taking of Constantinople.

We would also like to conclude with a further extract from the pen of Bro Thomas where he writes in reference to the Ottoman power that ruled from Constantinople (present day Istanbul). The Ottoman power had extended over a great territory, but its power was “drying up” (Apocalypse 16:12) and was known even in Bro. Thomas and Bro Roberts days as “the sick man of Europe”. Turkey is not a strong power today, and is vulnerable to the great power to the north of its borders. We saw the war in Serbia drying up the Turkish power even further, as the Serbs sought to “ethnically cleanse” the Moslems in their territory. God’s purpose slowly, but surely continues. The quote referred to is as follows:

“The Ottoman dynasty must of course be driven out of Europe. The occupation of the Dragon’s throne by a non-Catholic royalty is clearly exceptional. The Ottoman has never, as a matter of fact, “magnified himself above all”; nor has he honoured the Latin Bishop as a god in his dominion, or

shown himself at all a gracious patron of his saints and their temples. The power causing falsehood, or False-Prophetism, to prosper, must hold Jerusalem at the crisis of the accomplishment of the indignation. By False-Prophetism, I mean, papalism. Hence, the Sultan must be ejected, that a dynasty patronising a High Priest who forbids to marry, may come in. When, therefore, the Czar gets possession of Constantinople he will not be hostile to the Pope. On the contrary, he will honour and acknowledge him, and be the enemy of the Holy Land." (Exposition of Daniel page 58)

Let us watch and be ready.

SIGNS AND EVENTS

The Middle East, the 'hot-spot' of trouble in the world, has remained a key feature of news in the U.K. this past month. One brother said to me just at the start of the Iraq war, that he wondered if Mr. Bush, subsequent to the war, would strive to bring about peace between Israel and the Palestinian's, in a bid to bring about world security.

It certainly seems as though the brother's opinion is coming to fruition. In the past week, we have seen Mr. Bush visit the area, an activity routinely avoided by the President. Perhaps there will be a Palestinian State incepted in the next few years and this may bring about the time of Israel's peace long expected by brethren since 1848. The following two articles show Mr. Sharon's reluctance to sign up to the road map and then concessions being made to establish agreement, respectively.

Israel Rejects Offer of Partial Truce

A PARTIAL truce offer from the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas has been dismissed as a "non-starter" by Israel.

Leaders of the militant group have told new Palestinian Premier Mahmoud Abbas they were ready to halt attacks inside Israel if the Israeli army stopped hunting their followers.

But a spokesman for Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon rejected the proposal, saying settlers and troops in the West Bank and Gaza Strip would still be at risk.

"They can murder just a little and we can stop defending ourselves?" said Raanan Gissin. "This is a non-starter."

The Palestinian prime minister, under growing international pressure to rein in the militants, had summoned the Hamas leaders to his office in Gaza City and called on them to stop their attacks on Israelis.

The disagreement between Abbas and Sharon over how to deal with the militias is a major obstacle to getting started on the U.S.-backed road map to peace in the Middle East.

Abbas wants to persuade the militants to lay down their arms through dialogue, while Sharon insists they be disarmed and arrested.

Despite the obstacles, Sharon has for the first time signaled qualified support for the peace plan, an Israeli official said last night.

Sharon told the White House through an emissary that he would go along with it as long as the Bush administration took his concerns into account, the official said.

A White House announcement is expected.

There were signs Abbas and Sharon would meet U.S. President George Bush separately - or perhaps together - over the coming days to discuss the peace plan, which calls for an immediate end to violence and setting up a Palestinian state by 2005.

Sharon Accepts Road Map to Peace

A HINT of flexibility by President George Bush has allowed Israeli premier Ariel Sharon to accept the road map to Palestinian statehood.

The plan is an attempt to end 32 months of fighting, freeze construction of Jewish homes on the West Bank and establish a Palestinian state by 2005 on land Israel has held for 36 years.

The Bush administration, hoping to spur Middle East peacemaking, pledged to "fully and seriously" address Israel's concerns about the plan.

"The United States shares the view of the government of Israel that these are real concerns," said a statement issued jointly by Secretary of State Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice, President George W. Bush's national security adviser.

The statement stresses that there is room to hear contrasting views on the so-called "road map" peace plan.

That opened the door for Israel's formal acceptance of a formula for accord with the Palestinians although, at a news conference in Paris, Powell said: "We are not planning on making any changes to the road map."

One of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's main worries is that the road map, which requires the dismantling of recently established Israeli outposts, might be construed as requiring the dismantling of all Jewish settlements on the West Bank.

Sharon told the Israeli people last week that abandoning settlements was not on the horizon. On Friday, however, Sharon said he was "prepared to accept" the plan and will present it to the Cabinet for approval.

The Cabinet will discuss the peace plan on Sunday or Monday, said a Sharon adviser, Raanan Gissin.

Sharon is expected to face stiff opposition from hard-line Cabinet ministers, but Gissin said he expected a majority of ministers would vote in favour because of the US assurances.

Palestinian Information Minister Nabil Amr said the Palestinians "consider the Israeli acceptance as a positive step, but at the same time we still insist on

the American and European promises and guarantees not to have any changes in the road map."

One point worth mentioning is that a brother we recently visited pointed out that Zechariah 14 v 2 prophesies: "For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city." Why will half the city be taken into captivity? The brother mentioned that under the terms of the road map, half of Jerusalem would be given to the Palestinians, and as such does Zechariah's prophecy relate to the fact that the one half which will be taken captive will be occupied by the Jews whilst the other half wouldn't be taken because it would be occupied by the Palestinians? Just a thought!

DISTRESS OF NATIONS

"And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken" (an A.D. 70 prophecy taken from Luke 21v 25-26)

The following three articles are interesting from the Bible Student's perspective to show that: -

- Men's hearts are failing them for fear;
- Distress of nations is a key characteristic of modern nations, just as it was in A.D. 70;
- Man is still doing that which is right in his own eyes (and will continue to do so until he is stopped); and
- The problems in the world today, as always, show us that 'it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps'.

Yahweh Elohim has conveyed to us in the pages of His Word that Jesus Christ will soon intervene, for "In the days of these kings shall the God of Heaven setup a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the Kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." (Daniel 2 v 44). Notice that the Kingdom shall not be left to other people (for Christ and the Saints will receive the dominion's of the world as their inheritance) and that God's Kingdom shall 'consume' all other kingdoms.

The following articles are disturbing in some aspects, but show us that the time is coming for the Lord to be revealed! : -

Mass grave found in DR Congo

A mass grave has been uncovered pushing the official death toll to over 300 from recent clashes between rival militias in the north-east Democratic Republic of the Congo.

United Nations officials say some 30 bodies were found in a grave on the outskirts in the regional capital, Bunia.

A fragile ceasefire is now in place, allowing aid workers to complete the task of recovering the bodies of the dead from streets and buildings previously too dangerous to access.

But the brutal clashes have led to calls for a multinational force to be deployed in the region.

Speaking from Bunia, the BBC's, Ishbel Matheson, says it is unclear whether the remains were those of civilians or of fighters from the rival Hema and Lendu militias.

But most of the bodies which have already been recovered are civilians shot at point blank range or hacked to pieces by machetes.

Dogs of war

There have been allegations of cannibalism during the conflict but a spokesman for the UN mission in DR Congo (Monuc) said these were difficult to confirm.

"Many of the bodies have had parts ripped out but it is difficult to say whether this is cannibal-style atrocities or not, as there are a lot of dogs who have been eating the bodies," said Hamadoun Toure.

Local people say they want the militias disarmed and the roads opened up so they can flee the town.

On Wednesday, human rights groups Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch urged international intervention, saying the 700-strong UN presence was insufficient and thousands of civilians were at risk.

French military observers have now left Bunia, where they had gone to investigate the possible deployment of a multinational force; they will also meet Monuc officials.

British officials are considering contributing to the force, alongside the French offer of 1,000 troops.

The health clinic by the main U.N. compound is crammed with people suffering from the most appalling injuries.

One woman who refused to give money to militiamen was slashed repeatedly with machetes, and saw her children killed in front of her, our correspondent said.

The bodies of two U.N. military observers who were killed in DR Congo last week have been flown to the capital, Kinshasa.

A memorial service will be held in their honour, before they are flown to their countries of origin - Jordan and Malawi.

Rivalry

The clashes erupted soon after the 9,000 strong Ugandan forces withdrew from Bunia about two weeks ago, as part of a wider peace deal.

Some 20,000 Congolese civilians have fled to Uganda since then, according to the UN refugee agency.

"We would all have been massacred on the way if it weren't for the large numbers of [withdrawing] Ugandan soldiers," one refugee told the BBC's Will Ross in western Uganda.

Hamas, traditionally cattle-raisers, and Lendus, predominantly farmers, have been in conflict for centuries for land and other resources in the area.

The rivalry has become more bloody because Ituri district around Bunia is rich with gold.

Neighbouring nations involved in the five-year DR Congo conflict - Uganda and Rwanda - armed both sides as proxy militias.

An estimated 50,000 people have died and some half a million people displaced from Ituri since 1999.

CIA: 'Al-Qaida Set for Nuclear Strike'

"And this shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth" (this verse is thought by many brethren to relate to nuclear warfare in the time of the end) Zech. 14:12.

AL-QAIDA terrorists and their supporters are set to use nuclear, chemical and biological weapons in deadly strikes, a CIA report claims.

An internal report, apparently seen by The Washington Times, said the terror network plans to use unconventional weapons "to cause mass casualties".

It said that while "most attacks" by the group were likely to be small scale, extremists linked to al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden "have a wide variety of potential agents and delivery means to choose from for chemical, biological and radiological or nuclear attacks."

One goal of any attempted strike would be spread "panic and disruption," the CIA report said.

It also identified several deadly toxins and chemicals that could be used in attacks, including nerve gases, germ and toxin weapons, anthrax and ricin, and radiological dispersal devices, also known as "dirty bombs".

Al-Qaida is developing bombs with radioactive material from industrial or medical facilities, and an al-Qaida document found in Afghanistan revealed

that the group had sketched out a crude device capable of causing a nuclear blast, the report said.

"Osama bin Laden's operatives may try to launch conventional attacks against the nuclear industrial infrastructure of the United States in a bid to cause contamination, disruption and terror," the report said.

According to the report, al-Qaida and other terrorists could also produce what the CIA called an "improvised nuclear device" capable of causing a nuclear blast.

Terrorists could produce a nuclear device in three ways, including a bomb made from "diverted nuclear weapons components," a nuclear weapon that had been modified, or a new, indigenously designed device, the report said.

The report also raised the spectre of another strike from the air. It said both Mohamed Atta, ringleader of the September 11 hijackers, and Zacarias Moussaoui, who is on trial in the US on charges related to those attacks, "expressed interest in crop dusters," raising fears that al-Qaida was considering using aircraft to spread biological warfare agents.

Indian Heat wave Deaths Reach 1,438

RAINS have cooled parts of India hit hard recently by a scorching heat wave, but the toll from the hot weather is still rising, with at least 1,438 reported dead.

Thousands have been hospitalised for sunstroke and dehydration since the heat wave began, but rain in several parts of India brought hope that the hot spell would end soon.

Rain has fallen in southern Kerala and Karnataka states, the Press Trust of India news agency said.

Several north-eastern states located along the Himalayan foothills also saw showers and rain in these areas was expected to continue for the next two days.

In northern India, including the capital, New Delhi, temperatures have fallen after a dust storm.

However, Andhra Pradesh state has not seen any rain yet, although a cool breeze was blowing through Hyderabad, the state capital, on Saturday.

Brethren and Sisters, let us take heed to Christ's words that we may be found acceptable stewards at his return. When Christ returns he will no longer be characterised as the lamb being led to the slaughter, but as the lion of the tribe of Judah with vengeance to those who know him not: "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, watch." (Mark 13: 35-37).

The Deep Things of God: The Acquisition Of Biblical Knowledge

Lord willing, with this issue, our series, "The Deep Things of God," commences another year of installments. One year ago we wrote: "That which may be gleaned from Holy Writ is treasure indeed. In this series of short articles we shall search for precious jewels of truth that the Lord has carefully placed along our path to the Kingdom. This we shall do together, as students.

A few of our discoveries may be new to some, but not to others. We are all in different stages of growth. In some cases we may find that we have rediscovered old treasure that has been forgotten. 'The mind is a leaky vessel,' a Biblical expositor once observed. This is absolutely true. At times, we uncover new pearls of wisdom from the trove of Divine Truth, only to let our earlier finds slip from memory in the process. Continuous study throughout the Oracles of Deity is, therefore, paramount."

During the past twelve months we have searched out a variety of subjects in the foundational, exhortative and prophetic areas. Some we have related through personal experience. Others through the writings of brethren Thomas and Roberts. We have also reflected upon some of the issues that continue to divide Christadelphia. Our purpose is hopefully to encourage each of us to continue our growth in the knowledge of Deity to the end that we might be well pleasing in His sight. As the Apostle Peter states: "But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ..." (2 Peter 3:18).

As we are all aware, that which may be derived from God's Word -- both rudimentary and advanced -- is inexhaustible. The Apostle Paul hath declared: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33).

So vital is the quest for this knowledge that the Prophet Hosea declared that God's people were destroyed for lack of it. He proclaimed: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no more priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of God, I will also forget thy children." (4:6)

The acquisition of Biblical knowledge is a duty we shan't finish. It is ongoing until the day when our probation is at an end. But more is required. James writes: "Even so, faith if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." (2:17)

Knowledge, while certainly a spiritual requisite, will only "puffeth up" if it is alone. Correct belief must beget proper walk. Only by putting our beliefs into action is our faith made perfect (vs. 22). My dear brethren and sisters, if this end is achieved then we shall count this little effort to have been beneficial.

And now as we go forward, let us look to Him that is of power to establish us according to the gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began.

But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith. (Romans 16:25)

Bro. Bob Widding

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

"But I desire fruit that may abound to your account . . . the odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God."

Philippians 4: 14 - 18

The nature of fruit-bearing in practical life is therefore evident. To receive the grace of God in vain, is to be destitute of this fruit; it is to know the gospel without being so influenced by it as to yield to it the results it contemplates in the renovation of the heart, the purification of the affections, the reformation of the life, the opening of the generous impulses toward men, and the fountain of gratitude and adoration towards God; and the abandonment and crucifixion of all that is contrary to the mind of Christ.

Where this is the unfortunate state of things; where the heart is still set on earthly things; and the sympathies are yet undrawn out towards the things of Christ; where sin is yet followed and God still distant; where holiness is unknown and self-denial not understood, nothing waits but, "a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation which shall devour the adversary."

The "unprofitable servant" is to be cast out. The servant who can show nothing done for the name of Christ; nothing ministered to the wants of the saints; nothing beyond a life spent at the shrine of self-interest and self-gratification - has little to look for in the day of reckoning.

Even those who do their duty are sensible of the inadequacy of their claim upon divine approbation; having done all, they say,

"Behold we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do," even as Christ enjoins - (Luke 17: 10) If this is the case with them, where shall the faithless and unholy appear?

Bro. Robert Roberts - 1872