

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

Houston, Texas – Sunday School 10am (verse by verse study of Genesis); Memorial 11am; Study Class 1pm (Phanerosis); 4th Sunday 1pm (Open discussion 1st Principal Class); Wednesday 7:30pm (The Minor Prophets). Meeting Hall address: 8008 Junius Street, Houston, TX 77012.

Loving greetings in Christ Jesus,

We have several items to report since our last correspondence. Sister Bea (Groda) Arredondo has recently given some updated contact information for her. She was apparently not receiving mail sent to her at the former address in our possession, so we were happy to get the new info. She is living in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico with her husband and she reports that she is doing well. Everyone is encouraged to write or call her; she would enjoy hearing from you. Her contact information is as follows:

Bea Arredondo

P.O. Box 103-1

Mina 188 Centro

Puerto Vallarta, Jal

Mexico CD 48301

Email: mariposa9919@hotmail.com

Phone: 322-297-2490

For those that have not yet heard, we are very happy to report that brother Joel Pando has returned to fellowship after an absence of some time from the table of the Lord. He requested readmission by formal letter and the arranging brethren met with him and were fully persuaded that he was ready to return. He has been faithfully attending meeting for several years now, and his return was expected. Brother Joel broke bread the final Sunday of the Hye fraternal gathering, and we look forward to his help in the Lord's vineyard in the days ahead. For those who may wish to contact him directly to encourage him in his renewed commitment, his email address is as follows:
jpando@houston.rr.com

We have had the pleasure of many visitors: Bro. Rusty and Sis. Susie Stephen; Bro. Curtis and Sis. Cindy Hurst; Sis. Carol Smith; Sis. Shiloh Brown; Sis. Rachel Johnatty; Bro. Gary and Sis. Brenda Smith; Bro. Dylan Foley; and several visits from Bro. Bob Bent. Surrounding their travel to the Hye gathering we were also happy to have Bro. Phillip Hughes, Bro. Matthew Hughes, and Sis. Elizabeth Hughes, all from South Wales; as well as Sis. Leah Morrell of Boston. Bro. Phillip and Bro. Bob each offered the exhortation for memorial meeting. We also now have the privilege of seeing Sis. Marie Cassidy on a regular basis, as she is staying with Bro. Harry and Sis. Cindy Cassidy. We thank everyone for their efforts to meet with us. Visitors are a welcome sight and a great spiritual strengthener.

With love in the bonds of the truth from the Houston ecclesia,
Brother Shauywn Smith

LAS CRUCES, New Mexico, Berean Christadelphian Ecclesia,
Memorial 10am; Key Lesson Bible Seminar 1pm; Tuesday 7:30pm MidWeek
Bible Class; Thursday 7:30pm Walk and Conduct Class & Social Time
Meeting Hall address: 800A Spring Street, Las Cruces, NM 88011; Bro.
Michael Morrell, 301 North Roadrunner Parkway #309, Las Cruces, NM
88011; morrell@morrellcom.com Web Page <http://lascruces.bereans.org/main>

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Las Cruces Berean Christadelphian Ecclesia meeting hall on 800 A
Spruce Street Las Cruces, NM 88011 opened on Sunday, August 3, 2003.
Brother Michael and Sister Leslie were in attendance for the first meeting, and
are currently the only members. The following week we were blessed to have
Sister Ruby Wolfe, of Lampasas, Texas visit and join us for memorial
meeting.

We wish to thank the brethren in Boston, Massachusetts for the lovely cup,
plate, and pitcher presented to us upon our departure from Boston after many
years of being a member there. This gift was for our use during the memorial
meeting once we established our ecclesia here in Las Cruces. This wonderful
gift helps us feel connected to our brothers and sisters on the east coast even
though we are separated by so many miles.

Our weekly schedule is as follows:

At the hall we have Sunday memorial meeting at 10 AM local time,
Sunday Bible class at 1 PM local time, Sunday lecture at 7 PM local time, and
mid-week class and social Thursday at 7:30 PM local time.

Each Tuesday there is a Mid-week Bible class at the home of the Morrells
at 7:30 PM local time. We live at 301 North Roadrunner Parkway, Apt. 309,
Las Cruces, NM, 88011. Phone: 505-522-0222.

All are welcome.

Love in Christ,

Brother Michael and Sister Leslie Morrell

Bro. Michael and Sis. Leslie Morrell

301 North Roadrunner Parkway #309

Las Cruces, NM 88011

Phone (505) 522-0222 (home)

Phone (505) 312-1025 (cell) Michael morrell@morrellcom.com

Phone (505) 312-1074 (cell) Leslie leslie@morrellcom.com

FRATERNAL GATHERINGS & ACTIVITIES

(To be held God Willing)

DETROIT FRATERNAL GATHERING..... Oct 18 - 19, 2003

Bro. Fred Higham, 20116 McKishnie, Clinton Twp, MI 48035, 586-790-2156

(Please Note: This is the third weekend in October).

HENGOED FRATERNAL GATHERING..... Mar 19 - 22, 2004

It will be held at Baskerville Hall in Hereford

Bro. Phillip Hughes 25 Hoel-Y-Gelli Fforchneol Parc, Godreaman, Aberdare, Mid-
Glamorgan, South Wales, U.K., CF44 6LN, phone 011-441-685-870254

HYE FRATERNAL GATHERING..... July 19 - 25, 2004

Bro. Curtis Hurst, Rt.1 Box 40, Mullin, TX 76864, 915-985-3868

Study Class Topics: Galatians – Daily Bible Readings - Discussion

James 4

We will begin our look at James chapter 4 with a brief overview of the
chapter, then proceed through the chapter again in greater detail.

The start of James 4 is really a continuation of the thought from chapter
3 starting at verse 14, the main theme being the problems of envying and
strife. This theme is discussed through verses of the 4th chapter. Verses 6-
10 give instruction on how the conditions of envying and strife may be
overcome. The chapter proceeds with two aspects of human arrogance in
verses 11-16; verses 11-12 deal with evil-speaking and judgments against
other brethren, and verses 13-16 involve the planning for and placing
importance on the future. Finally, the chapter ends with another
reinforcement of the theme of the whole epistle, “be ye doers of the
word.” As we look at these sections in more detail we should try to apply
these lessons to both our ecclesia and ourselves. Although James was
speaking directly to the Jews, it is very easy to read this as if he were
speaking directly to us. This makes the study of this book so beneficial to
us.

If we look back to chapter 3, we see mentioned two kinds of wisdom.
One is the wisdom from above, as in verses 17 and 18. The other is
wisdom that descendeth NOT from above, as in verses 14-16. This is the
“earthly wisdom”, wherein is envying and strife. The beginning of chapter
4 addresses this “earthly wisdom”. Notice how James abruptly changes the
tone from the last verse of chapter 3. He was undoubtedly trying to arouse
their attention, as he no longer speaks of generalities and pointedly asks,
“from whence come wars and fightings from among you?” The word
“wars” comes from the Greek word ‘polemos’, meaning ‘given to dispute’.
The application of this word ranges from a verbal dispute all the way to
military action. The word “fightings” is more generally applied to disputes.
From this, we may conclude that James is referring to verbal conflicts
amongst themselves. He then suggests the answer: “come they not hence
even of your own lusts (or pleasures) that war is in your members?” He
refers here not to the lusts themselves, but the source of the lusts:
“WITHIN OUR MEMBERS”. The word “war” may be applied more
militantly. Brethren and sisters, we have the same fleshly tendencies.

There is a war going on within OUR hearts and minds as well. It must be fought constantly. Paul, in Romans 7:23-24 says,

“But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

Who shall deliver us and how shall we be delivered? His own answer in verse 25 brings us right back to James. Romans 7:25

“I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.”

“With my mind I myself serve the law of God”, which is a way of saying, “BE YE DOERS OF THE WORD”.

Verses 2 and 3 further expound on his charges against them. To better understand this verse, we read from the Revised Standard Version: “You desire and do not have; so you kill. And you covet and cannot obtain; so you fight and wage war.” The word “lust” in verse 2 is in this case not referring to pleasures, but evil desires. The margin renders “kill” as envy, but it could very well have been a murder to which James is referring. Violence among the Jews was not uncommon, even to those who had accepted the Truth. The end of verse 2 states “because ye ask not”, yet verse 3 states “ye ask”. How could this be? We find the answer from the example in Isaiah 59:1-3:

“Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness.”

Although they did ask, to God it was as if they didn’t ask at all. This is why, of course, they received not. They consumed (or wasted) their prayers on their own lusts (or pleasures). What a lesson this is for us! Do our prayers reflect our own fleshly desires in any way? God knows what we need-He knows all. But do we ask for his guidance to know, think, and act righteously in HIS sight, not ours? The prayers in verse 3 were obviously not appropriate, for we read in James 5:16, “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”

Verse 4 begins with “Ye adulterers and adulteresses.” Many manuscripts omit the word “adulterers”. This is significant because it gives us the application of their ecclesias being the Bride of Christ, and their unfaithfulness to that responsibility. In Mark 8:38, Jesus tells us what could happen to those of James’ generation:

38 Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

This kind of spiritual adultery was committed because the people were trying to serve two masters. Matthew 6:24 refers to this condition:

“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”

We ourselves are in the same predicament: we may go to a study class, the memorial service, and do the readings every day, but what about the DOZENS of waking hours spent each week in the world? Are we “friends” with the world during these times? We cannot serve God part of the time and the world part of the time, or we will most assuredly grow to hold to the world and despise God. We could be as the ecclesia of Laodicea mentioned in Revelations 3:14-16:

“And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; 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 spue thee out of my mouth.”

If we look to the Revised Version or other similar translations, verse 5 becomes much clearer: “Or do you suppose it is in vain that the scripture says, He yearns jealously over the spirit which He has made to dwell in us?” God has created us, we have accepted Him, and the ecclesia has taken the position of the Bride of Christ. Now what had happened to the Jews because of their worldly cravings? They had become an unfaithful bride, making God jealous. We have all experienced the feeling of jealousy. When someone has lessened our position with friends, family, or in the workplace, we tend to resent them, sometimes to the point of hatred. It is one of the most intense emotions that can come over us. Although these feelings are completely unjustified with US, God has every right to be jealous. We see God’s reaction when provoked to jealousy in Exodus 20:1-5:

“And God spake all these words, saying, I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;”

Yet in spite of our almost constant giving in to sin, He giveth more grace; GOD GIVETH MORE GRACE. “Wherein sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Romans 5:20). Now God is a just god and will not give His grace to just anyone (note that God GIVES grace, we do not deserve it). If we, in meekness and humility, bow ourselves to God, He will bestow His grace upon us.

Verses 6-10 describe the state of mind we must be in to receive God’s grace. We see in verse 7 undoubtedly a reference to James’ own half-brother when he was tempted of the devil and overcame sin in the flesh. If we place our confidence in God alone, he will respond to us as well. Note the beautiful words of verse 8, “Draw nigh unto God, and He will draw nigh unto you.” These words are so poetic, they are easy to remember. If we would say these words to ourselves every day, what a comfort to us they would be. Draw nigh, unto God and He will draw nigh unto you. Notice the rest of verse 8, “cleanse your hands,” and “purify your hearts.” These are two distinct things we must do. We must wash our hands of the outward things of the world (controlling our actions), and we must make pure our inward selves as well (controlling our thoughts and motives).

Verses 9 and 10 are not telling us to be gloomy and depressed in our daily life, but rather to be sober-minded. Think also of the times when we’ve been sorrowful, say at the loss of a loved one. The kind of humility and something like that brings upon us is what is required of God, not the laughter of fools. There is nothing wrong with laughter; it is something God has created for us. However, their laughter was not proper-it was the laughter of fools. In hymn 170, we have a fitting analogy of the fate of these fools:

The noisy laughter of the fool
Is like the crackling sound
Of blazing thorns which quickly fall
In ashes to the ground

Verses 11 and 12 deal with the judging of others. Verse 11 begins, “speak not evil one of another.” The Diaglott renders it “each other”. Doubtless there was a problem not just of speaking evil of another man, but of a brother. Have we ever spoken evil of a brother or sister? This could take on the form of spreading derogatory rumors when talking to others in idle conversation. It could also be the sole purpose of a conversation, attacking a brother’s motives or actions behind his back. This is a judgment made on a brother. He who judgeth “speaketh evil of the law.” What law is that? It is the latter of the two great commandments uttered by Jesus in Matthew 23:39, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” The Jews to whom James is speaking certainly loved themselves-

but did they love their neighbor, even their brother? Who were they (and who are we) to presume to judge our brother? Have we bothered to remove the BEAM that is in our own eye before removing but a MOTE in our brother’s eye? God is THE judge, and those who presume to do what only God can do will certainly find this out when they stand before the judgment seat. God is the one lawgiver, the only one with authority to execute judgment; that authority was passed on to His son only in John 5:26-27. We are not to enforce the law, we are to be DOERS. Perhaps we could more easily overcome this weakness of the flesh if we thought of Paul’s instruction in Philippians 2:3,

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.”

We now come upon the second case of human pride and arrogance in verses 13 and 14. This case is the presumption that we are in control of our future-what we do, where we go, etc., and in the process become engrossed with the things of the world. Jesus gives an example of this in the parable of the rich man found in Luke 12:16-21:

“And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

Note the parallel of this parable with James 4:13:

- “today” or “tomorrow” : whichever they saw fit
- “such a city” : a predefined location
- “continue a year” : a predefined time period
- “buy and sell” : the Jews especially were obsessed with it
- “get gain” : the underlying purpose of all the above actions

Now this can not only happen to those who are rich, but also to those who are aspiring to be rich. What happened to the rich man here? His soul was required of him THAT NIGHT. James’ comment is similar: “ye know not what be on the morrow”. I was given a plaque that reads:

This is the beginning of a new day
God has given me this day to use as I will
I can waste it or use it for good
But what I do with it is important because
When tomorrow comes, this day will be gone forever

Now we may take one of two attitudes with this in mind: We may live with the attitude, 'eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die', or we use the day God has given us to be DOERS OF THE WORD. Actually, if we choose either path, our lives are still but a vapour in God's eyes. However, if we are doers of the word, we have the opportunity to put on immortality. Our labors to buy and sell and get gain are fleeting. If, however, we be as in 1 Corinthians 15:58,

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

God is the sustainer of our very being. It is His will to sustain it, or to take it away. Therefore James instructs, "ye ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall do this, or do that." We have not been saying that it is wrong to make plans for the future even with regard to worldly issues. We should not, however, become too preoccupied with them, for they will only occur if the Lord wills them to occur. We hear ourselves say, 'God-willing', which is certainly appropriate. Whether we say it or not, the important thing is to be conscious of it at all times.

The Jews were certainly not conscious of it. Quite the opposite: they rejoiced in their boastings. The Diaglott renders the word 'rejoice' in verse 16 as 'boast'. The same word for 'boastings' in verse 16 is rendered 'pride of life' in 1 John 2:16. Putting these together, we have 'ye boast in your pride of life'. Not only were they disregarding the Lord's will, they were boasting about it! Brethren and sisters, we must not be guilty of either of these offences, but rather follow the words of Proverbs 27:1,

"Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

Our whole lives and plans for the future could be changed in a day. We could lose our jobs, our family could be stuck with tragedy, we could be taken to our grave, or we could be standing before the judgment seat of Christ, all in a day.

The final verse of this chapter is also somewhat of a conclusion of the middle three chapters of this epistle that all have dealt with specific weaknesses of human flesh. The Jews who read or heard this epistle have the Truth; they knew to do good. What they needed was ACTION! "To him that knoweth to do good and DOETH IT NOT, to him it is sin." "Faith without works is dead."

Brethren, sisters, Sunday school students, we know to do good as well. We must press onward, ACTING on that knowledge. Draw nigh unto God, and He will draw nigh unto you. Paul, in Philippians 3:12-14 gives us the motivation (speaking of Christ), Philippians 3:12-14

"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Bro. Lynn Osborne

Search the Scriptures

"The secret things belong unto the lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 29:29).

It was said of the disciples at Berea (Acts 17:11) -

"These were more noble; ... in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

The Greek word for "searched" in that passage is "akarino", and it means to judge or sift again. The same Greek word is also translated in the A.V. by the following words: "ask questions"; "discern"; "examine"; and "judge."

Readiness means, "quality of being ready, promptness; alacrity."

This gives us an idea of what is meant by searching the scriptures, "with all readiness of mind." It is to examine them carefully, with promptness and clarity, carefully discerning the meaning of the context, and judging between scripture and scripture to be sure that we have caught the sense of the words, as the writer intended. Then if our efforts are not all sufficient for the task, we ask questions of those who "by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and bad." (Hebrews 5:11)

We read in Proverbs 25:2-

"It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honor of kings (who are from a sun's risings) to search out a matter."

We can well understand that the Great Majesty of the heavens would be pleased as He watches over the lives of his children, to see them all earnestly engaged in searching out the height, length, breadth and depth, of the mysteries of the divine and infinite mind, as He has revealed it for our growth in the way of godliness.

Not only is He well pleased at our sincere and forward efforts in this direction, but when God sees (and He sees all that we do) that we are very anxious to learn His Word, and are wholly exercised to the limit of our ability to understand His message to us, THEN He reaches down to us with a helping hand.

“If any man lack wisdom,” James says, “let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord” (1:5-7). We could say then that here is our starting point as we set forth on the great and holy mission of searching the scriptures. Let us search them prayerfully. Jesus said –

“Without me you can do nothing.”

We can never enter fully into the depth of the love and mercy of God as contained in His plan of redemption for man WITHOUT God’s help. And we are assured that we do not get this help unless we ask in faith, with a CONSUMING DESIRE that our minds be filled “with all the fullness of God.”

The casual reader of the Bible, who dips into it lightly and intermittently, here and there, at such times that suits his fancy, will never receive divine help in the matter; neither will he ever achieve a thorough knowledge of the Word. The help of God comes at the point where our own strivings reach their zenith and when our desires urge us on with zeal and fervor.

The Lord told Israel through the prophet Jeremiah –

“Ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart” (29:13).

Such seeking and searching as this “WITH THE WHOLE HEART,” and with an humble and prayerful approach to the subject matter in hand will bring wonderful results, Solomon said –

“The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord” (Proverbs 16:1).

The Hebrew for “preparations” here means, “arrangement, disposing.” It is God who calls us to the Truth: it is He who prepares our hearts to receive the engrafted Word, and Who works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. But this doesn’t come but with our full co-operation in love and submission to the divine hand in our lives.

It is much to our advantage, then, in searching the scriptures, if we spend a few moments, before ever we open the book, to enter in the presence of the Great Father of Lights, in meditation and prayer, making our requests known to Him Who is able to help to the utmost – asking that our minds be opened, and our hearts humbled as a little child so that the power of the Word may overwhelm us and carry us along in the better way.

Coming thus into the presence of God, of Whom are all things, and Who is the Author of our salvation, the heart is fully prepared, and the atmosphere is cleared for beholding the wondrous things contained in His glorious Law.

Thus the beauty and holiness of the divine revelation to man unfolds itself before our eyes.

We can do all things through Jesus Christ who strengtheneth us, but nothing without him.

Continuing with our studies of the methods and practices that will fill our minds with the knowledge of God’s will and develop within us a complete and wholesome concept of the “whole counsel of God,” we next consider the materials needed for the work..

In our day, when so many versions and translations of the scriptures are available, the question arises in our minds which of all these should we use as the basis of our studies, or do we need them all?

The King James or Authorized Version of 1611 is in most general use, and it cannot be surpassed for beauty, and reverence and dignity of language. At that time the English language was at its best, as will be apparent as we compare its lofty style with that of modern Versions. In the A.V. Psalms 146: it reads -

"There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High."

Notice the decline in elegance and beauty of discourse as we read the same passage in one of the modern Versions -

“The river divine hast streams that gladden the city if God, the sacred shrine of the Most High."

Also, read the first verse of Paul's letter to the Hebrews and notice how fluent and easy to read the A.V. is as compared with other translations.

It is true that the meaning of some words have changed since 1611, and there have been later discoveries of older manuscripts that were not available to the translators of the A.V. But this deficiency can easily be off-set by having on hand the Emphatic Diaglott and the American Standard Version of 1901.

To cumber our studies with numerous and sundry modern Versions, which for the most part are highly colored with current, erroneous theology, is to cloud our thoughts with useless material that will add little or nothing to the success of our studies.

The use of a good commentary, such as Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, which first appeared about the middle of the last century, during the early labors of Bro. John Thomas, will lessen the need for referring to so many Versions, since the various renderings of the important translations of the Bible are given in cases where the Hebrew or Greek is obscure.

The Septuagint (commonly designated by LXX), a Greek translation of the Old Testament, was in common use in the days of Christ and the

apostles, and is now used to a considerable extent by many Christadelphians, as is Halley's Handbook of the Bible.

It might be said in regard to reference books and collateral study material that Young's or Strong's analytical concordances, and Westminster's or Smith's Bible dictionary are well to have at hand.

But a word of caution is necessary in the use of any reference books or commentaries, not written by faithful Christadelphians. They are good as a source of factual, historical, biographical or geographical material, but they were all written by men who did not understand the saving truth of the gospel, who believe in the immortality of the soul, heaven going at death, and the doctrine of the Trinity. When they presume to speak on matters of doctrine and holiness of life, naturally, they are not to be trusted.

As to books written by Christadelphians, the indispensable ones are those by Bre. Thomas and Roberts. They were a part of that great movement referred to in the 11th chapter of the Apocalypse as the two candlesticks "standing before the God of the earth."

After prophesying for a "thousand two hundred and threescore days (of years), clothed in sackcloth" the two witnesses were killed and their dead bodies lay in "the street of the great city" (Rome) for three and a half symbolic days (105 years), ending in 1790 A.D.

But at this point it is said -

"The spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet" (v. 11).

The time had then come when the great Roman apostasy could no longer suppress the witnessing of those who desired to study and investigate the teaching of the scriptures for themselves. And so about 60 years after religious liberty was obtained, and after 5 vials and part of the 6th vial had been poured out upon the worshippers of the beast, we find Bro. Thomas proclaiming the original purity and simplicity of the Truth in Britain and America. This sweeping divine movement that began with the French Revolution had accomplished its mission, and the Truth of God was again set up in the earth on a firm foundation, that a people might be prepared for the coming of the Lord. This work of unveiling the Truth was according to God's will. The prophet Daniel was told -

"Go thy way, Daniel; for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end" (12:9).

And in Habakkuk 2:3 we read -

"The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie."

The unsealing of these visions at the time of the end, that he may run that readeth it" has been done according to God's design.

"Thy hands have made me, and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments" (Psalms 119:73).

Without the books of Bre. Thomas and Roberts, the Truth of God would still be buried in the rubbish of clerical apostate theology, and Egyptian darkness would still prevail throughout the earth.

But thanks be to God, we have been drawn into this Great Light that has newly arisen in the earth, that a people might be prepared for the coming of the Lord, to give light to the watchers on the walls of Zion, so that they might answer with authority the query -

"Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come." Isaiah 21:11-12

May we all have in our libraries all of the books of these two pioneer brethren, and study them carefully; for we cannot believe, in view of the divine purpose that there would be "watchers" in these latter days, with the divine light to understand what they see, and also that there would be those who would "not sleep", but be alive and remain to the coming of the Lord: we cannot believe that their work was anything less than a complete unveiling of the whole Truth, as once for all delivered to the saints in the first century. To diverge from the basic principles set forth in their works is to compromise our position, and so stand on dangerous ground.

Of all the books that have ever been written expository of Bible Truth, none other can compare with Eureka, by Bro. Thomas. To study and understand this great work is to acquire a profound and comprehensive insight into the whole Bible, so that a complete picture - is developed before our eyes depicting the unfolding of God's eternal purpose from the creation till the new heaven and new earth have come, and "the sea is no more."

The present day unstable condition in the brotherhood could well be attributed to the current trend to consider such works out of date and unsuited to the times, and the placing of emphasis on a more modern approach to the eternal Truths of the Scriptures.

In connection with our studies in the Truth, and in order to keep our minds pure, and our thoughts free from all entanglements and associations with false ideas, we must keep our reading material pure - our libraries at home, clear of any taint that might lead us into the wrong channels of thought.

The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him. We know we have the Truth. We are sure that the basis upon which we worship and serve-

God and fellowship with Him and His Son, and with all of like precious faith with us in the world, is the same as that originally brought to light by Bre. Thomas and Roberts.

In order to maintain the purity and holiness of the Truth in our midst, LET US BE SEPARATE in the matter of reading and studying as in all things else. This will exclude from our studies the books, magazines and tracts currently sent out by those from whom we must stand aside because of their relation directly or indirectly, with false teaching.

We need to study systematically along a well-planned course of study. Beginning with the first principles of the Truth as a foundation, we lay one stone upon another from day to day until the whole superstructure of the house of God which we are building is completed and we stand full grown in the Truth.

It is well to understand that studying and searching the Scriptures is not to be confused with mere reading of, the text as contained in the daily Bible lessons. We can read the Bible through many times and still know pitifully little about its great message.

Studying is best done when we are alone, and under peaceful and quiet conditions, so that the mind can be fully absorbed in the work. Reading our daily lessons on suitable occasions together with others is good, but those passages that do not readily yield their full meaning as we read, must be dealt with at such times as we can give ourselves wholly to them in private study.

As we pass from one book of the Bible to another, we should be able to fit each one into its place and purpose in such a way that the continuity between them all will be perceived. Thus a complete and composite picture is formed, link by link, from Genesis to Revelation, and the history of God's dealings with man, and the revelation of His will and purpose are well impressed on our minds.

In studying any of the books of the Bible, and more especially the writings of the prophets of Israel, we need to understand the history of the times contemporary with the writer. This is so because much of the material so written has a literal application to the times then current. Before we try to make a figurative or typical application of Scripture, let us be sure first that the message is understood in the light of its primary or lateral meaning, taking into consideration who the writer was, to whom he was writing, and the conditions extant at the time of writing.

"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wonderous things out of thy law" (Psalm 119:18).

Bro. E. W. Banta

Hymn 178a

Lord, Thy death and resurrection, We show this day,
'Tis a tribute of affection we all should pay.

Where do our affections lie? What are the important things in our lives? Do we wrongly or misguidedly place our affections on the things of this world?

Wine out-pour'd, bread now broken, of Thy sacrifice the token,

He gave his life for us. He gave his life for us. HE GAVE HIS LIFE FOR US.

Do we comprehend the import of this? Or, do we just casually accept it because we have heard it so often?

Even so, as Thou hast spoken, We will obey.

Do this in remembrance of me. Do we really think about what we are doing when we break bread each first day of the week? Do we really listen and consider what is said and what we are saying by partaking?

Till Thou come we will remember Thine agony.

The agony of the cross was intense. His death was not easy. Do we appreciate this as we should?

Of Thy body ev'ry member suffers with Thee.

We cannot imagine what it was really like, but have you tried? But the glory that shall follow on that glad long-looked-for morrow, Merging from the night of sorrow, revealed shall be.

Jesus, emerging from the night of sorrow and death, rising from the tomb, on that glad resurrection morning, and then ascending to the glory of the Father.

Till the morning break, O may we be wholly Thine.

Till our resurrection morning comes, may we remain in His fold. Sun of Righteousness, we pray Thee now rise and shine. Come, Lord! Come! From heaven descending, All the angelic host attending,

Do we likewise consider and contemplate and meditate upon that glorious day? Christ's return, our resurrection and gathering to him, assisted and accompanied by the angels.

To bestow the life unending, Nature Divine.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. (1 John 3:2)

DANIEL – THE 70 WEEKS PROPHECY

“Under the full and lively expectation of the restoration of his people, Daniel confessed with deep and sincere repentance the rebellion for which they had been righteously punished through the Chaldeans; and besought Yahweh that he would turn away his anger and fury from his city Jerusalem, his holy mountain; and cause his face to shine upon his sanctuary ‘mikdosh’, then in ruins, for His own sake; seeing that the people and the city were called by His name. While he was yet speaking in prayer, Gabriel appeared to him at the time of the evening sacrifice. Fifteen or sixteen years before, Gabriel had been authorised to make Daniel understand the vision concerning the ‘tahmid’, or evening-morning sacrifice (Dan.8:15). But as we have seen, he only accomplished this to a limited extent. He has left Daniel “astonished at the vision, but none understood”. He saw the destruction of the people of the holy ones; the greatness of their destroyer’s power; his presumption in contending in battle with their Commander-in-Chief; and his final overthrow; but of what was to occur in relation to Messiah the Prince, before the taking away of the evening and morning sacrifice, and the casting down of the foundation of the temple – of these things he had no understanding. Gabriel was therefore sent a second time “to make him skilful of understanding”, that he might “discern the word” he then brought to him” (Exposition of Daniel – page 30-31)

In our last article (which began an examination of the ninth chapter of Daniel), we briefly considered the prayer of Daniel in which he made earnest supplication for his people and the city Jerusalem. While thus praying we are told in verse 21 that he is visited with an angelic messenger, even Gabriel. This was the angel Daniel says he had seen “in the vision at the beginning”. As Bro. Thomas says in the quotation above, this was fifteen or sixteen years before Gabriel had been authorised to make Daniel understand the vision concerning the Ram and Goat and the tahmid, or evening-morning sacrifice (see Daniel chapter 8). “But as we have seen, he only accomplished this to limited extent. He had left Daniel “astonished at the vision, but none understood”. (Bro. Thomas)

He is now told that the reason he has come to Daniel is to give him “skill and understanding” (verse 22). That is, further information is now to be provided which would enhance the vision recorded in chapter 8 (verses 8 – 12). Daniel would now learn of further details in the plan and purpose of God that would come to pass before “the place of his sanctuary was cast down” (i.e. when the Temple and city was destroyed in the events we refer to as A.D.70).

These details are recorded in verse 24, and six items are contained in that verse including the time period of “seventy weeks”, or 490 years (on the day for a year principle). As Bro. Thomas expresses it, “six particulars were to become accomplished facts before an army should be given to the Romano-

Greek Babylonian Little Horn” (Exposition of Daniel page 31). We intend to look at the six particulars, and examine the seventy-week period in a subsequent article (God Willing).

We would encourage the reading of the section in the Exposition of Daniel for a full consideration of the Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks that includes these six particulars. We have in fact, in this article extracted a significant amount of material from those pages as the exposition could be expressed in no better language.

The six particulars are as follows:

1. The perfecting of Judah’s transgression. We have commented more than once upon this aspect. Israel’s history was one of disobedience and rebellion to Yahweh and His commandments. However, the culmination of their iniquity was in the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the householder who had planted the Israelitish vineyard. He was “The Heir” to whom reverence should have been shown, but Israel said, “Come, let us kill him, and let us sieze on his inheritance” (Matthew 21:38). Pilate sought to release him, not finding any fault in him, but was met with the clamour of “Away with him, away with him”, “crucify him”, “we have no king but Caesar.” “Thus was the first particular of Gabriel’s word accomplished. Judah’s rebellion was perfected within a few hours of the expiration of the seventy times seven years from the Passover of the 20th year of the reign of Artaxexes, Ram-king of Babylon” (Bro. Thomas).

2. The causing to cease from sin-offerings. The daily offering of animal sacrifices did not come to an end at the crucifixion of Messiah. They continued to be offered right up to A.D.70 when the Temple was destroyed and it was no longer possible to offer the blood of lambs and goats etc. However, the sacrifices were meaningless rituals. Firstly, because Judah had long ceased to offer them in an acceptable frame of mind (Compare Isaiah 1 verses 10-15), and secondly (and more importantly) because the one great offering for sin had been made. “We read of no more sin-offering being presented by the apostles, who had been made clean through the word spoken to them by Jesus; nor did they enjoin sin-offerings upon those who received their teaching. “By the” Abrahamic or “Second Will, they were sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once”; “for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified”; so that having thus obtained a permanent remission, “no more offering for sin” was needed. Hence they were superceded by Messiah’s sacrifice, though they continued to be offered by the rebels.” (JT)

3. The covering of iniquity. “The verb rendered thus is khahphar, to cover, or overlay, to hide. Hence, khaphporeth, a cover, and therefore applied to the cover of the Ark of the Testimony in the Most Holy Place of the Temple, called the Propitiatory, because propitiation or expiation was made for sin by sprinkling it with the blood of the sacrifices. It was also called the

Mercy Seat. A good conscience is without shame or fear. Transgression of law, or sin, converts a good conscience into a bad one, and develops shame and fear. Before he sinned, Adam's conscience was good; he was naked, but not at all ashamed, or afraid of the presence of the Elohim: but immediately after, his conscience being defiled, shame and fear caused him to hide himself, because he was uncovered. This teaches us that sin needs to be covered. Adam felt this, and undertook to cover his own sin in the best way he could devise, being ignorant of the manner in which sin is covered by divine appointment. But the Lord God stripped him of his own device, which did not recognise the principle of blood-shedding in the covering of iniquity. He taught Adam to shed the blood of a lamb, and to cover his nakedness with its skin. This was the lamb slain at the foundation of the world, and represented him who is the Lamb typically slain from the foundation of the world.....The patriarchs, prophets, and others, who Abrahamically believed the things covenanted to the fathers, and were dead, had died with no other covering for their sins than could be derived from the pouring out of the blood of bulls and goats. But "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4); their sins therefore remained uncovered and unexpiated; and as "the wages of sin is death", if the expiation of the seventy heptades had never been effected, they would never have risen from the dead to eternal life. Hence, speaking of the covering efficacy of Christ's death, Paul says, "For this cause he is the Mediator of the New (or Abrahamic) Covenant, that by means of death FOR THE REDEMPTION OF THE TRANSGRESSIONS UNDER THE FIRST COVENANT (the Law) they which are called might receive the promise of the everlasting inheritance" (Hebrews 9:15). (Bro. Thomas)

4. The bringing in a righteousness of ages. "If Messiah the Prince had not been cut off for his people "a righteousness of ages", could not have been brought in. Faith in the things of the Kingdom could not have been counted for righteousness to life in the future ages of glory without a propitiatory or mercy seat, sprinkled with blood. The cutting off of Jesus provided this indispensable kaphporeth, or cover for sin: so that he being slain and raised from the dead, the means of a sinner's justification, styled, "The righteousness of God", was brought in or completed within the period appointed. Here then were the victim and the covering provided by Yahweh – a victim of expiation for the sins of the faithful; the faithful who believed the promises covenanted to Abraham and David: - a covering garment to hide their sins in putting on the victim by immersion into his name. Thus invested or clothed upon, they are in Christ, who of God becomes to them thus, "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." (Bro. Thomas)

5. The sealing of the prophet and vision. "To speak the word of the Lord is for a prophet to speak what the Lord impresses upon his brain. We perceive before we speak; hence, to reveal our perceptions is to speak what we see, or to speak a vision. When a man speaks impressions made upon him by

the Lord, and the Lord confirms what he speaks, he speaks "an open vision", and the confirmation is the sealing of it. "Bind together the testimony; seal instruction among my disciples." This was done in the ministrations of the Lord Jesus. He spoke an open vision, instructing his disciples; and has instructions the Father sealed, by the signs and wonders that accompanied them. In sealing the vision of the seventieth heptade, the prophet by whom the vision was spoken, was sealed likewise. The confirmation of the vision was the confirmation of its prophet also...."The Father himself, who hath sent me, hath borne witness of me.....The sealing of the vision and the prophet go together, and are therefore placed together in Gabriel's word; and have unquestionable reference to Jesus, who speaking of himself says, "Him has the Father sealed". (Bro. Thomas). (See John 6:27 John 5:37 Romans 15:8)

6. The anointing the Holy One one of holy ones. "The sixth and last of Gabriel's specifications in this verse is the anointing the Holy One of holy ones. This personage was the Messiah, a name signifying an anointed one. There have been many anointed ones, but the one here referred to was to be pre-eminently such; and to be anointed within the limits of the seventieth heptade; that is, some time between the end of the sixty-ninth and the end of the seventieth, as appears from verse 25. Believing that Jesus is Messiah the Prince, we are at no loss where to place the anointing. Peter says, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power"; and Luke, after relating the particulars concerning it, says that "Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age" (Luke 3:23 Acts 10:38). This fixes the baptism and anointing at three years and a few months before the crucifixion. Thus, "God anointed him with the oil of gladness above his associates" (Psalms 45:7). He is therefore the Holy One of those holy associates, or the Holy One of holy ones." (Bro. Thomas)

In conclusion and by way of exhortation, we would draw attention to the words expressed to Daniel in verse 23. "At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved." What a wonderful and encouraging form of address. Does the Deity regard us as "greatly beloved"? The answer lies in asking ourselves if we are like Daniel in the many faithful characteristics that have been revealed concerning him. This is not a special reference reserved only for Daniel. It is how the Father regards all those who are developing a character after the image of His dear Son.

Do we therefore strive to do those things that are pleasing to Him, despite our many faults, weaknesses and imperfections? Are we trying to the best of our abilities to keep the Commandments of our Lord, being afraid to offend or grieve him? Are we sowing to the flesh or to the Spirit? Are we carnally minded or spiritually minded? Are we making the study of the Scriptures an integral part of our daily lives? Are we striving to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts? Is the plan and purpose of God our constant meditation? Are we seeking to bring every thought into subjection to the law of Christ?

Do we pray to God always and faint not? Are we removing stumbling blocks from our path? Are we keeping separate from the world and its ways?

The answer to these and similar questions will give us an indication of whether we are beloved in the Father's sight. There is no question as to the love he has shown towards us, and it is His good pleasure to give us the Kingdom. The question is whether we will continue in that love. May our continued thoughts on Daniel, his life and prophecy, inspire us, to the end we may be saved, and God glorified.

Bro. Phillip Hughes

SIGNS AND EVENTS

“This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness” (Ephesians 4: 17-19).

Although the churches and chapels of the world have always been more of a social club than a true gathering together of faithful servants of Christ, at one time the clergy did serve as a sort of “moral police force”. Now, even the churches of the world are finding it hard to draw people's interest. Instead of scaring people into attending church with the threat of hell fire, they are trying to change with the times, to become more relevant to people's needs and changing lifestyles. In other words, the Bible is being totally discarded, in order to cater to the wants and feelings of this Godless, self-centred society, so that the churches may once again fill their pews and their pockets.

The Head of a Church in Nigeria recently, during a B.B.C. interview regarding the appointment of a gay priest in New Hampshire, U.S.A., said that the Anglican Church in his country, feared that Americans and the rest of the Western World, were becoming ‘post-Christian’. In other words, the Church has become so ‘contemporary’ (their favourite buzz-word) that they've left the principles that Christ introduced in the first century and adopted new principles that are unrecognisable in Scripture. We know that the Churches in both U.S.A. and Nigeria have fallen wholly astray from the Scriptures, but it is interesting that missionary workers from the West once taught religion in those countries like Nigeria, and now, Nigeria are sending their missionaries back to the U.S.A. and U.K. with a view to getting them back to true Christian doctrines.

We would like to include two news articles from the British press which we feel adequately demonstrates our point.

Christianity 'almost vanquished in U.K.'

Christianity has been "all but eliminated" as a source of moral guidance in people's lives, according to the head of the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

The Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor also lamented the fact people were "indifferent" to Christian values and the Church when he addressed the National Conference of Priests in Leeds.

"In our countries in Britain today, especially in England and Wales, that Christianity, as a sort of backdrop to people's lives and moral decisions - and to the government, the social life of the country - has now almost been vanquished," the Archbishop said.

He added that music, new age and occult practices seemed to be replacing Christ as something in which young people could trust.

Society had been demoralised, with people seeking transient happiness in alcohol, drugs and pornography, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor continued.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, said Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor's comments echoed his own views.

Bishops Back Divorce in Shock Church Report

A CHURCH of England report has declared that divorce can be a good thing - if it brings unhappy marriages to an end.

A study by the church's Doctrine Commission has said marriage can shelter abuse, stifle personal development and cut families off from the rest of the world.

It reads: "An increasing number of people have lived through difficult and painful divorces, to which there sometimes seems no realistic alternative."

The report, called “Being Human: A Christian Understanding of Personhood”, is the church's latest attempt to make itself more relevant to contemporary society - and also gives support to unmarried couples.

It praises committed relationships and says sex should be celebrated as "a wonderful gift from God".

And the report recognises that the church needs to change with society if it is to remain relevant.

It says that, in light of society's changing attitude towards sex and relationships, "a merely nostalgic or conservative reaction is out of the question".

And it argues that people need ever greater wisdom to deal with modern pressures such as power and money.

The report says that marriage has changed considerably over the centuries, claiming that it has not always been seen as an ideal.

Some think the report may be opening the way for the church to engage with gay relationships, following the controversy over Canon Jeffrey John being picked for the role of Bishop of Reading and declining the post.

The Scriptures : To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them (Isaiah 8 v 20).

Christadelphian teaching since 1848 has been on the fundamental premise that “all things were written aforetime for our learning”. The Divine writing of the Scriptures has given Bible students ‘contemporary’ guidance in the things pertaining unto righteousness from the first century until now. Indeed, if the Master remained away for the next 2,000 years, then still the Bible message would be as relevant to society in A.D.4003 as it is today in A.D.2003! Yahweh is a God of unspeakable wisdom and knowledge and in His unlimited foreknowledge, has known what is best for man throughout all generations. Our study, our trust, our consolation and comfort, must be founded upon the light of the Word. If we speak “not according to this word, it is because there is no light in us”! Brethren and sisters, the days in which we live are exceptionally dark and evil, and people certainly do not ‘speak according to the word of God’. They are “lovers of pleasures” and “not lovers of God”. “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. ²For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, ⁴Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; ⁵Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. ⁶For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts” (1 Tim. 3 v 1 to 6).

The communist manifesto has done much to take people away from God, and we have to be careful, with the three frog like spirits so strong and prevalent in our age today, that these things don’t fool us and take us away from our first love.

Communist Rules for Revolution, Captured in Dusseldorf, Germany, May 19th 1919 by the Allied Forces: -

A. Corrupt the young, get them away from religion, get them interested in immorality. Make them superficial, destroy their ruggedness.

B. Get control of all means of publicity and thereby:

- Get the people’s mind off their government by focusing their attention on athletics, immoral books and other trivialities.

- Divide the people into hostile groups by constantly harping on controversial matters of no importance.

- Destroy the people’s faith in their natural leaders by holding them up to contempt, and obloquy.

- Always preach true democracy but seize power as fast and as ruthlessly as possible.

- By encouraging government extravagance, destroy its credit, produce fear of inflation with rising prices and general discontent.

- Foment unnecessary strikes in vital industries, encourage civil disorders, and foster a lenient and soft attitude on the part of the government towards such discords.

- By specious argument cause the breakdown of the old moral virtues; honesty, sobriety, continence, faith in the pledged word, ruggedness.

C. Cause the registration of all firearms on some pretext, with a view to confiscating them and leaving the population helpless.

{End of manifesto}

We may see the world become much darker before the second advent of our Lord and Master. We may see much more of the ‘Time of Jacob’s trouble’ than many once thought! We are exhorted to be “watching and waiting” with our “wedding garments on”; our “oils filled, trimmed and well burning”, and there is only one way we can achieve this, and certainly no other.

The daily reading and contemplation of the Word of God and real study in connection with it, is the only way we can prepare ourselves. Far too many have, and are influenced, by friends in the world. Far too many engage themselves in trivial pursuits, such as TV, sport, worldly knowledge and education, which we’ve been directly warned against in the Scriptures. Far too many give little or no time to study, worship and praise. Let us examine ourselves and set our paths straight TODAY before it’s too late. Are we ready?

John 8 v 31-32: “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; ³²And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

Bro. Stephen Male

CHRIST’S CRUCIFIXION—ITS PURPOSE

The crucifixion of Jesus was divinely pre-ordained, with what object?

“By him, to reconcile all things to himself . . . in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unreprouvable in his sight if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel” (Colossians 1:20, 23).

But what had the crucifixion of his body to death to do with this result? There are several apostolic definitions that explain this. Putting these three together, we get the answer—

“Condemned sin in the flesh” (Romans 8:3) “to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God” (3:25); “that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (6:6).

God required that our sinful and condemned nature should be federally put to death in one who had done no sin, through whom, after resurrection, we could come, in baptismal identification with his death, for forgiveness and

friendship with God, “if we continue in the faith grounded and settled.” It was our very nature that was put to death in him. It was righteously so done because of his physical participation in the results of Edenic transgression. His resurrection was in righteousness also; for “he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.” Forgiveness on this basis is by grace (favour) and not of debt; for the death of Christ is not the payment of our debt but the declaration of God’s righteousness, on our recognition and submission to which, He is pleased to pass by our sins, of His own kindness and forbearance.

It is evident, then, that behind Christ crucified, is God and His claims on us. He claims our love; He claims our obedience. Both are the claims of the highest reason, for when reason opens to the origin of all things in God, we feel the utmost rousing of admiration at the perfect wisdom and goodness which they show to exist innately in Him. And when we realise that “It is He that made us, and not we ourselves,” and that we are merely so much of His stuff in a certain form by His permission, the idea of disobedience seems madness. To “delight in the law of God after the inward man” becomes the elementary act of reason. Any other state is aberration, due to ignorance. Its visitation by death is both reasonable and beautiful, for how could we imagine rebellion tolerated in a permanent state of things? And how could we imagine the misery of sin to be allowed to be endless?

The death of Christ is the assertion of all these beautiful truths, and the laying of the foundation-stone of salvation in righteousness. But it has a powerful and urgent application now to all those who are baptised into his death and in the enjoyment of the forgiveness predicated upon that submission. Paul suppresses the question:

“Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?”

His answer is energetic.

“God forbid. How shall we that have died to sin (in taking part baptismally in the very death that Christ died) live any longer therein?” “Our old man (our old nature) was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”

So that there was a dramatic lesson in it. Every time we look at Christ crucified, we see a reason why we should not be guided by the mere instincts of the body we now possess, for that body was put to death on the cross that we might be told that rational life is not to be found by obeying the impulses that are native to that body. Those impulses are the law of life in the world, they are not the law of the sons of God. They are not a safe law. Followed by themselves, they lead to every hideousness and ruin. Regulated by law (that is, by God’s commands), they are beautiful, as fire is, under control. But the world loves not the law. Naturally, we revolt at it.

“The carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”

But when the power of the Spirit enters our minds, by the Word of the Spirit understood and believed, the darkness of the carnal mind gives way before the light, and we “put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him.”

The restraints and self-denials and disciplines implied in this process may be irksome to flesh and blood; but there is another side. Even in systems of human wisdom, the value of “training” (whether physical or mental) is recognised; but what training can compare in results to that which hews us into the divine image while yet in the flesh; confers peace in a world of unrest and trouble; gilds the future with the glory of infinite hope; and at last confers the priceless gift of an incorruptible nature in which God will be our open vision and His whole universe our sphere of joyful life for ever?

Bro. John Thomas - Herald

The Deep Things of God: The Apocalypse and the Obedience of Faith

Of all the testimony that the Lord has provided there is none of greater depth than that revealed in the Apocalypse. The following remarks of Brother Roberts demonstrate the importance of achieving a correct understanding of its basic message, the depth of the book notwithstanding.

"A correct interpretation of the Apocalypse is of more importance than may at first sight appear. 1. It was given 'that his servants MIGHT KNOW' (1:1) the things it treats of; and if a wrong view of it prevails, the object of its communication is to that extent frustrated. 2. The Spirit pronounces a blessing on those who understand it (1:3), from which it follows that a wrong apprehension of its import deprives the wrong apprehender of the blessing. 3. Jesus pronounces a curse on those who take away from its words (22:19); and no one takes away from its words more effectually than the man who misrepresents its meaning. That misrepresentation of its meaning which asserts its inapplicability to the present constitution of things in the world, and teaches that it has no fulfillment till the saints are removed at the coming of Christ, is especially mischievous in its effects; for it interferes with a scriptural attitude in relation to things and systems which are therein condemned, and participation in which is declared to implicate the participators in the doom awaiting them. The ecclesiastical systems and practices of Europe are exhibited under symbols perfectly intelligible to the students of God's word. A beast and its image, a ten-horned monster and a woman are introduced as representatives of the constitution of things in Papal Europe, and a peculiarity of the saints therein described is that they 'worship not the beast neither his image, nor receive his mark upon their foreheads nor in their hands.' (20:4), that they 'obtain the victory over the beast and over his image, and over the number of his name' (15:2); that unlike those dwelling on the earth 'whose

names are not written in the book of life' and who worship the beast who makes war upon the saints, they 'keep the sayings of the prophecy of this book' which declare, 'If any man worship the beast and his image and receive his mark in his forehead or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God.' Now if you regard the whole matter as future to the Lord's coming, do you not loosen and undermine the terrible obligations arising from these sayings? Certainly; you place these obligations beyond the circle of a saint's duties, and leave him at liberty to imagine that he may safely take part with any system extant in his own day. Of course, you are at liberty, in this day of liberty, to think and act as you will: but such views are a serious impediment to the co-operation which you are disposed to ask on the part of the Christadelphians. They could not admit such an element of corruption among them. They could not identify themselves with so complete a neutralization of the last message of Jesus sent to his servants. They could not make themselves responsible for such a departure from his testimony which he himself has fenced with special imprecations. Your belief in the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, 'the same as the Christadelphians,' may justify you in being immersed; but with such a state of mind with regard to the important directions he has given for the guidance of his servants in the Apocalypse, it is impossible they could enter upon that co-operation which has for its basis an intelligent apprehension of the mind and will of Christ.

"The idea that 'Revelations' is future in its fulfillment would be dispelled by the effectual realization of one or two points which we mention by way of conclusion. The angel interpreting to John the meaning of the seven heads of the scarlet-colored beast, says, 'There are seven kings; five are fallen, one is and the other is not yet come' (17:10). Here is proof that in the day when these words were addressed to John -- nearly 1800 years ago -- part of the symbolism had been realized in history. In connection with its developments (11:18) 'the time of the dead comes that they should be judged,' which is inconsistent with the theory that those developments do not take place till after the resurrection of the saints. A similar argument arises in the fact that the beast makes war upon the saints and overcomes them (13:7). Surely this is not after the saints are raised from the dead! So also with the fact that saints, under the sixth seal, are seen in a state of death, and allowed to rest (6:9); and that the scarlet woman is drunk with the blood of the saints. (Surely she is not to kill them after they are made immortal.) 'In her was found the blood of prophets and saints' (18:24). The apostles were slain by her (Rome under the pagan constitution) -- (18:20). Surely the apostles are not to be killed a second time. In addition to these and many other points that might be mentioned, the general character of the book as to things said about to 'shortly come to pass,' and as to keeping the things written in the book, conclusively shows the fallacy of a theory which futurizes everything except the messages to the ecclesias, and reduces it to a thing of no practical consequence whatever."

Bro. Bob Widding

What Does That Mean?

"And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Matthew 16:16-18

Three years before the above scenario, Andrew found his brother Simon Peter and told him, "We have found the Messiah!" This declaration appears to pass without comment, but when Peter tells Jesus, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" in Matthew 16, Jesus heaps blessings on him as though no one else had ever acknowledged that He was Christ. What was so remarkable about Peter's words that garnered a blessing, when Andrew had actually told Peter who Jesus was before Peter and Jesus had ever met each other?

This does seem a bit odd; we find the same type of confession from Philip after he met Jesus; "Philip findeth Nathaniel, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." (John 1:45) Philip's recognition that Jesus was the one foretold by the Law and the Prophets puts his understanding of Messiah on the same level as that of Andrew. Once again, this is three years before Peter's confession and passes without any blessings from Christ.

Nathaniel's confession is even more direct. When Jesus mentions that He saw him under the fig tree, Nathaniel says, "Thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel!" Once again, there is no blessing for this confession.

So again, why the blessing for Peter's confession, and not for the others'? I believe that to address the puzzle we must look at the circumstances leading up to and under which Peter made his confession. Jesus, after having a confrontation with the Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem and calling them "hypocrites", retreats to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. He appears to be avoiding trouble with the authorities until the time should come when he would face them firmly. After returning from Tyre He feeds the multitude, then rejects their advances to make Him a king, and rebukes their desire for more food. This causes them to turn away from following Him. He then has another confrontation with the authorities and retreats far north to Caesarea Philippi.

It is under these circumstances that Jesus asks the question found in Matthew 16:15, "...But whom say ye that I am?" Remember, every opportunity for him to be king had been lost or outright rejected. He has been avoiding engagements with the authorities who have become openly hostile to him, and travels all the way up in Caesarea Philippi (old northern territory of Dan) instead of staying in Jerusalem!

It is at this point, in spite of every human indication to the contrary, that Peter comes forward with the answer to Jesus' question, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!" Is it any wonder, brothers and sisters, that he receives a blessing for this timely declaration in the face of adversity? Let us exemplify the unshaken faith of Peter when we face trying times in our lives.

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