

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

MTONDIA, Kenya, Berean Christadelphian Ecclesia, Bro. Fred Omoto, P.O. Box 1177, Kilifi, Kenya, East Africa

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Loving greetings in Jesus Christ's name.

Thanks, Bro. Fred, for your monthly Ecclesial magazine that have assisted us much in understanding the Ecclesial activities. As you were aware, Bro. Philip Wekati was here with us for more than a month, and we very much enjoyed his company and we hope he will be able to come again soon so that we may share the Word of our Lord with him.

Please, Bro Fred, I regret to report that Bro. Peter Okoth has left the Mtondia (Kilifi) Ecclesia to go to Nyanza, therefore use the following address for our ecclesia:

Bro. Fred W. J. Omoto

Mtondia Ecclesia P.O Box 1177,

Kilifi, Kenya, East Africa

Pass my warm greetings to all brothers and sisters. Also receive greetings from my wife, Sister Irine, who has contributed a lot towards the establishment of the Mtondia Ecclesia.

Yours in our Jesus Christ's name,

Bro. Fred and Sis. Irine Omoto

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)

MTONDIA/MAWENI FRATERNAL GATHERING..... Oct 18 - 19, 2003

Bro. Fred Omoto and Bro. John Wanjala. It will be held at the Mtondia Lecture Hall.

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

Ecclesiastes 5

The book of Ecclesiastes is said to have been written by Solomon in his later years. If you may recall, he was David's son, and unlike his warrior father, he was blessed with a peaceful reign.

When Yahweh spoke to him in a dream, early in his reign, He offered the young king a gift. Anything his heart desired. I Kings 3 speaks of this dream:

“And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there; for that was the great high place: a thousand burnt offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar. 5: In Gibeon Yahweh appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. 6: And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. 7: And now, O Yahweh my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. 8: And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. 9: Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? 10: And the speech pleased Yahweh, that Solomon had asked this thing. 11: And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; 12: Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. 13: And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days. 14: And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days. 15: And Solomon awoke; and, behold, it was a dream. And he came to Jerusalem, and stood before the ark of the covenant of Yahweh, and offered up burnt offerings, and offered peace offerings, and made a feast to all his servants.

Solomon did indeed become one of the wisest kings the combined tribes of Israel had. The multitude of the book of Proverbs is attributed to him; indeed, his knowledge of proverbs in general is spoken of in 1 Kings 4:32: And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five.

However, there was a "flip-side" to this, so to speak. As promised, Yahweh gave him great riches as well, and the kingdom was splendid. But in this, Solomon also craved many wives and concubines. And this would be to his undoing, as recorded in I Kings 11,

“But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; Of the nations concerning which Yahweh said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for

surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with Yahweh his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. And Solomon did evil in the sight of Yahweh, and went not fully after Yahweh, as did David his father. Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods. And Yahweh was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from Yahweh Elohim of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which Yahweh commanded. Wherefore Yahweh said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen.”

Now, consider the book of Ecclesiastes. It speaks of a man of Judah. A KING of Judah. A son of David. One such man who had been increased with goods and riches, one who had sought out and earned much wisdom, and one that explored folly and pleasure. Who else could it be BUT Solomon?

If this is indeed true, then it shows a repentant Solomon after all the wandering astray. He realizes that all the wealth and pleasure he sought was "vanity and vexation of spirit." Without Yahweh, he reasoned, all his findings and dealings were simply filled with futility. This is what makes the book so important, as it shows that mortal man in all his perceived wealth and wisdom cannot stand without the hand of the Almighty to strengthen him. As we read the book every year, let our hope be that we can indeed learn this lesson.

So now considering chapter 6. What I plan to do is speak on some of the thoughts presented, and give other examples of scripture that identify with the thought on hand.

“Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil.”

I believe that the incident regarding Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron the high priest, quite vividly illustrates this point. Leviticus chapter 10 tells the story:

“And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before Yahweh, which he commanded them not. 2: And there went out fire from Yahweh, and devoured them, and they died before Yahweh. 3: Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that Yahweh spake, saying, I will be sanctified in

them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.”

Likewise, the history of King Uzziah, spoken of in 2 Chronicles chapter 26:

“And he (Uzziah) made in Jerusalem engines, invented by cunning men, to be on the towers and upon the bulwarks, to shoot arrows and great stones withal. And his name spread far abroad; for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong. But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against Yahweh his God, and went into the temple of Yahweh to burn incense upon the altar of incense. And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of Yahweh, that were valiant men: And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto Yahweh, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from Yahweh Elohim. Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of Yahweh, from beside the incense altar.: And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because Yahweh had smitten him. And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of Yahweh: and Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land.”

In both cases, these men sought to worship Yahweh, but failed to do it in the prescribed manner. And in the case of Nadab and Abihu, the punishment for their improper actions was fatal. To plead ignorance of Yahweh's laws is no excuse. A willingness to know Him and obey Him requires knowing and following what He commands. There is never "a better way" that man can find to obey.

Continuing from Ecclesiastes:

“Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words. When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed, Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands? For in the multitude of dreams and many words there are also divers vanities: but fear thou God.”

I cannot help but think of the case of Jephthah, as recorded in Judges chapter 11,

“Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valour, and he was the son of an harlot: and Gilead begat Jephthah. ... Then the Spirit of Yahweh came upon Jephthah, and he passed over Gilead, and Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed over unto the

children of Ammon. And Jephthah vowed a vow unto Yahweh, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be Yahweh's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering. 32: So Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them; and Yahweh delivered them into his hands. 33: And he smote them from Aroer, even till thou come to Minnith, even twenty cities, and unto the plain of the vineyards, with a very great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel. 34: And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter. 35: And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto Yahweh, and I cannot go back. 36: And she said unto him, My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto Yahweh, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as Yahweh hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the children of Ammon. 37: And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows. 38: And he said, Go. And he sent her away for two months: and she went with her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains. 39: And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed: and she knew no man. And it was a custom in Israel, 40: That the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year.

Jephthah indeed had great zeal to fight Yahweh's battles, and fully intended to offer thanks in the end by an offering. But in his rashness and zeal, he could not predict that what would come out of his house would indeed be a sacrifice-worthy animal. For this, his hasty vow would cost him the companionship of his only child, a beloved daughter.

Jephthah did the honorable thing in performing his vow. And whenever one makes a vow, one should perform it. But Jesus, as recorded in the gospel of Matthew chapter 5, offers a better way:

“Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto Yahweh thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil”

Considering Jephthah, it would have indeed been to his benefit to keep silent in the haste of his thoughts. Rather than attach conditions to what we wish to do or not do, we should simply say that we will or will not do it, and leave it at that.

And yet, there is one more thing to remember when we say these things.

James, in the fourth chapter of his epistle, counsels:

“Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If Yahweh will, we shall live, and do this, or that.”

Remember, all things that happen on this earth, and all things that we DESIRE to happen, are subject to Yahweh's will. And how would we perform a vow that would run contrary to His will?

Jesus warns us in Matthew 12:

“A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.”

The idle words of Jephthah were accounted for in a most painful manner. Let us hope we can avoid such a fate or worse when we stand in judgment.

Moving on:

“If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for he that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they. 9: Moreover the profit of the earth is for all: the king himself is served by the field.”

Verse 8 speaks quite clearly of the ways of man. Man, in all his capacity for wisdom and compassion, is still an animal, and is subject to the instinct and drives of the natural world. It is only by Yahweh's words that man may hope to overcome and subdue such a nature, but so few do. Well spoke Psalm 49, verse 20: Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.

However, no matter what the world does, it should be a comfort to know that if we seek Yahweh, he will see to us and protect us according to His will. As a matter of fact, it is to upbuild our character that we are to suffer these things. Jesus, in praying to His Heavenly Father, said this in John chapter 17:

6: I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. ... 13: And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. 14: I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15: I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. 16: They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 17: Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. 18: As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. 19: And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

It is even as He explained to them in the previous chapter, verse 33: These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Thus, in spite of mankind's cruelty, Yahweh is observing and controlling

the affairs of this world. Jesus likewise observes, and intercedes for those of which He spoke. And soon, He will return in His Father's Power, to set up a kingdom untainted by mankind's shortcomings. It is our lot to show our endurance until then.

To continue:

“He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity. 11: When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes? The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep. There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt. But those riches perish by evil travail: and he begetteth a son, and there is nothing in his hand. As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand. And this also is a sore evil, that in all points as he came, so shall he go: and what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind? All his days also he eateth in darkness, and he hath much sorrow and wrath with his sickness.”

There is a phrase spoken in these times: "You can't take it with you." The parable of the rich fool, as spoken of in Luke chapter 12, speaks clearly of this:

“And one of the company said unto him (Jesus), Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. 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.”

Now, pay very close attention to what Jesus says next.

“And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? 29:

And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. 30: For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. 31: But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. 32: Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 33: Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. 34: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Sensible, then, are the words Paul wrote to Timothy in the first epistle, chapter 6,

"But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7: For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8: And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. 9: But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10: For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. 11: But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

So then Solomon concludes:

18: Behold that which I have seen: it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it is his portion. 19: Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; this is the gift of God. 20: For he shall not much remember the days of his life; because God answereth him in the joy of his heart.

When one is consumed with being rich, that person should take care and beware, unless the riches should consume him! It is more fitting, then, to seek after Yahweh, strive only for what is necessary, and rejoice in those things we have. There is something much better that will come, and that is the Kingdom which was promised to Abraham and his descendents. One of our brethren has reminded us that we must always be saying, "I want to be in the Kingdom more than anything on this earth." Living up to this is no easy task, which I am free to confess for myself. But we all must put forth the effort.

Let us then review what this chapter has declared to us:

1. Approach unto Yahweh in meekness with a desire to learn, not with ignorance and inappropriate means.
2. Guard your words carefully, for He is listening. "Say what you mean, and mean what you say."
3. Trust in Him, no matter what state the world is in. He and Jesus, His Son, will watch over us.
4. Do not desire to be rich, but focus on Him, as He will care for us.

Solomon was indeed a wise man on the earth, but like us, he was a frail human before God. In Ecclesiastes, he shares with us how he dealt with his

weakness, and saw how Yahweh is One to look to. His final conclusion, at the end of the book, is this:

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

Solomon's struggle is our struggle, whether or not to the same degree. Let us therefore share what he has learned, and give our thanks and honor unto Yahweh, the God of Israel. Only through God do we have strength, and only by His will do we have the Hope of Israel, in the Kingdom soon to come.

Bro. Seth Brown

Hezekiah

In the first reading this morning (2 Kings 20) we begin the history of King Hezekiah. He was one of the three great kings of Israel—David, Hezekiah, and Josiah. His outstanding characteristic was trust in God, as we see from verses 5-6 of this 18th chapter. "He trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him. For he clave to the LORD, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses."

His one recorded failure, when his heart was lifted up and he showed his treasures to the Babylonian ambassadors, was a result not of too little faith, nor actually of too much, but of presumption upon that faith—familiarity.

Because of great privileges and promises and prominence in God's purpose, we remember that Paul had to have a thorn in the flesh to humble and to handicap him, lest he should be overmuch lifted up. Hezekiah, we find, had great power and great blessing and great favor with God for his zeal and his faithfulness. The flesh being what it is, he was carried away.

There is a tremendous lesson here. We are never safe. We must always be prayerfully on our guard against the deceptiveness of the flesh, for the more progress we make in the Truth, the more we are liable to this lifting up like Hezekiah, and there must be a humbling.

The chronology of this period of the kings of Judah and Israel is quite difficult to harmonize—both within the Scripture itself and with the Assyrian record of the times. Much is made in the world of the accuracy of the Assyrian record—the so-called eponyms, or lists of years and events, tied in with the eclipses and so on. And also of the archeological inscriptions that have been found concerning these times and these events. But as soon as we actually look into these eponyms, we find scholars vary greatly in interpreting them. They are nowhere near the clear and continuous chronological record they are made out to be. And they are far from dependable. As for the inscriptions that have been found, the Assyrians were notoriously liars and boasters, apart from the general errors of the flesh. So, we are far safer in following the Scriptural picture and accommodating the history of man to it, rather than the other way around.

This record beginning in 2nd Kings 18-20 about Hezekiah is clearly not all in chronological order, nor intended to be. Chapters 18 and 19 are a

continuous record, except that some items are mentioned in them that refer back or forward in general summaries, like the summary in verses 2-8 of the whole reign of Hezekiah, which is given at the beginning, and the death of Sennacherib in 19:37 which was actually twenty years later than these events.

Also, it is not clear where time gaps occur. There does appear to be a gap, apparently of 12 years, between verses 16 and 17 of this chapter, between two separate Assyrian invasions.

Chronology itself is not too important, except to the extent that it helps us to get clear the relationship of events to each other, and the period in a man's life and development when he does certain things, as in what period of Hezekiah's life his heart was lifted up, and what relation this had to the deliverance from the Assyrians.

His sickness and his presumption are recorded at the end in both Chronicles and in Isaiah. But clearly they are not meant to be at the end chronologically by the dates that are given in connection with them.

The history of Hezekiah fills eleven chapters of Scripture—quite a lot in relation to the other kings. They are 2nd Kings 18-20, 2nd Chronicles 29-32—almost exclusively about his religious reforms—and Isaiah 36-39.

Putting all these together, this seems to be the most likely order of events: First, the great reformation and Passover and clearing of the land of all idols and the re-establishment of the true worship of Yahweh in his first year. Second, the siege and fall of Samaria—the northern kingdom—and the carrying away captive of the ten tribes in his fourth through sixth years; it was a three-year siege. Third, the first invasion of Judah by the Assyrians in Hezekiah's 14th year. Hezekiah at this time stripped the gold and treasures from the temple and buys off the Assyrians for a period. The Assyrians claim that they took away at this time 200,000 people as captives. The Assyrian account of the ransom corresponds generally to the Scriptural account. The fourth in order, following this first invasion and their buying off, was Hezekiah's sickness and recovery, still in the same year as this invasion—the 14th year of his reign. Both are dated in the Scriptures to that year. At this time 15 years were added to his life. The next item—the embassy from Babylon and Hezekiah's presumption, very soon after his sickness, and as a result of it and the events connected with it. And finally, another Assyrian invasion twelve years later in Hezekiah's 26th year. At this time, Hezekiah resists, and the Assyrian host is destroyed, and Jerusalem is delivered. Judah is given a 105-year new lease on life to 608BC, when Necho of Egypt deposes Jehoahaz after the death of Josiah, the last good king, and sets up a puppet Jehoiakim, and Judah's independence ends forever (the kingdom of Judah).

Hezekiah's supreme act of faith—defying the vast army of Assyria, when it was right in his land and at his gate, seems clearly to have occurred near the end of his life, long after his sickness and his lifting up of his heart. This fits best both with the Bible record and with the Assyrian record.

Let us then trace the course of Hezekiah's reign on the basis of this record in 2nd Kings 18-20, putting the events recorded elsewhere into their most likely proper order.

It should be noted all the way through that Isaiah, although not mentioned until near the end of Hezekiah's reign in connection with the resisting of the Assyrians, was actually very prominent and active all the way through, not only in Hezekiah's reign but in the three reigns preceding him. Isaiah's own book records his dealings with Hezekiah's father—the wicked Ahaz, to whom he made the great prophecy of the virgin bearing the Son and his name being Emanuel—God with us.

Isaiah was clearly a major factor in Hezekiah's faith and zeal and reforms. Also, the prophet Micah is prophesying at this time, as well as Hosea in the northern kingdom. Jeremiah records in chapter 26 that Hezekiah and the men of Judah hearkened to Micah, when he warned them that because of the land's wickedness Zion would be plowed as a field.

Beginning then in 2nd Kings 18:1 – He began to reign in the third year of Hoshea—the last king of Israel in the north.

Verse 2 – He was 25 years old when he began to reign, and he reigned 29 years.

Verse 3 – “He did that which was right in the sight of the LORD,” like unto David, “according to all that David his father did.” This is not said of any other.

Verse 4 – “He removed the high places.” This was a system of local worship and sacrifice—long tolerated but never approved and usually becoming centers of idolatry and corruption. He broke down all the images in the land. And he even broke up the brazen serpent, which Moses had made, because it had become an object of idolatry.

Verse 4 records briefly what is given in great detail in 2nd Chronicles 29-31. So, turning to these chapters to carry on the record, because this is in the first year of his reign. 2nd Chronicles 29:3 – “In the first year of his reign, in the first month, (not necessarily the first month of his reign, but the first month of the first complete year, because this was the first month of the year—Abib, the month in which the Passover was supposed to be kept, although actually it was kept a month later on this occasion). “In the first year of the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the LORD, and repaired them.”

Verses 4-11 – He exhorted the priests and the Levites to the work of re-establishing the worship of God. He mentioned in verse 9 – “Our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and our daughters and our wives are in captivity.” In chapter 28 of 2nd Chronicles, the previous chapter, we have the record of a great multitude, verse 5, a great multitude from Judah being carried captive to Damascus. In verse 6, a hundred and twenty thousand were slain in Judah. And in verse 17, Edom also carried away captives. This was because of the wickedness of the land under Hezekiah's father.

In verse 10 of chapter 29, he refers to the fierce wrath of God upon them, which he learned from the preaching of the prophets, Micah and Isaiah, and also from the circumstances in which Judah was, when he came to the throne, under tribute to Assyria.

Verses 12-15 of 2nd Chronicles 29 – The priests and the Levites sanctify themselves in preparation for the work.

Verses 16-19 – They cleaned the temple—cleansed it of all the corruption and abomination—the courts and all the vessels in sixteen days.

Verses 20-24 – They offered a great sin offering for all Israel, both Israel and Judah. We notice in verse 24 that all Israel is emphasized twice. It is clear all through the record that Hezekiah intended, as far as possible, to take in all those of the northern kingdom that he can, to make an offering for them all before God. This sin offering consisted of seven bullocks, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven he goats. And then after this preliminary and necessary offering for sin, verses 25-26, he set the singers and the players in order.

Verses 27-30 – They re-establish the regular system of offering and worship. All the singers sang together, and the priests and the king and the officers and the people worshipped God. And then the latter part of the chapter, verses 31-35, all the congregation brought their individual sacrifices. In verse 34, it is mentioned that the priests were too few, and the Levites had to help them. “The Levites were more upright in heart to sanctify themselves than the priests.” The priests had been delinquent in preparing for this reformation of Hezekiah.

The next chapter continues on with the same record. He sends a letter to all Judah and Israel to come to the Passover, which he proposes to hold on the second month. The law required it on the first, but he was unable to get it done in time for the first, and the law did provide for it being held on the second under circumstances when it could not be held on the first. The law of course covered individual cases, but Hezekiah applied it nationally.

Verses 1-9 – These letters being sent out to all Israel and Judah.

Verse 10 tells us that the general reaction in the northern kingdom to the letters of invitation was that “they laughed them to scorn.” They just had at this time three more years to go, until the complete destruction and captivity of their kingdom. This was their last chance to repent.

Verse 11 – We learn that some of them from the northern kingdom did humble themselves and come, showing us that general scorn and rejection cannot be made an excuse for not proclaiming the Word. For there may always be a few who will hear.

Verse 12 – God gave to the people of Judah one heart to serve Him—to do the commandments of the king. All is of God. God in His mercy is uniting them in zeal and holiness, giving them a new start again.

Verse 15 – The priests and the Levites were ashamed—those who had previously been dilatory in sanctifying themselves. They are moved by the example of the people.

Verses 17-20 – Some of the congregation had not had time or proper understanding to cleanse themselves as required, but Hezekiah prayed that their offering may be acceptable under the circumstances, and God heard him.

And so in verse 21 – They kept the Passover “with great gladness.” The only possible source of any real gladness is the assurance of harmony and peace with God—true faith and obedience. Nothing else gives any real satisfaction.

Verse 23 – They had enjoyed it so much that they decided to keep the Passover another seven days. Such was the beginning of Hezekiah’s reign.

Continuing the record in the next chapter, 2nd Chronicles 31 – Stirred up to a high pitch of zeal, all the assembled congregation dispersed throughout all the land, both Judah and Israel, and destroyed all the images and groves and high places, “until they had utterly destroyed them all.”

This would of course be under the guidance and inspiration of Hezekiah, and in Kings briefly it is said that he is the one that did this, or caused it to be done. He took advantage of this period of zeal to cleanse the land completely.

Quite often zeal for destruction does not always mean zeal for subsequent reconstruction, for the flesh enjoys destroying things. It regards it as righteous zeal. But very often, it goes no further than the destruction of the fault. It takes a lot more determination and patience to build the Truth, and we find that, unfortunately, this did not happen here. We are reminded of Jehu, “Come and see my zeal for the LORD.” Very effective in destroying the wicked predecessors, but no better himself.

The rest of chapter 31 is the setting up of the permanent appointments and arrangements of the priesthood and the worship and the offerings. Summing up at the end, verses 20-21, “And thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought that which was good and right and truth before the LORD his God. And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered.”

Truly a very good record. Now this is still the beginning of his reign, although those last verses would be a summing up of the rest of the course of it.

Returning then to the 2nd Kings 18, and picking up the record there. Verse 5 – “He trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him of all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him.” This clearly was his outstanding characteristic—his TRUST IN GOD.

Verse 6 – “He clave to the LORD, and he departed not from following him, but kept his commandments.”

Verse 7 – “The LORD was with him; and he prospered withersoever he went forth: and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not”. This rebelling against Assyria, when he came to the throne, he found it a tributary, because of his father’s subservience. This appears to be his course and his purpose throughout.

The first time the Assyrian king came to punish him for his rebellion, he submitted and paid an enormous tribute. We do not know the reason that he gave in upon this occasion, whether his faith failed or whether the people or his leading men would not support him in his resistance. It seems clear throughout and from the writings of Micah and Isaiah that all the initiative for faith and resistance depended upon Hezekiah himself, and that there was very little depth of faith in the generality of the people around him.

On the occasion of this first invasion in his 14th year, Shebna seems to have been the chief officer under the king, as we see in Isaiah 22, and he was

not a good or faithful man. He was probably a leftover from the previous administration. Isaiah condemns him and says that he will be replaced by Eliakim, who was a faithful man and a type of Christ. This is the chapter in which we read of the key of the house of David and so on.

Chapter 22 of Isaiah is generally applied to this time, and we note of two things in it. It refers to the preparations that Hezekiah made for the siege; this is, what he did with the water courses, which pins it down at the time. And also it refers to the condition of the people, which was very unsatisfactory in God's sight. So we can clearly get a picture of this first invasion and the difficulties that he faced and the kind of men that he had in control.

Verses 9-12 refer to the carrying away of the northern kingdom of Israel into captivity. They had, as a whole, scorned God's last plea to them through Hezekiah. We could say that it was providential on God's part that they be given this last opportunity. Hezekiah took very great pains to send the message throughout the whole northern kingdom.

In the natural course of things, Judah would have suffered the same fate at the same time. But, it is clear that Hezekiah's efforts and reforms and mediation for the nation deferred the wrath of God, which had already very strongly begun to be manifested among them.

Verse 13 – We come to this invasion of the Assyrians. Eight years after the fall of Samaria in Hezekiah's 14th year, Sennacherib came against Judah. Hezekiah had inherited a kingdom already under tribute to Assyria. He may have accepted the situation at first, until he could reform and rebuild the nation and build up their spirit of resistance, so God would be with them. Or, he may have rebelled from the beginning and this was the Assyrian's first opportunity to come against him.

It does not appear from the Assyrian record that Sennacherib was the supreme ruler at this time, but his father Sargon was still alive and the emperor or king, according to the most likely chronology. The term king in Scripture was not so restrictively used as today. We find a similar relationship where Belshazzar is called the king of Babylon, even though his father was still alive and was still the chief ruler.

The Assyrian records that have been discovered in the past century or so give remarkable confirmation to the general reality and historicalness of this Bible account, though details are often difficult to reconcile, primarily we believe because of the errors of the Assyrian scribes rather than otherwise.

Until recent discoveries, the Bible had been for 2000 years the only record of any kind of all these events, which men regarded as legend.

Verse 14 – Hezekiah submits and pays tribute. "I have offended; return from me: that which thou puttest on me will I bear. And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold." The Assyrian record claims that it was 800 talents of silver and 30 talents of gold, which is remarkable similar considering the normal lying and exaggeration of the Assyrians.

Verses 15-16 – He stripped all the treasures of the temple to pay this tribute. We do not find that he is condemned for this. And we do not know the circumstances.

His sickness occurred this same year. And it appears that God soon after far more than made up all this loss to him by gifts from the surrounding nations. He became very rich and very prosperous later.

Then we come to verse 17. We notice that the translators have put a paragraph mark there, indicating that in their view there is a break in the record. From several considerations there does seem to be a break in time between verse 16, where Hezekiah buys them off with a great ransom, and the story that begins in verse 17, where we find Hezekiah in direct rebellion and the king coming against him to destroy the city. The two records do not coincide.

Actually, according to the most likely chronology, verse 17 appears to begin the record of a later invasion twelve years subsequently. For verse 16 speaks of his submission and his tribute, whereas this section starting with verse 17 speaks all the way through of his resistance and refusal to submit and the destruction of the Assyrians. Two completely different events.

It seems clear that between verses 16 and 17, we must put his sickness and the embassy from Babylon and the temporary uplifting of his pride and presumption, and his soon after repentance and humbling of himself. For in the very sentence when God tells him that He will add 15 years to his life (20:6), He also tells him that He will deliver Jerusalem from the Assyrians.

This record in chapter 18 and 19 is the last delivery under Hezekiah, for the Assyrians are destroyed and Sennacherib goes back to his own land and comes not again against Hezekiah. The record beginning at verse 17 of chapter 18 tells of this deliverance and carries the history at the end of chapter 19 right down through the destruction of the Assyrian host and the death of Sennacherib back in his own land of Assyria in Nineveh.

So following verse 16 of chapter 18, we go to chapter 20. This begins "in those days was Hezekiah sick unto death." In those days—referring back to some time earlier. For chapter 19 goes right down to the death of Sennacherib, which was nearly 20 years after the death of Hezekiah himself. "In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death." From the fact that 15 years were added to his life shows us that this was in the 14th year of his reign—the same year that we are told in chapter 18 and verse 13 that the Assyrians first came.

So continuing the record in chapter 20, Isaiah tells him, "Set thine house in order; for thou must die, and not live." This was a message from God.

Verse 3 – He prayed and wept sore. Whether he was wise in this request is hard to say. Certainly, as a general rule, it is far wiser and safer and better to submit to the wisdom and arrangement of God, rather than plea for something other than what God provides. Certainly the son that was born to him during the added 15 years was, by his wickedness, a direct cause of Judah's final downfall. We are told that although Manasseh himself repented, God could not forget the course of evil in the nation that he set going.

Certainly Hezekiah's great failure that occurred later was naturally a direct consequence of his extension of life. If his concern was for himself in pleading for extension of his life, it would seem far wiser to submit to God's appointments. But if his concern was for his people, like Paul and Moses under similar considerations, then at least we can sympathize with his desires, and see why God complies with them.

The fact that God gave assurance in verse 6 of the deliverance of the city right together with the extension of his life would point in this direction—that his concern was with his people and his land and what he felt was required to be done. There was no one else to do it.

Hezekiah, doubtless, realized the shallowness of the people's reformation and worship. He would realize that there was much to be done, and he would not want to leave the nation as it was, under bondage and tribute to Assyria, under the constant threat of Assyrian destruction. Truly he did fail after this, but also he did humble and recover himself, and he went on later to his greatest triumph of faith—his defiance of the Assyrian host with consequent miraculous destruction whereby Judah was relieved of the Assyrian oppressor for many years. So Hezekiah's life was extended for 15 years.

Now we notice in going back and picking up briefly in chapter 18 that Rabshakka's appeal to the people told them that the king would carry them away captive to a land like their own land. This was the Assyrian policy generally, and Israel had already gone, and so had a great number from Judah itself. This would clearly have meant the end of the nation, and Hezekiah, doubtless, foresaw the closing in of the Assyrian power upon the land. As a result of his faith and resistance, we find that Judah enjoyed 105 more years of independence—from this year of 713BC to 608BC, and 105 is 7 times 15. So we can see in the extension of Hezekiah's life a type of extension of the favor of God to Judah for another 7 times 15.

In verse 8 of chapter 20 – Hezekiah asks for a sign. Why would he ask for a sign? Was it a lack of faith? We find that he was given a sign—a very tremendous sign—one of the great mysteries of Scripture, which people have pondered upon ever since. In some way God caused the shadow on the sundial to go exactly 10 degrees backwards, and He gave Hezekiah the choice beforehand as to whether it would be backwards or forwards. Why such a tremendous sign for something that was going to happen within three days anyway? Couldn't Hezekiah believe and wait?

Perhaps this reveals something to us about Hezekiah's faith, which God knew and which Hezekiah himself realized, for faith is not an automatic thing. God's strength is made perfect in weakness, and Hezekiah may have realized his weakness. Hezekiah bore great responsibility to the whole nation. Their destiny depended entirely upon what he did in relation to the Assyrians. The Assyrians were proverbial for the ruthless and wanton cruelty to their captives, especially to any who had resisted them.

Clearly, for what he had to do, Hezekiah needed strength from a tremendous sign. It was not a matter of just getting well. It was the work that lay ahead of him after that. The very fact that he failed so soon after this, when put to the test, emphasizes his need. The sign was actually the indirect

cause of his failure, for the ambassadors had come to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land. It was all a part of his training and his development, out of which he at last successfully came.

We find in this chapter 20, Berodachbaladan sends messengers to him and a present, regarding his recovery. This Berodachbaladan had a history (we find this from the Assyrian record), both before and after this time, of rebellion against his master, the king of Assyria. He was the king of Babylon, and it is clear from the whole record here that he was seeking an ally in Hezekiah, and that Hezekiah was carried away temporarily. Isaiah came to him very soon after and inquired what the man had come to ask him about, and warned him that all his treasures which he had shown them would be taken away to Babylon, showing that Babylon was not a suitable ally but an enemy to be feared.

Hezekiah immediately humbled himself and recognized his error and so did the inhabitants of Jerusalem, we are told, for clearly they were involved with him. He was given assurance that there was to be peace and truth in his day. We note peace AND truth. For truth, as we read earlier in the summary of his life, was the course which he always tried to follow.

This brings us back to chapter 18. This records the long dissertation of the messenger from Assyria against Hezekiah and against the people, crying out to the men on the wall, and Hezekiah's dependence upon God on this occasion and the complete destruction of the Assyrian power—185,000 destroyed in one night. The Chronicles tell us specifically that it was not just the soldiers, but all the mighty men of valor, and the leaders, and the captains. And so it would be clear that this would break the Assyrian power for many years to come, all their officer corps being destroyed.

And finally, the record of the end of his life, going back again to 2nd Chronicles 32:32-33, "Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his goodness, behold, they are written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, and in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. And Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honour at his death. And Manasseh his son reigned in his stead."

We find that Manasseh rebuilt all the abominations that Hezekiah had broken down, undid all the reforms that he had made, and turned it back to the previous abominations. G.V. Growcott

DANIEL – THE 70 WEEKS PROPHECY (continued)

"Tell us, when shall these things be?" But, after giving them certain signs by which they might know that the desolation was approaching, he added, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark 13:3,4, 32). It was a secret reserved in the power of the Father only. But if the time when "a host should be given to the Little Horn of the Goat against the city and temple" was withheld, precise information was granted concerning the time when the things testified in the twenty

fourth verse of the ninth chapter, and the cutting off of Messiah the Prince, should come to pass. They were to be accomplished in a period of seventy weeks of years from the promulgation of Cyrus in the first year of his reign, for the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem.” (Elpis Israel – page 394)

We stated in the last article that we would next consider the actual 70 weeks prophecy (contained in Daniel chapter 9) having considered six particulars that “were to become accomplished facts before an army should be given to the Romano-Greek Babylonian Little Horn against the evening and morning sacrifice for the suppression of it, and the destruction of the holy city and people, and the consequent abolition of the Mosaic law and constitution.” (Exposition of Daniel page 31). This (to remind ourselves) took place in AD70.

The problem with this part of the exposition of Daniel’s prophecy (as with other chapters containing chronologies) is that various dates have been used upon which to project the time periods. The subject of chronology is not an easy one as we have stated before. What we would like to do in this article more than anything else is to demonstrate the principles, or the broad outline of the prophecy so that we at least can understand in general terms what is being revealed to Daniel. It is hoped (God Willing) to have a series of articles following these on the Prophecy of Daniel, where the chronological time periods can be reviewed in more detail.

We intend to use the exposition of Bro Thomas as the means to help us understand the basic meaning of the prophecy, but before we do so, we may like to think about the expectation of Messiah’s appearance as recorded in the Gospel records.

In Luke chapter 3 and verse 15 we read:

“And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not;”

No doubt the teaching (and appearance) of John the Baptist was tremendously powerful, as he went before Christ in “the spirit and power of Elijah” (Luke 1:17). So effective was his teaching that the multitudes actually wondered if he were the Christ.

We also read in John chapter 1 that “the Jews sent priests and Levites” to ask John “Who art thou?” to which John answered, “I am not the Christ”(verses 19-20). They too were wondering if this was the promised Messiah.

We know John was not the Messiah, but there was an expectation of the appearance of him. In Luke 2 we read of Simeon who was “waiting for the consolation of Israel.”

This air of expectation was based upon a number of things. For example, the prophecy of Isaiah 40 made reference to the “voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of Yahweh” (verse 3). To the (few) thoughtful minds in Israel in those days, the appearance of John the Baptist was a sign that Messiah was about to appear. John fitted the prophecy very well.

However, the prophecy of the seventy weeks would provide the exact date of the appearance, if the calculations were carefully worked out. We are reminded of the words of Amos in chapter 3 and verse 7:

“Surely the Adonai Yahweh will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.”

Was this how the “wise men” of Matthew chapter 2 worked out the time when Messiah would be born?

“Where is he that is born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him” (verse 2).

These wise men had come from the east (verse 1). That is the geographical direction of Babylon, where Daniel had been taken captive. This was the place where Daniel had saved the “wise men” from destruction because of his revealing and interpretation of the king’s dream (Dan.2:13,28). The place where Daniel had been able to reveal the dreadful prediction of Belshazzar’s fate on the eve of Babylon’s destruction after the “wise men” had failed (Dan.5: 15, 25-28). True, they were following this unusual star, but had the prophecy of Daniel, and its meaning been recorded among the wise men of Chaldea? Had the wise men been humbled by Daniel’s interpretations, and were thereby prepared to listen to Daniel’s words, as he preached the Truth to them? Perhaps the details were recorded in some way among these Chaldeans, and remained in the possession of their descendants. When the time arrived for the appearance of the subject of Daniel’s prophecies, they were ready, and prepared to make the journey to Israel. The divinely prepared star would give an assurance to the group that their calculations were right. The Chaldeans were of course skilled in astronomy, and would have noticed this unusual star in the heavens. The record in Matthew chapter 2 is extremely interesting and highly typical, although we cannot digress to consider it now.

Turning to the prophecy itself, we find that the seventy weeks is divided into three portions. Bro Thomas comments as follows:

“Gabriel divided the seventy weeks of years into three portions, namely, into one of seven weeks; another of sixty-two weeks; and into a third of one week, which he subdivided into two half parts. The seven weeks, or 49 years, were allotted to the restoration of the state; after the end of which, 434 years, or sixty-two weeks more, were to elapse to the manifesting of Messiah the Prince. This was 483 years to “the beginning of the gospel concerning Jesus Christ” announced by John the Baptist, who came baptising in water “that he might be made manifest to Israel.” From this date there remained seven years to the end of the 490.” (Elpis Israel page 394) (see Daniel 9:25-27, Mark 1:1, John 1:31)

The question is, when did the prophecy begin? Verse 25 of Daniel chapter 9 says:

“Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks.”

Bro Thomas points out that there were four decrees made by the kings of Persia in favour of Judah and Jerusalem, but that it is the fourth that

commanded the building of the “broad wall and the setting up of the gates of Jerusalem”, as recorded in Nehemiah chapter 2:

“And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king...Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick?...the city, the place of my father’s sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire...it thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers’ sepulchres, that I may build it...So it pleased the king to send me.” (see verses 1-8)

The following tabular analysis is taken more or less from Chronikon Hebraicon, and may help to set forth this prophecy more clearly:

BC 456		The beginning of Daniel’s 70 weeks in the 20 th Year of Artaxerxes. This was the decree for the building of Jerusalem.
(-49 years)	7 weeks (7x7)	“allotted to the restoration of the state.” The work of Nehemiah and Ezra.
(-434 years)	6 2 w e e k s (7x62)	The historical details are referred to in Daniel 11:1-36
AD26		Period of Jewish expectancy – 483 years from AD456 to “the beginning of the gospel concerning Jesus Christ” announced by John the Baptist.
(+7 years)	1 week (1x7)	The week of confirmation divided between the ministry of John (3½ years) and Jesus (3½ years) (Dan.9: 27).
AD 33	70 weeks (490 years)	The crucifixion of Christ, or the Cutting off of Messiah the Prince.

Hopefully this table will show the period of the seventy weeks prophecy, but the subject is amply demonstrated in Chronikon Hebraicon, Elpis Israel and The Exposition of Daniel.

Another important point to note in this prophecy is contained in verse 27 of this chapter. There is states:

“.....he shall confirm the covenant for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.”

The Septuagint renders this as “in the latter half of the week.” Bro Thomas too regards the Hebrew khatzi hasshahvua as being incorrectly rendered in the Authorised Version. He says:

“It is the accusative of time how long, and not a precise point of time. Khatzi signifies “one half”, or one division of the whole seven years. Daniel was not informed which of the equal divisions of the last heptade was to witness the desisting from sacrifice and oblation, by divine authority. He might infer that it would be the end of the latter half of the heptade, as the causing to desist was the last incident revealed, included in the whole seventy sevens, or heptades of years.....This conclusion would have been correct; still

he was left to inference, as Gabriel did not satisfy him on the point. We, however, are not left to inference. The prediction being long since an accomplished fact, we know that the khatzi referred to is the latter part of the seventieth heptade, and on the last day thereof, that is, of the crucifixion, which was exactly 490 years, of Seventy Heptades, from the month Nisan of the 20th of Artaxerxes, BC 456.” (Exposition of Daniel page 38)

Again a tabular analysis may demonstrate the period of the last week. Once again, it is taken from Chronikon Hebraikon.

AD 26		69 (7 weeks and 62 weeks) of the 70 weeks, or 483 years end. Beginning of the first 3½ years.
		John the Baptist aged 26 years and 6 months begins to preach the baptism of repentance.
		This seventieth week is divided into two halves.
AD 30	3½ years	At the end of the first half Jesus immersed and John shut up in prison. Jesus begins to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom.
AD 33	3½ years	Jesus “does cures to-day and tomorrow, and the third day” – a day for a year, and is then “cut off” at the end of the second half of the week.
	7 years (1 week)	

Bro Thomas also makes some very helpful comments in Elpis Israel. The following is an example:

“At the end of the latter half-part of the week the Lord “caused the sacrifice and oblation to cease” as an acceptable offering for sin. The sacrifice of himself put an end to sin-offerings as far as believers in him were concerned. They still continued to be offered by the nation; but when the people of the Little Horn should come to execute the work assigned them, even these should be violently interrupted: for the daily was to be taken away, and the place of its sanctuary cast down. This was fully accomplished about 37 years after the crucifixion, that is to say, in about seventy years from the birth of Christ.” (Elpis Israel page 395)

We commented earlier in this article that passages of Scriptures such as these in Daniel chapter 9 enabled the faithful to discern significant events that were to take place. They are still able to do just that as we scan the political horizons with the Bible in hand.

We are also able to see once again the veracity of the Word of God in such detailed and accurate prophecies. The evidence for divinity is overwhelming to the thoughtful mind. Sadly, such “minds” have always been in the minority. We can however, rejoice that we have been called in the mercy of Yahweh to “behold wondrous things out of (His) law” (Psa.119.18).

Our next article will (God Willing) make some final comments and begin a consideration of Daniel chapter 10.

Bro. Phillip Hughes

Signs and Events

The Scriptures prophesy that at the time of the end, children would be 'disobedient to parents, unthankful and unholy.' Since the inception of women working full time in the unscriptural pursuits of satisfying careers and equal rights, the family structure has long broken down. Today, instead of a child coming home from school and having the full support of his mum, he comes home to a child minder/carer who have no real interest in the proper upbringing of the child, especially in Spiritual matters, and therefore, children are being subjected to all kinds of objects, media and games, to keep them entertained without the need of too much attention or interaction from others.

TV, for those in the world, is the 'entertainer' that keeps children occupied for hours on end. TV is full of carnal and evil principles that all Spiritually minded brethren and sisters do well to steer away from. Bro Roberts, over 100 years ago, wrote that cinema, radio and worldly novels will be avoided.

Our duty is to develop our children in the ways of righteousness and to actively encourage them to be 'obedient, thankful and holy.' The following article provides clarity for us as to the evil monster TV really is, with an average child watching up to six hours per day. Garbage in = garbage out. Evil in = evil out.

Isn't TV one of the major contributing factors to children being 'disobedient to parents etc' in our age?

80% OF YOUNG CHILDREN 'WATCH SIX HOURS TV PER DAY'

"MORE than eight in 10 children aged six and under watch up to six hours of television a day, according to a new survey.

And a third of all five to six-year-olds regularly play video games, the study found.

The research comes just days after David Bell, the Chief Inspector of Schools, complained that communication and behavioural skills among five-year-olds are at an all-time low.

Parents failed to impose proper discipline in the home and simply put children in front of the television rather than talk and play with them, he said.

He also warned it led to poor behaviour in class and the picture in primary schools around the country was that children were less well-prepared than ever.

The survey was conducted by NOP, which interviewed 750 parents with children aged up to six for toy retailer the Early Learning Centre.

It found 86% of children watched up to six hours of television a day every day.

Those interviewed acknowledged the time their children spent in front of the television, with 69% believing the youngsters watched more programmes than they did at the same age.

The survey also found that 81% of working parents wished they had more time to spend with their offspring.

But parents encouraged their offspring to play outside, with youngsters averaging 3.6 hours a day during the summer months.

Almost all of those questioned believed play helped to develop their children's social and motor skills.

Child psychologist Richard Woolfson said: "Parents today are much more aware of the benefits of play than in previous generations.

"There is a clearer understanding that play contributes to child development in a variety of ways - that it is not 'just for fun' - and that play and learning is connected.""

DIVORCE

Family structures have certainly broken down. The following article shows that divorce is so rife, the Churches and Chapels are bringing in new doctrines to accommodate the practise, and secondly, it shows how much Christendom has really strayed from the Bible as its guide. It would seem that the Bible is no longer considered or read by them to any degree, even in regard to the Commandments of Christ.

Let us be aware of this 'contemporary living in society' way of modern thinking, a nonsense principle laboured by them. There are many examples of those attempting to bring the truth down to a level where it has been 'contemporary' with the times, and in each case, the results have been, and indeed always will be, disastrous.

During the time of the flood, just over 1650 years from creation, the sons of God looked upon the daughters of men. These people were the epitome of 'contemporary' living and they now rest in the dust of the earth, of the class who shall not inherit eternal life.

Just a few hundred years later, in the accounts of the Tower of Babel and Sodom and Gomorrah, both classes had reduced God's everlasting truth in their lives to nothing and both attempted to live a 'contemporary' life with the world around them. The results again were disastrous.

Yahweh Tz'vaoth poured out his judgements on those wicked generations and He is destined to execute judgement on the same class in the world in the very near future. In that day there will really only be two classes. Those who have lived a lifestyle which has been anything but 'contemporary' who have held to the straight and narrow path, which alone leads unto life. And the second class are those who in contrast have pleased themselves and have lived life to the full. They eat, drink and are merry ... "knowing that tomorrow they'll die".

Is marriage out of date?

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 they 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 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.

EU (European Union)

During the past twelve months of contributions, we have referred several times to the proposed new EU constitution. Brethren have expected to see a move of European Countries uniting together forming a European Super-State in the last days, but with Britain being forced into stronger relations with the young lion countries, and being pushed out of Europe itself.

For the time being at least, it does not look however as though Britain is going to be pushed out, and we may see her joining many of the mechanisms of the EU framework, as she has done over the last decade. Two things seem for sure though:

1. France and Germany are doing all in their power to unite Europe under a 'super-state' umbrella; and
2. No matter how far into Europe Britain goes in the near future, Ezekiel's prophecy calls for her to be on a different side, at the time of the end.

The following article is interesting with reference to point one above:

EU draft constitution agreed

A final version of the draft constitution for an enlarged European Union has been agreed after tough last-minute negotiations in Brussels.

The document is to be presented to EU leaders at a summit in Greece next week.

Former French President Valery Giscard d'Estaing, who headed the convention that produced the text, said that history had been made.

However, several countries including Britain and Spain said the draft would need to be amended when governments start to debate it later this year.

"This will be a good foundation for final negotiations," said Britain's chief negotiator, Peter Hain.

The convention has also put off a final decision on some controversial issues until after the summit in Thessaloniki.

These include the question of whether EU should drop national vetoes in foreign, defence, taxation and cultural matters.

Mr Giscard d'Estaing said that when he handed over the draft to next week's summit he would advise the leaders there to tamper with it as little as possible.

"I will make just one recommendation to the Council: The closer you stick to our text, which has been discussed and reflected upon at great length, then the lighter will be your task."

Two presidents

The 105 members of the convention, representing 25 countries, have been working on the text with a president and two vice-presidents for 16 months.

They have reached broad agreement to extend qualified majority voting to a range of new areas, including immigration and asylum policy.

The debate has been dominated by tensions between small states, which favour strengthening the European Commission - the EU's executive arm - and the larger states, which prefer joint decision-making by governments.

The final draft constitution creates a new post of president of the European Council - the body made up of heads of EU member states - who will work in parallel to the President of the Commission.

It also introduces a foreign minister who will get his or her mandate from the European Council, but will serve as a vice-president of the Commission.

Europe united

Some of the changes are designed to make it easier to administer the EU when 10 new members join the 15 already in the union next year.

"We are setting up a new political age, more efficient, more democratic, and assuming [Europe's] full role on the world stage," said French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin.

Slovenian parliamentarian Alojz Peterle said that the draft was part of the project of unifying Europe after 50 years of Cold War division.

"This project proves that a united Europe is possible, and an expanded Europe can be successful," he said.

We hope that the above articles will help us be mindful that we live in significant and ominous times, a time of trouble such as never was for the nations. Blessed is he that watcheth. Blessed is he that understands and observes narrowly the words of this prophecy (Apocalypse 1 v 3). The question for us, as always is: - "Are we ready?"

Bro. Stephen Male

The Deep Things of God: The Larger Mission of The Mosaic Law

In the following short excerpt from a pioneer Christadelphian book, The Law of Moses, the author, Brother Robert Roberts, writes of the larger mission of the Mosaic law. In all of the commands, ordinances and feasts of the law there was, in fact, an underlying rationale which the casual observer might not readily ascertain: the great principle of God's kindness. Our brother writes:

"Over-arching the whole as a rainbow, is that larger mission of the law, which men are so liable to omit or fail to appreciate, viz., a clearing of the way for the manifestation of the kindness of God. This is the last lesson we learn: the beauty we last perceive. Naturally so; it belongs to God's point of view; and our own point of view is our first, and for a long time, our only point of view.

"God's kindness is full and bountiful and unconstrained, but in the matter of admitting created beings to a participation in His open friendship and divine nature, it has its limitations and conditions of so strict a character that one act of insubordination on the part of Adam sufficed to put an end to it. The work of restoration is being carried out on the basis of this principle being vindicated. There must be no boasting, says Paul. Most reasonable.

Boasting is barbarism, even between man and man who are equal. What is it towards God, who is the fountain of all being? God will be head. He is so, and it is only reasonable that the fact should be recognized. Where is there any monarch or human official of any kind who would consent to work where his authority was challenged or dignity affronted? If this is a tolerable principle of action amongst fellow-mortals, is it not absolutely indispensable with God who is the author of our life and the strength and support and wisdom of all creation?

Yet it is a principle that man ignores in his pride. It is a principle that God asserts by bringing ALL men under condemnation first of all. He has done this by the law of Moses. Unless there is forgiveness, there can be no salvation. Forgiveness is favour (grace), and God requires the honour of 'faith' towards Himself as a condition of the favour. 'Where is boasting then?' enquires Paul.

'It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay, but by the law of faith.' 'It is of faith that it might be by grace' - 'that God in all things may be glorified': 'that no flesh should glory in his presence . . . that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord' (Rom. 3:27; 4: 16; Pet. 4: 11; 1 Cor. 1:29, 31)."

Bro Bob Widding

What Does That Mean?

"And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." (Ex. 17:14)

Why did God tell Moses to, "Write this for a memorial" when he says that it is His intention to "utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven?" Doesn't the former seem to contradict the latter?

The law used every opportunity to act as a schoolmaster for spiritual instruction and exhortation. As we recall, when Moses let down his hands with the outstretched rod, Amalek prevailed, but when the rod was held up, Israel prevailed. In this incident, Amalek is used as a symbol of the flesh—those who do not fear God and who take advantage of others while thinking only of themselves: "Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; How he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God." The next verse tells us what God intends to do with Amalek and with his class of people: "Therefore it shall be, when the LORD thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it." (Deut. 25:17-19)

The significance of God's quarrel with Amalek is timeless: "write this for a memorial in a book". This was not to be recorded on loose papers, but in a book, that the lesson might continue; that it might be kept in memory and transmitted to future generations. It would have been a poor Israelite-- and it is a poor Christadelphian-- who is unable to see more than the literal meaning in this battle. The law is here presents us a challenge to wage a relentless war against sin in ourselves and against any that may ensnare us. We must never allow this war to slip from our memory. Every waking hour must be a constant vigil with rod outstretched and hands held high in order to win the victory.

Moses certainly understood the significances of this battle and he constructed an altar, "and called the name of it Jehovah Nissi." (that is, "The LORD my banner") He explains why he gave it that name, "For he said, Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." (Ex. 17:15-16) Our own experience is proof that this is indeed so.

If we, like Moses, are able to keep our hands held up, and when weary, have others ready to help prop them up for us, then we will gain the victory over Amalek. God tells us what that victory will be, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." (Rev. 21:4) "I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven."

Bro. Jim Sommerville