

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. Defending the original, foundation principles upon which the Truth was uncovered from darkness, and upon which the Christadelphian movement was developed.
Upholding the Truth as Bereans since 1923.

Vol. XCII No. 2

FEBRUARY, 2004

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God Willing, The Berean Christadelphian 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

BOSTON, Mass. – S.S. 9:30 am; Memorial, 10:45 am; Mid-week Study Class, Tues. 7:30 (West of Boston) and Thurs. 7:30 pm. (South of Boston) Meetings held at 310 Washington St., Dedham, MA 02026. Bro. Jim Sommerville, 34 Birch Hill Rd, Northboro, MA 01532 508-393-2874

My dear Brethren and Sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ,

We are pleased to report, that the Boston ecclesia (on behalf of the Newton, North Carolina ecclesia) received into fellowship three new members. Bro. Dale Lee and his wife Sis. Kathy from Chesapeake, Virginia; and their son Bro. Brian Lee from Rocky Mount, North Carolina were interviewed on December 27, 2003 and met with us the morning of December 28 for breaking of bread. We therefore are pleased to welcome them into fellowship and to announce to you that we now have a Berean Ecclesia in Chesapeake, VA. We wish them Godspeed on their journey Zionward.

You can contact Bro. Dale and Sis. Kathy at dleecpa2@mindspring.com or 321 Woodbridge Drive Chesapeake, VA. 23322. Bro. Bryan can be contacted at bryanalee@earthlink.net or 237 South Winstead Ave. Apt. B2 Rocky Mount, NC. 27804.

On a sadder note, we regret to report the death of our beloved Bro. Bill Stephen. He fell asleep in Christ on October 26, 2003. Although the past few years his health had not permitted him to get out and about, he still stands out as a remarkable example of one that would always, “visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction.”

We have welcomed the following visitors around the table of the Lord since our last report. Bro. and Sis. John Phillips of the Canton, Ohio Ecclesia; Bro. and Sis. Rusty Stephen of the Lampasas, Texas Ecclesia; Bro. Gary Stephen of the Glenn, New Hampshire Ecclesia; Sis. Leslie Morrell of the Las Cruces, New Mexico Ecclesia; Sis. Donna Rankin of the Holladay, Tennessee Ecclesia; Sis. Jessie Prentice and Sis. Norma Rankin of the Worcester, Massachusetts Ecclesia.

With much love in the One Hope,
Bro. Jim Sommerville
Recording Brother

The Berean Christadelphian Ecclesial News – Volume Numbers

The Berean Christadelphian Ecclesial News is a continuation of the Berean Christadelphian Magazine since certain Brethren and Sisters withdrew from the body of the Bereans in 1997. The origin of the movement for the keeping of the Faith was begun in 1913 by Bro. Frank Walker with The Young Worker’s Advocate and Mutual Magazine. This is why the volume numbers date from this year or XCII (92). Bro. G. H. Denny continued with The Mutual Magazine a few years later. In 1923 it became known as The Berean at the time the group separated from Central. Later in 1923 the magazine again changed the name to The Berean Christadelphian.

Books For Kenya

If you have books and material that you can send and would like to help in this effort, please contact Sis. Kaye Yuen at Syuen33550@aol.com or fax (604) 925-0649.

FRATERNAL GATHERINGS & ACTIVITIES

(To be held God Willing)

HENGOED FRATERNAL GATHERING..... Mar 19 - 22, 2004
It will be held at Buckland Hall - (See web site www.bucklandhall.co.uk)
Bro. Phillip Hughes 25 Hoel-Y-Gelli Fforchneol Parc, Godreaman, Aberdare, Mid-Glamorgan, South Wales, U.K., CF44 6LN, phone 011-441-685-870254

LAMPASAS FRATERNAL GATHERING..... June 10 - 13, 2004
Bro. Curtis Hurst, Rt.1 Box 40, Mullin, TX 76864, 915-985-3868

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

CANTON FRATERNAL GATHERING..... Oct 9 - 10, 2004
Bro. Don Miller, 6695 Carriage Lane, North Canton, OH 44721 330-494-7717

A Wise Man Builds His House Upon a Rock.

This concept comes to us from one of the parables which Jesus spoke to his disciples. The parable reads in:

Matthew 7:24-27 "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."

The message here is very clear. Jesus had just delivered his first all encompassing message to the world, which is typically called the "Sermon on the Mount." In it, he had given many new principles that we are to believe, and live our life by. He had completely changed, or as one might say "enlarged" most of the principles which had governed God's people in the Mosaic law to that point.

Jesus, throughout this sermon told them expressions like this:

Matthew 5:43-45 "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

This was Jesus' style through out this monumental talk. He would tell them "Ye have heard that it hath been said" ... meaning it was written in your Mosaic law to behave in a certain way. But now, (Jesus said,) now I say unto

you that in the law I am setting before you, your righteousness must exceed the things taught in the Mosaic Law.

Jesus clarified this point with them right at the beginning of this Sermon. There was a class of men in Israel called Pharisees. This class of men were regarded by their community, in the days when Jesus was walking the earth, as wonderfully righteous men because they knew and kept the law so very perfectly. They had even made additions to the law, just to be sure that the law itself was perfectly kept. For instance, the Mosaic law had forbidden the eating of anything that was unclean. The Pharisees, in order to be sure that this ordinance of the Mosaic law was kept perfectly, ordered the washing of plates and hands prior to ever eating anything. That way they could be extra sure that nothing unclean, no unclean insect or some such, could ever cause them to eat something unclean, or defiled by something unclean.

But Jesus tells us as he begins this Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 5:20 "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

The Pharisees kept the law wonderfully. We must do better. We must do better, not in keeping the rules of the Mosaic law, for it was about to be fulfilled and taken away in the death of Jesus. But we must do better in keeping the true spirit of the law, in learning, believing, obeying, and acting upon the commandments of Christ. And most importantly, changing our heart.

Our heart, our thought processes and emotional expressions: These are what has to be changed to conform to Jesus. The Pharisees didn't understand that the Rock we must build upon is not a list of laws, but a conforming to the things that Jesus commanded with our whole heart and mind. When the Pharisees complained that Jesus and his disciples ate with unwashed hands, Jesus explained to his disciples:

Matthew 15:17-20 "Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashed hands defileth not a man."

Our heart, by nature is an evil thing. Jeremiah exclaimed:

Jeremiah 17:9 "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

Jesus' teaching is that we must change our heart. We must change our thought process to conform to his, or we will not be able to stand when the storms of trials come, and our house will be found to be upon a foundation of sand, and quickly washed away. We usually think it's the other way around.

Man wants to believe he can provide a foundation for himself against the evil times. So we spend incredible amounts of time laying up stores against the times of trouble. Jesus says it's just the opposite.

Matthew 6:19-21 "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also. We know some people complain that it is too hard to understand the Bible. There is too much to know. There are too many differing opinions. How can anyone figure out what is right? Jesus' point is that, if it is important to you, if it is truly your treasure, you will take the time to figure it out, learn it, understand it and obey it. But if it is not your treasure, if other things are more important to you, then, yes, it will appear too difficult a task. And you will say with the Jews of old:

Malachi 1:13 "Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the LORD."

But, it is not a weariness. It is the most edifying endeavor a man can undertake. But it is an act of faith, and a discipline, and an effort only made by the truly faithful. As the wisest man on earth noted in his Proverbs:

Proverbs 25:2 "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter."

The question before us is, do we wish to be kings, and reign with Christ? Because if we do, we need to sweep away all the sand that weakens our foundation, and make our stand upon the Rock, which is Christ.

When a builder sets out to build a building, he must first explore the area in which he wishes to build, to be sure that the foundation will be sure. He must make sure that he is not building in the creek bed, or in a place which will not stand against the elements. So it is with the Truth. Before we can build our house, we must find out what the foundation is. Jesus, shortly following this sermon on the mount made a point which is very unpopular in the world today, in fact, in every age. Jesus said:

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

"The truth shall make you free." Nothing else can do that. Jesus didn't say, Ye shall know error, and error shall set you free. Only the Truth. Jesus did not say there are many Truths, that what is true for you may not be true for me. He said there was the Truth.

Most think it is the height of folly to think you have found the Truth. Even

Pilate ridiculed Jesus over this principle at Jesus' trial. And we can see just how old the pursuit of Truth is, in the Bible's account of Jesus' testimony before Pilate. Pilate asked Jesus,

John 18: 37-38 "...Art thou a king then?" Jesus answered, thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, what is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews ..."

What is Truth? This question which Pilate asked him, is what is called a redundant question. It was asked flippantly, and no answer was expected. In fact, it is asked in such a way so as to show that Pilate did not even believe that there could be an answer to his question. And he immediately left the room before Jesus had the opportunity to answer. Pilate was ridiculing Jesus, indicating that he thought it was presumptuous and absurd for anyone to presume to know the Truth.

And the world still ridicules us for making the same statement, but it is not our statement. It is Jesus' statement. And the Scriptures are very clear that there is such a thing as the one Truth. Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well:

John 4:23-24 "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

And the apostle Paul continued this thought in his letter to the Ephesians. Paul wrote:

Ephesians 4:4-6 "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, ONE FAITH, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

So no matter how arrogant it may sound to the world around us to claim there is only one Truth, that is the teaching of Jesus and the apostles in the Holy Scriptures. There is one Truth, and only that which is built upon this one Truth can stand. Everything else will come to fall when Jesus returns to establish his kingdom.

Just before Jesus gave the parable of the House built upon a rock in that Sermon, Jesus had given us this same principle. Jesus said:

Matthew 7:13-14 "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

There are many important points in this verse which are generally ignored in the world today. Jesus said that the way to life is "narrow." But the Greek word there is "stenos" and it really means "confined." The path that leads to life is a confined path, not a broad one. Not one with many forks. And in

this, we have the reason why there are so few who find it. Because men and women of Adamic nature are not willing to be confined in the way they act, or what they must believe and conform their lives to.

And Jesus follows this stern warning about seeking the Truth with this parable. Jesus warned:

Matthew 7:21-23 “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

So in all these things, we come face to face with the fact that Jesus taught there was such a thing as “The Truth.” It was this “Truth” which he said would set us free. But he warned that there would be many that claimed to hold the Truth but did not. And so the apostle of love, the apostle John wrote:

1 John 4:1-3 “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.”

So finding the foundation to build upon first requires a lot of work, a lot of testing false prophets, a lot of trying the spirits to see if they are of God. But really, the Truth by itself is not that difficult. It is the errors which have been raised against it with high sounding words and complicated arguments to deny the clear and obvious teaching of the Scriptures which make it difficult.

The Truth, the foundation upon which our house must be built consists of two things, which the Acts defined this way.

Acts 8:12 "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."

The Truth can be simply defined in two subjects. The things concerning the Kingdom of God, that is, the plan that God has to establish His kingdom over this entire earth. And secondly the things concerning the name of Jesus Christ, that is, the reason that God will forgive us our sins for Jesus' sake.

But suffice it to say that in the early pages of Genesis, God made a promise to Abraham. When God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, God took him to Israel. And there, on a mountain in Israel God made this promise:

Genesis 13:14-15 “And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will

make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.”

The things concerning the Kingdom of God is nothing more than how God will accomplish this promise. God promised the land of Israel to Abraham and his seed. Paul tells us that the seed God spoke of was Christ.

Galations 3:16 “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.”

And this seed was to inherit the kingdom of his Father David, sitting on David’s throne, which of course was in Jerusalem. As the prophet Isaiah wrote of Jesus:

Isaiah 9:6-7 “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”

Now it must be clear that none of these prophecies have been fulfilled. Abraham and Christ did not inherit the land of Israel forever. Christ has never sat upon the throne of his father David, so obviously he has not done so forever. This is obvious to us. It was obvious to the apostle Paul who wrote of Abraham:

Hebrews 11:13 “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”

Promises have been made to Abraham, and the same promises repeated to his son Isaac, and his son Jacob. But they did not receive the promises. And Paul also explains why. As he closed that chapter he wrote of the faithful of old:

Hebrews 11:39 “And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”

The things concerning the Kingdom of God are the things concerning how God will fulfill His promises to His faithful of old; to resurrect them to life, to judge them according to their faith and works, and to establish a new order on earth where Christ rules from Jerusalem over the whole earth in peace with his immortal saints, gloriously and how it will be brought to pass.

Likewise the things concerning the name of Jesus Christ means the things accomplished in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It involves how we are rejoined to God. The word “Religion” is from the Latin religar, and it means to be rebound.

Man was alienated from God by wicked works begun in the Garden of Eden, and continued through out man's sad and rebellious history. But it was God's intention that the Earth should be inhabited by righteous men. God provided Christ that through his work, our sins might be forgiven for Jesus' sake, and we might live on the earth forever.

God explains his actions quite clearly in Romans 3:25:

Romans 3:25-26 "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

God set Jesus forth as a propitiation. That is, a Mercy Seat. A place designated under the Mosaic law, where Israel could receive forgiveness for their sins. God set Jesus forth to be the fulfillment of the prophesy of the Mercy Seat. Jesus became the place we could go for the forgiveness of our sins. And the reason why God did this, was because of what was accomplished through faith in Jesus' blood, that is, through the death of Jesus. The death of Jesus was the declaration that God was righteous, and man wasn't.

How so? Because Jesus was a man of the same nature as us. As Paul wrote:

Hebrews 2:14 "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;"

Jesus had our identical nature which he bore to the tree. Our nature, the devil--that which had the power of death, that which is killing us--he took it to the cross and killed it there. In doing so, Jesus made the statement to the world that this is how human nature is fit to be treated in comparison to the righteousness of God. It is only fit for destruction. In doing so he declared or exhibited, as the word is better translated, the righteousness of God, in comparison to man. And when we acknowledge the correctness, the rightness of Jesus' great statement made on the cross, God is willing to forgive us our sins.

The things concerning the name of Jesus Christ, then are those things associated with this great statement which Jesus made. It involves our nature, of which we already have Jeremiah's testimony, that it is desperately wicked. It involves how we, through the forgiveness of sins, can be rebound to God to receive a greater nature, or as Paul said:

Philippians 3:20-21 "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

These are the things that must be known. We cannot say we believe in

Jesus, and not believe in the things he accomplished. We cannot say we believe in God, and refuse to believe in God's plan for mankind.

Jesus, during his ministry came to the house of a man named Nicodemus. Now Nicodemus is described as a Pharisee, and a ruler among the Jews. Nicodemus told Jesus that he knew he was a teacher, sent from God. Jesus answered his flattering remarks in an odd way. He told Nicodemus:

John 3:3 "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Here was a baffling response for Nicodemus. He didn't understand the context.

John 3:4 "Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?"

But Jesus was not talking about a natural birth. He was speaking of a spiritual birth. And the spiritual perspective was something that a Pharisee would naturally struggle at. So Jesus went on to explain to him:

John 3:5-8 "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

Baptism was something that John, the baptizer, had recently been practicing in Israel, but of which the Pharisees rejected. It wasn't written in the Mosaic law. Why should they do it? But here Jesus is making the point to Nicodemus that that which the Pharisees had been rejecting, he had to do. He had to be born again. He had to rid himself of all his human attentions, which is what they had turned the law into, taking human pride in their keeping of the law, and turn his attention on divine things. He had to be baptized.

But not just baptized. He had to believe. This was going to be Nicodemus' problem at this time. Jesus said to him:

John 3:12 "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?"

Jesus had just told Nicodemus a fundamental part of his teaching. He had to put away the things he had been basing his life on, bury them in the waters of baptism, and come forth to a newness of life in Jesus. And Nicodemus, at this time, could not believe. And so we learn an important lesson in regards to the plan and purpose of God. It is not enough to merely know. We must believe. We must have faith.

The meaning of baptism is explained to us all throughout the New Testament. There were really two parts to it. First, it was coming into a relationship with the promises to Abraham of which we just spoke. Secondly, it was a symbolical killing and a destroying of the nature we bare, showing

our agreement with the statement that Jesus made on the cross.

The first part of baptism is explained by Paul in his letter to the Galatians. He wrote there:

Galatians 3:26-29 “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

This was a problem for the Pharisees. They already believed they were Abraham's seed. But they weren't. It is among the reasons that they rejected John's baptism. We see some of the Pharisees coming to John, and John telling them:

Matthew 3:7-9 “But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.”

No, as Paul argues, and as John argued before him, the seed of Abraham was not after the flesh, but through the one God would provide, His son Jesus. And if we are baptized into Christ, and have truly put on Christ, then are we--even though most of us here were born Gentiles--in Christ, and Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise which Abraham and the faithful of old are still waiting for.

And the second symbol displayed through baptism was equally as difficult for the Pharisees. They wanted to attain their own righteousness through the keeping of the law. They didn't see any reason for them to identify with the righteous statement Jesus made in his death. They didn't see the need to destroy this body which was killing them. They didn't see the law as condemning them.

But it did condemn them. It condemned them so much that Paul refers to it this way to the Corinthians:

2 Corinthians 3:7-9 “But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.”

Paul calls the Mosaic law the Ministration of death, and the ministration of condemnation. He compares it to Christ's law, which he calls the ministration of righteousness. The Mosaic law condemned sin at every point. Sins that a person committed through weakness were condemned when the person brought the trespass offering. Sins that were inadvertently committed were

condemned when the person brought the sin offering. Even the nature which produces the sin was condemned daily, when the priests and people brought the Burnt Offering. Even sins of presumption, that is, sin which is not repented of, but rather defended, was condemned when the sinner himself was put to death. That is why Paul calls it the ministration of condemnation, or the ministration of death.

Paul, even commenting of this very characteristic of law, writes to the Romans:

Romans 7:9-13 “For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.”

Paul says, I was alive until the law came, but as soon as the law gave a commandment, and I failed to keep that commandment (which every one of us who bears this nature knows happens all too frequently) then I died, condemned by the law which was intended to give life.

Therefore God did through Jesus what the law could not do. He gave life, through Jesus' death and resurrection. As Paul wrote:

Romans 8:3 “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:”

Baptism was then provided as a symbol that we agree with the need to destroy this body which is condemned because of sin. Paul wrote in Romans 6:

Rom. 6:3-7 “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.”

Our old man is crucified with Jesus in baptism, that the body of sin might be destroyed in symbol, just as Jesus destroyed it in reality upon the cross.

That which the law couldn't do, which was to give life, God did by providing Jesus to condemn sin in the flesh, the devil, on the cross. But what a foreign idea to the Pharisees, who looked to the law to provide their salvation. And so when Jesus was explaining to Nicodemus the need to be baptized, he could not grasp either of the reasons, and so Jesus asked him,

“If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?”

Jesus went on to explain to Nicodemus:

John 3:17 “For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

We must not only correctly understand the plan and purpose of God, but we must believe it. It must come to be a part of our very being and reason for existing. Just as we believe that the sun will rise in the east tomorrow morning, so must all our actions reflect our belief in the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ. If we believe not in these things, then, Jesus tells us, we are condemned already.

This is the test of true love. Jesus said:

John 14:15 “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”

John 14:21 “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.”

It is hard to imagine how Jesus could have explained this any clearer. If you love Jesus, you will do the things he has commanded. If not, you will find some excuse not to.

Now, there are no shortage of pretending well wishers in the world who deny the need to learn and understand and believe and obey God’s truth. They reason that surely a merciful God will not condemn the man who has had some religious experience with Him. Surely a merciful God will not condemn the man who did what he could, but refused to spend the time to learn about this plan. This is the teachings of people who do not understand God. God is a merciful God, freely and mercifully forgiving the sins of those who truly love Him. But if we don’t truly love Him, Jesus’ clear teaching as we have seen in John 3:17, is that people who don’t believe are condemned already. And we have already seen this evening, in Matthew 7 where there will be people who claim to have worked miracles, and prophesied in Jesus’ name, who at the last will be told “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” So mercy should not be confused with indifference. God is merciful to those who love Him. He is not indifferent to those who do not.

Salvation is based upon faith. Now Paul tells us this about faith. He wrote:

Hebrews 11:1 “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

Faith is one of those terms that in modern time, has had its meaning blurred. We often hear people speak of “blind faith.” Really, there is no such thing. Paul says that faith is the substance of things hoped for. Substance is from the Greek word “hupostasis” and it means the foundation. Just as the

wise man was to build his house upon a foundation of Rock, so is faith based upon a foundation of the things hoped for. But there has to be a foundation, or there can be no faith. We must understand the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ, or we have no hupostasis, no foundation upon which to build in the first place.

Secondly, Paul says that faith is the evidence of things not seen. Faith is evidence. But not simply evidence, such as may be used in a trial. This again, is from the Greek word Elegechos, and it means proof, or conviction. Some have rendered it the assured expectation. Faith cannot exist where there is no proof. Faith cannot stand where there is no foundation.

So yes, while God is merciful to those who desire His mercy, He demands certain things. He demands that His foundation, not another foundation is in place. He demands that His evidence is understood, believed, and acted upon. And He is quite clear about those situations where this is not the case.

You know, after the Pharisees had seen so many of their followers leave them and follow after Jesus and the apostles, they themselves began to follow Jesus. But where the apostle Paul, who said he was a Pharisee of Pharisees before his conversion to Christ, totally abandoned all the principles he had embraced as a Pharisee, many of the new converts desired to bring the habits of the law with them, and they tried to force these things on the brotherhood.

This seems harmless enough. It is just a few additions to the teachings of Christ, and additions that were not out of harmony with Christ. Keeping the Sabbath, as they desired, was after all a part of the law which prophesied of the time when Christ shall rule the earth for 1000 years in peace. And circumcision was, after all, a prophesy of the time when all flesh shall be cut off from the earth, and the earth shall be peopled with a righteous class of men and women serving God in purity and in Truth. What could possibly be wrong with forcing these notable symbols upon the newly formed ecclesia?

Here is Paul’s evaluation of any teaching not authorized by Christ. Paul wrote to the Galatians who were in question about these things:

Galatians 1:6-7 “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.”

What Paul is saying is that if it is not a teaching by Christ, it is not a teaching at all. It is not another Gospel, or glad tidings. It is a perversion of the Gospel of Christ. We are not free to receive a different Truth, one for you, and one for me. There is one Truth and one Gospel. And Paul goes on to show just exactly how serious he is about this. Paul continues:

Galatians 1:8-9 “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”

But you know, before he died, Paul was well aware that not everyone was

going to build and maintain a foundation upon the Rock, so that the house could stand. Paul prophesied of the coming of a lawless one, in 2 Thessalonians 2. Paul warned the true believers at that time that they should not look for the return of Christ until such a time as the ecclesia had become corrupted.

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.”

The day of Christ’s return would not come until there had been a great falling away from the principles of the Ttruth. That the teachings of Christ so easy to be seen and understood in the pages of the Scriptures, would be corrupted and mocked and destroyed. Things that are clearly written in the Scriptures as wrong, are accepted by modern Christians as right. Immoral behavior is excused on every hand. Those who teach against it are ridiculed as “closed minded” or worse.

This is the day that Christ warned against. When his teachings would fall on deaf ears, and very few in the world are concerned. Paul worried that when this day came, it too, would effect the ecclesia itself in a very bad way. Paul warned:

Acts 20:28-31 “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.”

He warned night and day with tears about the difficulty it would be, to maintain our house upon the Rock that is Christ. And so let us take his warning to heart. Let us take it very seriously, that there are many who wish to change the foundation upon which the Truth is established. And we must be prepared against the day of trial. If we have set our foundation in stone, in the Rock of Israel, on the precious corner stone--then we will be prepared against the stone. If not, our house is in danger of being swept away with every wind of doctrine.

Paul wrote to us,

2 Corinthians 6:14-17 “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the

living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.”

Bro. Jim Phillips

1 Peter 4 & 5

As we have seen so far in these chapters, Peter writes in a way that makes a vivid bold point. He poses his comments to us, the listeners and readers of his letter, as a challenge that in the process of attempting to live his words we might have a chance for salvation by giving praise and honor to the Father. His words are not stagnant, but cry for us to respond to him through action.

Chapter 4 – This chapter is broken down into two sections:

1) Verses 1-11 – Peter draws our attention to characteristics that will help us live a spiritual life and in turn will give honor to our Father, and

2) Verses 12-19 – Peter helps those who experience trials and hard times to continue in faith, knowing the reward that will come through God’s mercy.

Verses 1-11 – Peter starts by drawing a comparison—a comparison in the character and attitude we are to have in relation to the character and attitude of Christ. In the 18th verse of the previous chapter (1 Peter 3:18), he shows us this character of Christ—“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.”

How would we respond if we were asked to fulfill such a command? My first thought (which is fleshly and selfish) would likely be the following. “It’s not fair. Why should I have to live this life being totally consumed in giving it to others so they can profit from my accomplishment?” It would be fleshly or natural for us to look at those around us and say, “They do not have to bow to such high demands,” and “Why should this be imposed onto me?” Obviously, Christ’s mind was far beyond this type of thought. He was focused on his job and mission, regardless of the lives being lived out around him. He knew this was his Divine purpose. He knew that God’s wishes for us are the best for us, regardless of what our fleshly mind thinks. He was able to not allow the fleshly sinful mind control his brain, but ensured the Spirit mind persisted and gained victory over his thoughts and actions. It is this persistence and commitment that Peter is challenging us to.

“Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.”

We know we cannot attain to this level of success as Christ lived. That is the simple truth. But this does not mean we, in the end, have ultimately failed.

Of course we will fail; we will sin, and let down the Deity. The good news is that there is recourse. There is a way to forgiveness. This depends on our hearts and minds. Are we desiring to please God? Are we sorrowful at our failures? Do we wish and strive to attain to do better?

On a case-by-case scenario we too can be like Christ and have success. We can overcome the flesh while we suffer in it, and cease from sin. Every time the flesh presents itself we can choose to obey it or to cease from sin. It is in this sense that Peter is challenging us: to be like Christ, to suffer in the flesh and cease from sin, even on a case-by-case scenario. Every opportunity we have to put the flesh aside is a victory. “And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh...” (Galatians 5:24).

1 Peter 4:4 – “That they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.” We all have friends and acquaintances in the world. There are times when these friends or acquaintances engage themselves in activities that we as followers of Christ do not feel comfortable promoting. The loudest voice we have is our actions—what we do. It may be something as simple as not partaking in their “excess of riot,” as Peter puts it. If these friends or acquaintances care at all for us, then they will respect us for our choices in life and potentially may be curious enough to ask why we make the choices we do. Acting in this manner is a far louder statement than making any kind of vocal comment.

1 Peter 4:6 – “For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to the Spirit of God.” The words “judge according” would be better translated as “to make a distinction” or “to separate from” man in the flesh. This give the verse new meaning and has the following interpretation: “The gospel was preached to people that they may be distinct from men in the flesh, and live according to the Spirit.”

1 Peter 4:7 – “But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.” It is figured that 1 Peter was written about A.D.60-64, which was almost 10 years before the destruction of Jerusalem. Peter was giving words of warning. Peter had insight to this event by the Spirit. Are these words valid for us in this day during the year 2003? God’s plan continually moves forward. The return of Christ comes at a time that no man knows. We need to watch—meaning be awake, alive and using prayer as a necessary tool of support.

1 Peter 4:8-9 – “And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging.” Charity is the word *agape*, and hospitality is the word *philoxenos*, which means the love of strangers. This reminds us of verse 1 of this chapter – “arm yourselves with the same mind”—that is, the mind of Christ. We see here the importance the Spirit places on the characteristic of charity and humility. We are told that “charity shall cover the multitude of sins.” Again, we can see the mercy of the Father. Through Peter’s writing he

is encouraging us to find and utilize *agape* love—charity. He is prompting us and identifies that those who find it cover the multitude of sins. Knowing this fact is a pleasant thought—not only is it exciting to us that we can cover the multitude of sins, but it is exciting that our Father has the love, mercy and care to tell us this, and to build us up with this encouragement.

1 Peter 4:10-11 – “As every man has received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

These verses close off this first section of the chapter. For those of us who have heard and understand what the Bible truly means, these verses remind us of how we are to be a light in a dark place. Our deeds and actions, if we allow them to be directed by the Spirit, will be seen as a different quality and standard than the normal person’s deeds and actions. If the Spirit’s will controls our mind, we will be exuberant and optimistic to tell others of this wonderful way we have found in hope that they too can share in this good news. We can see how the general public loved Christ. Christ showed his love to all. Children flocked to him. I am certain that all who interacted with him, whether religious minded or not, saw something special in his character and mannerisms. We too, if we can approach people in a similar fashion, should gain a certain sense of respect from those around us, whether they are religious minded or not, or even if they agree with our beliefs or not. King David had this mind set, and we can see this reflected in his inspired words of Psalm 90:17—“Let the beauty of Yahweh our God be upon us; and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it.”

In the last section of this epistle (1 Peter 4: 12 through the end of 1 Peter 5) Peter is purely encouraging the believers for what was about to come on them. His words are words which were meant to help them maintain their path through a very troublesome road that was ahead of them. The Emperor was about to begin persecutions on all those who believed in Christ.

In verse 12-19 of chapter 4 Peter attempts to change people’s paradigm about persecutions. He was attempting to give them a focus other than the natural thoughts of the pain they were about to endure.

1 Peter 4:14 – “If ye be reproached (or reviled) for the name of Christ, happy are ye: for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.” Many believers were tortured and killed. Peter was telling them to look beyond this present trial and see the rejoicing and victory, which soon would be theirs. We are reminded of the fifth seal of the souls under the altar that “cried out with a loud voice saying, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and

avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth.’ And white robes were given unto everyone of them...” (Revelation 6:10-11).

1 Peter 4:17 – “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?” Peter is letting the followers of Christ know that God is just by saying that they do not need to worry for the evil of the present, because God will set things right. Followers of Christ must maintain focus on this to ensure their minds remain fixed on producing actions that reflect the characteristics of Christ.

1 Peter 4:19 – “Let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.” The word “keeping” here means to entrust, like how we give money to the bank in trust. Those that suffer on behalf of their righteous beliefs can know that God will hold them in His bank, or the bank of the Book of Life. Again, this statement continues Peter’s encouragement to those who will be faced with physical and mental adversity from the Roman rule.

Chapter 5 – This chapter continues on the topic of “how to combat and withstand the fiery trial” that the believers faced. The last part of chapter 4 provided words of encouragement for the minds of those who would be subjected to torture and even be put to death. Chapter 5 looks at what duties different ones in the ecclesia had to fulfill. The backing help an ecclesia could provide to its individual members would be invaluable during this trying time.

Verses 1-4 of this chapter are addressed to the elders of the ecclesia. Being an elder involved an important job. The elder was required to feed the flock, and was responsible for taking an oversight directive position in the ecclesia. It is likely that being named an elder was not a democratic event, but was a title given to those who fulfilled the roles due to their sound beliefs and teachings, and who had stepped up willfully and assumed the duties of an elder. It would be something done in love, a freewill giving to others. This action would mimic the work of the apostles and ultimately mimics the work of Christ. Peter also calls the elders to lead by example, to have the remainder of the ecclesia come to them through natural attractions, and not to rule over the ecclesia with force.

Elders that can accomplish this shall be given a crown, a stephanos—a green wreath of victory “that fadeth not away.” The stephanos was used to signify victory, like a gold medal in the present day Olympics. The stephanos, which was given to the winners, was made of vines and leaves and eventually dried up and faded. This stephanos spoken of here, which fadeth not away, is charged with Spirit energy symbolizing eternal life, like a jasper stone, as given by the judge to the saints. Peter identifies the challenge to the elders and the reward of success.

After the address to the elders, Peter speaks to the youth. Most of us can reflect on Peter’s words, where he is asking the youth for humility. In our youth we can’t understand the slower reactions, softer words and approaches

taken by our seniors. As youth, the answers appear very obvious, and we are tempted to make bold strong statements. As maturity and experiences mold us, typically, a humbler approach is found. Peter attempts to help the youth by asking them to be clothed in humility, subjecting themselves to the elders and to the mighty hand of God.

Again, Peter writes this as a challenge with a reward for the successful. Peter tells the youth who succeed in this that God will “exalt” them in due time.

1 Peter 5:7 – “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.” Peter, reflecting on the youth, knew that the youth tend not to see their mortal limits. As youth, your physical health is great. Your mind is sharp. Typically, as youth, you can complete whatever tasks you set your mind to without restraint or damage. Peter was warning the youth of the time coming when persecutions would be rampant. The youth, with the elders, would not be able to rely on themselves, but would have to truly put their entire faith and trust in God, even to death. Peter gave them calming thoughts by telling them that God careth for them that serve Him.

Peter finishes his challenge by asking the ecclesia to be sober and vigilant. Sober means “to mentally control oneself.” We can understand why these brethren and sisters would require mental control. The Romans would not act favorably towards these followers of Christ, and as such, the believers would have to exercise mental control to overcome this trial. Vigilant means “to keep awake, keep on your guard, do not sleep.” This is the same word that Christ spoke to Peter himself, with James and John, on the night he was betrayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. There, they had failed to be vigilant. Peter had learned from his master of his weakness, and calls on his brethren and sisters to be able to grasp this characteristic now, as he knew they would need it shortly.

Verse 12-14 of this chapter conclude this first epistle. We note that Silvanus was Silas—the Silas whom Paul chose to take with him on his second journey. Paul declined to take John Mark with him and took Silas instead. Also, Silas and Timothy followed Paul in his travels—Paul forging forward, establishing the ecclesias, and Silas with Timothy trailing, to complete the establishment as Paul himself continued forward.

It is noted that the ecclesia at Babylon saluteth you. It appears that this is not a symbolic ecclesial name, but appears to be a real ecclesia located in the Babylon district. Peter passes on the greetings of this ecclesia to those who would read his letter.

In conclusion, we can see in Peter’s words the need for growth and strengthening for the impending trial on the ecclesias. These are words that we can definitely relate to as we know the return of the Lord is near, and we are uncertain of what trials the saints will have to endure before their judgment. We can definitely see the mercy and reward given by the Lord to those that follow him.

DANIEL – THE KINGS OF THE NORTH AND SOUTH

“There are many fulfilled prophecies in the Bible, but none of them is so circumstantial in detail or has received such an undeniable fulfilment in the actual events of a long past history as the prophecy contained in the first 39 verses of the eleventh chapter of Daniel. The fulfilment is so remarkable that unbelievers can do nothing with it but assert that the prophecy of Daniel is a forgery, written after the events were accomplished. But this assertion is contrary to explicit evidence. Those who wish Daniel to be untrue, or who cannot distinguish between assertion and proof, are easily enough carried away by it. But there is nothing in it. It originated with the professed opinion of Porphyry, the Syrian of Bashan, who lived in the third century, about 400 years after the time that he thought the forgery had been perpetrated, and who, therefore, is no authority in any sense. Porphyry was an enemy of divine truth in general, and his opinion will have no weight with those who can weigh evidence as against prejudice. There is not a single sound argument against the authenticity of Daniel. In support of it, the evidence is overpowering..” (Daniel and His Great Fulfilled Prophecy of Chapter Eleven – Bro. Roberts)

Before looking at this remarkable prophecy in Daniel chapter 11, we would like to make a few remarks before concluding our review of chapter 10, which in a sense is closely related to the eleventh chapter. We recall that Daniel was disturbed to learn that even though his people were shortly to be restored to the land of his fathers, a further down treading was to take place because of iniquity. Daniel would obviously be grieved to be informed of this, and would naturally be interested in the final outcome, and the consummation of the purpose of Yahweh. The words spoken to Daniel in chapter 10 were, amongst other things, for the purpose of giving further understanding to Daniel,

“Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days.” (Daniel 10:14)

The first point that we want to draw attention to is one that frequently presents itself throughout the book of Daniel, and which we have referred to on more than one occasion. That is the constant, intense desire that Daniel had, to learn and understand the plan and purpose of God, and the things that were revealed to him. Though we have referred to this aspect on a number of occasions, the repetition of this fact in the prophecy cannot be without significance and stands as an example and exhortation for our learning. We read in verse 12

“Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.”

The word “set” according to Strong is “used with great latitude of application” as can be seen by the various words that have been translated from the Hebrew word ‘nathan.’ Gesenius gives a definition along the lines of setting someone over any person or thing as in Genesis 41:41, when Pharaoh tells Joseph “See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.” Such an appointment was absolute and comprehensive.

Gesenius goes on to refer to the verse in question and says it is “to apply the heart to any thing, to devote oneself to any thing.” Is this not the key to success in the things of the Truth? What do we set our hearts upon? How do we apply our time and effort? What do we devote our energies to? Do we think that we can get into the kingdom with anything less than total devotion to the Truth? Is Yahweh going to be pleased with only a percentage of our time given to him? If we think He is, then let us re-read Bro. Growcott’s exhortations and take stock before it’s too late!

It is admittedly not easy to give this kind of determination. We are so easily distracted by other things. Our mental energies are so often sapped by the humdrum of daily life, and the one hundred and one other things that seem to demand our attention. And the flesh much prefers to be entertained than to labour in the things of the Spirit. However, the lesson from the life and character of Daniel must surely be a steadfast, persevering dedication to the Truth. And this was not just at the end of his life, when the attractions of the world had faded, and no longer held any interest. It was not at a time when youth’s energies had evaporated and he was happy to sit down and think about the Word. Let us cast our minds back to when he was about 16 or 17 years of age in the first chapter of his prophecy. It was the same spirit of determination to please God, to conform to His way, and to refuse the world.

The word ‘anab’ rendered “chasten” also has a great depth of meaning in relation to one’s personal demeanour and frame of mind. It appears to have in this context the idea of humbling oneself, and mentally preparing to give undivided attention to a particular matter. It is rendered “afflict” in Ezra 8:21 when Ezra was preparing for the long and dangerous journey back to Jerusalem from Ahava, and is connected with fasting. It is also used in reference to the Day of Atonement (Cp Leviticus 16:29) and probably involved fasting.

Daniel therefore probably engaged in fasting, the spiritual counterpart of which is an abstinence from fleshly gratification, to give oneself totally to Yahweh and to the understanding of His purpose. What a lesson this is for us in crucifying the flesh with its lusts and affections so that we can give ourselves unhindered to the things we profess to desire with all our hearts.

The second point that we wish to briefly comment upon is the phrase “I am come for thy words” (verse 12). Moffat translates this part of the verse “for the sake of your prayers I am here.” While we do not expect divine visitation in answer to our prayers, or any direct communication from the Most High, as in the life of Daniel, we cannot help but feel that there is a lesson for us here in the value and power of prayer. This is a subject of its own of course as the Scripture speaks extensively of prayer. We will just recall the words of Proverbs 15:8, “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination unto Yahweh: but the prayer of the upright is his delight” upon which Bro. Roberts comments as follows:

“We could not have imagined it possible that so small a circumstance in the universe could have yielded satisfaction to the stupendous Being upholding all by the Word of His Power.” (Law of Moses page 118)

The final point before moving on is contained in verse 13 where Daniel having been told by the angel who was speaking with him (probably Gabriel) that he had been sent in response to his prayer, adds

“But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.”

Verse 2 of Daniel chapter 10 tells us that Daniel “was mourning three full weeks” which corresponds with what the angel said. Here we have another insight in the book of Daniel into what might be termed ‘angelic ministration’. We see on a number of occasions in the Scriptures the work of the Elohim carrying out the purpose of the Deity in the ‘order of things’. It is so in the book of Daniel. The current world is subject unto them, as the future Olahm will be to the saints (Hebrews 2:5). It is therefore interesting to see glimpses of the Elohim in action.

In the verse in question we are being told in the words of one writer that it took 21 days to arrange the political world so as to bring the policy of Persia into conformity with Yahweh’s purpose. Circumstances had to be arranged so that the Prince of Persia would act in a certain manner. To the observer of these events, everything would appear to be working naturally of course, just as the restoration of Israel, (for example) would be estimated by the casual observer as natural events on the world scene. Israel would appear as another nation coming into existence after a period of dispersion, and adding complications to the Middle East. In reality it was an amazing fulfilment of Bible prophecy, clearly showing the hand of God in the world’s affairs.

So the decree of Cyrus would not have been regarded by the ignorant masses as the fulfilment of the Word of God. But ‘behind the scenes’, the Elohim would be directing affairs to a predetermined outcome demonstrating that “God rules in the kingdom of men.” (Daniel 4:17) It was in this year that

the decree of Cyrus took place, and it seems appropriate that Cyrus would be the Prince referred to in this verse.

How he withstood the work of the angels is not revealed, but it is interesting to note that even the angels “that excel in strength” (Psalm 103:20) do not always perform miraculous events to carry out the will of God. In fact, Gabriel receives assistance from Michael to achieve the required result, as recorded in Ezra 1:1 and 2:

“Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of Yahweh by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, Yahweh stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, Yahweh Elohim of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.”

The concluding verses of the chapter also show that the work of the Elohim was to continue. We read in verse 20 of Daniel 10:

“Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? And now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come.”

Again, we are not told why it was necessary for Gabriel to return and fight with the Prince of Persia. Possibly, events were developing that would, if left to themselves, frustrate the work of restoration. It was imperative therefore for Gabriel to return and ensure that the purpose of God was performed.

Before that however, Daniel was to receive the answer to his prayers in a greater revelation of the unfolding plan of Yahweh, “But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth.” (verse 21) Greece was to emerge on the political horizon as a formidable power, but the words recorded in chapter 11 were to describe events that would span many centuries and end in Daniel himself standing on the earth again and shining as the “brightness of the firmament” (Daniel 12:3).

Daniel had now witnessed the emergence of the Persian Ram. He would not witness however, the uprise of the Grecian dynasty, or that represented by the diverse fourth beast. He had of course been given visions concerning these things and his attention was to be directed to them again.

Bro. Thomas says that the truth that was revealed to Daniel could be “distributed into three sections”.

1. From verse 3 to verse 35
2. From verse 36 to verse 39
3. From verse 40 to the rest of the chapter and to the end of chp. 12.

These divisions cover a considerable period of time, and contain a vast amount of historical information that we will be unable to deal with in detail. However, a basic outline of the divisions will, God Willing, be provided so that we will gain a better understanding.

Daniel chapter 11

“And now will I shew thee the truth.” (verse 2)

The foundation of this particular chapter as stated previously, has been laid in some of the prophecies already considered. We have looked for example at the 4 heads of the leopard in Daniel chapter 7 and the 4 horns of the Goat in chapter 8. Both of these visions have relation to the Grecian Empire, and to the four divisions that developed subsequent to the death of Alexander the Great. Bro. Thomas comments on these heads and horns as follows:

“Only two (of the heads or horns) figure in the prophecy of Daniel’s book. The reason of this is, that the prophecy was not delivered to prefigure the history of the Gentiles; but to foreshadow how the international policy of some of them in its bearing upon Judah, the Holy Land, and the saints, would at length create such a situation of affairs in the end, as would favour the execution of the divine purpose of demolishing the powers of the Gentiles in the establishing of the Kingdom of God” (Exposition of Daniel page 13).

Only two powers are referred to in the prophecy, “the northern and southern horns in their struggles with one another for ascendancy in the Holy Land, and consequent lordship over Judah” (ibid page 24). This struggle is the focus of this eleventh chapter. (to be continued)

Bro. Phillip Hughes

As Ye See The Day Approaching

"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." (John 9:4) Jesus spake these words during his ministry and they have been true for every generation of men and women enlightened with the Truth ever since. They will doubtless have their literal fulfillment in this generation, as the day of his coming is, obviously, very near, based upon all we see going on around us. The sixth vial is still pouring on. The Euphratian power is still drying up. This we have seen in the fall of Iraq to the allied forces.

We know he comes under the sixth vial before its exhaustion. Jesus realized the vital importance of finishing his Father's business and had but three and a half years to complete the tremendous work before him. He did not waver in unbelief. He trusted wholly in his Father. Jesus, " in the days of

his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death...was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered..." (Hebrews 5:7-8)

"... when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem..." (Luke 9:51) During his ministry he rebuked three who made excuse (and through them, us, as well, if we make excuse). "And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:57-62)

In Luke 14, Jesus spake of the importance and responsibilities of the invitation given and of the consequences for ignoring, neglecting or wrongly assessing its value. "Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper. And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else,

while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Luke 14:16-35.

Brethren and Sisters, if we are to avoid falling into the same conditions as mentioned in the Scriptures above, we must be ever on our guard. We must be circumspect and actively seeking to live the Truth as it is in Jesus Christ our lord. We ask ourselves how individuals, such as the ones mentioned above, could allow the Truth to slip from the highest place of importance in their lives? The answer is this: we simply cannot serve two masters. We either make up our minds to serve Yahweh and go after the things that He has called us to or we foolishly drift down the path of least resistance to death. What we have to do is truly evaluate the gift that has been offered to us. Yahweh has extended an invitation unto us to receive the gift of eternal life! Imagine for a moment what that means. Life without end! Not life as we now know it, but life in the fullest and most wonderful sense possible. Not only will death have no place in those who are the recipients of this glorious gift, but life will be wholesome, vibrant, effervescent, joyous and peaceful. There will not be the toil and labor we now know to earn our daily bread. Life will have boundless purpose and pleasure in the highest sense in our total dedication and service to Yahweh. Imagine a glorious body free from all of the suffering and pain, sadness and sorrow we presently experience! Imagine knowing even as we are known! Can we even begin to enter into how it would be to see with eyesight as those who are immortal see? How about hearing and smelling?

The Scriptures tell us of Elisha in 2 Kings 6:8-20, who was enabled to hear and see as no mortal would ever naturally be able to. If a mortal prophet like Elisha could have temporarily granted supernatural seeing and hearing by the Spirit of God, think of how wonderful those faculties will be in the immortal state! All of the faculties will be so far superior to anything we presently experience. Dogs hear sounds or pitches at ranges much higher than we can hear. Elephants hear sounds that are much lower than anything we can hear. Some snakes see with a heat-sensing organ. Bats use something very much like radar to navigate. The sense of smell in dogs is much superior to ours. If earth groveling creatures of dust--hear today and gone tomorrow--can experience heightened sensual experiences such as those mentioned here; what will life and sensation be like in the immortal state? What must an immortal's voice sound like? Imagine how a multitude of immortals will sound in songs praising the Deity of heaven and earth. There will be many changes. "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them." (1 Corinthians 6:13)

Through this Scripture we can see that there will be a radical change in our digestive systems. Imagine no more corruption. An immortal being will have a marvelously efficient body. One in that wonderful state will be able to eat, but will not have to eat out of necessity or for strength. Remember Jesus in Luke 24:41-43. Doubtless, anything eaten would be totally consumed in such a powerful body, sustained in life by the Spirit of Yahweh. "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God..." (1 Corinthians 15:50)

We know that this means flesh with the blood cannot inherit the kingdom. Flesh immortalized, minus the blood, can and will inherit the kingdom. Blood is necessary to sustain a mortal body in life, but an immortal body is sustained in life by the Spirit of Yahweh which so totally permeates it and has eradicated all corruption and death in it. In the most holy state of all, one would have no need of a cardiovascular system. In Luke 20:33-36, Jesus spake of the children of the resurrection being equal unto the angels who can die no more. He mentioned that they neither marry nor or given in marriage. This tells us of bodily changes which will result in our being able to serve Yahweh without distraction. Imagine having bodies free from all of the proneness to sin and temptation--free to serve our heavenly Father with true and total mental capacity. Keep in mind that they who are Born of God--born of the spirit--cannot sin! If they could, they would obviously not be immortal, but would die, as the wages of sin is death. (Romans 6:23)

Imagine never being weary or needing sleep. To run and not be weary! Wow! What joy? Remember Elijah in 1 Kings chapter 18? Think of the much more efficient use of time and the better service those who obtain life eternal will be able to render to Him who calls us from the dust! Can we get our minds around being able to potentially flit around the planet by the power of the Spirit, in accordance with divine will, at lightning velocity to attend to the administration of affairs in the Kingdom of God. Remember Philip? (Acts 8:39-40) These things mentioned above are just a glimpse or sample from the Scriptures showing us the things that pertain to life eternal.

The invitation we have each received is not for life eternal only, but for an inheritance in the Kingdom of God! That kingdom will never be destroyed or left to others. This means that those who inherit it will have eternal inheritance therein. Never will they have to worry or be afraid of anyone ever overthrowing it or toppling its glorious and all-powerful king--the king of kings and lord of lords-- Jesus Christ. most who have ruled in the kingdom of men have reigned in tyranny and oppression, being in constant fear and dread of their overthrow and of their kingdoms being left to others. Think of the fact that Jesus Christ will be the first, truly enlightened despot this world will have ever seen. He comes to rule by divine fiat. He comes with the decree of Heaven, from the Highest Himself. He will rule to earth's utmost bounds. There will not be a single nation which will successfully disobey his high command. His word shall be absolutely all-powerful and

unquestioned obedience will be demanded in that day. See Zechariah 14:12-21. The saints will reign with him as kings and priests over the then enlightened earth. Imagine the earth filled with the knowledge and glory of Deity! Imagine all knowing Him from the least unto the greatest! The veil that now is upon the hearts of the peoples of earth will, in that time, have been taken away. No more gross darkness! Imagine Jerusalem as the center of world government and worship--the throne of Yahweh Elohim! "At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart." (Jeremiah 3:17) It is clearly indicated in Scripture that Yahweh's holy house shall be at Jerusalem.

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Isaiah 2:2-4

Imagine one pure language whereby the people of the earth will be able to worship Yahweh with one consent. This will certainly happen as per Zephaniah 3:9. Building codes and municipal planning will all be according to divine specifications. All of the filthy squalor of man's cities will be swept away and clean, efficient well managed cities built after divine approval. And we can be sure Yahweh will insure long term planning is according to His will, as He sees and knows the end from the beginning! (Acts 15:18) There will be justice and equity for all before the throne of the merciful and faithful high priest and king who will truly judge by the word and righteous precepts of Deity. Iniquity and evil will be dealt with summarily. Wickedness will simply not be tolerated. The righteous shall be acquitted. The poor and him who has no helper will find grace and mercy of the one who is all-mighty through Him who gave him that power. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will be luminaries of the highest magnitude in that glorious new order of things upon the earth. The twelve apostles will shine forth in splendor, each one reigning over a tribe of the twelve tribes of Israel restored. Enoch, Noah, Job, Daniel, Paul and all of the prophets will shine in radiant brilliance in those newly established political heavenlies.

The resurrected and glorified saint community shall shine forth as the stars in brilliancy and splendor, having differing magnitudes of brightness according as their rewards in judgment. The saints will have joy and gladness as they reign with Christ the thousand years. That thousand years will be just

the beginning for them. They will live for the age of the ages and the beyond. The beyond is all eternity, when Yahweh shall be the all things in all! Imagine a beautiful and glorious home planet filled with God's glory and Him the all things in all. There will simply not be a trace of sin and death. Evil, fear and oppression will be things of the past. They will be as a dream of the night--completely gone! Think of the advancement of knowledge and science.

Yahweh has intended that all happiness, joy, pleasure and the highest form of purest love is realized in knowing, loving, obeying and serving Him. He is the only one who could possibly give all. All is His and He is all. Soon, He will be manifested in a multitude that no man can number. His plan is to eventually be the all things in all who live. He alone shall say what is good for us and what we must do that we may be granted an entrance into that glorious new order of things to be established upon the earth. It is right and fitting that it should be His prerogative alone, as it is we who have sinned and transgressed against Him. He has provided the way of escape from sin and death through His only begotten and well beloved son, Jesus Christ our lord. He has given the invitation. It is our duty, having accepted that invitation to answer the calling with faithfulness and holiness and love and zeal.

These things are our reasonable or logical service. Yahweh has given His very best, His only begotten son whom He loves. Jesus alone did what no other from the race of Adam has ever done. Through true faith, trust and love, he crucified to the uttermost the law of sin and death in his members and thus opened the way to life--first for himself that it might be for us, also! How thankful we should be that that way has been opened. The way into the holiest state of all has been set before us. Do we really want Life or are we guilty of making senseless excuses like those recorded above? One of the simplest facts in life is that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. We can't reach the goal if we are headed in the wrong direction. We must keep our eyes on that goal, our hands on the plough and go forward. If we find that we are going in the wrong direction, let us speedily return to the ways of Truth and walk in the straight and confined way that leads to life.

That we might gain entrance through the door that is about to be opened in the political heavenlies in the very near future. May we hearken to our elder brother who is the antitypical door of the ark. He is also the one who shuts and no man can open. Lest the door shut upon us at unawares, let us take heed to ourselves and hold fast our most holy profession. Let us not look back or sell out for a mess of pottage, as did Esau. Let us enter in through that open doorway, provided of Yahweh in His infinite mercy and love.

Deep Things of God: All Things Are For Your Sakes

Concerning this holy and mighty people, Paul says: "All things are for your sakes" (2 Corinthians 4:15). "Ye are the holy temple of the Deity." All things are yours; whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come: all are yours; "and ye are Christ's and Christ is the Deity's" (1 Corinthians 3:16-23). This is all said to the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus; and it shows what an important and honorable people they are considered to be by the Deity who are Christians of the ancient and original stamp---Christadelphians.

There are very few of them to be found in the year of grace 1864--so few that one would be justified in saying almost none; for, certainly, these bloodshedding parsons and their flocks, who are on both sides of the line hounding on chaplained armies of their fraternal potsherds to mutual slaughter and devastation, committing all kinds of deprecations and profligate abominations upon the helpless and unoffending victims of their lusts, can have no scriptural claim to the name Christian. What are they but heathen of the blindest species!

Assuredly they are not the holy temple of the Deity. Though they have got the world--for they are the world--the world is not theirs; nor is any thing that exists for their sake. No; it is for that poor and despised company--that "contemptible few," who are "rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which the Deity hath promised to them;" it is for the sake of these that all things consist.

This important testimony, that all things are for the sake of the true believers, is presented symbolically throughout the Apocalypse. Because the things represented in the seals were for the sake of believers of the original Abrahamic type, the Lamb and the Four Living Ones are introduced as the ruling spirit of the scenes. The Lamb with Seven Horns and Seven Eyes, all-seeing and all-powerful, was superintending and working together all things for the good of them who love the Deity, and who are the called according to his purpose; so that, suffering with him when that purpose is effected, they may all be glorified together (Romans 8:28,17.) The Lamb, the Spirit, opened the seals and worked their invisible machinery for the good of these sufferers unto death, if need be, represented by the Eyes of the Four Living Ones.

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Bro. John Thomas

What Does That Mean?

"By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son." (Hebrews 11:17)

Why is Isaac called "his only begotten son" when we know Abraham had previously fathered Ishmael, and had an additional six sons later by Keturah? (1Chronicles 1:32)

Although "only begotten" is a correct translation of the word "monogene" it can also be translated as "single of its kind" giving the idea that Isaac was a "unique" son and not necessarily the only son.

This is a very accurate interpretation, for Isaac was "unique" and alone in kind. First he was born not only of a barren woman, but a barren woman that was ninety years old and with whom "it had ceased to be after the manner of women!" But Isaac was unique and alone in kind, being the only son of promise. God was showing to Abraham that his promised seed (Christ) was not to be born by the will of man. His birth was to be outside the scope of natural procreation, it was to be by divine intervention.

The fact that Abraham did not doubt God in this was counted to him for righteousness. Paul says: "He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead because he was about a hundred years old, or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. That is why his faith was 'reckoned to him as righteousness.'" (Romans 4:19-22 RSV) He saw in the unique circumstances surrounding Isaac a foreshadowing of Christ.

And so he exhorts us in Galatians: "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free. Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free."

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Bro. Jim Sommerville