

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. Opposed to the dogmas of papal and protestant christendom. Upholding the Truth as Bereans since 1923.

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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

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Please advise us of changes or corrections to the above information.

The Berean Christadelphian Ecclesial News is published as a service of love to the Berean Christadelphian Brotherhood. Through generous contributions from the Ecclesias we have been able to publish each month without subscriptions. The magazine expenses amount to about \$1.00 per copy. We are currently covered for about 5 months.

Ecclesial News

CANTON, Ohio – Sunday School, 10:00 AM; Breaking of Bread, 11:00 AM; Bible Class Tuesday 7:00 PM; at Mayfield Senior Center, Bro. Beryl Snyder, 4095 Prosway, S. W. , Massillon, Ohio, 44646

Greetings in Christ's name,

We continue in God's grace and mercy to hold forth both at our meetings and in our private walks of life. Our efforts at spreading the gospel also include mail-order Sunday school lessons. At this time we have a number of students in various stages of lessons. It is our fervent hope that the Lord may grant us an increase to the body of Christ through these efforts. Although the fruits of our labor are apparently small, we take courage in the hope of the approaching return of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, trusting we shall be found worthy of a place in his glorious kingdom.

I would like to take this opportunity to apologize to the brotherhood and to my home ecclesia, for the tardiness of this epistle. I didn't realize length of time which had transpired since my last writing. True, the days are swiftly flying as the end of the Gentile dominion is drawing ever closer.

Our ecclesia has been blessed with a number of visitors, Sis Annetta Jones (twice), Bro. Jim & Sis. Kathy Sommerville (6 times), Sis. Kay Stinchcomb (twice), Bro. Ricky & Sis. Julie Hurst (twice), Sis. Sarah Snyder (twice), Bro. Fred & Sis. Ruth Higham (3 times), Bro. Steve & Sis. Sharon Osborne (5 times), Bro. Jim Rankin (3 times), Bro. Antonio LaBarbera (4 times), Bro. Jeremy Osborne (3 times), Bro. David & Sis. Kelly Sommerville, Bro. Stephen & Sis. Elizabeth Male (twice), Sis. Terri Davey, Bro. Mike & Sis. Joyce Murphy (twice), Bro. Len & Sis. Pam Naglieri (twice), Sis. June Jones, Bro. Jim & Sis. Terri Rankin (twice), and Sis. Claudette Kelly, all of whom we would thank for taking the time and effort to visit our corner of the vineyard. And we greatly appreciate the assistance of brethren, Fred Higham, Steve Osborne, Jim Rankin (3 times), Jim Sommerville (twice), and Stephen Male in giving us the word of exhortation around the table of the Lord.

Many of our visitors have made the effort to attend our Sunday school picnic. It is a wonderful weekend spent in association with those of like precious faith around the Word of our Lord. The author has spent many hours in discussion of those things necessary to our salvation and enjoyed the fellowship and association of those who hold the Word dear to their hearts. And we send an early invitation to all those of like precious faith to join us this coming year, should the LORD remain away.

It was also our pleasure to host the Northeast Fraternal Gathering this year. We had many visitors from the ecclesias across the globe. God has

blessed us with the ability to come together from the four corners of the earth and strengthen each other to walk worthy of our high calling. We heard many uplifting talks showing the types and lessons brought forth by those who lived their lives in obedience to the will of our heavenly Father. We would thank those who made the effort to attend the gathering and strengthen us in friendship and love. We would also extend our gratitude to those brethren who, from the platform, gave us edification and correction. It is good for brethren and sisters to assemble together in unity and love. May we be able to labor on in the work of the Truth, and at the last hear those words, "Well done, good and faithful servant".

Bro. Beryl Snyder, Recording brother

PORTLAND, Oregon – Sunday Bible Class 10 am, Memorial Meeting 11 am, Special Study Class 2nd Sunday 1 pm, Wednesday Bible Class 7 pm. Sunday meetings are held at the Oregon Stamp Society building, 4828 NE 33rd Avenue, Portland. Please direct communications to Bro. Dave Burnett, 25321 NE 72nd Avenue, Battle Ground, WA 98604, 360-687-5641

Dear brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ,

We send loving greetings to each of you from all of us here. It is wonderful that although we are separated by such distances, we can always carry with us the closeness and warmth of true fellowship with one another in our Father's house, the members of the body of Christ, for whom he gave his all in life and death, and for whom he now lives forevermore.

As you know, last April we temporarily lost the presence of our beloved sister Lois Sharp when she fell asleep in the hope of life. Following a graveside service, she was laid to rest beside Bro. Bill in a small country cemetery not far from the home of her son and daughter-in-law, Bro. Paul and Sis. Nancy. There were probably about 30 brothers and sisters in attendance, most of them in the Central group. The four of us could have felt quite alone, but we know that we are never alone when following the way we firmly believe to be right in the sight of God, and we had you there with us also — not only in your thoughts and prayers, but also with the visible presence of your plants, flowers, and cards. Thank you all!

It appears more and more that Bro. Bill and Sis. Lois will not sleep for long. A few years ago we found very stimulating an exhortation by a brother who visited us via the tape recorder and pointed out just how unique the time is in which we live, a time with a combination of circumstances never before seen on the earth since the days of Adam. Israel has been an independent nation again for over 56 years; throughout the earth unprecedented military preparations continue and increase; to the north of Israel the clouds are gathering that will give birth to the whirlwind

attack of the king of the north; the weak are saying they are strong, and with ever growing ferocity; society today is at least as decadent, immoral, and violent as the worst the earth has ever witnessed; and life in the world is so tremendously busy, busy, busy with so many ambitions, goals, and pursuits, that the great God of heaven and earth goes mostly unnoticed. All of this is here now, all at once, altogether. There is absolutely no doubt that this is the time of the end, and very soon, in fact at any moment, our summons will come — perhaps in a manner not unlike the call to Mary: "The Master is come, and calleth for thee."

While we wait and anticipate, our meeting location in Portland has nicely improved. After meeting in our homes for years, in 2000 we found a community room available in a Portland school building that had been closed as a school but then privately developed as a hotel and restaurant facility. We were able to rent that room and met there for about two years. Then another opportunity presented itself, and we are now meeting in the Oregon Stamp Society building, the same building where Bereans and then the Four Points brothers and sisters, met for many years. We are very thankful to our heavenly Father for providing this facility for us to use for His honor and glory.

It is very encouraging to us to hear the joyful news of those who have made the commitment to God to enter upon His road to life through baptism, and also to be able to join the brotherhood in welcoming those who have come to us from another Christadelphian group, believing, as we do, that Bereans as a body understand and endeavor to uphold the will of God in belief and practice, including the requirements of fellowship. It is very important that we keep in memory the lessons of the history of the Truth in the earth from the days of Adam, the circumstances that led to the formation of the Berean fellowship over 80 years ago, and the reasons why we need to maintain our position today. May God be with us all as we strive to do our very best to give pleasure to Him, which is the sole reason for our existence!

With love in our "common salvation", on behalf of the Portland ecclesia,
Bro. Dave Burnett

Ecclesial Correspondence

To brethren and sisters and friends scattered throughout the world which is under the hand of our Almighty God,

This morning the section of the ecclesia at Richard met at our ecclesial hall around the table of the Lord. This was Bro. Joey Marple's first time to president over the meeting.

Bro. Dan Jackson gave the exhortation based around the book of Philemon. The focus of the exhortation was actually on servitude or slavery. Christ's work was for himself and us. Often when we see the word servant the word in the Greek really represented the English word slaves. In the time of Israel as a nation they were allowed to have slaves, but there were laws concerning how they treated them.

Things were different in Roman times. The life of a slave was terrible. The master or mistress had the power of life and death over a slave. The slaves were treated like animals. They could have the most savage punishment for a small mistake. They also could be better treated depending on the Master. Slaves were very often mistreated in savage ways such as beaten to death, thrown to the dogs, etc. Other slaves may have risen in respect in the households and obtained a position of authority over other servants or even run the household. Because of the conditions the slaves lived under sometimes they were very immoral in their standards. Some saved a little money so that they could sell themselves to a god and then the master would come and take the money and the slave would be free. Few managed this.

Christ became a slave and was crucified, then he was freed from the power of sin and death. We were once slaves of sin, but now have obtained freedom from sin by the blood of Christ.

We do well to remember the price that was paid. We are now not our own but bought with a price. We are now the slaves of God, Christ and righteousness. We should never let ourselves become slaves to sin again.

At that time slaves and masters were learning the Truth. Thus there would be quite a change of attitude needed in the relationships. Masters who had been free (so they thought) would now become slaves to Christ. Servants who had once been slaves would be free under Christ. The servant who had learned the Truth should be an example in serving their masters. A believing master should now be treating his slaves much better. Perhaps it would be a believing master and a believing slave. Both should remember their position in Christ and treat one another well.

Paul gave instruction for the slaves to work as unto God. They were not to steal or run away. They were to remember the sorrows that Christ went through and be comforted.

We live today in a different society. However we are to work as unto the Lord in our jobs or schools, etc. Whether we are a boss or a worker, we need to remember that we are to be faithful to the guidelines of Christ.

We remember that John recorded the incident of Christ washing the disciple's feet. Here was the Lord and Master girding himself and humbly washing the tired, dirty feet of his followers. Why? It would appear none of them would lower themselves at the time to serve the other. They had

been arguing over who should be greatest. Christ showed them by example how they were to treat each other. A slave is not greater than his master or the disciple than his master. Peter did not want Christ to serve him, but in the end he understood the lesson Christ was trying to teach. We must all remember humility and serving and practice it in our lives. We are to be slaves for Christ in humble service.

We remember Luke who was a physician. He wrote the book of Luke and Acts and yet he was very humble and did not express that. He didn't care who received the credit because it was the work for the Lord. From the record in would appear that Luke went with Paul on his journeys and ended up in Rome. A prisoner could have slaves and thus Luke humbled himself to the position of a slave to Paul when Paul was in need. He did not receive credit really for his sacrifice then but he will in the time to come.

Twenty-first century disciples must be slaves to Christ only. We need to make wise choices. We are to watch for the return of the master. Christ wants the best for each one of us. Have we used the talent or talents rightly that we were given to serve him? We must not worry about other disciples and how they are using their talents. We are to remember our position.

Now we think of Philemon. He was obviously a believing Master whose slave Onesimus had stolen something and run away. Whether he had met Paul at Philemon's house or how he met up with Paul later we are not told, but in the end Paul taught Onesimus the Truth. This letter is from Paul to the Master Philemon yet a brother in the Truth. Paul is relaying the information that Onesimus is now valuable to him Paul, but he is sending Onesimus back to Philemon because that is his master. Paul is willing to pay whatever debt Onesimus owes Philemon, but Paul also reminds Philemon that he owes Paul himself. Paul wrote as if he was sending his heart with Onesimus to Philemon. Paul was confident Philemon would act like a brother and treat his slave brother right. Let us be reminded of the price Christ paid on behalf of mankind and be faithful slaves of his.

After the meeting, Bro. Terry and Sis. Lisa Readman, Sis. Sarah Sadler and myself went to the home of Bro. Gordon and Sis. Linda Jones for dinner and a visit. I was able to share my pictures of the trip to Britain and Sweden with them.

We think and keep in our prayers the brethren and sisters and scholars in many parts of the world. At present Bro. Ed Truelove, Bro. Darren Truelove, Sis. Jeanne Humphreys and Sis. KayeYuen are in Nairobi and will be moving on to Britain on Wed., God willing. They have had a good trip so far as we can ascertain from the reports by phone.

May our Heavenly Father be with you all,
Your sister in Christ, Annetta Jones

FRATERNAL GATHERINGS & ACTIVITIES

(To be held God Willing)

NORTH CAROLINA–VIRGINIA STUDY WEEKEND.....May 28–29, 2005
Bro. Dale Lee at dleecpa2@mindspring.com.

LAMPASAS FRATERNAL GATHERINGJune 11–12, 2005
Bro. Lee Freeburg, 200 Gabriel Forest, Georgetown, TX 78628, USA.
1-512-869-2008

RICHARD FRATERNAL GATHERINGJuly 8–11, 2005
Bro. Sid Jones, RR #1, Richard, Sask, S0M-2P0, Canada. 1-306-246-4468

HYE FRATERNAL GATHERING July 25–31, 2005
Bro. Curtis Hurst, Rt.1, Box 40, Mullin, TX 76864, USA. 1-325-985-3868
Study Class Topic: **Ephesians**; Daily Bible Readings; Discussion

TENNESSEE FRATERNAL GATHERING...(Note corrected date)..Oct 1–2, 2005
Bro. Jim Rankin, 115 Sherwood Dr., Camden, TN 38320 USA. 1-731-584-6039

Perfect Peace

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee" Isaiah 26:3

This declaration of the Spirit introduces us to a subject of great depth and beauty — and one also of great and abiding importance. We do well to meditate upon it — to consider it word by word.

"Thou" — God is the beginning and foundation. God is also the ending and completion. This divine charter of eternal peace is encompassed by God: "...whose mind is stayed on Thee."

"Thou wilt." — Here is purpose and assurance. No yea and nay. No perhaps, or possibly, or usually—but a sure and all-powerful guarantee: "Thou WILT."

"Keep." — Permanence and stability. What value is this peace, if it will not endure? But here we are dealing with One who wearies or changes not. "Thou wilt KEEP."

"Thou wilt keep him." — Who? Everyone? All who ask? No. Only a certain class. Only those who follow a certain, prescribed course. Only the ones described in the latter part of this promise.

In natural things, intelligent men do not take the road south, and expect to reach the north, or the downhill road and expect to reach the top. Rather are they very careful as to their methods and directions. But in spiritual things — the only things of any real importance — wishing and assuming so often take the place of planning and doing.

The Scriptures say that as a man sows, so shall he reap. It is as simple as that. This is not recorded for us in bitterness or anger, but it is a plain statement of fact. In natural things, men accept this fact. They do not sow one

crop, and expect to reap another; or sow nothing at all, and expect to reap as if they had sown.

If we give our lives and time and energy to natural, passing things, we shall reap natural, passing things — very nice and gratifying natural things, if we work hard in that direction.

If we give our lives and time and energy to spiritual, eternal things, we shall reap spiritual, eternal things (and our crop of natural things will be poor — but what matters that?).

The choice is ours. We each have our life. We can invest it exactly as we choose. But let us be sure that we have thought it well out, that we know just which we are doing, and that we will be satisfied in the end with the results.

Christ will not wave a magic wand at the judgment seat, changing wishes and intentions into facts. He will be judging sober judgment— according as every man's works shall be found to be.

What is the next word? “In” — Just a little, unimportant one that we might pass over, but perhaps worth a thought. “Thou wilt keep him IN” — inside, encircled, protected, overshadowed.

Perhaps just at present it does not appeal to us to be kept in.

Perhaps, especially if we are young, there are many enticing-looking things outside. But here is where “wisdom is profitable to direct.” (Eccl 10:10) Here is where we are exhorted to consider the end, and not be “as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding” (Psalm 32:9) — aware only of the present.

In the final picture, in will be very desirable, and out will be very empty and bleak. Some will say, “Lord, open to us and let us in.” But there will be no entering then. “Thou wilt keep him in.”

The next word is “perfect.” — This is the key word, and sets the tone for the whole promise, giving it meaning and value. The whole theme of the Scriptures is perfection. How does Jesus sum up the marvelous, heavenly teachings in his message in Matt 5?

“be ye perfect.”

— and lest there be any quibble about what he meant, he added — “...even as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

Jesus prayed that his disciples might be “made perfect” (John 17:23). Paul, Peter and James gave expression to the same earnest prayer for those in their care (Heb. 13:21; 1 Pet. 5:10; Jam. 1:4). To the Ephesians (4:14, 13) Paul declared that we should,

“... be no longer children...but all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

Epaphras labored fervently in prayers that his brethren might “stand perfect in all the will of God” (Col. 4:12). Paul reminded Timothy that the

very purpose for which the Scriptures were given was that — through diligent and unceasing application to doctrine, correction, reproof and instruction

“...the man of God might be perfect, and thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:17).

With this marvelous instruction of the Spirit (so glorious in its import that it is blinding and fearful to the natural, fleshly mind) correspond the many beautiful and inspiring visions we are given of the True Bride, “adorned for her husband” with the true inward spiritual adorning.

“Christ loved the Ecclesia, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of (the living) water by the Word...”

“That he might present it to himself a glorious Ecclesia, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish... this is a great mystery.”

Truly it is indeed a “great mystery” hidden from the “wise and prudent” who are quite sure in their “wisdom” that it is an impossible fantasy, but revealed in divine mercy unto a few “babes.”

Dare we say to God that all these promises of the Spirit are meaningless exaggerations? That we have no right to foolishly expect these conditions in the holy, sanctified, called-out Body of Christ, in which God dwells by His Spirit? That we must be practical and reasonable, and abandon these impossible ideals, and come down to earth? That we must resign ourselves to a common, natural, earthly mediocrity in the holy Body of Christ — and be thankful it isn't any worse?

That is the counsel of defeat and despair. That is what we are asked to give in to and accept — after years of striving and struggling toward the “more excellent way.” One thing is certain — a body, or an individual, will NEVER attain any higher than it aims. And the scriptural standard and goal is PERFECTION.

That was what God intended, and for which He made complete provision — both in Israel and in the Ecclesia of Christ. There are no greater lessons in Scripture than those of Achan and of Ananias and Sapphira — parallel, cases in a strange and significant way. How clearly they reveal the mind, and purpose, and desire of God!

Have we not so often pondered on the fact that one small offence in all Israel completely disrupted the working of God in and through them, and they could not go on until that offence was tracked down and rooted out?

In His loving arrangements for Israel, God made provision for a maintenance of perfection — a constant renewing, and cleansing, and purging out of the slightest thing that offended — so that He could dwell closely and intimately among them. What a wonderful, “holy nation” in the earth Israel could have been, if they had maintained this intended relationship with God! But as Israel drifted from God, God ceased to cleanse and purify them by rooting out the offences. The glory gradually moved farther away.

So with the newborn Ecclesia of Christ. God gives the divinely intended pattern in the stirring record in the beginning of Acts 2:42-46:

“And they continued steadfastly...in doctrine and fellowship and prayer... and all that believed were together and had all things common... with gladness and singleness of heart... praising God and having favor with all...”

(Acts 4:31-33) “... and they were all filled with the Holy [Spirit]...and the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul, neither said any of them that ought of the things he possessed was his own...great grace was upon them all.”

What a beautiful, “impossible” picture! Impossible and impractical in the view of the seared and blunted “wisdom” of the mind of the flesh.

And because of this faithful, zealous condition, God — in His mercy and care — cut off from among them the defilement of Ananias and Sapphira, jealously cleansing and protecting His infant Ecclesia, just as He had the newborn Israel.

But — as with Israel — the glory of the heavenly vision soon fades, and the flesh, in its self-satisfied Laodiceanism, presumes to define what is, and what is not, “possible” to the power of the Spirit; and what were once inspiring and transforming divine assurances are interpreted as tantalizing and unattainable will-o-the-wisps.

“Thou will keep him in perfect PEACE.” This word “peace” is the central word of the sentence — it is the seventh word from each end. It is the keystone of this beautiful arch of divine promise which springs from, and eventuates in, God. What is peace? The dictionary defines it as:

“A mental or spiritual state in which there is freedom from that which is disquieting or perturbing — fears, agitating passions, moral conflicts.”

Peace is freedom. Jesus said to the Jews:

“The truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

They were quite unimpressed, and replied, that they were already, had no need of his freedom. And to the majority it was just meaningless words when he told them:

“Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.”

Men talk much about freedom. They take great pride in the delusion that they are “free.” But all except the rare few who have the Spirit's peace are helpless slaves of the great master Sin.

Sin tells them to be proud, selfish, ambitious, to seek their own, to labor for and be concerned about worldly things, to gratify their natural desires, which lead them finally into the cold arms of Sin's inseparable partner, Death.

Peace is freedom. But true peace is not just a negative thing. It is not just the absence of fears, passions and conflicts. True, scriptural peace is a living, positive force.

Peace, without God in the center of it, would be quite a monotonous vacuum. It is easy to understand natural man's lack of desire for it. But the rest of the promise takes care of that — “Whose mind is stayed on Thee.”

The mind is the thoughts, intellect, awareness, consciousness, hopes, desires, purposes, yearnings and aspirations. These must have a center and an object of interest and affection. They must have a fruitful field of activity and exercise.

There are two, separate, distinct spheres in which they can operate — the agitating passions, or the peace of God. We must consider them well, and choose between them.

“Whose mind is stayed.” — To be stayed is to be upheld, supported, sustained, established—unwavering, unmovable. David says:

“Great peace have they who love thy law, and nothing shall offend them” (Psalm 119:165).

“Nothing” here is related to the “perfection” of the peace. It is valueless if it does not hold true every time, without fail.

“Which love Thy Law.” — Some seem to feel that love and law are incompatible — that they are two opposites — that we must override law in order to manifest “love”. In a sense it is true that love and law are incompatible, for as soon as we wholeheartedly and enthusiastically love the Law, it ceases — for us — to be law, and becomes rather an eagerly sought opportunity to demonstrate our love. Jesus says (John 14:15)

“If ye love me, keep my commandments.”

But as he speaks, the thought changes. He says a little later (verse 23): “If a man love me, he will keep my words.”

This time he does not say “commandment” — he does not need to. If a man love him, they are no longer commandments, but happily fulfilled wishes of a loved one. David exclaimed, (Psa 119:97)

“O how I love Thy Law! It is my meditation ALL the day!”

We can put this “all” in the same category with the “perfect” and the “nothing.” It is a word of completeness — a word of glorious extremeness. Some seem to labor under the notion that to be an “extremist” is something to be ashamed of — an epithet with which to belabor and discredit others.

For the mind to be stayed on God is to love the Law of God, and to meditate upon it ALL the day — for the Law of God is the revelation of the mind and character of God. It teaches us what He is, and what He takes pleasure in. It both reveals Him to us and draws us to Him — transforming us to His pattern of perfection.

Writing to the Philippians, Paul speaks of the “peace of God which passeth all understanding.” And he tells us how to go about achieving it. First he says (Phil. 4:4)

“Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice!”

This is very important. See how he puts it first, and how he repeats it for emphasis. And note the “always.” Not just when we naturally feel like rejoicing it — it means nothing then

— but always, as a regular, established, purposeful course of life. (This “always” is related to the “perfect,” the “nothing,” and the “all” that we have noted earlier.)

Can we rejoice in the Lord always? — when we are sick, or in trouble, or worried, or cast down, or discouraged, or under pressure of various kinds? These are the very times when it is most important to rejoice.

To rejoice in the Lord always is the first stepping-stone to the “peace of God which passeth all understanding.” Nothing is ever so bad that a consideration of the overall eternal picture will not give grounds for rejoicing.

In fact, the worse things are, the more they intensify the basis of true rejoicing. Rejoice in the Lord; rejoice that the present is brief and passing, and all its evil is working to a wise, eternal end.

Rejoice, as Paul says (Rom. 5:3-5) — rejoice, glory, triumph in tribulation. Not just rejoice during tribulation — the meaning is deeper than that. But rejoice because of tribulation,

“... knowing that tribulation worketh patience . . . because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts.”

Surely if tribulation provide the avenue for God to pour love into our hearts, then tribulation gives abundant grounds for rejoicing! How strange and marvelous are the ways of God! How little we know about eternal realities!

How long was the power of the atom hidden within apparently “dead” matter! What infinitely vaster powers and purposes exist in spiritual realms of which natural man has never dreamed!

Next Paul says (Phil 4:5)

“Let your moderation be known unto all men.”

What is “moderation”? The word doesn't carry very much of a clear idea, nor does it at all express the true meaning here, as can be very easily determined. The Revised Version has instead “forbearance,” and in the margin “gentleness.”

Now we begin to get a clearer picture. Other versions have “forbearing spirit.” This word is always translated elsewhere throughout the Authorized Version as “patience” or “gentleness.” It occurs as “gentleness,” for example, in Paul's entreaty (2 Cor. 10:1)

“I... beseech you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.”

Gentleness of character is an essential ingredient of peace of mind. We are apt to think of patience and gentleness as virtues practiced for the sake of others, but actually they have an even greater and more basic value to ourselves.

They are part of the invincible armament of internal peace. They make and keep peace within ourselves even more effectively than they contribute to peace with others. We cannot have peace unless we develop gentleness and patience.

“Let your patience and gentleness be known to ALL men.” Here again a word of completeness and perfection — one of those extreme words which frighten the half-hearted. Unless these attributes are applied consistently and indiscriminately to all, and in all circumstances, they are not the real thing, and they will never produce peace. They are then just cheap subterfuges for personal advantage and self-satisfaction.

If we are building for perfect peace, our building materials must be solid and true, and not just surface veneer for outward appearance.

Why are patience and gentleness essential for peace? The answer is obvious immediately if we consider what the absence of these characteristics mean — impatience and irritation. Clearly no peace could blossom in that soil.

If we examine every cause of impatience or irritation, one or both of two things will be found at the bottom of it — having our pride hurt, or having our desires frustrated. If our pride and desires are related to the esteem of men, and to earthly things that men can jeopardize or in any way effect, we shall never have peace.

But if our glorying and desires relate wholly to eternal things that men cannot touch, our peace can never be disturbed. The peace of the godly man is secure, for it rests in things beyond the reach of mortal hands.

Jesus said: “Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly, and ye shall find rest [peace] unto your souls.” (Matt 11:29)

Meekness and lowliness lead to peace. Pride is the great enemy of peace. Pride is such a nuisance such an evil thing; such a potent cause of misery;

— such a merciless driver and miserly rewarder;

— such a robber of time and energy;

— such a magnet for hate and envy, that it is a wonder any sane person harbors it. Yet it is deeply engrained in all of us, one of the most vicious and tenacious roots of the law of sin in our members. Pride is natural man's most cherished possession, and one of the world's great virtues. Most people will do anything, and spite themselves in every other way, in order to protect their pride.

How much of man's labor is just to cater to his self-satisfaction and pride! — a better job, a better home, a better car, a better neighborhood, the desire to be looked up to as important — the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. Is that the mind of Jesus Christ, or of Paul, or of John the Baptist?

We must make our choice between peace and pride. We cannot have both, for one is spiritual, and the other is carnal.

The worst thing about pride is that it is such a universal and deceptive parasite. It can fasten its roots into anything, and flourish. There is no pride

more robust and assertive than the pride of a man who is proud of his humility.

What is the third step Paul prescribes for peace? Verse 6 — “Be careful for nothing.”

Does he mean just to let things drift without any effort or concern for them? Hardly, for he says elsewhere we must always “abound in the work of the Lord,” beside laboring for our own necessities and others.

What he is combating is worry, for there can be no peace where there is worry. The most effective cure for worry is to force ourselves to the humbling but comforting realization that we are but an insignificant partner in a great and invincible partnership.

God is the major partner. The big problems and their solution are safely in His hands. We but need to calmly do our little part as it presents itself from day to day. That is what Paul is telling us here; turn the problems over to God, and get on with your part:

“Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”(Phil 4:6)

“In everything” — note again that word of completeness. Insurance is of little value if it does not cover every possible emergency. If it doesn't, it is not insurance at all, but just a gamble with odds. And there is only one insurance that covers every eventuality.

Peter says the same, with the same emphasis on completeness

“Humble yourselves . . . casting all your care upon Him” (1Peter 5:6-7).

“All your cares” — no exceptions. God's insurance has no small print, full of reservations. We note Paul says — that in everything with thanksgiving make your requests to God.

Every approach to God must be with thanksgiving. That is the essential incense that must accompany every acceptable sacrifice. And surely that is most reasonable! If we are so spiritually numb that we are not consciously and constantly thankful for the priceless blessings already so freely received — of being called out of death and darkness to the life and light of sonship of God — why should God give us any more?

Present problems and troubles must never be allowed to obscure this basic, overflowing thankfulness which is one of the essential ingredients of the perfect peace we are seeking.

After having outlined the way, rejoice always in the Lord;

Let your gentleness, your patience, your forbearing spirit be consistently manifested toward all men;

Worry about nothing, turn all cares over to God; In everything seek God's help in constant thanksgiving—the n the apostle gives the glorious assurance of success, “The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, SHALL keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ.”(Phil 4:7)

Is this another of those impossible ideals — those tantalizing unattainables? We cannot bring ourselves to side with those who morbidly think so.

As he bid farewell to his disciples, and prepared himself for his great and terrible ordeal, Jesus calmly said,

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” (John 14:27)

Surely nothing could be truer than that it is not as the world gives that Jesus gives peace. What a shabby makeshift is the best the world has to offer! Especially as we look at it today with its vain cries of “Peace, peace!” when there is no peace. And there cannot be peace, for the Spirit through Isaiah declares (32:17)

“The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever.”

“Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” (John 14:27) Is that sometimes hard to do? A little later, right at the end of his farewell, Jesus tells his little band,

“Ask, and ye SHALL receive, that your joy may be full . . .” (John 16:24)

(“Full” is another of those wonderful words of perfection and completeness. There are no half-measures with the Spirit of God).

“These things have I 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.” (John 16:33, emphasis added)

Peace is the end of warfare, and the fruit of victory. He had overcome the world — the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life — and he had peace.

And he invites us to share with him his perfect, eternal peace — by leaving all, and following him.

Bro. G. V. Growcott

A Biblically Inerrant Chronology — Should the Year 2000 have brought the Return of Christ?

People all around us were very excited about the approach of the new millennium, but for different reasons. Some believed it signaled the end of man's 6,000 years, and they looked forward to the return of Christ. Others believed it signaled the end of man's 6,000 years and proof that Christ is not coming, that the whole Bible is a hoax. For this latter class, it was another opportunity to say with those of old:

2 Peter 3:3-4, “Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his

coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.”

The truth of the matter is that it was not necessarily either. We do not know the day nor the hour of our Lord's return. Therefore, it could have been in that year, but there was no Scriptural reason that it had to be so. The dating system which we use and which says that 2000 AD is the 6,000th year from the formation of the world was done by a man, not the Bible. He was a 17th Century Anglican Bishop named James Ussher.

As a dating system, it was done quite well. Considering the material he had available to him, it is quite remarkable. However, it is not a system based solely on the Bible; therefore, the Bible cannot be responsible for any errors in Ussher's calculations.

This article is a chronology of Bible time, and what we know about it using only the dates given in the Bible. The modern term for this exercise is called “a Biblically Inerrant approach.” It is an approach which begins with the proposition that the dates used in the Bible cannot be wrong. If the date for the reign of Saul is said, ‘scripturally’ to be 40 years, then we use the 40 years, not any other source which might suggest a different time. Using only the Bible's dates, we will show that Ussher's dates may be as far off as 100 years.

We wish to be very clear on one point. We are not saying that Christ's return is not for 100 years. We believe that Christ will be in the earth well before the end of the 6000 years, perhaps nearly 100 years before, meaning he may come at any time. Nor are we saying that Ussher's dates are definitely off that far. We are simply pointing out that the information given to us in the Bible allow for Ussher's dates to be off that much.

For the purpose of answering the question as to whether or not the Bible allows for time beyond the year 2000 AD, we will take the clues given to us as, and assign the shortest period possible to those clues, to determine the longest possible time for the end of the 6,000 years of God's plan.

This chronology will show that Ussher's dates do not necessarily correspond to the dating of the Scripture, and do not require that Christ returned to the earth in 2000 AD.

In our chronology, we will rely entirely upon the Bible as our source for exact dates. We will not alter in any way, the times given us in the Bible. This means that a 40-year period must equal forty years. We will note the arguments of the world's chronologists, and point out interesting coincidences where they exist, but we used none of the world's chronologists to arrive at our conclusions.

Observations About Chronologies and Dating in General

These are my observations as regards the world's chronologies and the world's assigned dates in general. Chronologies are most reliable when you have separate cultures interfacing with each other, chronicling the same events

in independent histories. By comparing the same events and their place in the respective histories, a greater accuracy can be obtained. The more chronologies of the same time period you have to work with, the more accurate the chronology.

Of course, the way most cultures interfaced with each other in the ancient world, was in war. Unfortunately, in antiquity, the losers of wars were not permitted to write histories. This has resulted in huge gaps in man's written record.

Further challenging the accuracy of the world's chronology is the fact that some leaders (even leaders from the same culture) hated their predecessor, and attempted to have all references to them removed from the written record. Some of these efforts are known. For instance, in the ancient Assyrian records called “Eponyms,” it is well known by comparing the Assyrian history with the Babylonian history, that early Assyrian historians completely expunged all the times when Assyria was under foreign rule, out of their records. The Babylonian histories have made us to understand that there were gaps of which we would otherwise have no knowledge. No one can comment as to whether or not other such gaps exist.

Man's written record of the chronology of the world develops a very good rate of accuracy about 320 BC, when the empire of Alexander the Great had been split four ways to his four generals. These were all of Greek culture. They all used the same calendar. They all kept written records, and they interfaced with each other in ways other than war, making political marriages and military alliances with each other.

Before that time, man's record is entirely suspect, and generally is supplied by the guesses of archaeologists. For instance, prior to the 1990s, it was generally understood that the first Babylonian invasion into Israel occurred in 612 BC. With modern archaeological techniques, this has been changed to 604 BC. These kinds of wide swings are not uncommon when dealing with the world's history before the Greek Empire.

Indeed, when dealing with antiquity, the world's teacher have two mainstream chronological thoughts that are as much as ten years from each other, as recently as 460 BC. The farther back into antiquity we go, the wider the gap becomes. There is yet a third line of thought developing, called the “New Chronologists” who suggest that the ancient dates are off 250 or more years.

The reason for the great gap between the New Chronologists and the mainstream teachers is a period called by the mainstream group “History's Dark Ages” from 1200 BC to 800 BC. There is very little archaeological data from this age. They infer this time line, due to other archaeological data they have. The “New Chronologists” deny the existence of this period being 400 years, and shorten the time greatly, depending upon the teacher.

Most of the chronologists and archaeologists that are well respected by the world, believe their dates are now fairly good back as far as 640 BC. After

that, they will readily agree to swings of 30 years back to 900 BC, and 300 year swings after that.

But archaeologists admit that even those dates are very poorly established. For instance, the common denominator for the dates of the 700s to 1000s BC is an eclipse of the sun in the 9th year of an Assyrian King named Assur-Dan. This eclipse is recorded in the Eponyms of Assyria, a document which is thought to give an annual account of the events of Assyria for a continuous period of 261 years. Now eclipses occur with mathematical precision, and it can be determined astronomically when they have occurred in the past. By finding the date of this eclipse, it is thought that a firm date can be established to “anchor” the Assyrian list of Kings to a specific date in history, along with other events recorded in the Eponym (notably, the war between Assyria and Ahab, and the collecting of taxes from Jehu, 14 years later) which is what has been done.

The generally accepted date for this eclipse is 763 BC. There was a total eclipse of the sun in Nineveh at that date. But there were other eclipses as well. For instance, there were eclipses which would have been visible in Nineveh in 723, 751, 791, and 809 BC.

The eclipse dated at 763 would agree with the history of Israel and the fall of the 10-tribe kingdom to Assyria around 718 BC. However, it disagrees by about 55 years with the reign of Ahab and Jehu. If the eclipse is determined to be the one in 809 BC, then the dates of Ahab and Jehu agree with the Scriptures, but the dates for the fall of Israel differ by the same 55 years.

The “New Chronologists” argue that the Assyrian Eponyms, generally thought to be consecutive years by the mainstream chronologists, are not complete. They point out that the more ancient Assyrian Eponyms (such as those dated around 1400 BC) are known to have gaps such as we previously alluded, which exclude all the years in which Assyria had been conquered by a foreign power. The Babylonian archaeological finds indicate years in which Nineveh was subject to Babylon, but the 1400 BC Assyrian Eponym list either never included Babylonian rulers when they dominated Nineveh, or if included, later expunged them from the Assyrian lists. That this happened is agreed to by all archaeologists/chronologists.

The New Chronologists point out that there were many years in which Assyria would have been a very weak power in the 700's BC, in which Assyria would have been liable to have been conquered by a neighbouring power. The New Chronologists argue this has taken place, though there is no direct archaeological evidence of it ever occurring. The New Chronologists argue that some years for Nineveh being laid to tribute must be added to the list, and that the Assyrian Eponym list cannot be considered to be complete or chronological.

Mainstream chronologists mock this idea, but have not been able to show conclusively that it is wrong. In fact, very little discussion on it has taken place. Most of the efforts to fight with one another deal with shortening the

chronology back in the 2000 BC era, and the chronology of Egyptian Pharaohs, and are less focused on the extending of dates in the 700 BC era.

It appears to me that both sides have some answers, according to the chronology given by the Bible. For instance, mainstream chronologists start the organized Egyptian line of kings before the Bible date for the flood. The flood, by Bible Time occurred in 2246 BC. The New Chronologists place the first Egyptian dynasty in the 2200s, quite consistent with the flood. The mainstream places it some 300 years earlier. On the other hand, the New Chronologists deny that the Egyptian Pharaoh Shoshonk I was King Shishak who invaded Israel in the 4th year of Rehoboam. The evidence seems strong that he was, only as King, not as Pharaoh as alleged by the mainstream group, and therefore at a slightly earlier date than they allow.

But as I said, for the consideration of this chronology, we will not pay any attention to the dates of either school, except for pointing out relevant coincidences. All our dates will be according to the Scriptural record, rather than the dates given by man. My dates are generally about 100 years off of the main stream of thought for the date of creation. By the Exodus, they are about 60 years off. And by the end of the kings, they are falling 1–3 years off of Man's records. Following the start of the Persian reign, they fall between two lines of main stream thought.

After we get into the more reliable periods of man's history, my chronology happens to fall between the two lines of mainstream thought.

The Year “0”

Just to make sure it isn't ever easy, there also exists no year “0” in the archaeological dating systems. Unlike our modern birthday keeping, the first year, or year one, is the first year of someone's life, not the completion of that year. So if an event occurred in 1 BC, and lasted to 1 AD, this is only 1 year, though if one tried to do the math, $+1 - (-1) = 2$. In archaeology, however, it is only 1. When crossing the “0 year, this must always be adjusted for.

Some individuals (usually scientists considering astronomy) use what is being called “astronomical time.” These dates are shown as negative numbers, and do include the year “0.” So as a general rule, when you see the date expressed as 604 BC, or 604 BCE, this system does not include the year “0.” But if you see the year expressed as simply -200, then it does include the year “0.”

Let us use, for an example, the punishment of Israel which God promised them through their law (Lev. 17.) Moses said Israel would be punished seven times for their sins. The seven times is ‘360 x 7’ or 2,520 years. The date for the start of this punishment, which was of course the invasion of Babylon (the head of Nebuchadnezzar's image,) would be 2520 years earlier from the year in which Israel was freed from rule by some element of Daniel's image. That punishment ended in 1917 AD, when Israel was finally freed from captivity to the nations of Nebuchadnezzar's image (Turkey, at that time.)

1917-2520=603+1 or 604 BC.

Likewise, if we were to figure the matter backwards, it would be:
604 BC + 2520 years = (-604) + 2520 years = 1916 + 1 = 1917.

But if we were to ask, how many years are there between 604 BC and 1917 AD, the answer would be” 1917 + 604 = 2521 -1 or 2520 years.

So if you are adding or subtracting dates across the year “0,” you must add a year. If you are calculating the amount of years between dates, one AD and the other BC, you must subtract a year.

Astronomical time requires no such adjustment. It works just like mathematics.
Bro. Jim Phillips

Hymn 24

O how love I thy law, it is my study all the day:

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” 2Timothy 2:15

It makes me wiser than my foes, and keeps me in thy way.

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” John 14:6

How sweet unto my taste, O Lord, are all Thy words of truth!

“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” John 8:32

Yea, I do find them sweeter far than honey to my mouth.

“Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.” Proverbs 16:24

I thro' Thy precepts, that are pure, do understanding get:

“Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.” Proverbs 3:13

I therefore ev'ry way that's false with all my heart do hate.

“Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.” Matthew 5:8

Thy word is unto my feet a lamp, and unto my path a light:

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Matthew 4:4

I sworn have, and will perform, to keep Thy judgments right.

“And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do and thou shalt live.” Luke 10:2

“I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: Therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life and the

length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”
Deuteronomy 30:19–20

The Men Who Conquer

There is a strange tendency in the human mind to depreciatory criticism. Most of us would rather pull down than build up, censure than praise, and the men who conquer the world's good opinion are stern, stalwart, fierce, long-enduring, determined men, who heed neither blame nor praise, but resolve to do that which they conceive to be right; to pursue that which they conceive to be the truth, through good and evil report, neither swerving to the right hand nor the left; making straight to the goal they have set before them, and in the end gaining the unanimous though tardy recognition of those who have been most studious in traducing them.

If a man wishes to leave the world better than he found it, he must pay little or no heed to whatever the world says. He must brush on one side all the puling and sickly censoriousness, which every man who pretends to think for himself, must be prepared to encounter. He must be willing to suffer persecution, calumny, opprobrium: all that mean minds can invent, and mean tongues utter.

He must not be alarmed if he finds friends fall away from his side, or enemies become unnaturally violent. He must suffer with unflinching stoicism, all that vicious malignity can suggest. He must see untrue motives and aspirations imputed to him. But on the other hand, should he be successful, he must make up his mind to receive the fulsome and smothering caresses of those who at one time systematically maligned him; and to be daubed with the praise of those who would more willingly damn him.

However, this is human nature, and we need not be astonished at it. In modern times instances have not been wanting of nations that crucified their benefactors and yelled to have Barabbas released unto them.

— Newspaper Clipping found among Dr. Thomas's Papers after his death.

Christmas Origins

Did you know the setting of the December date, for Christmas, and most of the traditions are pre Christian. It is interesting to note some of the differences between tradition, reality, and the Bible. The Bible teaches that Christ was born in a manger. Our Christmas traditions show us a well constructed wooden barn which is something we all can easily relate to. Interestingly, a manger in Palestine was in the hills and usually a hole a rock. Though no one can point to the exact spot where Christ was born, the

historical accurate site for the nativity is in a cave and not a cattle shed as we know it.

The original birth date was set for January 18th, a date which the Armenian church still holds to. But through time, disputes, decrees, and calendar changes it went to January 6th and then to our current date, December 25th. From the Bible we learn that the time the angel announced his birth to all the shepherds who were in the field. They were feeding their flocks by night in open fields. It is said that between December and February the cold nights in Palestine are very piercing. It was not the custom for the shepherds of Judea to watch their flocks in open fields later than the end of October. This is one point that shows us Jesus could not have been born on December 25th.

Another point is, everyone was to travel to the city where they were born. Some families have long and difficult journeys. The wintertime was not a fitting time for such travels. We would be foolish to think that the government would not take this into consideration. It had to be a fairly difficult time to travel because when Christ gave his warnings of coming destruction in Matthew 24:20 and Mark 13:18 he said "And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter." If winter was a bad time to flee in, it would stand to reason it would not be fit for shepherds to be in the field or families to travel in.

THE GOLDEN BIRTH FORESEEN

The last great age, foretold by sacred Rimes,
Renews its finished course Saturnian times
Role round again; and might be years begun
From their first Orb, and radiant circles run
The base degenerate iron offspring ends;
A Golden progeny from heaven descends,
O chaste Lucina! speed the mother's pains,
And haste the glorious birth! Thine own Apollo reigns!

The Son shall lead the life of Gods, and be
By Gods and heroes seen, and Gods and heroes see.
The jarring and nations he in peace shall bind,
And with paternal virtues rule mankind.
Unbidden Earth shall wreathing Ivy bring
And fragrant Herbs (the promise of Spring)
As her first offering to her infant King.

This sounds like a Christmas poem, but it was actually written by the poet Virgil several decades before the birth of Christ. This was written for the winter solstice which was regarded as the birthday of the sun. The Religious Encyclopedias states, "the Saturnalia in Rome provided the model for most of the merry customs of Christmas. The time was one of

general mirth. All class's exchanged gifts, the commonest being wax candles and clay dolls. Christmas inherited the general merriment, games, giving of gifts, abundance of sweetmeats, and as to the more ceremonial elements, the burning of candles." The book Pagans Progress has this to say, "Bishop Gregory, who died in 265, instituted many festivals in honor of saints and martyrs in substitution for the feasts the heathens celebrated and he directed that Christmas should be capped with joyful feasts and sports to replace those of Saturnalia. Even temples were converted into churches, statues of the gods into the saints."

Saturnalia was more than astronomic festival. In Rome it was called the feast of Saturn. Saturn is the Roman god for which our day Saturday is named while the other six names of the week are derived from Saxon Gods. If we look up the rituals that go with Saturnalia and its counter part Brumalia we would see a striking resemblance to the modern customs of Christmas. They make cookies with faces on them as an offering to gods. They made clay figures and hung them on pine trees, lit candles, sang ritual songs, and gave gifts to one another, from A Winter Solstice Ritual, by Apollonius Sophistes.

It is well documented how easily the early churches adopted beliefs of the pagans. Tertullian, about the year 230, even in his day bitterly lamented the inconsistency of the disciples of Christ in this respect and contrasting it with the strict fidelity of the pagans to their own superstition. He says, "By us who are strangers to Sabbaths, and new moons and festivals, once acceptable to God, the saturnalia of the feast of January, the Burmalia, and Matroalia are now frequented; gifts are carried to and fro, New Year's days presents are made with din, and sports and banquets are celebrated with up roar. Oh, how much more faithful are the heathen to their religion, who take special care to adopt no solemnity from the Christians."

Many cultures have festivals this time. The Egyptians celebrated the birth of the son league of the queen of heaven about this time. The Sabaeans of Arabia, who regarded the moon and not the son as the visible symbol of their idolatry, observed as the Birth Festival during the same period of time. The Chaldeans celebrated Yule day, and night that preceded it. In the book The Two Babylon's, by Alexander Hislop, the author wrote of the tradition of the yule log. He wrote, "the ceremony of the yule log, like so many of the oldest Christmas traditions, was thoroughly Pagan in origin. The Norseman made a habit of burning logs of oak in honor of the God Thor, (who gave his name to Thursday,) and the ancient Celtic belief in the sacredness of perpetual fire. This was behind the Old English tradition that the log had to be lit from a brand left over from the previous year's log. Primitive man always associated fire with warmth and light, and a burning log at Christmas at the height of the cold

lifeless winter months, was symbolic of the undying sun which was soon to bring spring and fruitfulness back to the earth. The church attempted to give the yule log some Christian significance by putting it that about that log should be ash. This was because the infant Jesus was first washed and dressed along side an ash fire, which the shepherds had made. They had used ash because they had to make a fire at a moment's notice and ash is the only wood which will burn while it is still green, without sputtering as pine does. It became the traditional wood for the yule log in England."

Hislop also writes about plants of Christmas. He says, "the Christmas tree, now so common among us, was equally common in pagan Rome and paid in Egypt. In Egypt that tree was the palm tree; in Rome it was the fir; Babylonians are said to have decorated trees with colored fruit. In Scandinavia the people once idolized trees. When they became Christians they made trees part of the Christmas festivities." Mistletoe with spoken of by the aforementioned poet Virgil as "The Golden Bough." From Pagan's Progress we read, "Mistletoe used in the ancient religious ceremonies of Greece and Rome these mysterious moon berries, so essentially the part of the Christmas season for use today, were an integral part of the Druidical rites... A Scandinavian custom of pre-Christian antiquity was the mistletoe, being deemed sacred. If enemy's met casually beneath it in the forest, they laid down their arms and maintained a truce until the following day. Thence grew the practice of hanging mistletoe over a doorway. Entering beneath it was supposed to apply a pledge of peace and friendship. There is little doubt that from this practice came today's 'kiss under the mistletoe'."

Let's take a moment consider that jolly old elf, Santa Claus. To begin with, Santa Claus is a fused creature, half St. Nicholas and half an ancient yule god. Saint Nicholas himself was the bishop of Myra in Asia Minor in the fourth century. On Mediterranean voyages he miraculously stilled and created several storms and so became the patron saint of sailors: his relic is housed in his church at Bari on the Italian Adriatic coast, where his day is kept with much marine splendor. However, the good bishop has also become patron saint of maidens, since it legend says that he saved the three daughters of an impoverished father from probable prostitution by giving each a quantity of gold for dowries with which to marry. He is supposed to have thrown the money in bags through the window, hence the stylize balls of gold he holds in his hand and also the three balls outside upon pawn brokers shop, for St. Nicholas is honored as the patron of pawnbrokers and bankers too. The familiar sacred number of three also reverberates into a further legend told of the bishop, and introduces his immediate connection with children. Three boys were murdered by an innkeeper, cut up, and the pieces preserved in barrels of vinegar. St. Nicholas bound the pieces, fitted them together with a prayer, and brought

the three results to life again, hence the association with children, and, via the maidens, with giving. His arrival by the chimney seems to have some significance also. Who else ever went in and out by the chimney? Early hearth gods and Gods of the yule log; and which is, the devotees of the old and early religion of horned God only much later made into the Satanic Christian devil figure.

Who else believes that Christmas was derived from Pagan traditions and has nothing to do with the one true God?

Chambers Encyclopedia records, "many of the beliefs and usages all old Germans, and also the Romans, related to this period are passed over from heathenism to Christianity."

B. J. Campbell, in the Story of Christmas declares, "as we have seen, there are not a few popular observances associated with the Christmas season which have nothing do with the Christian religion and the birth of Jesus. Most of these observances are older than Christianity, and some of them it must be confessed, are not of a very elevated origin."

William Auld, in Christmas Traditions, notes, "there are green and garlands, the marvelous trees, the mystic fire and lights...and customs many, still clustering about the great mid-winter feast, all of which descended to us from the pagan childhood of the race."

TG Crippen, in Christmas and Christmas Lore confesses, "The feast of the nativity rather incorporated than supplanted various heathen festivals. It was there for only natural that are relics of heathen practice should survive as traditional customs."

The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics confirms this, "most of the Christian customs now prevailing in Europe, or recorded from former times, are heathen customs which have been absorbed or tolerated by the church. The Christian feast has inherited these customs from two sources, Roman and Teutonic paganism."

Even the Catholic Encyclopedia admits, "there is no doubt that the original Christian nuclei attracted Pagan accretion."

The Encyclopedia Britannica says, "Many current customs date back to these pre-Christian origins, among them Christmas decorations. The Romans or amended their temples and homes with green boughs and flowers for the Saturnalia. The Druids gathered mistletoe and hung it in their homes; the Saxons used holly, ivy, and bay."

I think this has been sufficient in tracing the customs of Christmas to prove beyond a shadow of doubt that Christmas came from pagan customs and continues to be a pagan custom. But, if we would really like to learn about pagan customs what better place to turn and the scriptures of truth.

For Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 10:11 “Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition”

In the 23rd chapter of Ezekiel we see described two women which are two kingdoms, sister kingdoms, Israel and Judah, daughters of one mother having been for a long time one people. Ezekiel describes their actions while they were in Egypt. He says, (Ezekiel 23:3) “And they committed whoredoms in Egypt; they committed whoredoms in their youth” We do not know a lot about the time when they lived in Egypt but different references give us a clue that they were not faithful to the God of Abraham. It is an interesting thought that they should love Egypt's idols even though they were under the control of Egyptian taskmasters. As shown all throughout their history they would mix in pagan rites with true worship as defined by God. The results of this pagan idolatry we see prophesied in this chapter of Ezekiel, the Assyrians over running the nation of Israel. Judah witness this first hand and yet manages to become more corrupt than Israel, as verified in the latter part of this chapter. Judah is denounced for her evil ways and association with profane nations and her time is set for destruction. Israel is constantly punished for her willful disobedience to desires of God. Readily accepting and adopting the pagan customs of the nations around them! How many examples must be put before us in the daily readings before we realize the true folly in mixing the customs of the world with the people called out to be a special people. Selected by the Most High to be a light unto the world, not an example of its traditions.

In James Chapter 5 we see the warning of the coming destruction of Jerusalem because Israel again desires the things of the flesh. They chose pagan philosophies over godliness. Even amongst those who held the true knowledge the mystery of iniquity was beginning to work. And again God had to chastise Israel. A perusal of Josephus shows just how terrible this chastisement in AD 70 was. He says, speaking about the famine in the city, “It was now all miserable case, a site that would justly bring tears in your eyes how men stood as to their food and but as for the richer sort, it prove all one to them whether they stayed in the city or attempted to get out of it, for they were equally destroyed in both cases.” In another place he wrote, “However, when Titus and going his rounds along those valleys, saw them full of dead bodies, and the thick putrefaction running about them, he gave a groan; “These are but examples of God chastening Israel. Is it chastisement for adopting the ways of the world around them. And just as Israel had to suffer for the abuse of their trust so will those who fall short at the judgment seat of Christ. It will not be a chastening, it will be a retribution, appalling and destructive. It is beyond comprehension why anyone would choose to place their salvation in jeopardy by choosing the practices of Christmas.

Our closing thoughts turn to Bro. G. Growcott who sums up Christmas in a few short paragraphs:

“Brethren and sisters, how we, called out to be wholly sons and daughters of the Lord, stand in relation to these confused and corrupt Catholic pagan things of the world? Admittedly, it all appeals powerfully to the flesh. It is pretty, it is exciting, it is the popular way of the crowd, it is pleasant to the senses. It is all tinsel, and hoopla, and music, and glistening stars, and twinkling lights. It has everything that attracts the shallow, juvenile, fleshly mind. The Christmas songs and the Christmas stories are concocted and executed by consummate actors for the fullest emotional effect.

Doubtless the children of Israel, indulging in the pretty Canaanite religious customs, said to themselves, (or in self excuse to others), “there really isn't any harm. Of course I do not really mean it in a religious way. It really means nothing to me, and it's all so pretty and pleasant. I really serve the Lord, but I just like a little fun and relaxation. Why do we have to be so different?”

There is absolutely nothing Scriptural about Christ-mass. Nothing like it, leading to it, or justifying it, is ever mentioned in the Bible, or even in early Christian records. We have seen that it is a religious blasphemous Catholic-Pagan abominations. Why should Holy brethren and sisters of Christ ever want to have anything to do with such things of the Apostasy? Surely we desire holiness!

We cannot really say what part of this fleshly mixture, the pagan part or the Catholic part, is the more objectionable to God, but either one alone should be enough to keep a child of God from having any thing to do with it.

The glorious struggle of life must not be viewed as an unhappy, burdensome, stoical battle against what we really desire. The secret is rather a gradual, joyful, education and training of the inclinations toward better things; and opening up of our natural, dark, ignorant minds to divine Love and Light and Holiness — “yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.” (1 Corinthians 12:31)

“Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” (Romans 12:21)

God says to us, — here is a BETTER, a more excellent Way. The life in the truth is a GROWTH: a movement ever forward and upward; a progressive advancement toward greater light and fuller understanding. God desires us to want to get as close as possible to Him, and as far as possible away from the customs of the world: especially the superstitious and religious customs. If we are not deeply moved with this desire, there is little hope for us attaining the Kingdom.

Bro. Beryl Snyder

Christmas Past

It is popularly believed that the 25th of December is the anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ. This belief rests, not on reliable evidence, but simply on tradition. When the mode in which the commemoration originated, and the circumstances attending the birth of Mary's Son, are duly considered, it will be seen that there are good reasons for rejecting the tradition as unworthy of credence. "The method of dating events from the birth of Christ is said to have been first practised by a Romish monk, named Dionysius the Little, about the year 527. It came into general use in Italy before the termination of that century, but in France not until the eighth century, in Spain not until the fourteenth, and in Portugal not till after the commencement of the fifteenth."—(Penny Cyclopædia.) From this fact it will be seen that a mistake might easily occur respecting Jesus Christ's birth, in regard either to the year, or the time of year. In fact, it is now admitted by chronologists generally that this event took place about four years earlier than the date assigned to it by the above-named Dionysius. If, therefore, a mistake of four years could be made about five centuries after its occurrence, and be generally indorsed, it would not be surprising if the wrong day or month were fixed upon.

"The institution of this festival (Christmas) is attributed by the spurious Decretals to Telephorus, who flourished in the reign of Antoninus Pius (A.D. 138–161), but the first traces of it were found about the time of the Emperor Commodus (A.D. 180–192). In the reign of Dicoletian (A.D. 284–305), while that rule was keeping court at Nicomedia, he learned that a multitude of Christians were assembled in that city to celebrate the birthday of Jesus, and having ordered the Church doors to be closed, he set fire to the building, and all the worshippers perished in the flames. It does not appear, however, that there was any uniformity in the period of observing the Nativity among the early Christians; some held the festival in the month of May or April, others in January. It is, nevertheless, almost certain that the 25th of December cannot be the nativity of the Saviour, for it is then the height of the rainy season in Israel, and shepherds could hardly be watching their flocks by night in the plains."—(Chambers's Encyclopædia). From this extract it is evident that the birth of Jesus was celebrated before the time of Constantine, though without any uniformity as to time; thus showing that within three centuries of the event, different opinions had arisen as to the precise month of its occurrence. The subsequent uniformity which prevailed throughout Christendom, is no argument in favour of the 25th of December, because it was the result of Papal decrees, after the Apostasy had usurped the place of Paganism.

The improbability of Christ being born in the middle of winter, is thus referred to by a writer, in 1733, on the True Years of the Birth and Death

of Christ:—"It is not credible that an edict, which in Israel required all men's removing to the ancient residence of their families (as it obliged Joseph, for example, to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem, about 100 miles), and so forced most of the nation to put themselves upon the road, should, without necessity, be executed, with universal inconvenience, in the depth of winter. For in that mountainous country, that season is often very severe, as we learn from Josephus, in several places, and more from our Saviour's directing his disciples to pray that, in the Jewish calamities, their flight might not be in the winter. Nor was it mid-winter, in all probability, when the shepherds were all night in the folds, watching their flocks, because in those countries the sheep are usually brought at evening into shelter, and are not watched all night in the folds, but only in the times of yeaning, that is, in spring and autumn, according to Jerome and others. . . . The tradition now prevailing that the birth of Christ fell on the 25th December, was not known in the Eastern Churches till about the end of the fourth century, nor was it probably much older in the Western, who recommended it."—(N. Mann.) To this may be added the following extract from the Oxford Encyclopædia:—"John, Archbishop of Nice, in an epistle on this subject relates that, at the instance of St. Cyril, of Jerusalem, Pope Julius procured a strict inquiry into the day of our Saviour's nativity, which being found to be on the 25th of December, they began thenceforth to celebrate the feast on that day. However, the precise day, or even the month, in which our Saviour was born, is extremely uncertain. Some, as Clemens Alexandrinus informs us, affixed it to the month Pachon, corresponding to the 16th May. But there are some circumstances which should rather lead us to conclude that he was born in Autumn; as this was, in every respect, the most proper season of the year for a general assessment, which took place at the birth of Christ, and which required personal attendance."

According to a writer quoted by Dr. Adam Clarke, it appears that no less than 136 different opinions have prevailed concerning the year of Christ's birth; and as to the day, it has been placed in every month of the year. That its celebration on the 25th of December is of Pagan origin is almost certain, that being "the very day on which the Ancient Romans celebrated the feast of their goddess Bruma." The reason suggested for selecting this date is that it is the winter solstice. At this period the sun begins to return to the Northern tropic, which leads to the ending of winter, the lengthening of the days, and the introduction of spring. This, it is thought, was emblematical of the rising of the Son of Righteousness on this benighted world. "Among the causes," says an authority already quoted, "that co-operated in fixing this period (25th December) as the proper one, perhaps the most powerful was, that almost all the heathen nations regarded the winter solstice as a most important point of the year,

as the beginning of the renewed life and activity of the powers of nature, and so of the gods, who were originally merely the symbolic personifications of them. In more northerly countries, this fact must have made itself peculiarly palpable. Hence, the Celts and Germans, from the oldest times, celebrated the season with the greatest festivities. At the winter solstice, the Germans held their great Yule-feast, in commemoration of the return of the fiery sun-wheel, and believed that during the twelve nights reaching from the 25th December to the 6th January, they could trace the personal movements and interferences on earth of their great deities, Odin, Buchta, &c. Many of the beliefs and usages of the old Germans, and also of the Romans, relating to this matter, passed over from heathenism to Christianity, and have partly survived to the present day. But the Church also sought to combat and banish—and it was to a large extent successful—the deep-rooted heathen feeling by adding, for the purification of the heathen customs which it retained, its grandly-devised liturgy, besides dramatic representations of the birth of Christ and the first events of his life.” Hence sprung the so-called Manger-songs, Christmas carols, Christmas dramas, Christmas trees, &c. It is only necessary to add that Sir Isaac Newton in his Commentary on the Prophecies of Daniel, has a chapter “Of the Times of the Birth and Passion of our Saviour,” in which he accounts for the choice of the 25th December, the winter solstice, by showing that not only the feast of the Nativity, but most others, were originally fixed at Cardinal points of the year; and that the first Christian calendars having been so arranged by mathematicians at pleasure, without any basis, even in tradition, the Christians afterwards took up with what they found in the calendars. So long as a fixed time of commemoration was solemnly appointed, they were content.

Christadelphian – 1872

What Does That Mean?

“And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli.” (Luke 3:23)

Why are we given two mutually incompatible genealogies of Christ? The account in Matthew traces his ancestry through Solomon, while Luke’s account has him as a descendent of Nathan.

Matthew 1:1-16 gives the genealogy of Jesus through Joseph, who was a descendant of King David through Solomon the kingly line. Jesus was Joseph’s adopted son, and as the oldest son his legal heir; and thus heir to the Throne of David according to Jewish Law.

Note carefully the language of Matthew: “And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary...” (1:15-16) This is the format followed in the preceding verses showing direct descendants: “Abraham begat Isaac, and Isaac begat Jacob” etc. So we see that “Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary.” Clearly Joseph’s father name was Jacob.

Luke 3:23-38 on the other hand uses entirely different wording to follow the ancestry. He says concerning Jesus: “being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph...” He is not tracing Joseph’s line but Jesus’ true blood line. This would be better understood if we read it as Bro. Roberts words it. “being (as was supposed the son of Joseph, but in reality) of Heli etc.” Jesus was the son of Heli (Mary’s father). This must be understood, and carried through the whole genealogy, as thus; Jesus the son of Matthat, Jesus the son of Levi, Jesus the son of Melchi, until Jesus the son of Adam.

Bro. Roberts sums it up well in Nazareth Revisited pg 45: “There would remain then but the simple question why Joseph’s genealogy should be given since Joseph was not the father of Jesus. This seems sufficiently answered by the reflection that there would have been legal confusion in Christ’s relation to David, if Joseph, the husband of his mother, had not also been of Davidic extraction. In the eye of the law, husband and wife are one, and if Joseph had not been of David, he would have eclipsed and marred the Davidic relation of Mary. Joseph, in his own right, as a descendant of Solomon, could have imparted “a title clear” to David’s throne: but Joseph was not to be the father of Jesus, though he was to be the husband of his mother, and the legal father only of her son. The case was totally exceptional and peculiar in all its bearings; and the difficulties and necessities of it were beautifully harmonised in Joseph and Mary being independently related to David through separate lines of descent—one (Joseph) through Solomon, and the other (Mary) through Nathan, thus uniting in themselves the royal rights of David’s house, which passed by law and blood to their wonderful Son.”

Bro. Jim Sommerville