

# THE BEREAN CHRISTADELPHIAN ECCLESIAL NEWS

*A monthly magazine devoted wholly to the Berean Christadelphian Ecclesial welfare. 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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Please send Ecclesial communications to:

Bro. Fred J. Higham, 20116 McKishnie, Clinton Twp, Mich. 48035 U.S.A.

Phone: (586) 790-2156 Fax: (586) 790-8519 e-mail: fredhigham@ameritech.net

Web Site: www.BereanEcclesialNews.com

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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.

## Ecclesial News

**Odiado, Kenya** — Sunday School 9.00 a.m; memorial 10.00 a.m  
Wednesday 2.30 (Home Visit)

Greetings in the Master's name;

It is my honour to update the brotherhood on the activities of the Odiado Berean Ecclesia of late. We have just concluded our annual August Bible School, which was on as from 11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> August. It is with a lot of joy and appreciation to say that it was a success.

Special thanks goes to the visiting brethren among them Bro. Steven Juma and Bro. Rogers Museve who did the speaking duties and gave the exhortation on **QUALIFYING FOR THE KINGDOM**. The occasion was jointly shared with visiting sisters among them sister Everlyne Simiyu of Mayanja and sister Carolyn of Kimukungi Ecclesia just to name a few. The topics studied were the Kingdom of God (Bro. Humphreys) Departure from the truth (Bro. Ogama), Popular errors and divine truth (Bro. Museve) and several others.

Finally on a sad note, sister Beatrice Nakholi untimely lost her only son after a prolonged illness. Similarly saddening was the loss to sister Margaret Owuori of her beloved husband. We pray that Almighty gives them strength at this moment of grief as they struggle in the wait for the return of the Messiah.

Love in the bond of the truth,

Bro. Humphrey Odaba, Recording Brother

## FRATERNAL GATHERINGS & ACTIVITIES

(To be held Yahweh Willing)

**MTONDIA FRATERNAL GATHERING** .....Dec 9-11, 2005

Bro. Fred Omoto, P .O. Box 1177, Kilifi, Kenya

**HENGOED FRATERNAL GATHERING** .....Mar 17-20, 2006

Bro. Stephen Male, 63 Ty Llwyd Parc, Quakers Yard, Treharris, South Wales, CF46 5LB, United Kingdom, Phone: 011 441 44381 3828

**LAMPASAS FRATERNAL GATHERING** ..... Jun 9-11, 2006

Bro. Curtis Hurst, Rt.1, Box 40, Mullin, TX 76864, USA. 1-325-985-3868

**HYE FRATERNAL GATHERING** ..... Jul 24-30, 2006

Bro. Curtis Hurst, Rt.1, Box 40, Mullin, TX 76864, USA. 1-325-985-3868

Study Class Topic: 1Thessalonians; Daily Bible Readings; Discussion on Zech. 1-7

## Books For Kenya

We have requests from the Kenya Ecclesias for works on the Truth—books, pamphlets and Sunday School material that you can send would be very helpful in this effort. They may be addressed to the ecclesial addresses in the Ecclesial Directory.

## Acts 19

**“Have ye received the Holy Spirit since ye believed?”** “You will observe that Paul did not say, “Did ye receive the Holy Spirit to enable you to believe?”

If Paul had been indoctrinated with popular theology about the Spirit he would have asked them, “Did ye receive the Holy Spirit to enable you to believe?” because the theory is that we have to receive something called “the Holy Spirit” or “grace” in order to enable you to believe. But the apostle says, “Have ye received the Holy Spirit since ye believed?” showing that they believed, and that men are capable of the belief of the Truth without being endued with something they call “Holy Spirit,” apart from the Word. If we understand what John says, that “the Spirit is the Truth,” why then it is manifest that no one could believe the Truth without the Truth, and in that sense, of course, no one could believe the Truth without the Spirit; but that is not what is commonly meant.

The Truth is contained in the Word of God—in the writings of Moses, the prophets, the Psalms, the discourses of Jesus, and the discourses and writings of the apostles, for, as Jesus said, “My words, they are Spirit and they are life.” So that when we understand things right in relation to a man’s intellect, that the Spirit in relation to it is the Truth, of course, reason teaches us we must receive the Truth before we can believe the Truth. But in the days of the apostles, with the exception of the Day of Pentecost and the transaction that occurred in the house of Cornelius, the Spirit was not imparted to men to enable them to believe, or before they believed.

We are told in John 7:37, “In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink; he that believeth on me out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” Then John says, “But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive, for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, besides that, Jesus was not yet glorified.” So that you see that all that believed the Truth before the glorification of Jesus, believed that Truth without having any abstract physical spiritual operation upon their minds or their hearts to enable them to believe.

The Holy Spirit was given to those that believed, those who obeyed the gospel, and therefore Peter, when he addressed the Sanhedrim, told them they were witnesses of the Truth; “and so,” said he, “is the Holy Spirit that is given to all them that obey Jesus.” Thus the Spirit is given to the obedient, not to enable them to believe, but because they had believed and obeyed the Truth; and it was not given till Jesus was glorified. So that they believed the Truth because of the evidence that was submitted to their

understandings, and it was that that convinced them of the Truth. The power of faith is in the evidence credibly reported. If it is not credibly reported, of course it is not reliable. But, being satisfied of the reporters, that they were honest and true, then faith rests upon the testimony of credible witnesses. And the power of faith is in the testimony.

We cannot will to believe one thing or another. Faith is not at the disposal of the human will. If a man is arraigned for any offence at the bar of justice, the jury, if they are honest and true, cannot will to believe that that man is guilty or that he is innocent. They are obliged to suspend their judgment till the evidence is adduced, and then, according to the evidence, so is the conviction in their minds; and, according to the conviction wrought in their minds by the evidence, if they are honest and true, they give their judgment. It is so in relation to things religious, as it is in relation to things intellectual, in reference to any branch of human knowledge. The power of faith is in the testimony. So that where there is no testimony there is no faith.

And as popular preaching does not, as a rule, submit the testimony of God—which is greater than the testimony of men—for examination, therefore the thing that is in the world called faith, is not faith; it is mere credulity. There is nothing so scarce as faith; it is much scarcer than diamonds. The faith, then, that saves a man, results from the power of testimony on his understanding and affections.

Then the apostle says unto them, “Have ye received the Holy Spirit since ye believed?” And they said unto him, “We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Spirit.” Now, that is a very incorrect rendering, because the question Paul asked them was not whether they knew of, or believed in, the existence of a Holy Spirit, but whether they had received the Holy Spirit since they believed. Their answer was a direct answer to Paul’s question; and it ought to be rendered—“We have not so much as heard whether the Holy Spirit is received.” That surprised Paul that they should be believers, and not know that the Spirit was received by believers. He says to them, “Unto” (or into) “what, then, were ye baptised?” This surprised him; he could not imagine what had been the subject matter of their belief; and it is manifest that he knew they were baptised on some basis; and he asks them, “Into what then were ye baptised?” It struck him forcibly that they could not have been baptised into the Christian baptism, and yet be ignorant that the Holy Spirit was received by believers.

Therefore, in astonishment, he asks them, “Into what then were ye baptised” (or immersed)? And they said, “Unto” (or into) “John’s baptism.” Well, this solved the whole mystery—Paul saw what was the

reason of their not knowing that the Holy Spirit was received. Then said Paul, “John verily baptised” (the word “with” is inserted here in the common version). “John verily baptised the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe.”—Here the word in the original is the same as that in the 3rd verse, rendered “unto”—“That they should believe on (or into) him that should come after him;” then Paul adds “That is, into Christ Jesus.” “When they heard this they were baptised.” Here the same word is used in the original, and is here rendered ‘in.’ “They were baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus,” Now, John had said, “I baptise you with water unto repentance”—I baptise you in water in the baptism of repentance, “but he that cometh after me is mightier than I—he shall baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” You will observe then that there are three baptisms alluded to here. First, John’s baptism; secondly, the baptism of the Holy Spirit; and thirdly, the baptism of fire. The baptism of John was a baptism based upon the belief that the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One was about to make his appearance. The baptism of the Holy Spirit was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon those who believed in Jesus as the Christ that had already come. And the baptism of fire was that outpouring of the indignation of Jehovah on the Jewish State which destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the temple, and broke up the whole Jewish fabric of society; that age, in fact, which had waxed old and was caused to vanish away. It is that that Peter speaks of in 2 Pet. 3, a baptism of fire which came on the whole heavens and earth and dissolved them. So that there were these three baptisms. But in relation to us, and in relation to the name of Jesus Christ, whereby we obtain remission of sins, there is one baptism, and that one baptism into the name of Jesus is neither a baptism of spirit nor fire, for the spirit is not now poured out.

The baptism of fire has been developed in relation to the Jewish State; but the fiery baptism which will wind up the times of the Gentiles, when they come to an end, that is yet future. But in the intermediate period between the apostolic age and the coming of Christ in power and glory there is but one baptism, and that is the immersion of a believer “in the things of the Redemption and the name of Jesus Christ,” into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. John therefore baptised with water into the baptism of repentance, the basis of which was that, as the result of the doctrine which John preached, men were brought to change their minds. As the result of that doctrine which John preached, announcing that the Kingdom of God or the Messiah was about to appear, it separated his hearers from the traditions of the Scribes and Pharisees, created in them an expectation of the coming of Christ, not knowing what person it was that would make his appearance and put in his claim; and as the result of their belief of John’s doctrine, it revived in their hearts a disposition similar to that disposition which was obtained in the hearts of

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—the disposition of the fathers—the mode of thinking that was developed in those ancient worthies, when God made promise to them of things which were the most improbable and impossible ever to be accomplished, judging by things then existing in the world.

In Rom. 4:1, Paul says, “What should we then say that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory, but not before God.” On the supposition that it was by works Abraham was justified, the apostle says, “He hath whereof to glory.” But what says Moses in Genesis? Why, this is what he says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.” What was the basis of Abraham’s justification? When he was living in Chaldea he was an idolater, and worshipped a plurality of gods, as his fathers did. God sent a message to him, preaching the gospel to him, and ordered him out of the country, separated him from his family and friends; and Abraham obeyed God, and then promises were furthermore communicated to him; and Abraham was not staggered at all at the promises but he believed on God—he believed God. To believe on God is not merely to believe that God exists, that is simply sufficient to save a man from being set down as a fool, for “the fool hath said in his heart there is no God.” But there are multitudes who believe there is a God, but who do not believe God, i.e., what God says. Abraham came to believe not only in God’s existence, but in what He promised. And that is called by Paul believing God, and believing on God, and the same exposition of believing on God, by substituting the word Christ for God, explains what it is to believe on Christ; not simply that there was such a person existing in the world 1,800 years since as Jesus Christ. To believe on Jesus Christ is to believe what he says, what he preached—not only to recognise his claim to be the Christ, but to believe what that Christ preached.

Abraham believed God, and that was made the basis of his justification. It was nothing that he had done as a work of righteousness that his justification was based on, but his believing God, and that is the greatest honour that a man can confer upon himself, viz., to honour God, for the Scriptures tell us that God has magnified His word above all His name. Now, the name of God contains all the attributes of God. When we know God’s attributes we know His name and one of the attributes of His character or name is that He is a God of Truth, that He cannot lie, that in Him is no darkness at all. Hence He has made this the test of men’s allegiance and obedience and affection for Him.

It is to believe what He says, and that is the highest honour we, as creatures, are able to develop in honouring God. You know very well that if you had a particular friend, and he was to say, “I love you very dearly,”

and, when you told him anything, he were practically or verbally to say, “I do not believe a word you say,” you would say, “How could you love me and treat me as a liar?” So God, in effect, says to mankind, How could you love me when you do not believe a word I say? Here we have a man, Abraham, no matter what God promised him, he believed it; and because he treated God as a God of Truth, therefore that confidence of Abraham was counted to him for righteousness. Abraham first came to know what the promises were, then he believed them, and that became the basis on which God counted to Abraham his faith for righteousness. And that principle of justification by faith in the promises of God has been the principle of men’s justification from the days of Abraham down to the present time. It was not necessary for God to vary His principles of justifying men, because the Messiah was afterwards introduced, and a new development of God’s power and principles. All who are justified on the like principles that Abraham was justified on, became the sons of Abraham by justification by faith, and therefore he is called the father of the faithful and the friend of God. All those therefore that are justified on like principle with Abraham become the children of the father of the faithful, and they also become the friends of God, for, says Jesus, “ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.”

“Now,” says Paul, “to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt” (Rom. 4:4). If Abraham, therefore, had sought to obtain justification by working out a righteousness of his own conception, and God had justified Abraham on that principle, He would have paid Abraham a debt that He owed him. But it is not so, so Paul says it is a matter of grace. “But to him that believeth, his faith is counted for righteousness” (v. 5). That was just Abraham’s case. Then the Apostle Paul quotes from the Psalms to show the same principle set forth by the Spirit in the Psalms. “Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works” (v. 6). (Paul quotes that from Psalms 32:1), saying, “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered,” properly “covered over;” the word in the original expresses the idea of “covered over.” And this leads me to make another remark, and that is, that, ever since the days when God appointed coats of skins to cover the nakedness of the first transgressors, Adam and Eve, from that day to this sins are pardoned on the same principle, i.e., the person pardoned being covered over. And you see the force of this when you see that the Scriptures, in speaking of sinners, always speak of them as unclothed or naked. In Exodus, when Moses was gone to the mount some forty days, the Jews said we do not know what has become of this Moses; we will make gods and go to Egypt. And when Moses had come from the mount, he heard singing and dancing in the camp below. And he found what was the reality of the case: they were

dancing round the golden calf. “And Moses saw that Aaron had made the people naked” (Exod. 32:25). Now, when you reflect on the condition of the people who had made the golden calf, under the leadership of Aaron, you see that the explanation of the phrase “Aaron made the people naked” was, that Aaron had enabled them to transgress God’s law, and that, in doing this, they were made rebels against the divine law, and, as rebels, they were declared to be naked. Now, in order to correct that, it was necessary that the people should be covered; and, when God pardoned them for that offence, according to the institution that was then carried into effect, that was re-covering, re-clothing them. We learn from the Apocalypse that Christ is coming to the earth again under the outpouring of the sixth vial. Now, in connection with the outpouring of the sixth vial, which has been pouring out, ever since 1820, upon the Ottoman power, the prophecy of the sixth vial is interrupted by giving the reader a warning of the coming of Christ. That is to say, when you shall see, as a sign of the times, the wrath of God being outpoured on that power, then you may know that the time is near at hand when Christ will come. Christ says—”Behold I come as a thief.” The people will not know that he is coming; they will be asleep. Jesus Christ comes as a thief. Thieves make their appearance to break into houses in the dark. There is one thing however, Jesus Christ will not come as a thief to that class of society who are preparing themselves for his reception; for Paul says—“But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake us as a thief” (I Thess. 5:4); but “sudden destruction” shall come on that class of people who raise the cry of peace and safety when there is no peace and safety (see v. 3).

The coming of Christ, then, is to be at a time when society is in an intensely dark state spiritually considered. You will find from Isaiah that when the light arises upon Zion it is at a time when darkness covers the earth. Why, if you could only prove at the present time that this was a scripturally enlightened 19th century, and that the knowledge of God was pervading the people, then I should be satisfied that that was a sign of the times that indicated that Christ was a long way off. But, when we see how dark is society in relation to the Truth of God, and how completely besotted the people are, and how difficult it is to gain the attention of men to what God has said in opposition to what man says, we are thoroughly satisfied we have got a sign of the times which indicates that Jesus Christ must be very near.

Well, he comes as a thief,—“Behold I come as a thief.” He comes as a thief to the world, but not as a thief to the people who are prepared for his reception. What constitutes people prepared for Jesus Christ? Why, this. He that believes the Truth as set forth by Jesus and his apostles 1800 years

ago, falls in love with that Truth, yields the same form of obedience,—and there is but one,—that they yielded who learned the Truth as it is in Jesus from the lips of the apostles themselves, who follow in the footsteps of the first Christians by being immersed for the remission of sins,—their past sins,” and who, being baptised, walk in the Truth, patiently continuing in well-doing; seeking for glory, honour, incorruptibility, and life; waiting for the appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ from heaven (see Titus 2:13). He who is found occupying this position is one of a company of people to be developed, and who are being developed as a prepared people for the Lord, to receive Him at His second appearing. This is a preparation to receive Him who comes as a thief to the world. And all who are not found in this prepared state are not fit to be recognised by Him. It is only the workers of God’s righteousness according to the principles laid down in God’s Truth, that Jesus will recognise as His people, prepared for Him when He comes. Consequently, as scriptural intelligence is the basis of this preparation, it follows that, when Jesus Christ comes, He will not recognise any of the names and denominations of the Gentiles, for they are styled, in the 17th chapter of the Apocalypse, “The names of blasphemy,” which fill the body politic of the Gentile beast. “Behold, I come as a thief,” then, “Blessed is he that watcheth.” Now, no one can watch for anything in the dark if it is very dark, and if you are going to watch for anything you must have a light. It is equally true of things intellectual, moral, and spiritual. For anyone to watch for things set forth in the Scriptures the watcher must have light, and, as the light of an oil lamp will throw no light on spiritual or intellectual matters, so it is necessary that the light to discern spiritual objects must come from the Scriptures. We must be the recipients of the unction by which John said that those in his day knew all things, and which taught them all things. So if we have the understanding of the Truth in us, we are answered with that Truth. And our earthen vessels, that is our bodies, our material organisations are as a lamp, as an oil vessel. Apart from the Scriptures of Truth, our material organisation is a very empty vessel; for the natural man does not know the things of God as the result of the thinking of the flesh.

When a man has, by the study of the Truth, come to understand the Truth, then his earthen vessel contains the spirit, or the oil, or the unction, and he has just so much of the unction in him as he has of the Truth, affectionately received and obeyed. This is the light within the man which he does not bring with him into the world. If we have any of the light, it is from the Scriptures of Truth. Therefore, the apostle says—“Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom” (Col. 3:16). When, therefore, we have that unction in us, it teaches us all things that God considers necessary for us to know. This is the light, then, whereby we are enabled to watch; “Behold, I come as a thief; blessed is he that watcheth.” But

there is something more that is necessary, and that is to keep the garments. People keep garments to clothe themselves. So you perceive, from the 16th chapter of the Apocalypse, that people watching are addressed as people having garments. Now it does not mean to keep our broadcloth, but spiritual garments, and these are to be taken care of. They are those garments which we are exhorted to keep unspotted from the world. Then there is something we are clothed with. Jesus is set forth as a clothing, a garment, a vestment, a mantle, and we are to be clothed with Christ. So that, when we are clothed constitutionally with Christ he becomes “The Lord our righteousness;” we put him on as a robe; we put on the Christian name and character by getting into Christ, and walking with him; and we are called upon to keep those garments unspotted. For if a man, after believing the Truth, and being baptised into Jesus Christ, and so putting him on; if, instead of walking in the Truth henceforth, he walks in the lusts of the flesh, then he defiles that garment, it becomes spotted, and that indicates a neglect of the garments with which we were clothed or covered over when we came into the position of that blessedness that David speaks of in the 32nd Psalm, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered over.”

“Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.” There the spirit teaches that if a man does not keep the garment unspotted from the corruptions in the world through lust, he is regarded by the spirit of God in the same light as if he were actually naked. If, therefore, we do not keep our garments, we are regarded as transgressors or sinners before God. Now you recollect the parable Jesus gave when referring to the time when he should call his servants before him. There was one man who made his appearance, who had had one talent committed to him, and who had laid it aside; and then, when Christ came and called upon him to give an account, this man came and said to his Lord, I knew that thou wast an austere master, and reapest where thou hast not sown; here is thy one talent, take it. That man represents a class which is represented in another parable, that of the wedding supper—and when the Lord comes to see the guests he finds a certain class of people represented by a man not having on the wedding garment. The wedding garment consists of Jesus Christ our righteousness kept clean and white; and if we have been walking after the flesh, we defile that garment, and, in doing so, we are regarded as being invested with that which is not the wedding garment. The wedding garment is what we put on at baptism. But if that which is not the wedding garment is what we put on at baptism, and do not keep clean. Then the Lord says, how did you come here? The man was struck speechless. And the class of people that that man represents will have nothing to say; they will be dumbfounded. The next thing is the order which the Master of the

Ceremonies gives in reference to that class: “Depart into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” “The devil and his angels” is that system of Gentile government which prevails over that territory comprehended within the limits of the dominion of the old Roman dragon, which, in the Apocalypse, is called “the dragon,” “the devil and Satan.” That class of people are at the judgment expelled from the Kingdom.

You see, then, how important it is we should give heed to the admonition—“Blessed is he that watcheth and keep his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.” The idea you will keep in mind is this: that all unpardoned sinners, according to the scriptural mode of representing them, are regarded as naked, no matter how “pious.” “Blessed is he whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.” As the basis of this forgiveness, we are to have the same disposition that Abraham had when his faith was counted to him for righteousness.

Then, as further illustration of this sign, we find in Rom. 4:11 that the apostle reasons thus as to the fatherhood of Abraham: Abraham “received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised that he might be the father of all them that believed, though they be not circumcised, that righteousness might be imputed unto them also.” “His faith was counted to him for righteousness,” being at that time 85 years of age and uncircumcised. Now, you see there was a reason why God justified Abraham before he was circumcised. It was that he might be the father of those who are not circumcised, that he might be the father of all Gentiles, as well as all Jews, upon the principle of believing what God says, and doing what God commands: “that righteousness might be imputed to the Gentiles (or the uncircumcised) also.” [Dr. Thomas then went on to argue that the Jew must be justified by faith notwithstanding his fleshly connection with Abraham.]

So that both Jews and Gentiles will be justified on the same promise. Paul speaks of that in Rom. 3:29, 30, “Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes of the Gentiles also: seeing it is one God, which should justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.” We do not see the distinction in the common version as well as in the original. It should read—“Seeing it is one God who shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through the faith.” You will see that distinction argued out by the apostle in his letter to the Galatians (3:21), “Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promises by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe;” that is, to them that believe the promises, for

that is what the apostle is writing about. “But,” he says, “Before faith came;” that ought to be “before the faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed” (Rom. 3:23). So that the apostle, reasoning as a Jew under the law, considers that, at a certain time, the faith had not come; that, under the law, they were shut up from the thing that was afterwards to come, called “the faith.” “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster unto Christ.” Here are three words inserted—“to bring us.” What we have is simply “wherefore the law was our schoolmaster unto Christ.”

Until Christ, they were shut up to the law, and had to exercise their minds in studying that pattern of things, and had to wait for the substance, which is of Christ, until Christ came. Until Christ came the faith did not come; so that they were shut-up from the faith, and could not get at it. Now John says—“The law came by Moses; the grace and the Truth came by Jesus Christ.” When you make yourselves acquainted with the Truth which came by Jesus Christ you have that thing called “the faith,” to which all under the law were shut-up till Christ came. Now Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, presents those two things before the mind of the reader. Men were justified, under the law of Moses, by faith; and, after the law had waxed old and was ready to vanish away, by the faith. Under the law they had merely the premises of justification laid in their minds; for, if Jesus Christ had never come and suffered death, Daniel and all the prophets would have perished. One purpose for which Christ came was to redeem the transgression of believers under the law.

Daniel was assured that he should be raised from the dead. When all the prophets and the other righteous who lived previous to the manifestation of Christ in the world, shall be in the Kingdom of God, it will be as a consequence of resurrection. And if you should be there with them, and ask them, “how came you here? You did not know anything about Jesus.” “Oh” they will say, “we believed the promises of God, made to the fathers,—covenanted to Abraham and to David. It is true we did not know who the person after the flesh would be, more than this, that we knew he would descend from David,—from the tribe of Judah; that he would be the sceptre that would be developed in connection with that tribe. We believed the promises concerning the Christ, and, since the resurrection, we have learned that Jesus was the Christ, and that he was put to death to redeem the transgressions of (among others) the prophets and fathers which the law of Moses could not cover; so that we stand here by virtue of the manifestation of Jesus.” So that we perceive how Daniel and all the prophets, when in the Kingdom of God, will have been justified by belief of something, and that something was the promises to the fathers. Now, if you and I are to be honoured to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and

Jacob in the Kingdom of God, we have to be justified through the faith which Jesus Christ brought. And you will observe that, whenever God gives additional information to a generation, all that and subsequent generations are required to believe that, in addition to what had been given to their predecessors. So that we now have presented to us “the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.” Those things are embraced in the phrase, “the faith,” while simply “faith,” by which the prophets were justified, did not embrace the doctrines pertaining to the death of Jesus. But God redeems both those under the law, and those not under the law, by the death of His Son. So you see the harmony of God’s purpose. We Gentiles are the parties who fulfil the law when we walk after the spirit. So that you perceive the law was given to the Jews as a representation of future things. The sign, of course, indicates something signified. When, therefore, the Jews kept the law, they only kept it in the sign; but when we keep it, we keep it in the substance, which is of Christ. There are two principles, then; the circumcision were justified by faith; the uncircumcision by the faith.

“The promises that Abraham should be heir of the world” (Rom. 4:13). Now you see who it is that is to possess the British Empire, the Austrian Empire, &c., &c., and the countries in the east. It is Abraham; for all these countries help to make up the world. And what a rich world it is! They all make up one system; and there is one man, who lived 3500 years ago, who is to possess them all! Now you see what an advantage it is to us to be able to prove that we are children of, and heirs with, Abraham. Paul says—“Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours.” (1 Cor. 3:22). They are addressed as future possessors of the world. Abraham is called the heir of the world, and Jesus Christ is called the heir of all things; and so we become the possessors of all things. If you be Abraham’s seed, so as he is the heir of the world, and his children inherit the same estate with him, you are also heirs of the world. This is a rich inheritance. This is a gift calculated to encourage the poor. No matter how poor a man may be, yet, if he be rich in faith, God promises him the world, and I am sure we could not ask for more than that. Men laugh at the idea. Those who know the Truth can afford to laugh, for “let those laugh who win.” But it was not through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. Those who could establish their claim to justification by faith, can claim the world. “Abraham rejoiced to see my day,” says Jesus. He did not, however, rejoice to see the day of Christ’s crucifixion, but a day still future. He saw it, and was glad; but he did not see it with his natural eye. He looked for the earth to be under a heavenly constitution, “Giving glory to God.” The way to give glory to God is to believe what He has said. It was not for Abraham’s sake alone that it was imputed but for us also. If we believe on

God, that raised up Jesus, the faith will be counted for righteousness to us also.

Thus John’s preaching was designed to develop the mode of thinking of the fathers, and the disposition of the fathers, that the company of persons to whom John preached should be like so many living Abrahams, that the Messiah might come to those who were comparable to the great friend of God, the father of the faithful. John came before Christ “to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:17). Now, how could John turn the hearts of the fathers to their posterity who were living when John preached? Luke did not say so. What he said should be rendered—“To revive the hearts or the dispositions of the fathers in the children,” that is, those contemporary with John, “and to bring the disobedient to the just person’s mode of thinking, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” So that there should be a people who reflected the faith or disposition of Abraham. And just the same operation is going on in these times. John worked no miracles. The proclamation of the coming of the Kingdom was all the power he had to develop a people for the Messiah. So in our day we have no power to work miracles; all the power we have with which to operate on our contemporaries, is the Word of God. And, while this work is going on, the Lord will come as a thief to those who do not know anything about these things; but not as a thief to those who have been studying the things which I have laid before you tonight.

Bro. John Thomas

## Bible Readings Notes - November

"God hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." (Acts 17:3.)

It is recorded in one of the chapters due to be read this month that Paul commended the believers at Thessalonica because, "when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God." No stronger reason could be advanced to justify regular Bible study. It is the first condition of acceptability to God. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (Isaiah 66:2). The tables for daily Bible reading have proved invaluable among the community of Christadelphians in encouraging this all important practice.

The allotted readings for November are 2 Chronicles 30 to 36, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Acts 10 to 28, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon.

## 2 CHRONICLES 30 TO 36

Hezekiah was one of the few good kings who reigned over the kingdom of Judah. Notice his insistence upon a thorough observance of the law of God commanded through Moses (chap. 30). He "wrought that which was good and right and truth before the Lord his God" (chap. 31:20). He possessed unbounded faith. When threatened by Sennacherib he encouraged the people by saying, "with him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles" (chap. 32:8). The discomfiture of the Assyrian hosts was a vindication of the power of the Lord God of Israel. The same power is operative today on behalf of all who trust in Him.

Manasseh and Amon were idolatrous kings, as were all the remaining kings except Josiah (chaps. 34 and 35). He cleansed the land of idols, revived the reading of the law, and celebrated the Passover. He is an example of enthusiastic service and robust faith. The last king of Judah was Zedekiah, whose career was cut short by the invasion of the Babylonians. Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple razed to the ground, and the people taken captive. The throne of David was overturned, never again to be restored "until he comes whose right it is" (Ezekiel 21:24). It has been covenanted to Christ (Luke 1:32), who will reign thereupon at his second coming (Matt. 25:31).

## EZRA, NEHEMIAH

These two books describe the return of the captives from Babylon, and their re-establishment in the land of Palestine as a subject province of the Persian Empire. Ezra records two separate returns, one in the first year of Cyrus, 536 B.C. (chap. 1:1), and the other in the reign of Artaxerxes (Longimanus), 458 B.C. (chap. 7:1). These returned Jews were the ancestors of the population inhabiting Palestine when Jesus was born, and this period of Israelitish history strikingly illustrates the ways of Providence in directing the affairs of his people for their ultimate well-being. Notice the enthusiasm and willingness which characterized the returned exiles (chap. 1:6; 3:5); also their insistence upon separation from the alien peoples who had inhabited their land during their absence (chap. 4:3).

Owing to continued opposition the work of rebuilding was arrested for about half a century, but resumed under the personal direction of Ezra. His prayer of contrition (chap. 9) is a beautiful example of humility, and his

reform of the mixed marriages (chap. 10) an illustration of the separation enjoined upon the servants of God in all ages.

Nehemiah's book is mainly his autobiography, relating his sorrow for his own land and people whilst he was cup-bearer, in exile, to the king of Persia. It describes the permission granted for his return, and the work he performed in maintaining the confidence of his people. He was a man of prayer (chaps. 1:5; 2:4), of unbounded faith (chaps. 2:20; 4:20), and of indomitable courage (chap. 6:3). The spirit of his life is expressed in his answer to those that sought his life. "Should such a man as I flee?" (chap. 6:11). The same spirit of fearlessness in doing the work of God will characterize all His true servants. Nehemiah encouraged the reading of the law (chap. 8, 8), and a strict observance of the things written therein (chap. 8, 15). His petition to God with which he closes his book is expressive of the mind of all who trust in Him. "Remember me, O my God, for good" (chap. 13:31).

## ESTHER

The reason for the inclusion of this book among the inspired writings is doubtless to teach the lesson that God is always mindful of the circumstances and needs of His people. The book does not even mention God, but it clearly reveals His unseen workings. The disgrace of Vashti, the crowning of Esther as queen, the subsequent advance of Mordecai, the hanging of Haman, and the slaughter of his confederates, were all links in a chain of events by which the Jews were preserved, and the divine purpose in them furthered. God has decreed that Israel, though persecuted, shall survive, shall remain separate, and shall ultimately be restored as a nation to their own land. Every age has produced its Hamans, who have been set upon the destruction of Israel, but by means similar to those employed in the days of Esther, God has thwarted their evil designs and saved His people. The closing words of this book describe the advancement of Mordecai and foreshadow the honoured position of Jesus as their final deliverer. "He was great among the Jews, and accepted the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed" (chap. 10:3).

## HOSEA

Hosea's mission was mainly to the northern kingdom of Israel, during the reign of Jeroboam II. The prevailing wickedness and apostasy of the nation was shown by the figure of a harlot being taken to wife by the prophet. The names of her children (chap. 1:4 to 9) were expressive of God's rejection of the people. "I will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel" (verse 4). True to her character, the woman subsequently left the prophet, but he was afterwards commanded by God to take her back (chap. 3:1). This prefigured the mercy and forgiveness which God

would extend to His people in their final restoration (chap. 3:5). The book contains many pictures of Israel's depravity. "There is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land" (chap. 4:1). "Israel is defiled" (chap. 5:3). "Ephraim is like a silly dove; they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria" (chap. 7:11). Judgments were to follow in the wake of their unfaithfulness. "They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind" (chap. 8:7). The book contains many gracious promises of ultimate blessing. "The number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand . . . it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God" (chap. 1:10). "I will break the bow and the sword, and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely" (chap. 2, 18). "He hath torn, and he will heal us . . . after two days will he revive us, in the third day he will raise us up" (chap. 3:2). Already half of Israel's third day of a thousand years, since her captivity, has passed, and the time of her healing is close at hand. The prophet's closing exhortations are equally applicable to-day. "Return unto the Lord thy God" (chap. 14:1). "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them" (chap. 14:9).

#### JOEL

No information is available concerning the time of Joel's prophecy, though conjectural evidence points to an early date in the history of the divided kingdom of Israel and Judah. Chapter 1 describes the ravages of locusts upon the land of Israel. This visitation is portrayed as a divine judgment upon the people for their hypocrisy and idolatry. It is evident, however, that the plague of locusts had a figurative application. "A nation is come up upon my land" (chap. 1:6). "O Lord, give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them" (chap. 2:17). Four distinct invasions are alluded to under the figures of the palmerworm, the locust, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar (chap. 1:4). The figure suggests the same idea as indicated in the vision of Daniel's four beasts (Dan. 7). These represented the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman invasions, and probably Joel's prophecy alluded to the same events. Joel speaks of coming blessedness. "The Lord will be jealous for his land and pity his people" (chap. 2:18). "I will remove from you the northern army" (chap. 2:20). "Ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God" (chap. 2:26). Chapter 3 describes the gathering of the nations upon the mountains of Israel in the latter days, when the kingdoms of men will be finally abolished, and the God of Israel known and adored in all the earth.

#### AMOS

Amos was contemporary with Hosea and Isaiah, and prophesied in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, and Jeroboam II., king of Israel. His

utterances reveal the decadence of the entire nation, making them ripe (like the basket of summer fruit, chap. 8) for the impending divine judgments. The prophet also foretold the outpouring of wrath upon the surrounding districts, Damascus (chap. 1:3), Gaza (chap. 1:6), Tyrus (chap. 1:9), Ammon (chap. 1:13), and Moab (chap. 2, 1). Judah and Israel were also to be punished for their ingratitude (chap. 2, 9), their oppression and idolatry (chap. 4). Notice the references to their special privileges (chap. 3:2), and to their final blessedness when "the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed" (chap. 9:14). This prophecy will be fulfilled when Israel is regathered, and Christ, their Messiah, reigns over them.

#### OBADIAH

This prophecy concerns primarily two nations, Edom and Israel. Edom was proverbially an enemy of Israel. She refused Israel passage through her land in the days of Moses. She was proud and arrogant (verses 3 and 4), and added to Israel's afflictions (verses 10 and 11). Obadiah foretold her extinction, and history proves the truth of his prophecy. There is no doubt that Edom's downfall characterizes the overthrow of all the enemies of Israel. "The day of the Lord is near upon all the heathen" (verse 15). The prophet's message concludes with a reference to the final triumph of Israel, when "upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and saviors shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau, and the kingdom shall be the Lord's" (verse 21).

#### ACTS 10 TO 28

The case of Cornelius (chap. 10) is important as showing that good living is insufficient to commend a man to God without correct belief. Notice how often baptism is taught in the Acts. Paul was baptized (chap. 9:18), the Philippian jailor (chap. 16:33), and the Corinthian believers (chap. 18:8). Chapter 19 shows that even baptism must be accompanied by right understanding. Another feature of the Acts is the prominence given to the doctrine of the resurrection. Paul preached about it at Antioch (chap. 13:30), at Thessalonica (chap. 17:3), at Athens (chap. 17:31), at Jerusalem (chap. 22:15). It was the basis of his defence before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa, and it was the theme of his preaching when a prisoner in Rome (chap. 28:23). Many glimpses are supplied of Paul's righteous character, notably his patience under trial (chap. 16:19), his zeal (chap. 17:2), his tact (chap. 17:23), his love of the brethren (chap. 20:2), his earnestness (chap. 20:31), his faith (chap. 27:23). These traits of character justified the apostle in declaring, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1).

#### COLOSSIANS

This epistle was written to combat the growth of worldly philosophy and intellectual pride. In Jesus alone are "hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (chap. 2:3). The only knowledge worth acquiring is "the knowledge of God's will" (chap. 1:9). It finds expression in a desire to be like Christ (chap. 3:10). This change is effected at the outset by baptism (chap. 2:12), and is sustained by holiness and purity of life (chap. 3). Those who endeavor to be like Christ in character will be made like him in nature at his coming (chap. 3:4).

#### THESSALONIANS

The cardinal doctrine of these two epistles is the second coming of Christ. There is at least one distinct reference to it in every chapter. (See 1:10; 2:19; 4:16; 2 Thess. 1:8; 3:5.) These epistles were written to encourage the believers to patiently wait and prepare for it.

#### TIMOTHY, TITUS

These epistles contain an abundance of precepts for the observance of godly men and women. They must be readers of the Word (1 Tim. 4:13), pure in heart and mind (Titus 2:11), peacemakers (1 Tim. 6:6), grave, temperate, sound in faith (Titus 2:1), in all things, patterns of good works (Titus 2:7).

#### PHILEMON

As a personal letter from one servant of God to another, this epistle illustrates true brotherly love. It breathes the Spirit of sacrifice, humility, service, and devotion, and portrays the courtesy, sympathy, and kindness which should exist among all the servants of Christ. It was written by Paul when a prisoner at Rome, and is an intercession with Philemon for Onesimus, who was a runaway slave.

### As Ye See the Day Approaching

We are living in the very end of the age. How we should be stirred and moved by the signs and events of our times! Truly, these are the most exciting of times in all of history. These are the times just prior to the coming of our Lord in power and great glory to establish the Kingdom of God upon earth. These times are clearly foretold in the pages of the Holy Scriptures; as we know and are firmly persuaded to declare the Truth that Yahweh has revealed.

Day by day we see headlines in the news of trouble in the Middle East. The trouble is increasing in intensity and in complexity with each passing year. Israel, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Iran and others beside, are all, as it were, a seething caldron. The State of Israel is surrounded by

hostile Arab Nations which have waged war against it several times throughout its fifty-six year history as a newly restored nation. The Palestinians are in a state of siege against Israel, having been in open intifada (uprising) for the past three and one half years. Israel has been forced to build a wall of separation between themselves and the Palestinians living in the territory known as the West Bank. That wall is nearing completion and runs roughly along most of the western edge of the West Bank. The wall is an attempt on Israel's part to reduce the number of suicide bombings carried out by Palestinians and Arabs opposed to Israel's presence in the land. They claim that Israel is illegally occupying Arab lands.

What they do not take into account, though, is the fact that the land is Yahweh's! The land has been covenanted to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and to their seed singular and plural. Yahoshua Meshiah, of course, is the seed singular and the seed plural are all in him; whether from among the Jews or from among the Gentiles, after judgment and immortalization. Hundreds and hundreds of people have died in these attacks and in shootings. Many raids and arrests have been made by Israel in attempts to stop the bombings and killings. Over the last two months, two leaders from Hamas, a terrorist organization, have been assassinated by the Israeli government. Hamas has vowed massive vengeance on Israel for these assassinations and Israel prepares and braces for more violent attacks, foiling them whenever and wherever it can. Still, inexorably, incidents occur and more people are shot, maimed or die in the terrible violence.

Israel's government has chosen a policy of hitting the terrorists quickly and with deadly force, threatening continued assassination to the upper echelon of Hamas and Hezbollah. Their quick and tough response to any terrorist attacks is fanning even more hatred in the Arab world. The Arabs perceive Israel as an oppressive power. Some are comparing the Jews to the Nazis. From a Jewish standpoint, however, their actions are merely defensive. The war has been long, costly and terrible. It would seem from a natural standpoint that there will be no end. However, we know that there is an end determined! We know the denouement! Israel will learn - as will all of the nations - that true and lasting peace will only come when righteousness fills the earth. Righteousness will only come as a result of the nations learning to do righteousness. They will only learn to do righteousness as a result of Yahweh's judgments being executed in the earth. The see-saw, back and forth, tit for tat exacting of vengeance will never bring righteousness or peace. It is written in Holy Scripture: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts." (Zech 4:6)

Al Qaeda has increased its ranks greatly by teaming up with Iraqi guerrillas and insurgents after the toppling of Saddam Hussein's regime. This past month they showed their new muscle in attacks in Amman, Jordan; Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; Damascus, Syria; and in the Red Sea port of Yanbu, pertaining to Saudi Arabia. Many of those now fighting for al Qaeda are former Special Republican Guards who had served under Saddam. They are highly trained in urban, chemical and biological warfare. These new recruits to this terrorist organization are willing to lay down their lives for the cause of Islam. It is important to keep in mind that these terrorists are extremists of the most radical stamp. The terrorist strikes indicate how easily and how far al Qaeda can reach with deadly force in its horrible attacks. They have quite visibly shown just how close they are in being able to strike directly at Israel and from multiple borders simultaneously. They have shown that they have obviously infiltrated the highest levels of security in Syria, Saudi Arabia and in Jordan. The thrones of these three mentioned kingdoms are very uneasy since these attacks manifested the gaping breaches in their security systems. The foiled chemical attack intended for targets in Jordan also was intended for the Adam Bridge, gateway into Israel! Jordanian authorities seized trucks containing 20 tons of toxic chemicals! They estimated that these chemicals could have taken out 80,000 people.

It is clear that al Qaeda has greatly increased its reach and potential theatre of operations throughout the whole of the Middle East. Syrians, Iraqis and many other nationalities throughout the region are now among the ranks of the terrorist organization. This means they can use local nationals in the nations where they stage their operations. This also means they can mole invisibly into the security systems of the various nations. In the world of espionage transparency is the all-important necessity. It is also quite clear that the potential for non-conventional warfare is much higher now throughout the Middle East, as the foiled attack in Jordan shows. That attack was very narrowly avoided! And as mentioned above, Israel was a direct target! In the attacks in Syria, Iraqis and Syrians were used. Syrians who had gone to Iraq a year earlier to help fight the coalition forces and help Saddam Hussein, joined ranks with al Qaeda after his fall and were part of the attack in Damascus. Islam is one of the fastest growing religions in the earth at present. This indicates the terrible gross darkness that covers the earth and its peoples in these latter days. People will believe anything but the truth. They love darkness rather than light. This is because their deeds are evil. They will not come to the light, even if they perceive in some way that it is the light. The whole earth lieth in wickedness. We know, also, that the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. With the swelling of the Islamic ranks in Europe and elsewhere throughout the earth, comes the potential for

increasing the ranks of al Qaeda and other radical Islamic terrorist organizations

We are living in the days just prior to our Master's return. We are living during the long period of the outpouring of the Sixth Vial upon the Euphratian powers. That period has been running since 1820-23! Islam is the uniting force of the geo-political system throughout the region. The various radical terrorist organizations are a manifestation of the division and bitter hatred that lies between east and west. Since the Euphratian powers are obnoxious to the Sixth Vial, it would appear that there will be a continued presence on the Arabian Peninsula of United States and British forces; and probably this could include other allied forces such as Canadian and Australian, etc. The very fact that al Qaeda, Hamas, Hezbollah and others are so active throughout the whole area; there seems to be the need for the allied forces to weaken or "tame" these radical elements to some extent to bring the drying effect of the Euphrates to a more perfect fulfillment. Remember that one of the prerequisites for Gog's invasion of the land of Israel is that Israel dwell safely; having neither walls, bars nor gates.

"And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords: Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet: Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all his bands: and many people with thee. Be thou prepared, and prepare for thyself, thou, and all thy company that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard unto them. After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them. Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee. Thus saith the Lord GOD; It shall also come to pass, that at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought: and thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, to take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land. Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of

Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?" (Ezek 38:3-13)

Israel is far from that scenario at present. She is in constant peril and danger. Every hour she must be vigilant. Qassam 2 rockets, suicide bombers, booby-trapped vehicles, landmines, gunfire and nuclear threats from enemy powers at present bar the fulfillment of this prophecy. We know it shall surely come to pass exactly as is written and has been on record for so many years. May we wait with patience, striving to be prepared for that glorious day of deliverance which awaits the true sons of Deity? Let us each hold fast, knowing that the time is nearly at hand.

Bro. David VanPelt

## Hymn 162

Come, let us anew our journey pursue,  
Roll round with the year,  
And never stand still till the Master appear,  
His adorable will let us gladly fulfill,  
And our talents improve,  
By the patience of hope, and the labour of love.

Our journey through these days of our probation MUST be a labour of love. Each day through the year we must renew our commitment to Him. Never standing still or thinking that we can slide right into the Kingdom, or "rest on our laurels" as some say. We must continually strive to work out our salvation, in patience and hope.

O, that each in the day of His coming may say,  
"I have fought my way through;  
I have finish'd the work Thou didst give me to do."  
O that each from his Lord may receive the glad word,  
"Well, and faithfully done!  
Enter into My joy, and sit down on My throne."

Do we fight our way through? Will we each be able to say, "I have finished the work Thou gave me to do?" Or, did we not have time that day? Or, not feel like working? Or, had some better thing to do? Oh! Maybe the weather wasn't right. We all have our excuses. Can we ever do enough? Emphatically, NO!

Yet, we MUST do our part.

And, we MUST have HOPE of forgiveness, mercy, acceptance.

OH! THE JOY!

## Meditations

The truth is sacred: it is God's property: and should be handled accordingly. Those who hold it, possess a talent for which they will have to render solemn account. The truth has not been given by God for the gratification of any carnal lust It has been given for God's glory. Let those who fight for the truth remember this—both in lecturing, exhorting, and debating. Let them "earnestly contend for the faith." Let them keep silent rather than contend merely for the sake of a mental combat, or for the purpose of displaying their abilities, or of injuring an opponent in the personal sense. God takes delight in an earnest contender, but a pretender. He abominates. "What has thou to do to declare My statutes?" is the divine rebuke to the latter. An insincere speaker (and falseness will show itself) is also a very unprofitable spectacle to man. The characteristics of such an one are: abuse, sophistry, carping, self-assertion, etc.

Men who aim at promoting God's glory work upon the lines that He has laid down. In fact His glory can be advanced in no other way. They make known His word faithfully (Jer. 23:28), they fear not to declare the whole counsel of God (Acts. 20:27), they speak as the Oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:11), meekly (1 Pet. 3:15), boldly (Ephes. 6:20), and without respect of persons (Jas. 2:1). Men who "give attendance to (Bible) reading" have to brave the opprobrium of being called by very unpleasant names. The world hates an open Bible. If we occupy our spare moments in reading the newspaper, nothing will be said. If we occupy but a twentieth part of the time in reading the Bible, the result is—What? This is a question that Bible-readers can feelingly answer. The trial though discouraging is designed to work good. It will strengthen character, and lead the way to great reward. It will train us to be "strong and very courageous." Let us not forget that there is a book of remembrance written for them that fear the Lord and think upon His name (Mal. 3:16). The world is very wicked. This is evidenced by its shameful antagonism to the Bible and its faithful readers. As it was in Christ's day so is it now—the Word everywhere, but its contents shamefully despised. Then Moses was lauded, whilst his teaching was ignored. Now Jesus is lauded, whilst his doctrines are blasphemed. Now, as then, a fearful time of retribution is ahead. The world-wide distribution of the Bible involves a responsibility which men but little dream of. Ere long they will be brought to their senses. "Their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because

they have cast away the law of the Lord of Hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel” (Is. 5:24).

Oh the folly of poor puny man! Although he cannot make a fly, nor foretell the events of to-morrow—although a headache will incapacitate him, and a little poison extinguish him—yet he hesitates not to sit in judgment on the ways of God. Inability to explain the will of God in permitting evil to prevail upon the earth, is not a logical reason for affirming that God has cruelly blundered in the matter. The withholding of full light concerning it may be a part of the means by which He has afforded us scope for displaying that confidence which is the reasonable ground of acceptance with Him. With a smaller estimation of our own demonstrably imperfect and untrustworthy judgments, we should be more inclined to adopt a wise view of the question.

If God had power to foresee the evil—to foretell it—to manipulate events throughout it—to determine its length—to appoint a glorious future as the outcome of it (and the Scriptures show that He had the power in each of these respects), can we question His wisdom in permitting it? “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” Surely His power and intelligence, especially His goodness as in the Gospel seen, compel us to trust Him on points whereon He has not fully spoken. Let us follow Abraham, who halted not, but believed when brought face to face with incomprehensible items in the Divine communications. The beginning of wisdom is to believe that God in all things knows best, and to believe that His mind is infallibly revealed in His Word. Apart from this conviction there can be no mental rest, but perplexing uncertainty and miserable speculation.

“If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another’s feet” (John 13:14). The lesson here is too plain to be misunderstood. We may travesty the words, as the Man of Sin has recently done, by literally construing them; or we may, which is far more likely, give them the go-by. The lesson was needed, or it would not have been given. The humility inculcated is not natural to us. Unreformed man is proud and consequential—he loves a position of authority. Let us not confound humility with shyness—with that mental imperfection which makes the head droop, the face blush, which inclines us to take a back seat, and robs us of our courage. Christ’s humility was active and practical—it had back-bone and go about it. Let us develop it. It is not always agreeable to take the place of a servant, especially to those whom we think our inferiors. But this is what Christ requires—an industrious, loving humility—a serving of others (irrespective of their standing) as occasions offer. Our mission is to serve—to do good—and every position of life in which we may be placed, will provide us with countless opportunities. If

we realise our mission—if we are obedient to the words of Christ—there will be no haughtiness, no domineering, no supposed superiority. It is not necessary that there should be any abandonment of ecclesial or social positions to carry out Christ’s precept. The thing is for every one, be he father or child, master or servant, presiding brother or hall-keeper, to see that he fills his position, not for his own selfish ends, but as a means of blessing to others.

The Christadelphian 1890

## “Not Ashamed To Call Them Brethren”

(Hebrews 2:11)

Numerous, friendly, and liberal subscribers, we thank you one and all for enabling us to continue this feeble work in manifestation of the truth in the midst of weaknesses and distresses, labours and wearinesses, in which we all have our part for Christ’s sake. The work is effective for its objects, notwithstanding the babblements and brabblements of a loud-voiced and unbelieving generation. Your letters are the evidence of this. We would write you each one did time allow. Let this answer for all.

Unfriendly subscribers, who pitch your subscriptions with a growl, we thank you also. Your words are bracing, though disagreeable — bracing because disagreeable. Your cold words and ways help to keep down the natural man, who is liable in a warm hand to rise like the toy bottle-imp. Your incivilities give us an opportunity of obeying the commandment, which directs us to “pray for them that despitefully use and afflict us.” Of course, it would be pleasanter to have your courtesy and your good words; but that is not always the best which is the sweetest. We know whom and what we are working for, and we must need exercise the right claimed by every man of judging which is the best way of carrying out his own part. That we do not please you is a grief: that we try to please many “for their good unto edification,” as Paul commands, is a consolation that will offset the grief to the last moment. You have our best wishes. When there is a chance of doing you good, be sure and let us know.

Bro. Robert Roberts - 1882

## “Confess Your Faults One To Another”

On this matter of holiness, let us remember one thing; our main problem is within ourselves, our own heart, the “law of sin within our members”. Let us extend to others the charitableness we give ourselves.

We can find so many excuses for our own shortcomings. We fail many times a day. We know we fail. We put it down to the weakness of the flesh and pray for forgiveness and go right ahead good friends with ourselves - not to much concern about these so easily self-excused manifestations of the diabolos. Perhaps we even admire ourselves a little for our sincere repentance and determination to press on again.

Why cannot we be at least as charitable toward the weakness of others? Why do we judge them with so much stricter a rule than ourselves? Can we not believe that they too realize that it is the flesh, and that they too are striving against it just as we are?

There is a well-known passage in the book of James –“The fervent, effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”

But do we know the rest of the verse? Do we know what comes just before this, and is part of the same thought?

It is a very important aspect. It would solve many wounds, draw us as a Body far closer together, strengthen and comfort us all in the struggle for life. It is this – “Confess your faults one to another, and pray for one another”.

Much estrangement, much bitterness, much coldness between brethren, is due to a failure to realize that others are fighting the same hard battle against the same diabolos as we are - struggling hard though they often appear to fail.

They know they fail and recognize and deplore their failure, and are striving to overcome. But these things are too often locked up in our hearts. We are too isolated and reserved. We just can not bring ourselves to the point of laying them out in the open.

And so we lose one of the greatest beauties of true fellowship. We judge and are judged according to the public outward manifestations of our mutual enemy the diabolos, rather than by the sincere and agonizing secret inward efforts to overcome it.

How often we regret a word or action, and would so much like to blot it out and start over: But unless we say so others will judge us by the fleshly action, and not by the spiritual regret, and so estrangement and misunderstanding grow.

We are engaged in a deadly war against the same great Enemy. In this struggle, let us keep our lines of communication open so we can support one another. Let us frankly admit we are having a hard time with our diabolos; perhaps we can help each other on to victory together - where alone we each would fail.

Bro. G. V. Growcott

## Is It Possible for the Truth to be discovered - apart from the writings of Dr. Thomas?

The question forming a title to this article needs to be considered as it appears more and more brethren and sisters think it is possible for individuals to come to an understanding of the Gospel by their own personal study of the Bible, independently of Christadelphian sources.

This short article endeavors to answer "no" to that question, and seeks to show that The Truth can only be discovered by recourse to the expositions of Dr Thomas, or those writings based on his works and usually published by The Christadelphians.

By "the Truth" we mean the whole Truth - not just parts of it - but the complete Truth that brings salvation. A "part Truth," even if 99% is not efficacious for salvation. There have been many individuals and groups that have parts of the Truth. Dr. Thomas had it all.

### The basic Premise

1. The Truth – the whole, complete Truth – was revived by the hand of Dr. Thomas. Anyone who cannot affirm that statement is, of course, in error. There should be no question as to the truth of this.

2. It is abundantly clear by a review of the Dr.'s life that he was a providential man; that is to say, Yahweh used him to re-discover the Truth from the dark morass of Christendom. Anyone who cannot affirm that statement is ignorant of the history that led Dr. Thomas from his Baptist background in Great Britain, through the perils of a transatlantic journey to America that greatly exercised his mind, and prepared him for the associations with Campbellism, and on finally to make his Confession and Abjuration in 1847.

3. Dr. Thomas did not have the power of the Holy Spirit. In fact, it is of paramount importance to recognize that Dr. Thomas did not possess the power of the Holy Spirit. Anyone who does so affirm is in error themselves, failing to understand that Holy Spirit possession is not a characteristic of the revived Truth. They have also failed to understand the work of Dr. Thomas who sought to bring the Scriptures to the attention of men and women without reference an application of the Holy Spirit as it was outpoured in the First Century. The fact that Dr. Thomas did not possess the Spirit actually makes the achievement of reviving Apostolic Truth more remarkable.

### Why only Bro. Thomas?

1. It is very clear from the various writings that are available regarding Dr. Thomas that he was a unique and highly intelligent man. He had the determination and mental capacity to independently review the Scriptures for himself, and find the One Hope of Israel; the Gospel of salvation in its

entirety – not just parts of it. Yet it took him 15 years to do so. We are often asked to believe, or consider, that someone can rediscover the Truth themselves, and (probably) in a substantially shorter period of time! If this is true, then the individual(s) must either be of a vastly superior intellect to Bro. Thomas, or that Bro. Thomas was not that unique after all. Anyone could have revived the Truth!

2. Those that held the same beliefs as Dr. Thomas were later named "The Christadelphians". They became the holders of the Truth in the latter days. Why would it be necessary for the Deity to providentially direct others to the One Hope independently of Christadelphian writings?

A correct understanding of Apocalypse chapter 11 provides an outline of the work of Dr. Thomas in the revival of The Two Witnesses. The Statement that Dr. Thomas is referred to in the Apocalypse is often met with surprise and skepticism, but it is true. While he is obviously not mentioned by name in Apocalypse chapter 11, the great work of reviving the Truth is clearly set forth. The Two Witnesses lay dead and unburied for three and a half (105) day/years which terminated in 1789. Dr. Thomas recognized himself that in the Providence of God he was an instrument in the rediscovery of Apostolic Truth (see Appendix A)

Bro. Roberts' view

Bro. Roberts clearly saw that the Truth had been revived by Dr. Thomas. In 1898 he wrote "In the writings of Dr. Thomas, the Truth is developed as a finality, and that they are a depot of the Christian doctrine. In this sense we are "committed" to Dr. Thomas.- (see also Appendix B)

The Berean Position

The details set forth above are supported by the stand taken by the Berean Fellowship. A consideration of the "Christadelphian Baptismal Interview" (as it appeared in The Berean Christadelphian for December 1980 (page 413), will confirm this view. While the Questions are not used by every Berean ecclesia, it must surely embody the Truth accepted by all Berean ecclesias.

Question 1 asks "Do you believe that the Christadelphians hold the true teachings of the Bible?" [The expected answer is "yes"]

Question 2 asks "Do you know of any other religious body other than the Christadelphians who teach the true Gospel?" [The answer expected from the Candidate is "no"]

Why is Question 2 asked? It is obviously not just seeking for information! The examining brother is not interested if the candidate perhaps happens to know of anyone else who believes the same as the Christadelphians.

The question is specifically designed to ensure that the candidate does not believe that it is possible for another religious Group to have the One

Saving Truth. Why? Because it is believed by faithful Christadelphians that the Truth has only come via the writings of Dr. Thomas; and has subsequently being formulated in the (faithful) writings of the Christadelphians. It cannot be discovered outside of this channel.

It is not acceptable to say that a religious group is not in existence, but individuals may be. How many make up a group?

In Conclusion

The issue is simple. The Truth has been discovered in the providential writings of Dr. Thomas and are now deposited in the writings and teachings of The Christadelphians where such hold to the original sound expositions. The position is well stated in an article by Bro. Emmitt W. Banta found in the Berean Christadelphian Ecclesial News magazine for August 2005. Bro. Banta wrote:

"Without the books of brethren Thomas and Roberts, the Truth of God would still be buried in the rubbish of clerical apostate theology, and Egyptian darkness would still prevail throughout the earth. But thanks be to God, we have been drawn into this Great Light that has newly arisen in the earth, that a people might be prepared for the coming of the Lord, to give light to the watchers on the walls of Zion, so that they might answer with authority the query– "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night; if will enquire, enquire ye: return, come." (Isa.21:11-12)

Bro. Phillip Hughes

Appendix A

Revival of the Witnessing for Gospel Truth — Apocalypse Chapter 11

Bro. Thomas at the start of this section quotes from a Mr. Bicheno who wrote regarding the crisis of the resurrection of the witnesses and the opening of the Third Woe. On page 659 of Eureka Volume 2 Mr Bicheno wrote:

"We have long been praying 'thy kingdom come,' and is there any probability that the preludes to it are arrived? It is deserving the most serious consideration, whether the revolution in France be not the beginning of the fulfillment of prophecy. I say beginning; for according to the prophecies, if this be the event pointed out by the resurrection of the witnesses, we have as yet seen but the dawn of what is to come, nor shall we perhaps for some time. Black and conflicting clouds will darken the hemisphere and obscure our prospect; but they will spend themselves and vanish. But were we sure that this event (the resurrection of the witnesses) is what we conjecture, yet no man could say how long it would be before 'the Spirit of Life from God,' by those more excellent operations, and in that larger degree, which we look for, enter into the witnesses for gospel truth; for they may be quickened with political life, and yet remain some time with a small share of spiritual

Although the French people are actuated by an astounding zeal for civil and religious liberty, yet their character seems very far from agreeing with what we expect from the witnesses for gospel truth. In the things of religion they

appear to be no further enlightened at present than to see the rights of conscience, and the absurdities and cruel oppressions of the Papal system."

Mr Bicheno while correctly assessing the termination of the three and a half days, could not see the religious element of the Witnesses. On page 670, after outlining the principles of the Truth which he had exhibited in his writings Dr. Thomas wrote an extremely interesting section in which he identified himself as being the instrument for the revival of The Truth:

"Such is the system of truth in outline elaborated by the author from the word as the result of an earnest contention for the faith which, as I have said, continued about twelve years. Its operation on his own mind was to cause him to be immersed; and, being thus put right himself to go forth and show the "straight gate and narrow way" to others. "The Spirit of life from the Deity," which Mr. Bicheno was looking for but did not see, had "entered into the witnesses fir gospel truth," as he expressed it, when in 1847, the Gospel of the Kingdom and Name was once more proclaimed for the obedience of faith. A few congregations had been collected upon this basis in America, and "the earth" has been to some extent impregnated with their principles. These earthborns, however, mix up many traditions with what they have learned, which make the truth of none effect for their salvation. They are known by various names, such as Milerites, Adventists, Storrites, and so forth, who while dissatisfied with their old mother and her daughters, have neither intelligence nor faith enough in the word to become citizens of the downtrodden Holy City. This witnessing society is "too exclusive," "too dogmatic," "too denunciatory of the Christians of other denominations," "makes too much of baptism," to suit them. "

#### Appendix B Bro. Thomas' Work

If God had not raised up in this century a man as Dr. Thomas, our generation would have been stumbling on in the inherited figs which have entirely hidden the teaching of the Bible from view, while glorifying the Bible itself in a certain sentimental way.

It does not appear that the understanding of the Bible has been attained in any other channel. There is a deal of writing about the Bible, etc a deal of smattering in connection with separate and scattered points involved in Bible things.

But where, outside of his work in our day, is to be found that complete mastery of the whole Scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation, which renders the work of God through Israel from the beginning a consistent, connected and progressive thing; which not only does not require the help of human philosophy, but which cannot endure the admixture of it, without being spoiled?

We know not its like in any current system or movement, or in the hands of any teacher or institution of modern life anywhere. If others know of it, we'd be delighted to be introduced with the liberty, however, of thorough independent inspection. We know enough of shams and echoes and abortions to make us very chary.

(RR — The Christadelphian — November 1871)

## What Does That Mean?

“And of Asher he said, Let Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil.” (Deut. 33:24)

What is meant by “let him dip his foot in oil,” could it be a prophecy of the oil in the Middle East?

It is true that these verses containing the blessings were prophetic, but I see them as relating to Israel inheriting the land and in the larger sense to Christ not to petroleum (oil) in that reign.

Prominent born-again Christian oilmen have drilled in specific locations in Israel based on their interpretation of various Scripture references. Mr. Hill invested \$6 million at a drill site near Mount Carmel in the '70s. It came up dry. Mr. Sorelle drilled during the 80's and spent millions on various leases throughout Israel. Mr. Harron spent nearly a decade searching just north of Tel Aviv. There does not appear to be any “oil” in the region of Asher.

The verse is speaking of a blessing of wealth. Only olive oil seems to have been used among the Hebrews. It was one of the most valuable products of the country Ezekiel 16:13 and was very abundant in Galilee, the area Asher inherited. The fatness of the olive was of great value and had many uses in Israel. Oil was a major commerce with Tyre which fell within the borders of Asher. (Ezekiel 27:17)

Olive oil was used for many purposes in Israel:

1. For anointing the body or the hair - Psalm 104:15, Luke 7:46.
2. In some of the offerings - Exodus 29:40, Lev. 7:12, Numbers 6:15 & 15:4.
3. But was excluded from the sin-offering - Lev. 5:11 and the jealousy-offering - Num. 5:15.
4. For burning in lamps - Exodus 25:6 & 27:20, Matt. 25:3.
5. For medicinal purposes - Isaiah 1:6, Luke 10:34, James 5:14.
6. For anointing the dead - Matt. 26:12, Luke 23:56.

The use of it was a sign of gladness – Psalm 92:10, Isaiah 61:3 and its omission a token of sorrow – 2 Sam. 14:2, Matt. 6:17.

To “dip his foot in oil” is referring to the process of treading out the olives to extract the oil. It would indicate an abundance of oil flowing from this process. This would indicate prosperity and wealth. We can contrast this with the sadder times that Micah speaks of, “Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil” (6:15).

When Moses gave Israel this blessing just before his death, he was looking at them as God's Olive tree that was about to be planted in the land. The light, blessing and gladness which come from the fruit of the olive proved to be lacking, so the natural branches have been broken off and the Gentile ecclesia has been grafted (contrary to nature) into the “good olive tree.”

Since we are now part of the good olive tree it is necessary to ask the following questions:

Are we daily treading out the olives to produce oil?  
Are we producing enough oil to make the show-bread for God?

Are we as the Good Samaritan binding up, anointing with oil and healing the wounds of our fellow traveler?

Do we possess the oil of gladness so we rejoice always in the Lord?  
Are our lamps full with oil, ready to meet the bridegroom?  
In short, are our feet “dipped in oil”?