

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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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.

CHRIST IS COMING SOON AND WILL REIGN ON EARTH

Berean Christadelphian Ecclesias

AUSTRALIA

BRISBANE, QLD, Bro. Ted Mingham, 8/2 Denison Ct, Capalaba, Qsld 4157

CANADA

EDMONTON, ALTA, Bro. Steve Armstrong, Box 16, site 440 RR#4, Stony Plain, T7Z 1X4

KINDERSLEY, SASK, Sis. Grace Punter, 24 Rutley Cr, N0E 1Y0

LETHBRIDGE, ALTA, Bro. Michael Bennett, 377 Laval Blv., T1K 3W7

RED DEER, ALTA, Bro. David Blacker, RR. #4, T4N 5E4

RICHARD, SASK, Bro. Sid Jones, RR#1, S0M 2P0

VANCOUVER, BC, Sis. Kaye Yuen, 4639 Caulfield Dr, V7W 1E9

ESTONIA

NARVA, Bro. Alexey Matveev, Kreenholmi, 31-1, 20203

KENYA

KAMUKUWYA, Bro. William Kilui, PO Box 27, Kamukuywa, 50216

KIMILILI, Bro. Rogers Musebe, c/o Kamusinde Secondary School, PO Box 267, 50204

KIMUKUNGI, Bro. Arphaxad Wekati, PO Box 552

KITALE, Bro. Pinon Wekati, (in care of), Kitale Nursing Home, PO Box 1825

KITUI, Bro. David Njoka, PO Box 1, Kitui

MAYANJA, Bro. John W. Simiyu, PO Box 2, Mayanja, Bungoma

MTONDIA, Bro. Fred Omoto, PO Box 1177, Kilifi

NAIROBI, Sis. Mary Agnes Kariuki, PO Box 1582, Kikuyu 00902

NAKALIRA, Bro. Shawn Tyler, PO Box 909, Webuye 50205

ODIADO, Bro. Humphreys O. Budedu, PO Box 142, Bumala

UNITED KINGDOM

HENGOED, Bro. Phillip Hughes, 25 Heol-Y-Gelli Fforchneol Parc, Godreaman, Aberdare, Mid-Glam CF44 6LN

SURREY, Sis. Rachel Johnatty-Theaker, 26 Woodfield Lane, Ashtead, KT21 2BE

UNITED STATES

AUSTIN, TX, Bro. Jim Phillips, 12707 Dove Drive, Buda, TX 78610

BOSTON, MA, Bro. Jim Sommerville, 34 Birch Hill Rd, Northboro, MA 01532

CANTON, OH, Bro. Beryl Snyder, 4095 Prosway SW, Massillon, OH 44646

CHESAPEAKE, VA, Bro. Dale Lee, 321 Woodbridge Drive, 23322

DETROIT, MI, Bro. Fred Higham, 20116 McKishnie, Clinton Twp, 48035

DENVER, CO, Bro. Dave Sargent, 4555 Red Forest Rd, Monument, CO 80132

GAINESVILLE, FL, Sis. Sharon Johnatty, 2730 SW 98th Drive, 32608

GLEN, NH, Bro. Gary Stephen, PO Box 1111, 3 Cow Hill Rd, 03838

HARPER, TX, Bro. Alfred Edwards, 675 KC 442, 78631

HOLLADAY, TN, Bro. Warren Rankin, 699 White Tail Rd, 38341

HOUSTON, TX, Bro. Mike Kramer, 12118 Cloudt Rd, Needville, TX 77461

LAMPASAS, TX, Bro. Charles Banta Jr., 949 County Rd 335, Burnet, TX 78611

LAS CRUCES, NM, Bro. Michael Morrell, 301 N. Roadrunner Pkwy #809, 88011

LITTLE ROCK, AR, Bro. Bob Widding, 4219 Kenyon, 72205

LYNNWOOD, WA, Sis. Gloria Russell, PO Box 123, Lynnwood, WA 98046

MARLOW, OK, Bro. Bob Wolfe, Rt. 2, Box 226, Marlow, 73055

NEWTON, NC, Bro. Mike Murphy, 347 S. College Ave., 28658

PALESTINE, TX, Sis. Mickie Lucas, Route 7, Box 7240, 75801

PORTLAND, OR, Bro. David Burnett, 25321 NE 72nd Ave, Battle Ground WA, 98604

RICHARDSON, TX, Bro. Roy Johnson, 1305 Magnolia, 75086

SAN ANGELO, TX, Bro. Gary Smith, PO Box 447, Blackwell, 79506

TEMPLE, TX, Bro. Daniel Wolfe, 707 Brazos Dr, Temple, TX 76504

WORCESTER, MA, Sis. Jessie Prentice, 29 Ekman St, Worcester, MA, 01607

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 12 months.

Ecclesial News

NARVA, Estonia — Sunday Memorial Meeting, 12 Noon. Bible Class, Weds. 7:30 p.m. Bro. Alexey Matveev, Kreenholmi 31-1, Narva, 20203, Estonia. +37235 61650

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I would like to report about the visit of five brethren and sisters, namely: Bro. Bob Bent (Texas, USA), Sis. Annetta Jones (Sask., Canada), Bro. Phillip, Bro. Matthew and Sis. Liz Hughes (Hengoe Ecclesia, United Kingdom). The visit took place on 19-21, November, 2005. On Sunday morning we all enjoyed the exhortation given by Bro. Matthew Hughes, based on the reading of Joel 3. On Sunday evening we were all very pleased to hear and watch a Power Point Presentation given by Bro. Phillip Hughes on the subject “Kingdom of God.”

That was very sad to see the brethren and sisters departing on Monday. We would like to thank them for their visiting us living in isolation. May God bless them for their endeavors and efforts.

Love in the Truth,
Bro. Alexey Matveev

HOUSTON, Texas – Sunday School 10am (Nazareth Revisited); Memorial 11:10am; Study Class 1pm (Temple of Ezekiel’s Prophecy); 4th Sunday 1pm (Open discussion, roundtable Bible class); Wed. 7:30pm (The Minor Prophets). Meeting Hall address: 8008 Junius Street, Houston, TX 77012.

Dear Brethren and Sisters in Christ Jesus,

On December 4, 2005 the Houston Berean ecclesia held a special ecclesial meeting with the purpose to reaffirm that, “We as a Berean body recognize and accept that a brother or sister who is withdrawn from, is out of fellowship with the whole body and any brother or sister who refuses to recognize this will no longer be recognized as a member of the body.”

After much sincere and heart-wrenching discussion in this meeting, Bro. Shauywn Smith of the Houston ecclesia refused to recognize that Bro. Carwyn Smith was out of the Berean fellowship since September 5, 2005. Therefore, the Houston ecclesia has withdrawn fellowship from Bro. Shauywn.

In addition, Sis. Beth Lorquet and Bro. Joel Pando (while recognizing that Bro. Carwyn was no longer in fellowship); believe that the Houston ecclesia moved hastily to withdraw fellowship from Bro. Shauywn.

Both Sis. Beth and Bro. Joel have indicated they are stepping aside from the Berean fellowship.

Their presence at the table of the Lord will be sorely missed and we pray for each to accept this position on fellowship and to maintain unity of one mind and faith.

On behalf of your brothers and sisters of the Houston Berean ecclesia,
Bro. Mike Kramer, (Recorder)

Kilifi Mtondia Ecclesia: Sunday Memorial Service 11 a.m and Thursday 5 p.m. Bible studies and business meeting Bro. Fred Omoto P. O. Box 1177 Kilifi, Kenya.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We would like to report that our long planned December 9th /11/2005. Gathering was held very successfully, thanks to the visiting brothers. Bro. Humphrey Odaba , and Bro. Francis Okama , who did an excellent job as speakers. The lessons were: Why God created Man and God’s promises to Abraham. During the Sunday Memorial Service the exhortation was about UNITY. We appreciated their efforts and, therefore, thank them very much and pray to our Heavenly Father to keep them under His care at all times.

Sisters were very much grateful for the lecture and advice they received from Sister Judith Odaba, which will help them participate positively towards the growth of the Ecclesia and also enable them to understand their role in the day to day Ecclesial activities.

GOOD NEWS:

At the end of the Gathering we witnessed the baptism of Stephen Mbita and Beatrice Sinamoyo Ngala. After their excellent confession of the faith during the interviews, before the visiting brethren, they were immersed and offered the right hand of fellowship at a Memorial Meeting.

Sincerely this was a very wonderful moment, therefore I appeal to all brethren who may be able to reach us in any way any time that you are most welcome.

May God keep us in His loving care and on behalf of the Mtondia Ecclesia, Your brother in Christ, Bro. Fred W. Omoto

LAMPASAS, Texas — S.S. & Study Class 9:50 am: Memorial 11:00 am: Eureka Class 1:15 pm: Lecture 4th Sunday 1:30 pm: Bible Class Wednesdays 7:30 pm: Fraternal Gathering 2nd weekend in June: Bro. Charles Banta Jr., 949 CR335, Burnet, TX 78611: Tel: 512-756-6298

Dear Brethren and Sisters,

Since our last news we have had the following visitors. From the Belton Ecclesia, Bro. Lee Smith; From the Austin Ecclesia, Bro. Jim and Sis. Kay Phillips, Bro. Mark and Sis. Naomi Braune, Bro. Matt Brown, Bro. Seth Brown, Sis. Shiloh Brown, Sis. Lori Gustavsson; From the Marlow Ecclesia, Bro. Bob and Sis. Sharon Wolfe; From the Houston Ecclesia, Sis. Sarah Brown, Sis. Juanita Reiss, Sis. Susan Sumler, Sis. Marie Cassidy. Bro. Jim Phillips and Bro. Seth Brown gave us words of exhortation and lectured. In October many from Lampasas and other locations went on a bus trip to the Tennessee Fraternal Gathering. They enjoyed the trip and the Fraternal Gathering.

On October 16 we had a joint study weekend between the Austin Ecclesia and the Lampasas Ecclesia. The theme of the study weekend was "The Parables." This was uplifting to have a joint effort between the two ecclesias.

On October 23 we had the baptism of Sis. Ruthie Hall after giving a good examination on the Saturday night. We hope she will hold on to the Truth and be ready when our Master appears. We rejoice in her baptism. May the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob be with her in her life in the Truth. She is the daughter of our Bro. David and Sis. Lois VanPelt.

On October 30 we welcomed Bro. Craig Kiley back in our ecclesia from his long stay in Alaska in isolation.

On November 17 Bro. George Hurst Jr. and Sis. Juanita Reiss were united in marriage. May God be with them in their new life and that they may faithfully help one another to attain the prize of life eternal.

We have some sad news to report. On December 11 Sis. Norma Ruth Smith and Bro. Aaron Lucas joined the Central Fellowship. Bro. Lyndel Lucas has left our fellowship and plans to join Central later.

May Yahweh help those ecclesias who are going through great trials and may He keep Bro. Joshua Garvey in the hollow of His hand.

Love to all in the Hope of Israel,
Bro. Charles W. Banta Jr, Recorder

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

The Lord bless thee and keep thee, the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace,

Over the last year our ecclesia has had a few visitors around the table of our Lord, bro. Jim Rankin (3 times), sis. Terri Rankin, bro. Len & sis Pam Naglieri, bro. Jim & sis Kathy Sommerville, sis. Kay Stinchcomb. We would thank our brothers Rankin and Naglieri for the words fitly spoken.

On the 27th and 28 of August last we held our annual Sunday school picnic. We would thank all those who took the time and expense to come. It is always profitable to associate with those of like precious faith. When, together we can put our minds toward the beauty and richness of God's holy written word.

With that thought in mind sister Becky and I met a few from the Detroit ecclesia, bro. Fred and sis. Ruthie Higham and sis. Kay Stinchcomb, in a park at Sandusky, Ohio for the memorial service one Sunday. Sitting in brother Fred's motor home with its view of the snow covered ground and the waves chopping across Lake Erie one could feel a sense of the glory and majesty of God's creation. We could see a family of ducks taking shelter from the wind and the waves while we held in our hands, our bibles, the shelter that God has provided for us. Later on in the afternoon while having lunch together we were able to watch a large flock of gulls feeding in the lake. Continuing to demonstrate how God provides that which is necessary.

Sadly, we know there were only be a few who will make use of the shelter that God has provided. Only a small number who will live up to their professed faith and truly deny themselves all ungodliness and worldly lusts, finding their provision in self sacrificing service to our heavenly Father.

Blessed be Jehovah. Israel's God, to all eternity. Let all the people say Amen. Praise to the Lord give ye.

Bro. Beryl Snyder

RICHARD, Sask. Sunday School @ 10:00 AM; Memorial Meeting @ 11:20 AM; Week night Bible Class Wed. @ 8:00 PM. Bro. Sid Jones, R.R.#1, Richard, Sask., Canada, S0M 2P0, Ph. 306-246-4468. Email:sc.jones@sasktel.net.

Our dear Brethren and Sisters in Christ Jesus,

Our love and greetings to all of you from the members here at the Richard ecclesia.

Over the past months, we have seen many things happen throughout the brotherhood, several who have joined the race toward the kingdom of God, some members who have fallen asleep and are now awaiting the trumpet call in that long awaited day, and many events and changes in the world in general, many of which are clear indications that the time allotted in Yahweh's plan for man to have his sway over the earth is drawing to a close.

May we all be able to cheer, and strengthen one another in the most holy faith, and assist one another in the work of stewards of the gospel of Christ..

Here in Richard, we just recently had the pleasure of watching the young present their year's learning at our annual Sunday School Program. It is an encouragement in itself to see the young grow in knowledge. They are the next generation, who we pray will carry on the work should the Lord remain away.

We have also had the pleasure of visits from various ones from other parts of the Lord's vineyard, Sis. Brenda McChesney, of the Edmonton ecclesia

joined us around the table of the Lord, as she and her husband Noel made their way to and from the October gathering in Tennessee. Bro Lynn Osborne has also been with us on a few occasions, and has lent us his assistance by bringing the word of exhortation, at some of these times. We are grateful for the company of those of like precious faith, and for those who minister to us from the word.

On a sadder note, we must report with sorrow, that we no longer have in our fellowship Bro. Joey Marple. Bro. Joey expressed to the arranging brethren here that he could no longer see fit to maintain separation from the people in the Central Fellowship. After a good deal of discussion, he expressed his determination to place his fellowship there. He has thus now embraced the doctrine of fellowship in a way which we cannot endorse. It is our prayer that our brother may, at some time in the future, see this matter more clearly.

Here at Richard, we have also just recently held our ecclesia elections, and so as of the beginning of 2006, our recording brother will be Bro. Terry Readman. All ecclesial correspondence, then, should be directed through him

May our master soon appear, and in the mean time, may the hand of Yahweh be with each one of us in care and guidance.

On behalf of the members here in Richard,

Your Bro in Christ Jesus,

Bro Sid Jones

A New Name - Israel

“Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but ISRAEL, for as a prince thou hast had power with God and with man, and hast prevailed.”

We have been following again in our daily readings the very interesting and instructive events of the life and wanderings of Jacob. We are told that God has caused these things to be recorded that we may receive instruction, comfort and hope.

The first lesson we learn is that—in the lives of the people of God—nothing happens by chance. All is arranged in God's wise purpose for the development of His children, and His hand is ever present to control and direct.

The reading of God's Word is the most important activity of our lives. It should be the most looked-forward to and enjoyable. Each day as we begin we should meditate upon the solemn and wonderful fact that this Book alone—of all books ever written—has been composed by God Himself, for the express purpose of saving man from death and making

him “wise unto salvation.” Each word is there because God specifically caused it to be there.

And the pleasure and impressiveness of reading these daily portions of Divine authorship are increased by the realization that, throughout the world, faithful and earnest brethren and sisters are reading and thinking upon these very same incidents, day by day. It is an intimate, worldwide communion of minds in the glorious deep things of the Spirit of God, of which the natural man, like the beasts of the field, knows nothing.

We have just read again of the blessing of Jacob and Esau by Isaac. Many questions arise in our minds. Some we cannot answer. But we should remember that in all these things the basic purpose is not to satisfy our curiosity, but to give us guidance that will help us to order our own lives in a way that will please God.

We may wonder why the faithful patriarch Isaac appears so out of step with the Divine purpose as to attempt to give the blessing to Esau. We read in Gen. 25:28—

“Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison, but Rebekah loved Jacob.”

We know that before the birth of Esau and Jacob, Rebekah enquired of God and was told the elder should serve the younger. But—did Isaac know? Or did she “keep these things in her heart?”

As we look back and survey the whole broad sweep of Israel's history, Jacob stands out so clearly and unmistakably as the chosen seed that we are apt to assume that the distinction must have been obvious from the first, and that Isaac should never have considered for a moment giving the principal blessing to Esau.

But in view of Isaac's life, and his especial mention as one of the great examples of faith, we should hesitate to attribute to him a complete disregard of God's expressed will.

True, it is sadly evident in this whole incident that there is something wrong, and it would appear that all concerned in it had lessons to learn. We must remember that there was no Bible to turn to then. To a large extent these early patriarchs must work out in their own lives, for their sakes and ours, the lessons that are now left so plainly on record for our guidance.

We see Isaac—misguided and overly influenced by the robust, worldly qualities of Esau. It is true, however, that Isaac grieved because of Esau's alien wives. He would realize how vital it was that the people of God be preserved from the destroying influences of alien marriage. Abraham, in

choosing Isaac's own wife, had strongly impressed him with this basic Scriptural principle.

We see Esau—whom the Scriptures describe as a “profane person”—a worldly, animal, unspiritual man to whom the present appeal of a tempting hot meal was stronger than his perception of a Divine birthright. Doubtless Isaac hoped and prayed that Esau, his eldest son and heir, would awaken to the great responsibility of carrying on the purpose of God. It is possible that, superficially and naturally, Esau appeared to be—at this stage of their development—a warmer and more intense character than Jacob. But Esau was not a man of faith—and the pillars of God's eternal house must, above all things, be men of faith.

We see Rebekah—with her Divinely-imparted knowledge that Jacob, the younger, was the chosen seed. But Rebekah did not seem to realize that God's plan of the ages is too great and too holy to be built upon deceit and falsehood, however well-meant.

Rebekah must learn that God's way is not man's way—that man's concern and duty is to glorify God by a strict adherence to His righteous, upright principles of truth, and humbly and trustingly leave the consequences to Him.

In the final view, we have but one concern in life—to please God. We do not have to do great things, nor assume an anxious personal responsibility for preventing the failure of God's plan. Our ability is very limited, even at best. Our circle is very small.

Consider Jacob's life. Like that of all God's people, it was filled with frustration, disappointment and trial. Jacob did not accomplish very much that could be seen by the natural eye.

Yet how many since his day have been instructed and inspired by the simple story of the way he met the daily problems of his life! He had the nucleus of an unshakable faith in God and recognition of His ever-present reality, passed on to him through Abraham and Isaac, but that faith had much to learn and much to suffer before it came to perfection.

Jacob was the fourth actor in this strange incident of the blessing. On what a shaky and shady, humanly-contrived foundation it was that he attempted to secure the birthright and the blessing! For the first he took a sharp advantage of foolish, careless Esau's exhaustion; for the second he used falsehood and deceit.

He had to learn by bitter experience that sharp practice and deceit are the way of natural, grasping man, and have no place with the people of God. Patience, straightforwardness, broad uncalculating generosity and unselfishness are the noble, infinitely satisfying ways of godliness. The

man of God has nothing to fear. He need not scheme and bargain, fret to get more or to prevent loss, for he cannot lose. Paul, by the Spirit, gives us the overwhelming message—

“All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.”

All things are ours! What difference then does it make if we do not get them today? We shall tomorrow, if we are faithful—the great Tomorrow of eternal promise.

The one thing the Scriptures remember about Esau is that he “despised his birthright”—the eldest son of the chosen family—chosen to keep alive the Truth of God in the earth. Today God has chosen a few and has revealed to them His way of life. Can it be that there are Esaus among them—too concerned about their mess of pottage to realize the great glory and responsibility of their call? Paul reminds all such that when it was too late, Esau sought God's blessing in vain with bitter tears.

Because of Esau's anger at the deception, Jacob is forced to flee from home. Rebekah said:

“Flee thee to Laban my brother, and tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away; then will I send and fetch thee.”

These “few days” stretched into 20 long years, and some time during that weary waiting for the return of the son whom she loved, Rebekah appears to have fallen asleep. We are not told about her death. She never appears again, but her last words here have been the concern of many a faithful mother since:

“I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth. If Jacob take a wife of these daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?”

This speaks well concerning Rebekah's outlook. Her interests were wholly in the purpose of God. She knew her family were the chosen seed. So intense were her feelings about this that if Jacob were to follow Esau and defile the line by alien marriage, Rebekah had no desire to live and witness her family's betrayal of the Divine trust and covenant.

The story of Jacob's life really just now begins. Previously there are but two brief references—his birth and the purchase of the birthright. At life's end, standing before Pharaoh, he says—

“Few AND EVIL have been the days of the years of my life.”

Jacob is an outstanding example of learning godliness by suffering. The days of his years were truly filled with evil. This incident of the blessing sends him out alone into the world. Sharp practice and deception stalk his path from this time forward, and give him no rest.

Jacob desires Rachel but is tricked into marrying Leah also, and consequently his household henceforth was filled with jealousy and contention. He serves Laban 20 years, during which time Laban constantly endeavors to impoverish and defraud him. When he leaves Laban to return home in search of peace, he soon after loses his beloved Rachel. The fearful meeting with Esau, the trouble involving his daughter Dinah, and the disgraceful conduct of Reuben, are incidents of the long return journey.

Soon after he resettles in Canaan, his favorite son Joseph, Rachel's firstborn, is taken from him, and he is victim of another heartless deception, which is perpetuated by his own sons for 20 cruel years—the supposed death of Joseph.

Yet during this eventful last half of his life, many wonderful things happen to Jacob too, as he learns by personal experience about God's great purpose of preparing a people for His Name.

Jacob's name means “supplanter or usurper.” We remember that Esau exclaimed bitterly:

“Is he not rightly named ‘Jacob,’ for he hath supplanted me these two times!”

Jacob's life-struggle is symbolized in the changed name that God gave him in the midst of his trials. The time was to come when God would say to him:

“Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but ISRAEL (meaning, A Prince of God), for as a prince thou hast had power with God and with man, and hast prevailed.”

A wonderful testimony to the Divine success of Jacob's new, patient, self-controlled way of life! There is great significance in God giving a man a new name, especially such a glorious name as this, and the taking away of a name of shame. Jesus said:

“To him that overeometh will I give a new name, which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it . . . On him that overcometh will I write the Name of my God, and my new Name.”

Jacob overcame. He overcame his fears, and he overcame himself.

Let us go back and follow his journey from the beginning. It was a great change when he set out alone from home. He was not young as we consider youth today, but he had hitherto lived a protected and quiet life. We are told that Esau was a man of the open field, but Jacob was a “quiet man, dwelling in tents.”

From what he says later, it would appear that he set out on foot, with just a staff for the way. Therefore it could hardly have been the first night of his journey that God appeared to him at Beth-el, for Beth-el is over 50 miles from Beersheba, through hilly country.

And it was fitting it should not be the first night. It would give him time to think, test his determination, and be a clearer separation from the old life he is leaving behind. A night or two in the open, wondering about what lay ahead, would prepare his mind for the heavenly vision. Yet he was not left alone too long, for God, in His infinite love and mercy, knew Jacob's need. One night, before he had gone very far on his journey, he had a dream in which he saw a ladder (more properly, a stairs) reaching up from the earth to heaven. Angels were ascending and descending upon it, and above it stood the Lord, and He spoke to Jacob, repeating the covenant of Abraham and Isaac, and said—

“I am with thee, and will keep thee, and bring thee again to this land. I will not leave thee.”

There is much to be learned from this vision. First, it was clearly a revelation and assurance to Jacob that God was closely watching over and controlling the lives of His people. Nothing could more strikingly convey this thought than a ladder directly connecting heaven and earth, with God's messengers traveling back and forth upon it as they carry out His will on behalf of His children. And there is a deeper import in the ladder that Jesus unfolds in his words to Nathaniel—

“Hereafter ye shall see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”

He is clearly alluding to Jacob's dream. Jesus himself is the ladder—the God-provided connection and way of communication between Himself and man. And angels ascend and descend upon him—that is, through and by him God's purposes are accomplished. Without him the angels could not do their Divine work of leading men to a place in God's Kingdom, for Jesus is the essential keystone to the whole plan. He “prevailed to open the book” and to make possible the fulfillment of its contents.

The common version gives the impression that Jacob is bargaining with God: “If God will do certain things, then He shall be my God.” But the whole atmosphere of the event teaches us that this is a totally incorrect impression. This is a solemn and grateful self-dedication, in view of God's great mercy and revelation.

It would appear, too, that in this revelation of God to Jacob, the initiative was entirely on God's part, but here again a later remark of Jacob's gives us a different picture. Of this incident, he says:

“God answered me in the day of my distress” (Gen. 35:3).

This tells a little more about those first few anxious days as he set out from home. It is reasonably certain that from the time he left home, Jacob's mind was occupied with thoughts and prayers concerning God's help in the lonely and unknown path ahead.

This was the turning point in Jacob's life. His conduct from this time on is that of an active, yet patient, faith. We can hardly regard the incidents of the birthright and the blessing as manifestations of true faith. They were attempts to secure by natural and questionable means what God had already promised He would give. They were not necessarily proofs of lack of faith, but rather of a misconception of how faith should work.

On the other hand, it is not faith to make no effort at all. The incidents of the breeding of the sheep and of the preparation to meet Esau seem to be examples of how faith should operate. That is, putting all reliance on God and none on self, but at the same time striving to merit God's help by diligent application to all legitimate efforts and precautions.

We cannot sit back and presume on God. If this were not a vital principle and a common danger, it would not appear as one phase of the 3-fold temptation of Christ. That temptation symbolizes all temptation—lust of the flesh, lust of the eye, and the pride of life.

“Cast thyself down, for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning thee.”

We must carefully follow the narrow road between presumption on God on the one hand, and the foolish vanity of self-reliance on the other. Jacob succeeded, and is a lesson to us.

* * *

“Leah was tender-eyed (that is, we believe, gentle, patient, amiable)—but Rachel was beautiful and well-favored.”

Jacob had another Divine lesson to learn—

“Favor is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.”

Leah had the sadder life, but the nobler position in God's plan.

It is significant that, as he was about to die, Jacob commanded his sons to bury him in the cave of Macpelah, beside Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah—and Leah. Rachel is not mentioned. She was not buried there. She died and was left along the way.

It is significant, too, that it is the unloved Leah, and not the favorite Rachel, whom God selected for the line of the royal seed.

There is a patient sadness, and a deep reverence, in Leah's naming of her children. Reuben—the Lord hath looked on my affliction; now therefore my husband will love me. Simeon—the Lord hath heard that I was hated. Levi—now this time will my husband be joined to me. But years later, at the birth of the sixth and last son, it is still the same unfulfilled hope: Zebulun—NOW will my husband dwell with me!

The enmity in the house of Jacob was carried down through the history of the nation, finally ending in the disruption of the kingdom. The first, faithless king was of the seed of Rachel. Following Saul's rejection, God set the throne forever in Judah, of Leah.

Proud and willful Ephraim, of Rachel, became the leader of the opposition, soon breaking away with nine other tribes to form a separate and Godless kingdom. Beth-el, the “House of God,” where Jacob at the beginning received the everlasting covenant and made his vow dedicating the nation to God—this same Beth-el became the center of Israel's idolatrous worship—

“Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.”

Ephraim had gone back to his mother's stolen idols.

The immediate cause of Jacob taking Leah was Laban's deceit, but the real cause was the hand of God. Through Leah came the great prophet-leader Moses and priestly tribe of Levi; through her too came the greater Prophet than Moses and Judah's royal tribe.

* * *

For 20 years Jacob faithfully served Laban, under stringent and unfair conditions, submitting patiently to repeated changes of agreement as Laban schemed for his own advantage. Why did he stay? Could there have been something in it of David's thought:

“Let him alone, for the Lord hath bidden him. It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day” (2 Sam. 16:11-12).

Both Paul and Peter teach us that faithful service in all things is a first principle of the Truth, regardless of the character of the ones served. (In our obsession with what we may term “doctrinal” matters, we can so easily overlook these EQUALLY VITAL “first principles” of conduct and life. Of such stuff is hypocrisy made). The one served is incidental. Our real employer is always God.

Jacob stayed with Laban because he (Jacob) was really serving God and laying up treasure in heaven. He was learning not to scheme for himself but to wait in patience for God's direction, in the meantime laboring diligently at what came to hand.

Finally, in the dream concerning the colored sheep, God directed him how to prepare his affairs so that he might become independent and self-supporting and be able to leave Laban. Then some time later God appeared to him and said—

“Get thee out from this land; return to the land of thy kindred.”

So Jacob set forth on his journeys again. He had come on foot with only a staff. He leaves with wives, servants, children, and cattle. But he had found no satisfaction in outward things. There is no peace in Jacob's family, but bitter enmity between his wives and among his sons.

On leaving, Rachel steals the household idols of Laban her father. When Laban overtakes Jacob, he angrily charges him with theft. Jacob, who knows nothing of the matter, makes a great show of innocence and righteous indignation, and vows that whoever is found with them shall die.

Laban searches through everything of Jacob's but Rachel, by deception, is able to conceal them. Again Jacob condemns Laban for his charges, and protests the innocence of his company. The long trail of deception is still plaguing Jacob's house, and will follow him through life.

Later on in the journey, Jacob's overconfident vow is fulfilled in a terrible way which he least expected—his beloved Rachel dies in giving birth to Benjamin.

Perhaps Rachel would have died in any case. Perhaps it was necessary in the plan that she be removed out of the way at this time. But perhaps on the other hand a little humility and caution on this occasion of Laban's charges would have spared Jacob his rash vow and the loss of what he cherished most. Overconfidence and the temptation to sweeping self-justification has trapped many.

Rachel, as she died, called her son Ben-oni—Son of My Sorrow; but Jacob renamed him Benjamin—Son of My Right Hand.

Rachel and Leah typify natural and spiritual Israel, just as do Hagar and Sarah. Rachel is the first chosen, but at the marriage-feast, Leah is the first espoused, then Rachel is added to the family. So it will be that the spiritual Israel is first at the marriage-feast of the Lord, then natural Israel will be taken in. Laban said—

“It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn.”

The Spirit through Paul declared (Gal. 3:17)—

“The Law of Moses (which was 430 years after) cannot disannul the Covenant to Abraham.”

So the apparently first-chosen natural Israel must take second place to the true Israel of God, for actually the children of faith were chosen in their father Abraham 430 years before the giving of the Law to natural Israel.

Rachel's outward, surface beauty fittingly typifies natural Israel; Leah's tenderness and gentleness the true “beauty of holiness.” Rachel took her Syrian father's gods. Israel's downfall was that she turned to the gods of their idolatrous ancestors. Of King Ahaz, for example, it is recorded that he worshipped Syrian gods, and—

“They were the ruin of him, and of all Israel” (2 Chr. 28:23).

Rachel in dying gives birth to a son. The nation, too, died in giving birth to their long-awaited son of whom the prophet Isaiah had spoken: “Unto us a Son is born.”

They, like Rachel, called him the “son of their sorrow,” but his Father called him, “The Son of My Right Hand.” In both cases, too, the son was born at Bethlehem-Ephrata. And there Rachel—the natural Israel—was buried, having fulfilled her purpose. The Spirit by Jeremiah says—

“A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted, because they were not.”

Matthew fittingly applies this to Herod's murder of the children at the birth of Jesus, but that was but a symbolic fulfillment of what was to happen to Rachel's children because of the birth of this son and their treatment of him.

Jeremiah's context makes it clear that this weeping of Rachel is the long desolation of natural Israel. But to Rachel and her children the prophet says:

“Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears; they shall come again from the land of the enemy.”

We hope too that Rachel will “come again from the land of the enemy.” We cannot presume to pass ultimate judgment in any case, especially not in view of the brief record we have here. We can but attempt to faintly trace the marvelous types and shadows that show the hand and wisdom of God in the affairs of men.

Rachel's children will in God's mercy, be finally purified and redeemed by the life-work of the great son of Leah whom we meet weekly to

remember, who will not rest until he has removed all enmity and sorrow from the family of Jacob.
Bro. G. V. Growcott

Our Unseen Enemy

“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth NO GOOD THING”
Romans 7:19.

Our immersion had taken place a few days before, and now it was Sunday morning, and we were seated in the meeting place waiting for the opening hymn. As we looked around the room, a shivering sensation, or tremulous emotion, swept over us as we gazed upon the many faces, and we said within ourselves,

“Here is a group of people who have found the Truth! They all believe as we do, and all must be growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

As time goes on, we thought, our conflict with the flesh will gradually diminish as we conquer it step by step, and it will not be long before the fruits of the Spirit will be in the ascendancy, and there will be nothing to disturb or agitate our peaceful calm.

It was not long before we were shaken as one startled by a discordant dream. One of the brethren was determined to have his own way in all ecclesial arrangements, and if he did not, he would become angry and, quite often, would leave the business meeting in a huff and sometimes would be absent from the memorial meeting for 2 or 3 Sundays. This is an extreme example, but to the thoughtful mind it vividly illustrates a universal condition and problem which confronts each one of us.

While we pondered these things, we became conscious of the fact that the flesh has not changed and as long as we live we must vigilantly maintain the good fight of faith. We soon learned that our corrupt sinful nature is an enemy that uses every form of attack, and we must be on our guard unceasingly; for, as Paul has said in Rom. 7:21

“I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me,”

While our mind strives for holiness, this law of sin in our flesh pulls against the law of our mind, and does everything possible to deceive us by its subtle, shrewd and well-pleasing manner, and endeavors to persuade us that sin is not quite so sinful as the Scripture says it is. It tells us that we are “too serious” when we try to live as the law of Christ bids us do. It suggests that we should get out in the fresh air more often, and a good way

to do that is to attend a few ball games. There we can enjoy the cool, refreshing air, and give our minds a rest from our exhaustive Bible study.

When reading the works of brethren Thomas and Roberts, our subtle enemy comes up with the suggestion that these writings are out of date, and not suitable for the present generation of advanced thinkers. It intimates that, unless we broaden our reading methods, we will become lopsided.

To avoid this, it is said, we should include with the Truth's literature “at least 2 novels each year,” and a few good magazines so we will become intellectually well balanced.

Do we listen and respond to this type of specious reasoning, or do the words of Paul make a deeper impression upon our minds as he writes in his first letter to Timothy? Here in chapter 4, he concludes a strong exhortation in verse 15

“Meditate upon these things; give thyself WHOLLY to them; that thy profiting may appear in all things.”

If a brother enters into business, either mercantile or creative, the enemy is ever on the alert, and soon suggests that he become a member of a businessmen's club, explaining with delicate subtlety that it is not for social purposes, but merely as a “proper and businesslike” means of making contacts with other business men, who might become clients, or customers.

It all looks innocently harmless at first, but the contacts gradually increase, and friendships develop, and before long he discovered that if his membership is to remain effective he must enter into the social activities of the club. Having become deeply absorbed in these things, he fails to observe the enemy's insidious and specious advances that have woven a web of worldly affairs into which he has become entangled. If he should, like the prodigal son, come to himself, he will be faced with a serious problem, and the necessity of making a momentous decision, for, said Jesus, in Luke 16:13:

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

The Truth calls us to holiness, and holiness is defined by James, when he says we are to “keep ourselves unspotted from the world.” We all know what that means. When we make our public confession of faith, and are baptized into Christ, we become his servants. Our obligations are exacting, and Paul reminded the believers in Corinth (I Cor. 4:2)

“Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”

Faithfulness is the basis upon which entry into the Kingdom of God will be determined. Those who attain to that exalted place in the divine plan, will then be in fellowship with Christ in his glory. Therefore, if we are to partake of “the glory that is to be revealed,” we must partake of suffering and humiliation during the days of our probation. In Rom. 8, Paul speaks of the children of God, and in v. 17 “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; IF SO BE THAT WE SUFFER WITH HIM, that we may be also glorified together.”

Let us beware of what our unseen enemy says by way of good words and fair speeches; and let us keep our eyes upon Jesus the pioneer of our faith, so that when we appear before him, we may hear his gracious words (Matt. 25:21).

“Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

Let us, therefore, repeatedly remind ourselves of the sobering and humbling truth with which we began “I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth NO GOOD THING.” always coupling it with the glorious assurance of the Lord: “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9). so that we can unite with Paul in joyful determination “When I am weak, then am I strong .. I can do ALL THINGS through Christ which strengtheneth me!”

Bro. George A. Gibson

Bible Readings Notes - January

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”—Matt. 5:5, 9

THE commencement of a New Year furnishes an excellent opportunity to adopt the practice of daily Bible reading, according to the plan known as the “Bible Companion”. By this method, the whole of the Old Testament will have been traversed once, and the New Testament twice, in the course of the year. A persevering, painstaking study of the Holy Oracles, in the spirit of humility and contrition, will result in the reader becoming “wise unto salvation”. No other occupation could possess such remunerative possibilities. The appointed readings for January are the book of Genesis, Psalms 1 to 57, Matthew, and Romans 1 to 9.

GENESIS

The name Genesis means “generation,” and it indicates the main feature of the book so named. The generations of the heavens and of the earth (chap. 2:4), are followed by the genealogy of Cain (chap. 4), Adam (chap. 5), Noah (chap. 10), Shem (chap. 11), Abraham (chaps. 11 and 25), Ishmael (chap. 25:12), Isaac (chap. 25:19), Jacob (chap. 37:2). The book was ascribed by Christ to Moses, and was endorsed as the inspired Word of God. (Luke 24:27 and 44; Mark 12:26; John 5:46.)

Chapter 1 describes the six days' creative work. That they were six literal days is strongly inferred by the oft-repeated phrase, “the evening and the morning were the first (etc.) day”, and the subsequent reference by Moses, “In six days the Lord made heaven and earth” (Exodus 20:11). It should be noted, however, that the beginning mentioned in verse 1 was antecedent to the six days during which law and order took the place of the chaotic condition of the earth when it was “without form, and void”, and enveloped in darkness. Verse 2 records that “the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” Paul explains the modus operandi in the statement, “One God the Father out of whom are all things”, (1 Cor. 8:6). God is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe by His Spirit. Notice the recurring phrase in verse 1 “after his kind”, applied to vegetation (verse 11), aquatic creatures (verse 21), birds and beasts (verse 25). The phrase excludes the possibility of the transmutation of species so essential to the Evolution Theory. Moreover, the Bible plainly declares that man is a product of direct creation (chap. 1:26), in contrast to the popular conception of his anthropological ancestry. The creation of man is described in fuller detail in (chap. 2:7). The verse teaches that he is a dust-formed creature, made to live by the “breath of life”. Thus vitalized, the man became a living soul.” The word soul, in the Hebrew, signifies “creature,” and is applied both to man and beast (chap. 1:30). The breath of life is possessed by all living organisms, and when it is withdrawn, death ensues. (See chap. 7:2 to 22). Paul defines the term “living soul” as “a natural body” (1 Cor. 15:44 and 45). This definition excludes the popular theory of the soul as a spark of the divine essence, having separate and continued existence after death. Eve was created from Adam's side, in order that she might have a natural affinity with her husband, and be a help meet for him (chap. 2:18). Companionship is the basic principle of marriage as divinely instituted.

Chapter 3 records the trial and fall of Adam and Eve, “by which sin entered into the world and death by sin” (Rom. 5:12). The pronouncement of death was made in the words, “dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (chap. 3:19). Man's mortality is a doctrine continually affirmed in the Scriptures. (Job 4:17; Psalm 89:48; Isaiah 38:17; 1 Cor. 15:22.) In the pronouncement upon the serpent (chap. 3, 15) is contained the germ of a promise of eternal life. The seed of the woman was Christ (Gal. 4, 4), and

the seed of the serpent was representative of sin (John 8, 44). Christ was “bruised in the heel” by the power of sin at his crucifixion, but he “bruised the serpent’s head” in his victory over sin and death (John 12:31, Rom. 6:9). The final bruising of the serpent’s head will be inflicted when death is completely abolished from the earth (1 Cor. 15:26; Rev. 21:4).

The period from Adam to the flood covers 1,656 years. Methuselah died, age 969 years, in the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, which was the year of the flood (chap. 7:6). There are two outstanding New Testament references to the flood. Jesus likens the condition of the world at his second coming to that which prevailed in the days of Noah (Matt. 24:38), and Peter refers to the ark in which Noah and his family were saved, as a type of the saving power of baptism (1 Peter 3:20). The life of Abraham (chaps. 12 to 25) should be studied as the outstanding example in the Old Testament of faith and obedience. The covenant made with him by God is the foundation of the Gospel message of salvation (Gal. 3:8). He and his seed were promised the land of Canaan for ever. The seed was Christ (Gal. 3:16), and all the righteous (Gal. 3:27). The promises will be fulfilled at the return of Christ and the establishment of the kingdom of God (Matt. 8:11). The reader is urged to study Romans 4, Galatians 3, and Hebrews 11, to obtain a true understanding of the Abrahamic covenant, and its relation to the divine plan of salvation revealed throughout the Holy Scriptures. The promises were renewed to Isaac (chap. 26:3), and to Jacob (chap. 28:13), who, with Abraham, are styled “the Fathers” (Acts 26:6). Jacob had twelve sons, who became the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel. Their early history is bound up with the life of Joseph, recorded in chapters 37 to 50. The story of Joseph strikingly illustrates the ways of Providence in shaping the lives of God’s children by good and evil circumstances, for the furtherance of His purpose and their ultimate well-being. Joseph’s bitter experiences, so graphically described in Psalm 105:18, were the prelude to his own exaltation to a position of honor, and were the means of preserving the lives of all his kinsmen. He freely acknowledged the divine superintendence of all his affairs. “God did send me before you to preserve life” (chap. 45:5); “ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good” (chap. 50:20). With such words did he comfort his guilty brethren, after he had made himself known to them. Joseph’s life should be read as a prefigurement of the life of Jesus. Both these servants of God were beloved of their father, hated of their brethren, sold for money, falsely accused, imprisoned, given up as dead, elevated to a position of honor and power and were pre-eminently savers of life. Joseph demonstrated his faith in the promises in the commandment he gave concerning his bones (chap. 50:25).

PSALMS 1 to 57

The Psalms express in inspired language the thoughts and aspirations of all the servants of God. They were mostly written by David, and reveal his nobility of character by which he gained the title of “the man after God’s own heart”. Many of them are clearly Messianic, and portray both the sufferings and glory of Christ. The first Psalm shows the necessity for separation from those who have no delight in the law of the Lord. The second is prophetic of the reign of Christ, and of the forceful means by which the existing kings and rulers of this earth are dethroned. On two occasions, Paul refers the Psalm to Christ (Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5). Notice the reference in Psalm 6:5, to man’s condition in the death state. The language employed emphasizes that it is a condition of complete unconsciousness.

Many Psalms illustrate the spirit of faith, confidence, and resignation, which characterized the life of David. See particularly Psalms 9:12, 25 and 27. Psalm 15 indicates the essential qualifications of those who shall abide in the Lord’s tabernacle, and dwell in His holy hill. Upright walk and truthful conversation must go together. Wrong belief or practice constitute barriers to adaptability to God. Psalm 16:10 is an interesting verse as a proof that the word “hell” in Scriptural use signifies grave. The apostle Peter quotes the verse to demonstrate the resurrection of Christ’s body from the tomb (Acts 2: 31). The Hebrew word used by the Psalmist is Sheol, and is translated elsewhere by the word grave (Psalm 31:17). Psalm 17:15 beautifully expresses David’s hope of resurrection and immortality. “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake, with thy likeness.” Psalm 20 contains a contrast between the wisdom of trusting in the strength of God, and the folly of relying upon the arm of flesh. The opening thought is one of confidence in the efficacy of prayer. “The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble.” Psalm 22 depicts in moving language the sufferings of Christ, with especial reference to the crucifixion, but it links with them a glorious prophecy of Christ’s coming exaltation as “governor among the nations” (verse 28). Other Psalms prophetic of the greatness and glory of Christ’s kingdom are numbers 45, 46 and 48. The reader is particularly directed to Psalm 37. It teaches that the reward of the righteous is eternal life to be enjoyed on the earth (verses 11:22, 29 and 34). The wicked will suffer complete extinction (verses 20 and 36). These first principles are in direct opposition to popular theology concerning heaven-going at death, or eternal torment in hell. Psalm 49 also contains greatly needed instruction for all. It is emphatically addressed to “all people,” and exposes the folly of devoting all one’s energies to the amassing of wealth and other worldly pursuits, “Man that is in honor, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish” (verse 20). “Like sheep they are laid in the grave” (verse 14). The vast majority of mankind are guilty of the folly described in the Psalm, trusting

in wealth, boasting in riches, having an inward thought that their houses shall continue for ever, but the Psalmist exhorts to a nobler and wiser course. God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave; for he shall receive me” (verse 15). The same lesson is enforced by Jesus when he enjoins, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33). Psalm 51 should be read as a model of contrition and true repentance. It was written by David after he had sinned in the matter of Bathsheba. Psalm 57 contains a beautiful ascription of praise to God, and of trust in His over-ruling providence. “In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.” Its concluding benediction will be reechoed by all true servants of God. “Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth.”

MATTHEW

It is generally considered that Matthew's gospel was written especially for Jewish Christians. It was intended to demonstrate that Jesus of Nazareth was the long-promised Messiah of the Old Testament Scriptures. The reader will observe the copious quotations from the Scriptures to show how he fulfilled its predictions. The opening verse describes Jesus as “the son of David, the son of Abraham”. The opening chapter is designed to demonstrate that the birth of Jesus fulfilled the prophecy concerning the virgin who should bring forth a son (Isaiah 7:14). Chapter 2 records the visit of the wise men to worship the child “born to be King of the Jews”. They came to Bethlehem, the city fore-ordained to be the birthplace of the “ruler in Israel” (Micah 5: 2). Herod's ruthless decree illustrated the literal meaning applied to these sayings, for he saw in Jesus a rival claimant to his throne. At the baptism of Jesus, his divine Sonship, and the Father's pleasure in him, was publicly acknowledged (chap. 3:17). The opening of Christ's ministry is described in chapter 4:23, Jesus went about all Galilee . . . preaching the gospel of the kingdom.” This kingdom was the theme of his teaching. He bade his disciples to seek it above every other object in life (chap. 6:33). Its glory was foreshadowed in the transfiguration (chap. 16:28). Jesus promised his twelve apostles co-rulership therein (chap. 19:28), and extended the same promise to all his followers (verse 29). He foretold the signs which would herald its approach (chap. 24) and described in parable the characteristics of those who should inherit it (chap. 25). At his trial before Pilate he publicly declared that he was the destined King (chap. 27:11). Christ's final instructions to his disciples, recorded in the last two verses of this book, should be carefully studied by all who desire to comply with the requisite conditions of salvation. These conditions are a belief of the gospel, baptism, and an observance of all things commanded.

ROMANS 1 to 9

This epistle was written to expound the great truth that salvation could be obtained only by faith in and obedience to the Gospel of Christ. None could obtain it by sheer merit of works. The apostle demonstrates, firstly, the inability of the Gentiles to attain to righteousness. His description of their unholy practices (chap. 1, 20 to 32) is a standing indictment of the depravity of human nature unenlightened by the Truth of God. Paul next shows that the Jews were equally guilty before God (chap. 3). He then demonstrates that the redemptive work of Christ (chap. 3/25) has made forgiveness of sins possible, and justification before God obtainable. The argument is next developed by a reference to Abraham, the Father of the faithful, who was justified by faith without the Law of Moses, and whose example is commended to all who believe in Jesus (chap. 4). In chapter 5 the apostle shows the far-reaching benefits obtainable through Christ. By nature all are without hope. “Death passed upon all men” (chap. 5:12). “By one man's disobedience, many were made sinners” (chap. 5:19). But through Christ's obedience” grace reigned through righteousness unto eternal life” (chap. 5: 21). Chapters 6 to 8 are devoted to exhortations to believers to renounce sin, and become servants of righteousness. Baptism represents a death of the “old man of sin,” and the birth of the new man in Christ Jesus. A life devoted to the service of God will bring forth “fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life” (chap. 6:22). This glorious reward, available to Jews and Gentiles by faith and obedience, is an expression of the “love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (chap. 8:39). An appreciation of this sublime truth will engender hope (chap. 8:24), and a disposition to endure tribulation, distress, persecution, and sword in the effort to attain the promised reward.

Shall We Fear To Confront Christ

It is possible to do so unnecessarily. It has been argued that the uncertainty of Christ's verdict, coupled with the terrible pictures which the Scriptures give of the rejected, warrant fear. This is an unfortunate mistake. Bible revelation is intended to inspire earnest, truth-loving men with confidence.

Let us look at a few of the many beautiful Bible promises and assurances: “They shall never perish,” “They shall be mine,” “Shall change our vile body,” “When he shall appear we shall be like him,” “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”

Of what value are such promises and assurances if the friends of Christ are going to shiver at the prospect of seeing him? Under no circumstances can this fearing be acceptable to Christ. As to uncertainty concerning the judgment verdict, this is a fault resting with ourselves, and is remediable.

If it is a question of not knowing whether we keep all Christ's commandments, then let us give greater study to the book of his law. It is anxiety lest we keep not sufficiently these commandments? Let us set the mind at rest by remembering that Christ will cast off no one whose life is characterised by a desire to know and to do his will, however feeble and imperfect the result. It is only the idle, non-effort-making, willful sinner that the Scriptures deprive of hope. Let us cheer up in the matter of the coming of Christ. To the fearful heart God says: "Be strong, fear not". Misgiving means the loss of strength—strength which no one can afford to lose in the struggle for life.

The Christadelphian - 1894

Editorship

Is an editor obliged to publish the whole of everything sent him? Has he no power of omission? Where then would be editorship? Or must the contributors be the editors and the editor merely a letter box to receive their MS. [manuscripts]? No doubt such an arrangement would suit some very well; but this editor would not consent to edit on those terms. And he is quite sure that none of the critics would do so either. Let reason prevail.—Bro. Roberts – 1894

Please question anything you may feel is out of place or amiss in the magazine. We try, as we have seen from the pen of Bro. Roberts, a very balanced approach to the magazine. Some prefer more serious and some more light reading. The "conflicting" articles on Christmas in the last issue were an example of Bro. Roberts approach to the pagan holiday. The poem was written by a sister and the words were very appropriate, if read. Many of the ecclesias had "Christmas Teas", including Birmingham and Bro. Roberts wrote of these events. The Birmingham ecclesia, under Bro. Roberts, yearly took up a collection for distribution to the poor at Christmas – although not in connection with any other worldly churches. I have been very impressed with the balance that Bro. Roberts maintained in the Christadelphian under his editorship. I hope that we will be able to maintain a balance of essential doctrines and interesting reading for the brethren and sisters. Bro. Growcott's words to me at Christmas time were, "there are 364 other days of the year to give". We should be giving to those less fortunate all of the time on all days of the year, as he instructed me. On the holidays Bro. Growcott would divide the day between his family and our family with an enjoyable time had by all.

Esther

The Name of God in the Book of Esther It is certainly a remarkable fact that the name of God should not be mentioned once in a book which shows His hand at work in Providence more strikingly than any other book of the Bible as a book. During the month, there has been put into our hands an ingenious pamphlet on the subject by Dr. Ballinger, and published at 7, St. Paul's Church Yard; price 3d. It is deserving the attention of readers who love knowledge. Pointing out that the Holy Spirit has given certain scriptures in acrostic form in the original Hebrew (such as Psalm 119.), with the result of preserving the Hebrew alphabet from possible oblivion, the author affirms that in the book of Esther, the name of Jehovah is given four times in an acrostic form, in four separate sentences of four consecutive words—twice by the initial letters of the words forming the sentences and twice by the final letters—the first giving the name backwards, the second forwards, the third backwards, and the fourth forwards. Three ancient manuscripts have been discovered, in which the acrostic letters are written in larger characters and in a more prominent form than the rest of the text, so that the Hebrew reader would see the name Jehovah four times. There are no other acrostics in it. It is evident, therefore, that the four acrostics are not the result of mere chance. It is parallel with the supposeable case of a person opening a book of closely-printed pages and finding his name on four separate pages standing out in red letters, in the midst of the ordinary smaller printing. Suppose that, on examining the letters composing his name, the person finds that they are the first or last letters of as many words as there are letters in his name. Would he not feel that his name had been put there as an acrostic by design? and that the idea of chance was out of the question? Practically, this is the position of the case in question. The explanation of it is necessarily a matter of speculation; but the author makes some feasible suggestions. Israel had been driven out of their land, and were away from touch with the divine Presence at the time described in Esther; yet they had not been finally cast away. He suggests that in a book portraying such a time, when God was defending His people, not openly, but by the gloved hand of Providence, it was seeming that God's name should be veiled in the writing of the record of it. For other interesting suggestions we must refer the reader to the pamphlet itself.

The Christadelphian 1892

Divisions

“It must needs be that offences (and divisions) come” (Matt. 18:7)—they cannot be avoided. So long as heresies exist, so long will there be occasion for division—but separation from false teachers is not a division contrary to the doctrine of our Master and Paul—but one in harmony with both them and their doctrine. Divisions cannot be avoided—when they are the result of heresies—and Paul says: “There must be also heresies among you that they which are approved may be made manifest among you” (1 Cor. 11:19). When heresy is proved, and every endeavour has been made in vain to bring a brother round, it is also clear that action must be taken by those who would be faithful to the truth. If action is not taken, it is by those who are not themselves confident of their own position, or of the standard by which they gauge the tenets of another man, but a heretic notwithstanding. The Christadelphian - 1894

Unity and Withdrawal

Paul exhorted the brethren to “be all of one mind” (2 Cor. 13:11). to “all speak the same things,” that they might be “perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10). There is great necessity for such unity, for “How can two walk together except they be agreed” (Amos. 3:3). Two opposite doctrines may not be held in common by us: Our attitude towards all errorists and false teachers is clearly and unmistakably defined. Our Lord himself said, “If one neglect to hear the Church (presumably a faithful one) let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican” (Matt. 18:17). Paul says—“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them” (Rom. 16:17). Again Paul says,—“Now we command you brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which ye have received of us” (2 Thess. 3:6). Titus, in his epistle, says—“A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition reject” (2 Titus 3:10). And John says—“If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed” (2 Jno. 10). All this and much more goes to show that withdrawal under certain circumstances is not only justifiable, but imperative, and is a serious and laudable duty—after repeated gentle reproof, friendly counsel, and caution; in other words, “after the first and second admonition.” — The Christadelphian - 1894

Baptism

A brother of Christ (or Christadelphian) is one who does the will of the Father. This is Christ’s own declaration (Matt. 12:50). Consequently, you may disregard the suggestion that a man is not a Christadelphian who, being otherwise a doer of the Father’s will, was uninstructed at the time of his baptism on some abstruse question of priesthood. We have to grow in knowledge. —Bro. Robert Roberts – 1894

Ecclesial Trials

No ecclesia knows the strength of its various parts until they are tried and tested. This ecclesia has been tested. But their trials and conflicts, instead of weakening, have strengthened them, making them better acquainted with their work, giving them a firmer grasp of first principles: compelled as they were by circumstances, to consider them in all their various relations and details. In this way their wrestlings for the Truth with their superficial antagonists have really strengthened and helped them. (Read 1 Cor. 11:19 19.)

The success of any and every ecclesia depends to a large extent upon the activity of its members. They must set their minds to the work of the Truth: read, search and study the Scriptures daily, and vigorously apply their thoughts to the business in hand; then with God’s blessing they will prosper. Bro. W. White - 1928

The Body Of Christ

One of the most beautiful figures which the Spirit has employed to represent the position of the true saints is the Body of Christ. No other figure could, we think, possibly better represent the close connection which exists, firstly, between Christ and His brethren and sisters, and secondly, between the brethren and sisters themselves.

In 1 Cor. xii, the apostle lays emphasis upon the fact of the unity of the Spirit, and dwells upon the theme of the one Spirit of God variously manifested in the Spirit-endowed eldership of the ecclesias in the first century. Pursuing this thought, he very easily leads us on to the consideration of the figure of the Body of Christ.

At verse 12, he says: “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also in Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular” (1 Cor. 12:12-14, 27).

There is here a very appropriate symbol. In a very fitting sense the saints are the Body of Christ, for do they not owe their existence as saints to the work of Christ, under God's mercy and love? If it were not for Christ and His work, or God's work through Him, we should not be in our present privileged position of being called saints. Here, then, is this wonderful relationship; this oneness existing between Christ and the saints, which is adequately expressed only by this figure of one body, or the body of Christ.

Elsewhere the apostle tells us, the Head of this body is Christ Himself, and we think it is only when we realize this fact that we learn the important lessons to be drawn from this simile.

To the Ephesian ecclesia, Paul wrote: "God gave him (Christ) to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:22, 23).

"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the Saviour of the body" (Eph. 5:23).

In the natural order of things, in the physical body, it is the head which controls all the movements of the body; the various parts of the body all move in obedience to the will of the head, or the brain; if the body be healthy there is perfect unison between the head and all the many and varied members of the body. If we are truly the Body of Christ, it will be so with us. We are all members of one body, the head of which is Christ, and it is His will, His law, His commands that we are all subject to. It is Christ who should control all our movements, our actions, and our work; they are the result of His headship of the body.

There has to be perfect sympathy and unity existing between the body (or the ecclesia) and the Head (Christ) if the full beauty of the figure is to be realized.

We are all acquainted with the results which would follow in the natural body, if the various parts moved and acted contrary to the dictates of the head, or the brain. It would mean irreparable disaster—possibly death. Is it not so with the Body of Christ? If we are not subject to the will of Christ, we are not members of His body. Paul so declares:

"Now, if any man have not the Spirit (mind or disposition) of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9).

We need to particularly notice that the apostle states that "we are all baptized into one body." There is, therefore, one body of Christ, not many. If we are true saints of God, called out and separated by belief and obedience, it matters not in what part of the world we may dwell, we are members of the one Body of Christ. There is not a body of Christ in

Britain, and another in America, or elsewhere. There are many members, but one body. Who constitute the real members of that body will only be made manifest at the Judgment-seat of Christ. Our object in inviting attention to these simple facts is to expose the serious nature of the error so prevalent in the ecclesias to-day, that is, that if doctrines or practices contrary to the teaching of Christ are tolerated in an ecclesia, it is the sole responsibility of that ecclesia; and should it shelter in its midst those known to be unsound in the faith, no other ecclesia may be permitted to express its mind in regard thereto. In other words, they must remain in fellowship with error, or darkness, because it is in another ecclesia. In our judgment this is entirely destructive of the beautiful figure of the One Body of Christ.

This, we think, is one of the greatest lessons to be learnt from this figure of the body of Christ, but there are many others. As we have shown, there must be true sympathy and unison between Christ (the head) and the church (the body); so also must there be a mutual care and regard among all the members of the body. Is not that the apostle's argument in 1 Cor. xii? —

"That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Cor. 12:25, 26).

Between the various members of the one body there should exist mutual care and regard, just as real and as close as exists between all parts of the natural body. In the physical body, if one part suffers all are affected, and care for the injured part is exercised, and a desire is manifested that it may be strengthened and restored. It should be so in the Body of Christ. If one member suffers, all are affected.

Let there be unity with unison; Christ, our head, has set us an example of love and care for one another, and it is especially in regard to the things which belong to our eternal salvation that our care for each other is required.

What is God's will concerning us? It is that we, who are now members of the one body of Christ, should:

"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 fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

A perfect man, edified, or built up in love; reaching to the measure of the stature of Jesus Christ; attaining in the mercy and love of God to even the nature of Christ; made immortal, a company of glorious sons of God, a

perfect-man community, many in one, the Head of which will still be the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is our hope; we shall attain to it in the age to come, only if we now realize what is involved in the subject of the Body of Christ.

Bro. W. White - 1928

Texas Gathering - 1894

Centre Point (Tex.).—Our annual fraternal gathering at brother Dr. W. A. Oatman's place in Bastrop, Co. Tex., was a complete success. It was conducted after the old plan which was in vogue in Texas before the introduction of Dr. Reeves' crotchets in 1890, which turned the meetings into a Babel of confusion and wrangling, to the great injury of the cause of divine truth, resulting in the shipwreck of the faith of several weak ones.

The meeting this year was a very enjoyable one, a real season of refreshing and upbuilding in our most holy faith, and much interest seemed to be manifested in the truth by some of the alien in attendance. There were two additions to our numbers at the close of our meeting by the immersion into the sin-covering name of brother and sister Copeland, of Dale Caldwell, Co. Tex., son-in-law and daughter of brother Wm. Cates. Several others were almost persuaded to cast in their lot with the little flock. It was decided among the brethren in attendance that our next annual meeting would be held at Fairland Burnet, Co. Texas, beginning on the first quarter of the moon in July, 1895, if the great gathering at Sinai does not intervene. We anticipate a large attendance of the faithful brethren and sisters, and a season of rejoicing together in the unity and purity of the faith once delivered to the saints. That the Lord may grant it is my fervent prayer.

The people of Texas seem to manifest more interest in the truth now than at any time since its first introduction many years ago. May the Lord help His poor, weak and needy children to hold out faithful and obedient during the short but perilous time which remains to the coming of Christ.—John Banta - 1894

Using Opportunities

Sister Mitchell furnishes the following particulars of two recent cases of obedience in Boston:—"To one of them, after long and patient waiting, the light came at last. Over thirteen years ago he saw that the Bible was not understood or preached, and he told the minister that he would not join the church, because he could not believe its doctrine. He could not explain where they were wrong, but he felt they were not in accordance with

Scripture. Years passed, then a letter came from his sister, and, to his surprise, he read, 'We have been taught fables from our childhood.' This sister, when she learned the truth, was diligent to obey her Master's command to sow the seed. She wrote her brother, and sent leaflets and pamphlets, then waited anxiously the result. The answer came, 'Never was so interested in anything in my life; have read the little book, 'The Great Salvation,' and also the leaflets, and can see they agree with my ideas in every way. I am heart and soul with you in your belief, and shall always prize that little book. Never read anything before that seemed to explain the true Gospel of Christ and the promises unto the Father.

Would like to have you send me anything more pertaining to the great salvation.' The anxious enquirer did not wait long, but came to Boston for examination, and though he had never heard a lecture or talked with any of like minds, yet he was found more than usually intelligent. God's word is powerful, and when the mind is willing, how quickly a ray of light can disperse the darkness. A leaflet, though seemingly a little thing, may be as a match applied to kindling ready for use. Sisters, take courage, and never feel that your place is insignificant, but be ever ready watching for the opportunities, for we know not when the Master may use us as his instruments to accomplish some work in God's plan. The work is God's, we are only the agents, and it is not for us to question, but to obey, and think of the blessing that will be ours if the seed sown bear fruit! Of the other case recorded, what might seem a very slight opportunity was faithfully used and resulted in blessing. One morning, an agent presented himself at the door of a sister. He was a Bible student, but she did not know that, but she kept the precepts of God in her heart, 'Be courteous,' 'Do good unto all,' 'Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.' As this sister answered her bell, she did not shut the door rudely because she saw 'only an agent,' but she received him kindly, and soon discerned that the agent for 'sticky fly-paper' was intelligent beyond his occupation. She drew him into conversation. He claimed to be a Christian. 'Are you,' she said, 'let me see about that. I want you to answer me one or two questions.

Prove to me from the Bible that man has an immortal soul.' After puzzling him upon this point, she gave him another, 'Where in the Bible is there a promise of heaven-going at death? Where is it recorded of infant sprinkling? The man became deeply interested, and remained the whole day in deep study of the Word. Next day (Sunday) he attended the lecture, and remained an interested listener throughout the service. On Monday he again came to the sister's house, with Bible in hand, not wishing to intrude, but only to ask a few questions. Again and again he came to the

sister's house, which he had come to look upon as a haven of rest to his anxiously enquiring mind.

By the following Sunday, he not only sought but demanded examination, so keenly did he realise his condition as 'out of Christ and without hope,' and he said 'The time is short'; he longed to enter on the Master's work. It seemed incredible that in the short space of one week, this man could have emerged from Salvation Army darkness to such knowledge as he displayed. In his answer he went deeper than the questions asked, and the demanded baptism could not be refused. These two remarkable cases thus brought together, their first acquaintance on the night of examination, went away together rejoicing, our brother agent finding with our brother farmer employment more suitable, and now they are company for one another and the nucleus of an ecclesia in Brookton, Maine, U.S. The first intelligence has already come through brother Grasshoff, who writes: 'I am altogether lost in wonder and awe, when I contemplate the Word of God apart from priestly fables. The beauty, especially of Paul's teaching, is charming in its simplicity. Last first day was spent in reading and meditation and breaking bread together.' Later he writes: 'Brother Armstrong gave a lecture last night on 'The Kingdom of God,' and got through nicely. Next first day I have announced a lecture on 'The Covenants made with David, realised in the re-establishment of the kingdom of Israel under Christ.' We may be starting early but we will advance no new ideas, unless we can prove them satisfactorily from the Bible.' Thus, through a small beginning, a Lightstand of Deity has been established in a town where the truth was previously unknown.'

"Be ye as lights in the world"—Is this true of us, or are we at one with the world, in its aspirations and pleasures? So that even our neighbours can see no difference between us and other people. — Bro. Frank Jannaway

What Does That Mean?

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord"—(Rom. 8:35–39).

I have heard people use these verses to show that we are "saved" and can never be lost; that there is no one or anything that can ever cause us to lose salvation.

Paul is dealing with brethren and sisters who were experiencing persecutions. He lists many issues they had to deal with... "tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword" are all things that are apt to inject fears and doubts about the love of Christ. Just as Job (and also Christ learned) just because we suffer it does not mean that we have been forsaken by God. But is he saying that there is absolutely nothing that can cause God to forsake us? Clearly the word of the Lord to Asa means exactly what it says: "The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you" (2Chr. 15:2) And Paul in another place says; "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." (Hebrews 10:38)

I can do no better than to quote brother Roberts comments on these verses: "There is one thing, and one thing only, which can separate us from this love. It is specified in the words of Isaiah to Israel: "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God." God will have no regard for those who forget Him or neglect His commandments: those who sink into a state of self-service, who live exclusively for their own comfort and well-being, who let God slip from their practical recognitions; His word from their studies; His honour from their concern; His commandments from their lives, will awake to find that where life and death, and men and angels, and heaven and earth, were powerless to interpose an obstacle between them and the friendly regard of the Almighty, their own folly has done it without further remedy. God is love; but our God is also a consuming fire. He will not be mocked; He will not be put off with the fag-ends of our service. He demands the whole heart and the whole life; and he is not his own friend who refuses the call: for there will come a time when the man who has served himself will find he has served a master who can only pay him at last with tribulation, and anguish, and death; while the man who obeys the Divine call will at the same period discover that in making God his portion, he has secured the joyful eternal inheritance of all things." (Brother Robert Roberts 1877)

"See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven". Hebrews 12:25

Bro Jim Sommerville