

# 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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Vol. IX No. 9 (XCIV)

SEPTEMBER, 2006

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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.

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CHRIST IS COMING SOON AND WILL REIGN ON EARTH

## Ecclesial News

LAMPASAS-GOLDTHWAITE, Texas –

July 22, 2006

Dear Brethren and Sisters,  
Loving greetings,

We are pleased to pass along the wonderful news that we have reunited in fellowship with Bro. Max & Sis. Carolyn McLaren, Bro. Larry Brinkerhoff, Bro. Vernon & Sis. Marie Hurst, Bro. Glenn Rhoades, Bro. Richard & Sis. Melissa Hurst, Bro. Glendon Rhoades, and Sis. Jessica Rhoades. [Sis. Julie Rhoades is now in fellowship at Goldthwaite.]

The process of reconciliation began with the March 1, 2005 letter from the Richard Ecclesia to the Goldthwaite Ecclesia. The letter included a question, “What are your conditions for reconciliation with the Berean Christadelphians that we, the Richard Ecclesia, are in fellowship with?”

The above named brothers and sisters wrote a reply to the Richard Ecclesia, dated November 21, 2005. This letter stated that they believed reunification could occur if agreement could be reached on 4 listed items.

With the cooperation of the Richard Ecclesia, our ecclesia elected a committee to investigate the possibility of reconciliation. Through communications between the Goldthwaite representatives and this committee, their first 3 points came to be these:

1. Brothers and sisters in Christ must not initiate, recommend, or promote the use of any type of lawsuits that are adversarial in any way. If any part of the procedure, paperwork, or process even hints of adversarial actions against another, it is unacceptable and cannot be tolerated. Examples of adversity include the threat of using force against a party to enforce a ruling if noncompliance occurs, or wording such as 'against', 'prosecute', or 'punish'.
2. All believe that suing at law against anyone for any purpose (even just pro forma) is against the commands of Christ.
3. All believe that to initiate a divorce through the old “for fault” law is in violation of the commands of Christ.

The Lampasas Ecclesia wrote a letter, dated March 12, 2006, which stated our sincere desire to see the reunion move forward, a reiteration of our firm commitment to the belief and to the upholding of clause 5 of the Berean Restatement, and an agreement that their 3 points are encompassed in clause 5 of the Berean Restatement. We also let them know of our March 12, 2006 agreement with the Boston Ecclesia, to reword the sentence of our joint statement dated September 2, 1998 this way: “We agree not to use,

recommend, or promote the use of Texas no fault divorce law, or use suits as an action against another.”

Their 4<sup>th</sup> point was a request that Bro. Jim Phillips recall his booklet titled “Our True Position on Suing at Law” by a statement in the Berean Ecclesial News magazine. After some correspondence between them and Bro. Jim, this request was satisfactorily met by joint statements that were to be submitted to the Berean Ecclesial News.

Please join us in welcoming them to our family. If anyone has any questions or concerns, please direct your correspondence to the Lampasas Ecclesia.

In the hope of Israel,  
Jerry Connolly, Recording Brother,  
Lampasas Ecclesia

**Statement agreed on by Bro. Jim Phillips on July 18, 2006 and by Goldthwaite Ecclesia on July 21, 2006**

The Goldthwaite Ecclesia wishes to inform the Lampasas Ecclesia that with Bro. Jim’s clarification they withdraw the charges made against him in their letters of October 6, 1997 and January 5, 1998.

Bro. Jim Phillips wishes to inform the brotherhood that with the charges in the October 6, 1997 and January 5, 1998 letters withdrawn, he withdraws his personal booklet, “Our True Position on Suing At Law.”

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**FRATERNAL GATHERINGS & ACTIVITIES**

(To be held Yahweh Willing)

**NE FRATERNAL GATHERING – BOSTON.....Sep 30–Oct 1, 2006**

Bro. Len Naglieri, romans6@mac.com, USA. 1-603-598-1745

**Thou Fool**

LUKE 12 is very useful in helping us to determine whether we are with the few on the very narrow path of life, or if we are with the vast hordes on the way of death. It contains some of the most searching and enlightening teachings and commands of Christ. It is perhaps best summed up in two words of verse 20: *"Thou fool!"*

In return for renouncing this life and giving ourselves wholly to God, we are promised endless joys far beyond our capacity to conceive; and yet we continue, like mindless infants, to play with tiddly-winks. It is absurd, and it is pitiful.

This chapter is an attempt to shake us out of this stupidity, into wisdom and reality.

*"He began to say unto his disciples, First of all beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy" (v. 1).*

Hypocrisy: pretending, make-believe, false appearance. There keeps coming back to mind those two tragic cases of folly with which the Mosaic and Christian dispensations begin:

In the midst of a great work for God, greedy and small-minded Achan thought he could steal and hide and use for himself that which was God's.

And Ananias and Sapphira, in a time of glorious unity of fellowship and unselfishness, *"kept back part of the price."*

*"Thou fool!"*—to think that you can outwit God—to think that you can ignore the rules and still receive the prize. ***"Thou FOOL!"***

*"For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed: neither hid, that shall not be known" (v. 2).*

We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and we shall leave that place either in shame, or in glory and joy.

Every act of our lives today must be measured against that one great moment of truth. The issues are so vast that any act today that does not contribute to success at that time is obviously utter stupidity: *"Thou fool!"*

*"Be not afraid of them that kill the body ... but fear Him who can cast into hell [Gehenna]." (v. 4-5).*

Much of natural life is based upon fear of, and dependence upon, natural man. The idea is broader than just fear as such, but encompasses dependence, reliance, trust. The point is: depend wholly and exclusively on GOD, Who alone has power to preserve and to destroy.

Arising directly from this is one of the most remarkable and thought provoking statements of all Scripture (v. 6)—

*"Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings?—and not one of them is forgotten before God."*

What a momentous revelation of the character and infinity of God! Of all the millions and millions of sparrows that so briefly come and go in the great cycle of life, not one—not one—is forgotten before God!

Our puny minds think in measures and limits. God is measureless and limitless. If God had limits, He wouldn't be God.

We worry faithlessly about our health, and our livelihood, and our puny little rubbishy possessions; yet God is watching every sparrow! Peter says (1 Pet 5:7) to — Cast all your care upon Him.

Note the *"cast,"* and note the *"all."*

Cast it—throw it—get rid of it—forget it—get it out of your mind. Don't just lay it there gingerly, still holding on with one hand, waiting

apprehensively to see if it will be taken care of. Throw it there and turn your back on it.

And ALL of it, a part won't work. To hold back part of our cares is just like holding back part of the price. It is lack of faith. If we want God to handle our affairs, we must turn ALL our problems over to Him, and concern ourselves solely with getting on with HIS work.

*"Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God" (v. 8).*

This is directly related to the previous consideration—fear of man or of God. And confessing Christ publicly is not just verbal testimony, not just one aspect of life—it is a complete way of life.

Everything we do or say must be a confession before men of our allegiance to Christ and his way of holiness and wisdom. We must publicly and obviously radiate that fact, even to the point of appearing—in the eyes of the wicked world—as foolish, fanatical and extreme. There are many ways we can deny Christ. Any neglect or violation of his commands is denying him before men—treading him under foot—taking sides against him. His commands are many, and contrary to all fleshly "common sense," and we stand absolutely no chance at all of keeping them if we do not constantly study and meditate upon them—

*"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him. Neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14).*

*"Unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven" (v. 10).*

Is it possible to come under this irrevocable, unforgivable condemnation today? That is not a profitable question. It is like saying, "If I jump off this cliff, shall I be able to climb back up?"

Why even consider such childish stupidity? The profitable course to take is to ask, What is the principle here? What is the warning? What is the lesson for our guidance? What are the dangers to be avoided?

The big lesson appears to be this—

Whenever we complain about anything, whenever we are unhappy or dissatisfied with anything, we are going in a dangerous direction, we are playing with fire and disaster.

We are told that all our affairs are under the loving dispensation of the Spirit of God—that *"all things work together for good,"* and are for a wise purpose in our training and development as children of God, and that it is our duty to patiently learn the wisdom these things teach.

Whenever, therefore, we do not accept all events and circumstances in cheerful

faith and thanksgiving, we are setting our face in the direction of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit of God, and that path leads only to irrevocable death.

"When they bring you... before powers, take no thought...what ye shall say; for the Holy Spirit shall teach you in that same hour" (v. 11-12).

Peter says (1 Pet. 3:15): "*Be ready*" —(that implies previous preparation)—

Be prepared. "*Be ready to give an answer to every man that asketh you, a reason of the hope that is in you.*"

And Paul said to Timothy—

"*Give attendance to reading... meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them*" (1 Tim. 4:13-15).

These commands all go together, and explain each other.

God's assurance of guidance depends wholly upon our giving ourself ENTIRELY to His Word and work.

He has put it all in His inspired Book of Life. He will help us find it and understand it and remember it—IF we will "*give ourselves wholly*" to it. "*Wholly*" is the key. We must put it first in our lives at all times: "*Seek ye first ...*"

We may have, with great and self-satisfying effort, worked the things of God all the way up to 2nd place in our lives, and we may thereby feel a great sense of accomplishment.

But 2nd is no good at all. It might just as well be 102nd. It must be first, or nothing.

"*Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me*" (v. 13).

Here was a man in deep trouble who came to Christ for help.

Christ spoke of justice and fairness one with another. Here was a man cheated out of his inheritance by a wicked brother, and he appealed for Christ's help that justice might be done. All he asked was fairness.

Why then did Christ rebuff him so sharply and strongly? Why not at least condemn the selfish brother and speak out for justice?

The answer is very revealing, and out of it comes that parable whose heart and lesson is summed up in those two words: "*Thou fool!*"

"*Thou fool!*" "*A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*"

Possessions are baby's toys, rubbish, dung, a burden, thick clay. How hard a lesson to learn, until it is too late to do us any good in living our life sensibly!—

"Master, my brother has taken my marbles and my rattle! Make him give them back!"

Christ came to speak and teach about REAL things, eternal things, grown-up things; things that have value and meaning and purpose and glorious, endless futurity.

Christ came to try to lift men's puny little minds out of the passing rubbish of this present brief vale of tears (v. 20)—

*"Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?"*

What can they do for you then—except to rise up to expose and condemn your hoarding lust and greed—at a time when you need help most, as you stand at the judgment seat to give an account of your stewardship of GOD'S GOODS that He has entrusted you with to be used exclusively in HIS service?

**What a great and terrible day of reckoning there is soon to come upon the Household of God!**

*"So is he that layeth up treasure for himself" (v. 21).*

Then he goes on to drive the lesson home to those who PROFESS to follow him and PROFESS to love his commands—

*"Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat: neither for the body, what ye shall put on."*

Truly, people have to eat, and people have to dress; and it is desirable that food be enjoyable and nourishing, and dress adequate and suitable.

But these things are very secondary and minor things in the great purpose of life—not the major things the animal world makes of them. They must be taken care of as quickly and simply as possible, and then the mind and energies must be turned to the real, important, eternal things.

Christ strongly warns his people about two deceptive dangers in this connection that can lead to failure and death—

1. Interest in and wasted attention upon these things—the passing things of the present— instead of concentrating all our attention upon our spiritual learning and development.

2. Concern and worry about these things instead of having complete, trusting, childlike faith in God who feeds the ravens and so gloriously clothes the lilies—

*"Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them" (v. 24).*

Jesus is not teaching lazy improvidence, under the guise of faith. Paul says, speaking equally by the inspiration of the same Spirit—

(2 Thes 3:10) *"If any would not work, neither should he eat."*

(1 Tim 5: 8) *"If any provide not for his own, and especially for his own house...he is worse than an infidel."*

Work is the whole purpose of our lives. Work—useful, purposeful, productive activity—is the very essence of true life itself. *"Always*

*abounding in the work of the Lord*" is the only way given whereby we may attain to life—

*"WORK out your salvation in fear and trembling."*

The whole issue is as to WHAT work we devote our lives to, and what its purpose is.

*"Which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit?"* (v. 25).

The thought clearly is—not as would appear from the Authorized Version, adding two feet to our height, which surely could not be spoken of as *"the thing which is least"*—but rather extending our life by even the briefest of periods.

The word translated "stature" is translated "age" in the expression, *"He is of age"* (Jn. 9:21); and again in Heb. 11:11: *"She was past age."*

The "cubit" was proverbially used in this connection of something very small, as meaning, "You cannot extend your life even one more step." David said (Ps. 39:5)—

*"Thou hast made my days as a handbreadth."*

Truly we can do things which shorten our lives, and we can do things which lengthen our lives, and it is our duty to use wisdom in this respect, but always subordinate to the issue of usefulness to God, which always takes priority.

Paul could, for example, have doubtless lengthened his life by avoiding the labors and abuses and hardships and beatings and sleeplessness that he endured, but he considered the work of God more important than mere physical well-being.

But in the obvious sense in which Jesus speaks here we cannot add one second to our life when the time comes for God to take our breath, so why be concerned with lesser things?

*"If God so clothe the grass... how much more will He clothe you, O ye of little faith!"* (v. 28).

That is us—the best of us—ALL of us—

*"O ye of little faith!"*

Faith is the great thing to be developed in us all—a life whose every action and decision testifies that all our trust and dependence rests on the direct daily care of God, and not on ourselves.

There is only one way that saving, God-pleasing faith can be developed and maintained (Rom 10:17)—

*"FAITH COMETH BY HEARING, AND HEARING BY THE WORD OF GOD."*

This blunt statement of Jesus: "*O ye of little faith!*"—with those other two words, forms the essence of this chapter—

*"Thou fool! ... O ye of little faith!"*

*"For all these things—food, raiment, protection, security, comfort—do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father KNOWETH that ye have need of these things"* (v. 30)

*"But rather seek ye the Kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you."* (v. 31)

V. 33: *"Sell that ye have, and give alms."*

Let us pause and consider this very striking command—

*"Sell that ye have, and give alms."*

This is not one of those passages where we read in the margin "Some ancient authorities word this a little differently." No one doubts or questions that this is the original text.

This is not one of those passages where we must look up how the words are used elsewhere, to try to figure out what is meant. They are all plain, simple, common words, none over four letters.

This is not one of those passages where we have to go to lexicons and commentaries to try to find an explanation. The simplest among us can clearly understand this command, IF WE WANT TO.

Some day, and it looks like it will be soon, we shall be asked, publicly in front of everyone, just what we understand that command to mean, and to what extent we allowed it to motivate and transform our lives from natural animal, to spiritual—

*"Sell that ye have, and give alms: provide yourselves a treasure in the heavens."*

It just might be a good idea to start planning NOW as to what answer we shall make, for upon the convincingness of our explanation in that day will depend whether we hear. "*Thou fool!*" or "*Come ye blessed of my Father.*"

*"We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ"* (Rom 14:10) to GIVE AN ACCOUNT of what we have done.

*"For where your treasure is there will your heart be also."*(v. 34).

It is good that he added that. And the more we consider it, the more true we realize it to be. Truly the command itself is sufficient, to test our faith and our obedience, but the explanation adds greatly to the incentive.

Wherever our treasure is, there our heart and attention is bound to be. If it is on earth, it will inevitably pull our minds down to earth, and rob us of eternal life.

If we are careful and diligent to transfer our treasure to the Bank of Heaven in the way Christ prescribes, as soon as it comes to our hand, then we shall find our heart and our attention strongly drawn upward as by a great and irresistible magnet.

"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning." (v. 35)

Figurative language, but with a clear and obvious meaning. "Loins girded" means awake, alert, and prepared for immediate action. "Lights burning" means the lamps of knowledge not only filled with the Spirit oil, but in the active state of radiance and illumination, both for our own path, and to attract and guide others.

*"And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord."* (v. 36)

We are told, here and in other places, that the moment of Christ's coming will be sudden and unexpected; and some will be ready, and others not.

We are told that much depends on just how that moment catches us—prepared or unprepared—watching, or off guard.

Not because our chance state at any particular moment would be the determining factor—that would be just like a game of chance—but because our state of readiness at that time will be the key to our whole life.

Some will tire, lose interest, relax, be temporarily diverted. With some, the keen edge of ardent expectation will be dulled by luxury or prosperity or simply the force of custom or habit. With some it won't happen to be Sunday morning when the call comes, and therefore their minds will be far away on other things.

But those who truly love will become more eager, more alert, more watchful with each passing day, knowing and rejoicing that each day brings them one day closer to that joyful time on which their heart is fixed. That great day will not catch THEM with their minds on other, rubbishy things.

*"That when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him IMMEDIATELY."* (v. 36)

"Immediately": that is the vital word there. There must be no hesitation or looking back—no last minute scurrying to put neglected things in order, or to fill neglected lamps.

Jesus' point is that, to please him, there must be a constant looking forward to that moment; a constant, instant readiness to go, like a runner on his mark, alert for the starter's gun.

It is so fatally easy to get things around our neck that distract from that readiness.

The approved will be those, and ONLY those, who are so thrilled and overwhelmed with the greatness of that promised time that nothing else matters very much to them at all.

They will find it hard to get their minds on present things, even to the point of taking care of obvious necessities. They will be ready and watching because the very intensity of their love and zeal and faith will make any other condition impossible, especially in these last terrible but wonderful days of swiftly fulfilling prophecy.

But what if we just do not have and cannot arouse that burning intensity of faith?—

*"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the WORD OF GOD."*

This prescription for giving health and robustness to feeble faith is clear, and the cure is divinely guaranteed. There will be no excuses accepted in that great day if we have neglected the prescribed treatment for our fleshly corruptions and infections.

Jesus' closing remarks in this chapter may appear somewhat obscure, but they are obviously a serious and urgent warning, and therefore meant to be understood and attended to—

*"When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him, lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison."*

*"I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence till thou hast paid the very last mite" (vs. 58-59).*

Here, this follows the condemnation of the hypocritical nation of Israel that could recognize the signs of the weather but could not discern the great time that had come upon them in the visitation of God's Son.

In Matt. 5:25, the same warning occurs in another context. It there follows the instruction to be reconciled to our brother before making offering to God.

In one case the warning appears more national in its application, in the other more individual; but in each case the principle is the same. It speaks of an Adversary who has the ultimate power to judge and punish, and it warns us to make peace with Him while opportunity remains, before the final issue is joined and it is too late.

If we fail to arrange a settlement and the case is carried to court, we are lost; for THERE we can only get justice, and what we must have to escape condemnation is mercy.

We have seen how, nationally, Israel failed to make their peace with the judicial Adversary, and how the judgment day came by the Roman armies. And how, for 2,000 terrible years, they have paid in blood to the last mite.

The context in Matthew, the more individual application, introduces another aspect—

**As we judge, so shall we be judged.**

If we judge others charitably and sympathetically, seeking to understand and to help rather than condemn, we ourselves shall be so judged.

If we judge suspiciously and condemningly, we ourselves shall be judged suspiciously and condemningly.

As we drive hard bargains in natural things, so shall we be treated in spiritual things.

As we glory in mercy and forgiveness and liberality and returning good for evil, and imputing no evil, so shall it be done to us in the day of final account when we shall need every measure of mercy and forgiveness we can get (Luke 6:38)—

*"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over...With the same measure that ye mete, withal it shall he measured to you again."*

We each, by our treatment and judgment of others, set the pattern of our own judgment. How few, how few, have the wisdom to put aside the flesh and walk in the way of life!

Bro. G. V. Growcott

**As A Jewel of Gold in a Swine's Snout**

*"As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion"* Prov. 11:22

After being assigned this particular topic, I spent quite a bit of time thinking about it, without actually putting anything to paper. While I wanted to consider it from a number of different directions, the one aspect that I continued to think about was the type of the woman to the ecclesia, and how an ecclesia, could be without discretion.

What can an ecclesia do, as a body, that would be considered lacking discretion?

Before looking at the type, let's look at the literal. In considering the literal, we know that a "fair" or maybe better translated "beautiful", woman that is without discretion, is one that does not think before she acts, you might say. Or maybe she doesn't dress properly, or she behaves in a manner that is not becoming of a sister in Christ.

On the other hand, maybe we are not even considering a sister in Christ at all, but instead any beautiful woman without discretion, which among the world today, would not be hard to find.

The point is, we know how an individual woman can be without discretion, but how can an entire ecclesia be without discretion? And, how can an ecclesia **use** discretion?

Let us consider a couple of scriptural references that would describe a woman with and without discretion, and in doing so, keep in mind how it can have application to an ecclesia:

Titus 2:3-5

*“The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be **discreet**, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.”*

—We see here, aspects of discretion and non-discretion. In fact, verse 5 uses “discreet” as one of the important characteristics of a proper young sister, variance of discretion.

In keeping with our type, should not the ecclesia also be sober, discreet, chaste, a keeper of the home (or in this case the ecclesia), good, and most importantly “obedient to their husband”, the husband of course being Christ!

If we are going to apply the type of the woman in the proverb to the ecclesia, why not apply the women in this verse to the ecclesia as well? In fact maybe even an “aged” ecclesia. It certainly would fit.

2 Tim. 3:6,7—

*“For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”*

—This is a particularly interesting verse as we consider this proverb, because of the Hebrew word used for “discretion” —it is “*tah-am*”, it has a number of different meanings, starting with “taste”, in the sense that we would apply a lack of taste to someone who lacks discretion. Also, other related meanings are “judgment, reason, and understanding” —three very important characteristics for a believer.

Understanding is something we all strive for throughout our lifetime in the Truth. With an understanding of certain things, we are able to use reason and make sound judgments and decisions.

—All of that comes from knowledge. To have a knowledge of the Truth, is the very important step to gaining “judgment, reason, and understanding”, and most importantly **discretion**.

—We would also point out that, the lack of understanding of the Truth, generally will lead to being “led away” by false doctrine.

—We have to have a way to shield ourselves from the fiery darts of the wicked.

The ecclesia certainly can be just as easily led away if a proper knowledge of the Truth is not in place.

Without a foundation, the house will crumble and fall. We are told, that foundation is laid by Christ. His teachings are what we build upon. But that foundation must be properly understood. If it is not properly understood, then it is a very poor foundation, it is a foundation of sand. Our foundation must be of rock, so that it can remain strong in the face of evil.

Once the foundation is established, it must be built upon.

Let’s consider the verses we are referring to here, 1 Cor. 3:11-13

*“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire”*

So, we can build upon it with various materials. However, we have to understand that it will one day be put through the fire. That fire can be trials that we face everyday, as well as the ultimate fire of judgment at the throne of Christ.

The question is, what will be revealed by the fire? One thing we know; wood, hay, and stubble will not hold up to it, however, gold, silver and precious stones can hold up.

We know for example that tried faith is represented by pure gold, gold that has been put through the fire to remove the impurities. If our faith is able to withstand the trials of this life, we can present our faith to Christ as nearly pure gold. Of course it will not be completely pure until we are put through the fire of judgment and judged righteous, thus removing all impurities of sin.

So how do we add to our foundation with gold and other metals that can withstand fire, and not with wood, hay, and stubble?

To go back to what we were considering, it is a proper knowledge and understanding of the Word of God. If we are to add to our solid foundation with more solidity, we must use the same materials as the foundation. We must grow in our understanding of the Truth, allowing the symbolic house to grow and be built with it. Our study materials for example can be wood, hay and stubble, or they can be solid metals. We must use discretion in the

things we study just as much as other aspects of our lives in the Truth. One thing we can be sure of, the writings of our pioneer brethren, Bro. Thomas and Bro. Roberts would constitute solid materials to build upon our foundation. It was their writings that built upon the ecclesial body that has eventually led to our body today. Unfortunately, we know that there have been various divisions that have occurred in the body since their day, but they were generally a result of brethren removing themselves from the original Christadelphian doctrines. This then led away captive those who lacked discretion. We must not allow this to happen among our ecclesial body. Using the building analogy, a solid ecclesia is based on solid materials from the foundation to the roof.

An ecclesia is of course a group of “called-out ones”, believers working together to serve God and one another.

So, to get back to our point, how can a body of believers, or an ecclesia lack discretion?

The answer is in the individuals that make the whole.

We know for example that Achan’s trespass affected the whole congregation of Israel. After all—“*A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*” (Gal 5:9).

If there is one among the ecclesia that does not use discretion, his or her actions not only can cast a stumbling block to the others, but the body as a whole may become accursed, just as in the case of Achan.

Why would this be?

Well, think about the duty of the other members. They are required to speak to the erring brother or sister and put an end to the problem. If they do not, they too are not acting with discretion are they? It can have a snowball effect!

This brings us to an interesting subject to consider, or rather two subjects really, but they both go hand in hand.

Love and Fellowship.

The question of “Love” and “Fellowship” is an interesting one among Christadelphians today. Yes, it is a question, or rather sometimes many questions.

Is love a part of fellowship? Is fellowship a part of love? Is there love in dis-fellowship? Can we “take a stand” on fellowship, and still be loving? What is fellowship? What is love?

“Fellowship” occurs 17 times in the King James Bible.

“Love” occurs 311 times in the King James Bible.

“Love” and “Fellowship” in the same verse, occurs once— Philippians 2:1 *“If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies”*

A favorite of many, with regard to “fellowship” is Acts 2:42 *“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”*

A favorite of many, with regard to “love” is I Cor. 13:13 *“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”* (Charity = love)

When studying “love”, many of us are familiar with the different forms of love. In particular, “Agape” and “Phileo”.

“Agape” is the Greek word generally meaning a higher more divine love. It is the love Christ felt for his Father, and the same that we feel for both Christ and Yahweh. It is also a love that we can feel for each other. It is the “spiritual” love that we have for our brethren, meaning, we have their spiritual welfare in mind in all that we do. Many times, if our actions are done out of *Agape* love, it may not be in the best interest for our brother or sister with regard to their physical or mental well being, but its purpose is for their future and eternal welfare.

“Phileo” is the Greek word that is used with application to brotherly love. Strong’s defines it as “to be a friend to, have affection for”. If our actions toward our brethren are done out of *Phileo* love, we care for their physical well being (their temporary well being).

*Phileo* is just as much a scriptural term as *Agape*, it is important that we not forget that.

The fact is, we must love our brethren with both *Phileo* and *Agape* love. To choose one or the other is not an option.

Hebrews 13:1,2 *“Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”*— this is *Phileo*, and obviously a command to follow just as we are commanded to *Agape* our brethren.

So, do we use discretion in our love for our brethren? No, certainly not, we must love without discretion! We cannot “choose sides”, so to speak, when it comes to love.

As you all know, it is our unfortunate nature to prefer one over another.

We generally prefer the company of those we have similarities with. In fact, in many cases we strive with those who are not like us—usually striving over matters that are of little importance. This then leads us to use the word “love”, but without attaching any meaning to it. It is meaningless to say we “love” our brother, if we in fact do not care for him at all.

This has similarities to something we have all heard before!

**It is like a jewel of gold in a swine’s snout!**

It may look good on the outside, but actually means nothing if we don’t mean it.

The point is we are to truly love all of our brethren, whether they are different from us or not.

Let’s look now at the subject that goes hand in hand with love, fellowship. Most cases of fellowship are from the Greek “*Koinonia*”, which, according to Strong’s, can have many similar meanings “partnership, participation, communication, communion”. Of course, we generally see it as those with whom we have a oneness of mind, and meet with around the table of the Lord.

Since we are considering women this morning, let us consider the woman, Ruth for just a moment. Ruth was, without a doubt, a servant of Yahweh, and always used discretion when it came to how she served Him.

In the account of Ruth, there is an interesting and important type to be seen. Throughout the account we see the type of Ruth to the Ecclesia, and her future husband and “redeemer” Boaz as a type of Christ. In particular to the issue of fellowship, let’s consider chapter 2 and verse 14—

*“And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left.”*

Ruth sat at the table of Boaz and partook of his bread, much the same way we meet each week with our fellow reapers at the table of the Lord and partake of his bread and wine.

To join the household of Boaz, involved discretion on his part. He would have hand-picked the members of his household, much the way he hand-picked Ruth from among the other reapers. Anyone who did not do the will of the master, Boaz, would not have fellowship with Boaz or his household.

This is an important type in our understanding of fellowship today. We are in fellowship both with Christ the master, and the servants in his

household. We should therefore hold the same standard that Christ would hold for those who *we* are in fellowship with.

—1 Cor. 12:12 *“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 is Christ.”*

We are all “one body”, in the same way Christ’s body is one. That oneness has many aspects—with regard to walk, doctrine, mindset, love for one another, etc.

How can that oneness be disturbed? — 1Cor. 10:17-21

*“<sup>17</sup>For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. <sup>18</sup>Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? <sup>19</sup>What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? <sup>20</sup>But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. <sup>21</sup>Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and of the table of devils.”*

We cannot disturb the fellowship of the Lord with devils, whatever those “devils” may be. And yes, it is very important to apply anything contrary to the Lord as devils, not just idols, etc.

—So, we must separate between *“the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils”* to quote verse 21. That is using **discretion**. We cannot do both, to do that, would not be the standard that Christ would have. In keeping with the type, it is not the standard seen in Boaz and his household.

—What does that involve? Staying in 1 Corinthians, consider 1 Cor. 5:4-8

*“In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: <sup>8</sup>Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”*

So why is the doctrine of fellowship important? To quote verse 5, *“that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus”*.

This is one of the more difficult aspects of our service to the Lord, with respect to fellowship. Sometimes it is actually easier to be the “devil” than to condemn it or him. The flesh wants so much to forgive him and not appear harsh, rather than condemning him and doing what we have to do as believers. Yes, if the erring brother sees his error, then we must forgive him, to not do so is just as wrong as the sin committed.

As we have said, the term discretion is defined as “judgement, reason, and understanding”. This is where that comes in, among other cases.

Determining who or what that devil is and how it should be handled must be done with judgment and reason, and the proper understanding of the situation as well as of course the scriptural application. We are after all dealing with our brethren.

To go back to Ruth again, the account of Ruth is in essence a love story. It is about the love of Boaz and Ruth, and in type we can see the love of Christ to his ecclesia. Love and Fellowship go hand in hand, there cannot be one without the other. Dis-fellowship should involve just as much love as fellowship. We love the brother in error and pray that he will return, just as much as we love those who we are in fellowship with.

We must all love our brothers and sisters to the point that we will make the difficult decisions for the sake of their spiritual well-being, and eternal welfare. If we do nothing when we see our brother or sister following the wrong path, do we truly love them?

On the other hand, it is unfortunate, but many times when we do follow the procedures given to us by Christ in Matt. 18, for example, we are in fact the ones being condemned.

Matt. 18:15-17

*“<sup>15</sup>Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. <sup>16</sup>But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. <sup>17</sup>And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the ecclesia: but if he neglect to hear the ecclesia, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.”*

When a brother trespasses against us, depending on our disposition we will react in one of two ways. Either go straight to the brother out of vengeance, and as those confrontations never go well, then take it to the ecclesia. Or, go straight to the ecclesia skipping the brother himself as well as the small group of brothers. These are not the correct courses of action, they never lead to anything good. We are to follow the procedures laid out

for us by Christ, we cannot skip anything within that process. We must follow through each step for the sake of the erring brother, and for the sake of the ecclesia.

Of course, it is always best to go to our brother first with any issue that may involve fellowship. Many times it can be resolved in personal discussions. It's amazing how quickly rumors can fly among brethren, which are not always true. Gossip is not an act that is ever beloved by our heavenly Father. Again, we can see how using discretion is vital in the workings of our ecclesia.

As the ecclesia makes important decisions, and judgments with regard to the entire body, each individual being a part of that body, it is using **discretion**.

It is not putting on a pleasant face for the sake of outsiders, while in actuality it is very ugly behind the scenes. It is not putting a beautiful jewel on a swine, you might say.

Continuing, look at Eph. 5:11 *“And have **no fellowship** with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”*

The next question to be raised is, what are the “works of darkness”, or the “trespass against thee” (from Matt. 18)? What constitutes removal from fellowship, if the brother refuses to repent?

The simple answer would be anything that is contrary to the will of Yahweh.

That is the first rule to be used for an ecclesia that uses discretion. We must discern among that which *is* and *is not* the will of Yahweh.

To be more precise, how exactly do we do that?

If we are “out to get” a particular brother, then we will have to answer for that. If we are following the commandments of Christ out of love for him and the Truth, then we are following the fruits of the Spirit; *Love*, and for the sake of *Peace* in the body. *“Against such, there is no law”*.

We are also told how to handle approaching an erring brother. We must do it with gentleness and meekness, again, fruits of the spirit.

With regard to doctrine, in the question of “what are the works of darkness?”, we can look to the Apocalypse.

To the ecclesia at Pergamos, we read, Rev. 2:14-16 *“But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast*

*thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.”*

To the ecclesia at Thyatira, we read, Rev. 2:20-21 *“Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.*

Are we to “suffer” the doctrine of Jezebel, allowing it to seduce the body? Or, the doctrine of Balaam, allowing it to cast a stumblingblock?

No, these are things which God “hates”. We must allow for “her” to “repent of her fornication” and if she repent not, we must be separate from it. Again, we do this out of love for the body, and love for the offending brother or sister. If they are cast out, it is in hopes that they will see the error of what they are doing and repent. It is a type of the casting out at the judgment seat, but there, they will have no hope of returning. In our age, they are given that opportunity of repentance.

We should pray that they do repent and return.

The will of our Father in heaven is that none of us should perish, though so many will. We are all certainly blessed to have this hope of salvation, and we should want that salvation as much for our brothers and sisters as for ourselves. That is true **love**. That is the love that Christ has for the ecclesia, his future bride. If all brethren truly have that love for one another, we will be able to support each other through “thick and thin”. The legs of the body will lead the arms and chest in the right direction. The hands will not pick up the poisonous fruit. The eyes will see the nails in the road, and lead the feet. This is the true oneness of the body, the many members equaling the whole. This is truly the **fellowship** that the body is to have. If we have this as our ideal, we can at least have our goals set, and we must never forget that the head of the body is Christ, he is our guide. We find his words of guidance in the Scriptures. We cannot pick and choose what we want out of that guide, we must see it all and apply it all.

The body can survive, literally and spiritually, if an arm or leg must be cut off. But it dies, if ever the head is removed. Just as an ecclesia cannot sever its head, Christ, without dying.

Of course it’s never a quick “chop” you might say, it’s always slow enough that the other members of the body don’t realize what is happening, when in fact it’s happening right in front of them. One arm has a saw in its hand and is very slowly cutting the neck. Meanwhile the other arm and the

legs and the rest of the body are either not paying attention or are afraid to say anything.

As the head is slowly cut off, its teachings are slowly cut off as well.

The teachings of Christ must remain completely intact. Even a slight divergence from the Truth is always the beginning of another divergence. In time, the knowledge of the Truth will be lacking, and the ecclesia will be led away captive, just as the silly women laden with sins, as we read earlier.

Our focus this morning is not on the unfortunate issue of cutting off. It is about discretion. In particular how the ecclesia is to use it, so as to serve our master in the way that we are expected.

As we have pointed out, ecclesial discretion is about using judgment for the sake of the whole. But obviously, there are many more decisions that have to be made on the part of the ecclesia than just fellowship. We cannot go into all of them today, but certainly discretion must be made with regard to the basic subject matter we are considering this morning. The basic subject is **appearance**.

Sometimes, a jewel can be put on a swine to make it appear better than it is. And sometimes the ecclesia can be made to appear better than it is by its outward appearance. It should also be pointed out that sometimes the ecclesia can look just as poorly or just as beautiful as it, in fact, actually is. There is no disguise one way or the other.

1 Thess. 5:22 says *“Abstain from all appearance of evil.”*

And verse 23 says *“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Not only are we to remove all “appearance of evil” but we are to “preserve the body blameless”, the individual body and the ecclesial body.

And how does it say we are to do this? *“Sanctify you wholly”*. The whole body, again individually and ecclesially, is to be sanctified, or made separate.

This is another way that the ecclesia uses discretion; by being separate from the world!

It is very dangerous for us in this age to look to the churches in the world with desire for anything they have. The churches of the world satisfy the flesh.

Just as the Israelites looked to the other nations around them and desired to worship their gods, they did so because it was pleasing to the flesh.

God warned Israel more times than we can look at this morning, just as He warns us in this age. We must remain separate from the world.

Just to give some examples of things I've personally seen in the church advertisements and signs where we live. They offer, "come as you are services", "all denominations welcome", exciting bands playing during sermons, I even heard one offering a great cappuccino!

These are pleasing to the flesh, but have nothing to do with why our ecclesias are formed.

The members of our ecclesias meet each Sunday and have mid-week classes, and go to gatherings, all because we want to serve God, we love to serve God. And we not only abstain from the appearance of evil, but we strive to remove any evil, whether appearance or actual.

We can all understand why we are to abstain from evil, there are commandments given to us, that we are to heed.

But, what about the appearance of evil? Does it matter what it looks like, if in fact we are not doing anything wrong?

A good example to consider is when Paul told the Corinthians, they may "know" that eating meat offered to idols means nothing, because the idols are not real, but how does it appear to the other members? He tells them not to cast a stumbling block before others.

In 1 Cor. 8:12 *"But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ."*

This is a very good example of a lack of discretion. Even the appearance of evil, which can cast a stumbling block to our brother, can cause us to sin against Christ.

Evil in this case can be anything really. We mentioned it before, with regard to the "works of darkness", it is anything that is contrary to the will of Yahweh.

Eating meat sacrificed to idols in Paul's day would be considered evil, because it would cast a stumbling block before other brethren, and that is certainly contrary to the will of Yahweh.

In our day, it could be things like celebration of holidays that in time past involved idol worship, or maybe visiting of churches, and we just considered the parallel to Israel with regard to that, other things could be some of the basic historical stands made by Christadelphians like voting or military service, or drinking, or smoking, the list can go on.

The idea is that we as believers must use discretion 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We can never let our guard down so to speak. And even if we do not believe what we may be doing is wrong, we have to also consider what it could look like to others.

We are told to “let our light shine before men, that they may see our good works”. Anything other than “good” works is not letting our light shine.

It’s an interesting dilemma. How do we remain separate from the world and yet at the same time let our light shine?

Part of this goes back to appearance, and then the other part has to do with where our love lies.

With regard to appearance; generally, the things we say, the things we do, and the way we physically appear, are all a reflection of who we are. It will not go unnoticed by the world.

Personally, I can think of one occasion where I was asked if I was a “Christian”. The person who asked me said that my demeanor gave her that impression. Of course my response to her was “yes I am”, however it was not the place, at that time, to go into the difference between what my definition of a Christian was, versus hers.

Based on that, I felt like I must have been giving the appearance of a believer, as is our duty to do so. I must have been letting my light shine.

However, on another occasion, I can remember two co-workers discussing how they didn’t want anyone “religious” to work with them. After which I felt the need to let them know that I was in fact “religious”, to use their words. They stood in amazement. Their amazement was probably due more to the fact that I chose to interrupt them to tell them that, rather than my religiousness itself. But, in any case, they had no idea I was a believer.

I’m sure we all have our own accounts similar to these two. Hopefully, as we think about them, we will be humbled and reminded by the times we are not letting our light shine, and work toward changing it.

The other aspect to remaining separate and still being a light in the world, is more mental than physical.

It is choosing between two paths, the love of the world versus the love of the Truth. We have to choose one or the other. We cannot love the world and love God.

1 John 2:15 *“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”*

James 4:4 *“know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”*

This was the major problem for the Laodicean ecclesia of the Apocalypse. They loved the things of the world and were ignorant of the fact that they were lukewarm to the Truth.

As we all know, we are living in that Laodicean era. The considerable riches that we all have can be a strong deterrent to the Truth. We must work to remain separate from the evils of the world.

This is a very humanistic and Godless world that we live in today. The frog-like spirits of “liberty, equality, fraternity”, today known as “democracy” have been taken to an extreme.

We are all privileged to live in a country where we have the freedom of speech, assembly and religion. It has allowed us to meet here at this campground this week. But, unfortunately over the years, freedom and democracy have lead to the removal of the so called “Biblical restraints on society”.

Today the roles of the members of the family, for example, have been changed to allow for equality. Not only is it important that the husband and wife have equal roles, but the children have rights as well. Spanking for example is no longer tolerated.

Our daughters are told to disregard the “old fashioned” idea of being a mother and “keeping the home” as Paul tells them in the verse we read earlier in Titus.

“Family Values” is a catch phrase these days that has different meanings to different people. Our values are certainly different than the average family. But for the most part those who utter that phrase are seen as uninformed or religious fanatics.

This is the world that we live in, and the world that we must remain separate from.

When it comes time to use discretion, with regard to our dealings with the world, what choice do we make? Do we love the world, and only appear to love the Truth among our brethren? Or, do we choose to remove ourselves from the world, and only when we are put into the position of having to deal with darkness, do we let our light shine?

One thing we should all find comfort in, is that we are not alone in our walk. All of us here are striving to serve our Lord. It is a requirement of each of us that we serve one another as well. Not casting a stumbling block

before each other is key, but helping our brother or sister who has stumbled is just as important, if not more so.

After God created Adam, He said, “it is not good for man to be alone”, this is a principle that should not be taken lightly.

Man should not be alone. After all, we are told to spread the Gospel. One outcome of that is that our body grows. As long as all members of that body are striving to follow the commandments of God, or as we have been saying, uses discretion, then that body is able to present itself acceptably to our heavenly Father.

So, this morning we’ve talked about the importance of what occurs behind the outward appearance, as well as the importance of the outward appearance itself.

The basis of our talk is again from our verse in Prov. 11:22 *“As a jewel of gold in a swine’s snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion”*

If we continue to use discretion in all decisions that we make, both ecclesially and individually, we need not even be concerned with the outward appearance, it will take care of itself.

In fact, this verse is about a pig with a nose ring, to put it bluntly.

But, the lesson we can learn from all of this is we do not have to be the pig. The pig is symbolic of something ugly. We are to appear as the beautiful bride awaiting the return of her bridegroom. If we are following his commandments, he will return and see us as his beautiful bride.

That is our hope, and our faith, and of course our love.

*Bro. Scott Ricks*

## **Bible Reading Notes —September**

It is recorded in one of the chapters due to be read this month, according to the Bible Companion, that Jesus said, *“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God”* (Luke 4:4). Just as it is necessary to partake of a variety of food every day to maintain a strong, healthy body, so is it necessary to read the Scriptures daily to sustain the spiritual man. Experience has proved that a systematic reading on the lines of the accompanying tables is the most profitable way of assimilating the Divine teaching contained in the Holy Oracles. The readings for September are, 2 Kings 6 to 25, 1 Chronicles 1 to 14, Lamentations, Ezekiel, 2 Corinthians and Luke.

### **2 KINGS 6 TO 25**

These chapters contain the history of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, and portray the conditions that resulted in the overthrow of both kingdoms. Idolatry, cruelty, and immorality were rampant. Not one of the kings in the northern kingdom of Israel was righteous. The career of Jezebel, the wife of Ahab, which ended in her ignominious death (**chapter 9**), is used in the New Testament (Rev. 2:20) as a type of all false teachers. In the days of Hoshea, the last king of Israel, the Assyrians besieged Samaria, and took the ten tribes captive. The southern kingdom of Judah continued for a further 130 years. A few good kings, notably Hezekiah and Josiah, reigned over it, but the vast majority were wicked. The last king was Zedekiah, in whose days the Babylonians carried Judah away captive. The historical accuracy of the second book of Kings is strikingly confirmed by the tablets and monuments in the British and other museums. The Black Obelisk records the conquest of Israel by Hazael (**chapter 10**), the Moabite Stone describes the war between Mesha and Ahab (**chapter 3**), and many cylinders depict the exploits of Sennacherib against Judah (**chapter 18**). Many lessons can be learnt from the life of Hezekiah. He was a man of trust in God (**18:5**); he was a man of prayer (**19:14**). The record says that he took Sennacherib's letter and "*spread it before the Lord.*" He was also thankful for the blessings he received (Isaiah 38:19). Josiah was another exemplary man. He caused the book of the law to be read; he destroyed the idols in the land, and kept the Passover (**chapter 23**). The reader of the historical books of the Bible will be greatly helped by keeping in mind contemporary prophets. The following table gives the prophet and the kings in whose reigns he spake:

Joel ... ..	Uzziah
Amos... ..	Jeroboam II, Uzziah.
Hosea... ..	Jeroboam II, Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz.
Isaiah... ..	Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah.
Micah... ..	Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah.
Nahum .....	Manasseh, Amon, Josiah.
Zephaniah ...	Josiah.
Habakkuk ...	Josiah, Jehoahaz.
Jeremiah ...	Josiah to Zedekiah

### 1 CHRONICLES 1 TO 14

This book commences again the history of Israel from the days of David. The first ten chapters are a kind of introduction, and give a summary of the genealogies from Adam to David. **Chapter 1** mentions many names which figure in subsequent prophecies concerning nations and countries. Notice the names, Gomer, Magog, Meshech, Tarshish, Sheba and Dedan, in the light of Ezekiel 38. David was crowned king in Hebron, where he reigned seven years, after which he established his throne in Jerusalem for thirty-

three years. **Chapter 11** contains a catalogue of the mighty men who assisted David in establishing the kingdom. They are a type of the valiant men who will assist David's greater Son (Jesus) in establishing his kingdom in all the earth (Rev. 19). The trespass of Uzzah (**chapter 13**) in touching the ark illustrates the danger of carelessness in the observance of God's commands. The ark was borne on a cart, whereas it should have been carried on the shoulders of the priests (Num. 4). It was not to be touched on pain of death. David subsequently acknowledged the cause of the disaster resulting in Uzzah's death (1 Chron. 15:121). The prosperity of David's kingdom is summed up in **verse 14:17**. *"The fame of David went out into all lands: and the Lord brought the fear of him upon all nations."* Thus will it be on an even greater scale when Jesus rules on David's throne in Jerusalem. *"All kings shall fall down before him"* (Psalm 72:11).

### LAMENTATIONS

This book was written by Jeremiah, and describes the capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians and the destruction of the Temple. The twenty-two verses of **chapters 1, 2 and 4** begin with the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. In **chapter 3**, each Hebrew letter commences three verses, whilst in **chapter 5**, the twenty-two letters again commence the verses, but not in alphabetical sequence. The prophet attributes the tragic overthrow of Jerusalem to "the fierce anger of the Lord" (**1:12**). The pitiable condition of the land and people of Israel for 2,500 years is a guarantee that God will perform all the good, as surely as He brought the evil which He spake, concerning them. Jeremiah looked forward in hope to the day of restoration. Many verses declare his conviction in the final triumph of righteousness (**3:26, 31, 64; 5:21**).

### EZEKIEL 1 TO 26

Ezekiel was among the Jews taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar, about 600 B.C., and settled in a Jewish colony on the banks of the Chebar, some two hundred miles from Babylon. His utterances consist in the main of condemnation of Israel for their transgressions, and of promises of a glorious restoration after they had been punished by long dispersion. The depravity into which Israel had sunk is well illustrated in **chapter 8**. It depicts women weeping for Tammuz (an idolatrous practice of the Syrians), and men worshipping the sun. Other gross sins of Israel were rebellion against God (**5:6**), injustice and corruption among priests and people (**chapters 18 and 22**), and failure to heed Divine warnings (**chapter 24**). Ezekiel was sent to Zedekiah with the message that the throne of Judah would be overturned until the One should come whose right it was to possess the kingdom (**21:25-27**). The rightful occupant of David's throne is Christ (Luke 1. 32), who will sit thereupon at his second coming (Matt.

19:28). The whole twelve tribes will then be restored in fulfillment of **verses 11:17; 17:22; 20:33**. When these prophecies are fulfilled the glory of God will fill the earth, according to the visions of Ezekiel recorded in **chapters 1** and **10**. The following points of detail are worthy of notice in the course of daily reading during the month from Ezekiel's prophecy. **Verse 4:6**, alludes to the important Bible principle of "a day for a year." It is the basis of prophetic times found particularly in the books of Daniel and Revelation. **Chapter 18** is important as showing the Scriptural use of the term "soul." The Hebrew word is "*Nephesh*," and means simply "creature," being applied to both man and beast. **Verse 4** declares, "*The soul that sinneth, it shall die.*" This passage is sufficient to disprove the popular doctrine of the immortality of the soul. **Chapter 20** describes the purging to which Israel will be subject, and by which they will be brought to recognize Jesus as their long-promised Messiah (**20:37-38**). **Chapters 25** and **26** speak of God's judgments upon Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, and Tyre. History records the exact fulfilment in every detail, even to the "scraping of the dust of Tyre" (**26:4**), and provides a striking proof for the inspiration of the Scriptures.

## 2 CORINTHIANS

Paul was moved to write this epistle upon hearing from Titus of the effect that his first letter had had upon the Corinthian believers. In the main, the report of Titus was favorable. The Apostle wrote, "God comforted us by the coming of Titus . . . when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me" (**7:6**); "*Ye sorrowed after a godly sort*" (**verse 11**); "*With fear and trembling ye received Titus*" (**verse 15**). Nevertheless, there was a minority in the Church which was doing its best to undermine the authority of the Apostle and to oppose his teaching. Against these Paul wrote in the strongest terms. The minority charged him with craft in his designs (**12:15**) and with selfish and mercenary motives (**12:17**). They said, "*His letters are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible*" (**10:10**). Paul demonstrated his Divine authority by an appeal to the nature of his teaching, and proved his sincerity by reference to his manifold sufferings for Christ's sake. The chief feature of this epistle is its insight into the intense affliction which Paul endured. His introduction refers to it, "[God] *who comforteth us in all our tribulation*" (**1:4**). "We were pressed out of measure" (**1:8**). He further says, "*I had no rest in my spirit*" (**2:13**). "*We are troubled on every side*" (**4:8**). In **chapter 6** he describes his experiences as being "afflictions, necessities, distresses, stripes, imprisonments, tumults, labours, watchings, fastings," and in **chapter 11** he gives a catalogue of the things he endured, his beatings, imprisonments, and privations. Paul's experiences are a powerful argument

against the sceptics of his own and subsequent times who have doubted the genuineness of his claims. The Apostle expresses many times the hope that animated him to patiently endure, and his allusions are striking contrast to the hopes of orthodox Christians. He looked for the day when “the life, of Jesus would be made manifest in his *“mortal flesh”* (4:11), *“when mortality might be swallowed up of life”* (5:4). He says again, *“We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad”* (5:10). These passages preclude the idea of disembodied spirits enjoying felicity or suffering torment after leaving the body. They demonstrate the Bible doctrine of reward or punishment in the body after the appearing and judgment seat of Christ.

## LUKE

This book, like the Acts of the Apostles, is addressed to Theophilus. His name means “Loved by God,” and he stands as a type of all diligent readers and doers of the Word. Luke records more fully than any other narrator the birth and early manhood of Jesus. Notice the relation of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as revealed in **verse 1:35**. The Father is the *“Highest,”* the Holy Spirit is His *“power,”* and Jesus is the *“Son of God”* by begettal. The trinitarian doctrine of the Godhead is entirely at variance with these sublime facts. The mission of Christ was declared to Mary in the words of **verses 32 and 33**, *“The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”* These words will be fulfilled when Jesus returns to the earth and establishes his kingdom (Acts 3:19). This kingdom was the theme of his preaching (4:43; 8:1; 9:1; 13:29). A place of honor therein was promised to his disciples (12:32; 22:29). The promise to the thief on the cross (23:42-43) must be understood in the light of this simple teaching. The request of the thief was *“Remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.”* Jesus said, *“Today”* (Greek, *Semeron*), “this day,” i.e. the day referred to by the thief, *“thou shalt be with me in paradise.”* Other doctrinal matters to be observed in the course of a reading of Luke are as follows: The genealogy of Christ, as showing that he was the seed of the woman (3:23); the necessity for faith and works in those who would follow him (6:46); the first commandment to love God, and the second to love one's neighbor (10:27); the signs of Christ's second coming, and the need for watchfulness (21:27); his resurrection (28:6) and his ascension to heaven (28:51).

***Analecta Apocalypticae (5)***  
**The Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ**  
**Unseals the Mystery of God**  
**The Book Sealed**

The Apocalypse is represented as a book in the right hand of God completely sealed up. When John saw the book, he heard a loud voice inquiring, "Who is worthy to unroll the scroll, and to loose its seals?" But no man or angel came forward. "And no man," says John, "in the heaven, nor upon the earth, nor under the earth, was able to unroll the scroll, nor to see it." John was exceedingly distressed at this. The words and the book that Daniel had been commanded to shut up and seal (v. 12:4,9) no man in the heaven, earth, or grave, was found worthy or able to open. Therefore John wept exceedingly. "I wept much," says he, "because no man was found worthy to unroll and read the scroll, nor to see it.

The book remained thus concealed with God until the time of John's residence in the Isle of Patmos. He was there, he tells us, "on account of the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ." He was in tribulation, and doubtless "wept much," both on account of his sufferings, and his inability to say "how long to the end of the times" — Dan. 12:6,8; when the Lord Jesus should appear in his kingdom — (v. 1:9). But, at this crisis, a Messenger reached his place of exile, whom he styles "one of the elders," a constituent of the symbolic twenty-four (v. 4:4; 5:8, 9) — and said to him, "Weep not: Behold, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to unroll the scroll, and to loose its seals" — (v. 5:5).

*Enter the Lord Jesus Christ*

Thus "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," is brought before the reader as the only personage from among the dead, or among the living, who could open the words and unseal the mystery of God, as he hath declared the glad tidings to his servants the prophets — (v. 10:7). That mystery required cutting asunder a covenant for the covering of iniquity; and for causing to come in a righteousness of *Aions* — Dan. 9:24. In other words, "Messiah the Prince" had to be cut off; and so to be made a covenant of, according to the saying, "I will give thee for a covenant of the people" — Isa. 42:6; 49:8. Until this was accomplished no practical solution could be given of the end.

Had the Second Adam failed to establish his worthiness, like the first, John's weeping would never have been assuaged. But Jesus did "prevail:" for, though in all points tempted as we are,

according to the likeness of his nature to ours, yet he did not sin. Though a Son, he learned obedience by the things which he suffered. He was made perfect through sufferings, having been obedient unto death. He kept his body under, triumphing over its lusts; and, though sorely tried, he yielded not, but evolved a character that was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners — Heb. 2:10, 14, 16; 4:15; 5:2, 7-9; 7:26.

When he died, he was delivered from death, and now lives for evermore. Death hath no more dominion over him. For he had power to lay down his life, and to take it up again; a commandment which he had received of the Father. This he did; and in so doing, abolished the power of death, having led captivity captive, and brought to light the life and incorruptibility of the gospel of the kingdom — Psa. 68:18, Eph. 4:8; 2 Tim. 1:10.

### *The Book Unsealed*

Having established his worthiness in this moral conflict with the world and the flesh, God accepted him as the most excellent of all the intelligences of his universe; and in consequence gave to him what no one else possessed, namely, power to unroll the scroll and to loose its seals. The Apocalypse is therefore styled, "A Revelation of Jesus Anointed which the Deity committed to him."

Now, Jesus Anointed is Power, or Spirit, manifested in flesh, and justified in Spirit — 1Tim. 3:16: or, "Made of the seed of David according to flesh; and constituted Son of God in power, according to spirit of holiness, out of a resurrection of dead ones" — Rom. 1:3, 4: and therefore styled "the Lord the Spirit," or "a life-imparting Spirit" — 1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17, 18. Here are Spirit and Flesh. The Spirit is *Theos*, or Deity; the Flesh was the Son of Mary, and named Jesus; and when anointed with Spirit again at his resurrection, became Jesus Christ, or the Anointed Jesus. This anointing was his begetting of spirit by which he became Spirit; as he said to Nicodemus, "*that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*" — John 3:6. The Eternal Spirit, then, imparted to Jesus, after his glorification, the times, and seasons, and mode, and circumstances of his reappearance upon earth; all of which constituted a revelation such as he had not yet been the subject of. It is a revelation of Jesus Christ very unlike the revelation of the man of sorrows acquainted with grief. This was a revelation of the Son promised to Israel and David's house, as a helpless babe, born in a stable and cradled in a manger; as a fugitive in the earth, escaping from the sword of power; as a mechanic, laboring at the bench for his daily bread; as a preacher of righteousness, denouncing the hypocrisy and blasphemy of the clergy; and calling upon the people to renounce the traditions of their

blind guides; and to become enlightened in the wisdom from above; as a man persecuted for righteousness' sake by the pious and the powerful of the Church and State; as a man accused of blasphemy, sorcery, and perversion of the people; as an alleged enemy to God, and a traitor to kings reigning by his grace; as a man, in fine, adjudged "guilty of death," and worthy only of being "numbered with transgressors," and ignominiously executed with thieves. Such was the revelation of "Messiah the Prince" in Heaven's gift of him "for a Covenant of the People," which has now for many centuries been presented to the nations in New Testament history, and memorialized in the ecclesiasticism of the Beast.

"Messiah the Prince," or High Priest, was "cut off," or covenanted, as the spirit had revealed to Daniel. But before he died, he cried with a loud voice, in the words of Psa. 22:1, saying, *Aili, Aili*, "My strength, my strength, why hast thou forsaken me!" Before he had uttered this exclamation, the Holy Spirit, which had descended upon him from the Habitation of Light and Power, in the form of a dove, and rested upon him, from the time of his immersion in the Jordan, had been withdrawn. The Father-Spirit had evacuated the son of David's daughter, who is styled, in the Songs of Zion, "the Handmaid of Jehovah," Psa. 116:16. The Son was, therefore, left without strength or power, and consequently without God. Still he was suspended to the tree a living man; a man crucified through weakness (2 Cor. 13:4), and dying of his own volition in obedience to God. But after the God-Power had forsaken him, and before he committed his life to the Father in breathing his last, there was an interval in which, after the example of Abraham at the typical confirmation of the covenant, "a horror of great darkness fell upon him" (Gen. 15:12); "for there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour." In this darkness he cried aloud; and drank the bitterness of gall and vinegar; and again cried with a loud voice; and the deep sleep fell upon him from which he did not awake until the early dawn of the third day.

In this death-state the Son of David was prevailed against by the Little Horn of Daniel's Fourth Beast; and a prisoner of captivity. In this crisis he was neither God nor Spirit: but as testified concerning him in Psa. 22:6, "A worm and no man;" poured out like water; bones all out of joint; heart like wax, melted in the midst of the bowels. Strength dried up like a potsherd; tongue cleaving to the jaws; lying in the dust of death — (Psa. 22:14-15). But things were only to remain thus for a short space. The man Jesus, who had left behind him a character which the Father-Spirit acknowledged as His own, had been too excellent and admirable a person to be abandoned to the power of the enemy. The corpse rested, waiting to become the basis,

or *hypostasis*, of a new revelation — a new, or further, revelation of Spirit. The Father-Spirit had been manifesting himself for three years and a half, terminating at the crucifixion, in word and deed; teaching great truths, and working mighty wonders and signs which Omnipotence alone could operate; this was Spirit-revelation through Mary's Son — "Power manifested in flesh." but a Spirit-revelation was to be given to the Body Repaired (*swma de kathrtisw moi*, a body thou repairedst for me — Heb. 10:5). A breach had been made in it. Its "loins were filled with a loathsome disease: and there was no soundness in its flesh" — Psa. 38:7. This was its condition while prostrate and hidden in the noisome pit (Psa. 40:2) beneath the turf. But though sealed up in Joseph's cave, it was not concealed from the Father-Spirit, who had so recently forsaken it. Walls, and seals, and soldiers, could not bar out the Spirit from the Body he was about to repair for future manifestations. Hence the Spirit in David represents the Son as saying, "My body was not concealed from thee when I was made in the secret place; I was embroidered in the under parts of the earth. Thine eyes saw my imperfect substance; and in thy book all of them were written as to the days they were fashioned, when there was not one among them" Psa. 139:15.

The body was repaired, and in its being freed from the loathsomeness of death, it was created a Spiritual Body with all the embroidery of spirit. "It was sown in corruption," though "not permitted to see corruption;" it was raised in incorruptibility: it was sown in dishonor, it was raised in glory; it was sown in weakness, it was raised in power; it was sown a soul-body, it was raised a spirit-body," incorruptible, glorious, and powerful: *egeneto o escatov adam eiv pneuma*, the last Adam was made into spirit; he was freed from all those qualities of body which make our human nature inferior to the nature of angels; and acquired new ones, by which the nature he now rejoices in is so intimately combined with the Father-Spirit, that what is affirmed of the one is true also of the other, according to what is written in John 10:30, 38, "I and the Father are one;" the Father is in me, and I in him." "This is the true *Theos*, and the *Aion-Life*," 1 Jn 5:20, and therefore he is styled by Paul, "the Lord, the Spirit," imparting life. 1 Cor 15:42-45.

Now, though the world has witnessed the revelation which Light and Power gave to David's Son in the days of his psychical, or soul-body, commonly styled "his flesh;" it has never seen the apocalypse predetermined and recorded for manifestation through the *pneumatical* or spirit-body, begotten from among the dead. This revelation has been imparted to the glorified Jesus, to the once-dead body now anointed with spirit with which the Deity has sealed him." John 6:27. "A revelation of Jesus anointed which God gave to him;"

not to be held as a secret with himself, which no other intelligences should know, until the things revealed should burst upon the world, and take even the saints at unawares. This was not the purpose for which it was given to him; simply, as it were, to make the Son equal in knowledge with the Father, and more intelligent than the angels in heaven. It was given to him as "The Head of the Body the Ecclesia; the Beginning, the first begotten from among the dead, that he might be among all preeminent; for it pleased that in him all the fullness should dwell." Col. 1:18. He was to be the depository of wisdom, knowledge, and power for the heirs of the world. The apocalypse of his future was given to him for their benefit, that they might know the things which must be accomplished speedily. The inscription therefore reads, "A Revelation of Jesus anointed which God gave to him to show to his servants things which must come to pass speedily." The revelation was only intended for these. It was not communicated for the information of the wicked; for it had long before been noted in the scriptures of truth that "None of the wicked should understand." Dan. 12:10. "To the wicked, God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee." Psa. 50:16, 17.

Arranged from the writings of Bro. Thomas, by Bro. Bob Widding.

### **What Does That Mean?**

*"And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he [Stephen] spake." (Acts 6:10)*

Stephen's defense before the Council is titled "Stephen's Apology". He does not apologize and does not sound apologetic at all. Why is it called this?

You are correct in characterizing Stephen's Apology. He did not express any regret for any wrong done not even for being "politically incorrect" and offending their religious principles and leaders. He went right after them (Acts 7:51-53: "*Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.*")

The problem is in the definition of the word "apology" which we normally think of as defined by Webster's dictionary as: "an acknowledging and expressing regret for a fault, injury, wrong, etc." However, this is the second of three meanings given. The first one in Webster's says "a formal spoken or written defense; argument to show that some idea, religion, etc. is right." It is another form of the word "apologetics"- "the branch of theology having to do with the defense and proofs of Christianity."

There are several important lessons we can take from Stephen's "apology".

1. Defend the Truth. Many are afraid to speak up in defense of the Truth; afraid that they will fail and not properly hold up the argument. The simple fact is that this may and can happen, but the more we speak up the better we become in our ability to defend the Truth. Just remember,

we are absolute and total failures when we remain silent and say nothing!

2. Note the knowledge Stephen has of the history of Israel and of the Old Testament. If we wish to defend the Truth we must have a knowledge and understanding of the Bible. This comes only from daily reading and study of the word. *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”* (2Ti 2:15)
3. We can learn from Stephen’s method of preaching. He may appear very hostile to us in this politically correct society but note his method. He begins very humbly and friendly attempting to create unity; *“Men, brethren and fathers...”* He includes himself and them in this together and not you versus me. The next sentence he talks of *“OUR”* father Abraham and goes to great length on the history of Israel which they already knew. This serves two purposes: to give context for the disagreeable aspect to follow, and to gain as much common ground as possible before getting into areas of disagreement. Paul uses this method when preaching at Antioch (Acts 13). Our efforts are not to create enemies and get people mad at us. It is to help people come to an understanding of what God requires.

Brethren and sisters we have great responsibility to “get understanding” and use the wisdom to help people understand what God requires of them. May we use wisdom in how we go about this task. Regardless of the outcome we must be able to say with Paul; *“For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.”* (Acts 20:27)

*Bro. James Sommerville*