

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.

Vol. IX No. 12 (XCIV)

DECEMBER, 2006

Please send Ecclesial communications to:

Bro. Fred J. Higham, 20116 McKishnie, Clinton Twp, Mich. 48035 U.S.A.
Phone: (586) 790-2156 Fax: (586) 349-6304 e-mail: fhigham@gmail.com
Web Site: www.BereanEcclesialNews.com

ECCLESIAL NEWS	Houston, Denver
EXHORTATION	Filled With The Goodness Of God 367
EXHORTATION ..	Spreading The Word Of God In The Midst Of Evil .. 398
STUDY	Bible Readings Notes – December 384
SIGNS	Iraq In Her Prophetic Place? 390
THOUGHTS:.....	Call For Separation 392
	Complete Submersion..... 393
	Thoughts Gleaned By The Way .. 394
Analecta Apocalypicae (8).....	396
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN	400

God Willing, The Berean Christadelphian Ecclesial News will be published monthly as an avenue of providing information of Ecclesial interest to the Brotherhood. Ecclesial news and correspondence, Fraternal Gathering notices, special activities and upbuilding exhortations are encouraged. This is an effort to upbuild and prepare us in heart and mind for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

CHRIST IS COMING SOON AND WILL REIGN ON EARTH

Ecclesial News

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

Greetings in the hope of Israel to all our brethren of like precious faith.

Since our last report we have been blessed with visitors on several occasions and are truly thankful as they bring strength and encouragement to us. It is with great sorrow that we report the withdrawal of our Sis. Laura Pando. We will keep her in our thoughts and prayers and ask our Heavenly Father to give her strength to return to the fold. As our Lord is near to his return, we pray she considers her position and returns to fellowship. By God's grace and mercy may we soon realize the desire of our hearts as we all work together as immortals to bring the nations into subjection to God and His beloved son and to establish God's righteous Kingdom in the earth.

With love to all
from the Houston Ecclesia,
Bro. Michael Kramer

DENVER, Colorado

Those that attended the gathering were once again blessed this weekend here in the Northeast. For those who could not attend, the theme of the gathering was about the past present and future roles of nations in God's plan. Persia, Babylon, Egypt, Moab, Ammon, Edom, the Philistines and of course Israel were discussed. All the information presented really illustrated how God has been working to realize his plan for the earth and for us all throughout history. The final talk covered the events to transpire from Christ's return to the start of the millennium, finally asking the question we should all be asking ourselves, "Are you ready?"

"For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious. The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel." (Isa. 60:12-14)

"But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD." (Num. 14:21)

Love, Bro. Lynn Osborne

FRATERNAL GATHERINGS & ACTIVITIES

(To be held Yahweh Willing)

NORTH CAROLINA–VIRGINIA STUDY WEEKEND.....May 28–29, 2007

Bro. Dale Lee at dleecpa2@mindspring.com.

LAMPASAS FRATERNAL GATHERING.....June 8–10, 2007

Bro. Jerry Connolly, 12609 Dessau #404, Austin, TX 78754 USA 1-512-251-5101

RICHARD FRATERNAL GATHERING.....June 29 - July,2, 2007

Bro. Bro. Terry Readman, RR# 1, N. Battleford, Sask, S9A 2X3, Canada

HYE FRATERNAL GATHERING..... Jul 23–29, 2007

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

Study Class Topic: 2Thess. and Titus; Daily Bible Readings; Discussion on Zech. 8-12

Filled With All the Fullness of God

“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy”—Jude 24.

Let us, in this quiet period of meditation together around the Word of God, endeavor to extract, in as full measure as we can, the transcendent comfort and deep spiritual adventure of these wonderful words.

Let us not, like so many, struggle to wring all the meaning and inspiration out of them in an effort to pull them down to our own natural, mundane level of thought and experience. Let us rather let their full impact flood over us and fill us with awe and reverent fear in the contemplation of the marvelous, eternal purpose to which we, by the grace of God, are related.

*“Now unto him who is able to present you **FAULTLESS**. . .”*

With God all things are possible. The only salvation for the Berean body, and for the Christadelphian movement as a whole, is—by the transforming inspiration of such heavenly promises—to develop generally an exalted frame of mind and habit of thinking that dwells on a far higher plane than the natural mind.

This **MUST** be the *general condition of the membership* if we are to be a part, in our day and generation, of the true, holy Bride of Christ developed through the travail of the ages. Otherwise we are, as a body, just deceiving ourselves—pretending to be completely different from all the rest of the perishing world, when actually we are not.

*“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God... He that is spiritual discerneth all things . . . **We have the mind of Christ.**”*

Here is the key. On this we stand or fall. *“We have the mind of Christ.”* There is no use just trying to talk people out of various foolish, worldly things—alien associations, following worldly sports, television, smoking, the literature, entertainments, activities and unclean habits of the heathen world around us.

The glorious Gospel of God is a positive, not a negative, thing. If we are to have any justification for separate existence as a body from the various Christadelphian sects and the world around us, we must generally develop and inhabit a spiritual plane of thought that will make an indulgence in godless habits and empty pastimes utterly unthinkable to us.

If we do not set ourselves to strive to attain to this general condition as a body, we might just as well give up the struggle and drift down the broad and easy way with the rest. *“We have the mind of Christ,”* says Paul—the fervent, devoted, spiritual viewpoint that Christ had. *Can we say it with him?*

“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.”

Are we boldly taking advantage of the ecstasy of these glorious, heavenly things? Or are we blindly endeavoring to be content with natural poverty and gloom while within reach of unsuspected, limitless spiritual riches and light? Are we vainly, frustratingly laboring to lift ourselves by inches, when we could—if we would only believe it possible—be carried away by the Spirit to the limitless heights and grandeur of the “heavenlies in Christ.”

* * *

“God hath chosen us in Christ that we should be holy and without blame before him in love” (Eph. 1:4).

Do we comprehend the testimony of such Scriptures? Do we, in fact, attach any deep meaning to them *at all*? Or do we just dutifully plod over them in our Daily Readings—*wholly oblivious to their stupendous import?*

* * *

*“Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are **His** workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath ordained that we should walk in them”* (Eph. 2:9).

We do nothing of ourselves. Even Jesus himself, who rendered perfect obedience in every respect to his Father's will, said—

“I can of mine own self do nothing” (John 5:30).

But those few who, like him, completely give up their own will and desires, and submit themselves to the Divine Hand, are shaped by God into glorious vessels of beauty and honor—“*We are His workmanship.*”

* * *

“*That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word: that he might present it to himself a glorious ecclesia, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be **holy and without blemish***” (Eph. 5:27).

Are we afraid to face and analyze the import of these teachings, and to compare ourselves with them? The great purpose of God—and this is a most vital point—the great purpose of God through Christ is to purify and perfect, *not just in type and shadow and imputation like the purifications of the Law, but in LIVING REALITY.*

His eternal purpose is to develop for Himself a glorious community of holiness and spiritual beauty, cleansed from all the unloveliness of the flesh; a community wholly, joyously and unitedly dedicated to “good works”; a community with no other interest in life than the worship and service of God, and the love of the brethren; a community that have put away everything that is of the benighted, perishing world, and who—*not of themselves but by the operation of the mighty power of the Spirit*—can stand exultantly before God **HOLY AND BLAMELESS IN LOVE.**

Do we, individually and collectively, correspond to this Divine image of the beautiful, sanctified Bride of Christ?

* * *

“*That ye might be filled with all the fullness of God*” (Eph. 2:19).

What does it mean? Surely a more comprehensive and sublime statement could not be made! Consider the magnitude of the thought! “*Filled with all the fullness of God*”!

How all our smallnesses and pettinesses and impatience and foolishness and selfishness and thoughtlessness stand naked and ashamed before it! How mean and sordid does every fleshly thought seem under the brilliant light of its transcendent glory!

What would it do to our characters and our course of life from moment to moment if we could but keep this glorious conception constantly in the forefront of our minds? We *must* keep these things before our minds. It is only those rare few who make these things their constant meditation who are the subjects of this marvelous Spirit transformation.

* * *

“According to the power that *worketh in us*” (Eph. 3:20).

IS that power working in us? ARE we being (as the Spirit through Paul says we must be) gradually changed into the image of Christ, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord? Do we find ourselves—by this Divine power (for if it is happening it is certainly not of our own natural, evil selves)—gradually becoming gentler, kinder, more patient, more zealous in the service of God, of deeper spiritual understanding, sensing more fully the overpowering beauty and loveliness of the Divine Word, bonded more and more closely to those who are undergoing the same glorious, exciting transformation, freer from the empty foolishness of the natural mind and passing things, more able to detect and overcome the deceptive motions of sin within us, more keenly hungering and thirsting for the spiritual food of the Word of God, more anxious to put away all that is of the world?

If not, *the fault lies with ourselves*. If this Divine power of the Holy Spirit is not working these things in us from day to day, then it is the most important and urgent thing in the world to find out why *we* are being left out of this great Divine operation, for the time will soon come when the Bride will be assembled in all her beauty of holiness, and if God has not been working in us by His Spirit, *we shall not be there*. James says—

“*Draw nigh unto God, and He WILL draw nigh unto you.*”

It is a definite promise, an absolute guarantee. It is entirely up to us. We draw near to God by conscious, mental effort, by turning the mind and attention and affections toward Him, by constant prayer, by consistent, persevering study of His Word which He has glorified above all His Name, by endeavoring to serve and please Him in all we do, by striving to realize and comprehend the height and depth of His great purpose in Christ.

This latter aspect—the key to the whole—is why it is so *indescribably sad* when some concede defeat and failure before they really begin at all, by saying that parts of God's glorious message to His children are “too deep” for them to *try* to understand.

In all these things we must clearly realize that *natural ability and natural education mean nothing*, that none of our own efforts mean anything—except that it is such efforts that draw God to work within us by the mighty power of His Holy Spirit.

Our feeble and puny efforts to seek Him merely establish the contact. It is the limitless power that flows freely from Him that accomplishes the transforming marvels within us—that all the glory and accomplishment may be clearly of God alone.

* * *

“He gave himself for us that he might purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Tit. 2:14).

“Zealous of good works.” Are we joyously eager and anxious to be about our Father's business, in season and out of season, or do we find that other things draw our desires? Are the opportunities of assembling to strengthen one another, and to enjoy one another's companionship in the Truth, and to proclaim the way of the Lord—are they looked forward to with thanksgiving and anticipation? Do we avail ourselves of, and enjoy, daily feasts on the Daily Readings? Are the ecclesial activities the center of our lives and of all our planning and arrangements? *Such only* are God's jewels. Such only are the ones in whom this glorious power is working to bring forth spiritual fruit unto life eternal.

* * *

*“That ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual understanding . . . fruitful in every good work . . . increasing in the knowledge of God . . . strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering **with joyfulness**” (Col. 1:9-11).*

This is a description of the only proper and acceptable condition of the true saints of God. It rests entirely with us whether or not we set ourselves to comply with it. We note particularly the word *“with joyfulness.”* Without that the rest is meaningless and dead. These spiritual characteristics of patience and long-suffering are, in the true Bride, always manifested—not in cold resignation—but, as this passage tells us, in warm, enlightened joyfulness and thanksgiving, based on the consciousness of being the blessed subjects of the operation of the Holy Spirit.

In the true Body of Christ, *“patience and longsuffering with joyfulness”* are primary characteristics, for all members are filled with a fervent mutual love, each conscious of his own natural weakness, and each helpful and forbearing toward the weaknesses of others—but still each keenly realizing and confessing that *there must be a real and progressive “overcoming”* of these things. The promise of life is only *“to him that overcometh”* by drawing on the great power of God.

* * *

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13).

To the natural mind, this may appear to be a contradiction, but actually it is the beautiful expression of a great Divine mystery. Just how this merger of our efforts and God's power is accomplished we cannot know, but the

Scriptures teach us that in some strange and glorious way we are privileged to be “*workers together with God*”—working out our own salvation with fear and trembling, and yet all the while recognizing that the accomplishment of that salvation is wholly God willing and working in us.

What could be more beautiful and inspiring than this triumphant, loving partnership of the pitifully weak and the infinitely strong!

* * *

“*The God of peace make you perfect in every good work to do His will, WORKING IN YOU that which is well-pleasing in His sight*” (Heb. 13:20).

Are we justified in seeking, with childlike simplicity, the marvelous comfort and consolation that a full, literal acceptance of this verse affords—and never resting till we find it?

Or must we reinterpret it to fit the dictates of what the many may consider “reason” and “commonsense”?—sadly but realistically reinterpret it to fit the actual conditions we find among those claiming to be the children of God?

Is it unreasonable to have faith in the declared purpose and power of God to make His elect “*perfect in every good work to do His will*”? Is not rather a thoughtless contentment with anything less but a dreadful, slumbering delusion?

If there *is* such a power of God at work among men today as these verses say there is—(though wholly unsuspected by the world and apparently even by many who claim to have come out from the world to become the children of God)—then do not we want, *above everything else*, to be among the hidden few who come under this great Divine operation?

* * *

“*The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us*” (Rom. 5:5).

“*By the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.*” To what extent are we entitled—to what extent are we *expected* and *required*—to appropriate that promise to ourselves, and to adjust ourselves to the staggering magnitude of that promise?

Is the apostle just speaking of the miraculous Spirit-powers of the first century—the especial and specific external Spirit-gifts of miracles, prophecy, tongues, etc., which ceased with that generation—or is he speaking of *something far deeper and more marvelous and of vital concern to us individually today*?

A careful consideration of the whole verse, and its spirit and context, and similar verses of similar revolutionary import elsewhere, will make manifest that the *latter* is unquestionably the glorious and overwhelming meaning, for Paul is clearly speaking here of the *general inward experience* of all believers in their vital relation to God their Father—not just of some incidental, outward, bestowed power on the part of just *some* of the believers, as the possession of an external Spirit-gift.

The whole sense of his reasoning requires—to give it any meaning—that what he says should be an *essential part* of every believer's experience—

“The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.”

Is this love of God that is shed into the hearts to be restricted just to those who happened to be given the Spirit-gifts for the development and edifying of the early church? Is not the love of God shed into the hearts of all true believers? Surely; and it is done, says the apostle, *“by the Holy Spirit which is given us.”*

The miraculous gifts of the Spirit did not affect the heart or character of the possessor, nor did they have any direct bearing on his salvation or his relation to God. It is apparent that Judas, in common with other apostles, was given these powers when sent forth to preach (Mark 3:14-15). The Galatians had received the gifts of the Spirit, but were astray from the Faith (Gal. 3:5). The Corinthians had to be instructed to use the Spirit-gifts for edifying and not for vainglory and confusion (1 Cor. 14).

But *here* is a *completely different aspect* of the operation of the Spirit. Here is an operation that relates to the *heart and character*, and that is spoken of in terms that require us to apply it to every true believer as an essential element of the development and preparation of the purified Bride. To the Corinthians Paul said:

*“He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit **in our hearts.**”*

“In our hearts”—there is the key. It is an essential operation of God upon the hearts of His elect. This becomes even more manifest in the apostle's words to the Galatians (4:6)—

*“That we might receive the adoption of sons. And **because ye are sons,** God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant but a son.”*

Here the Spirit sent by God into the heart is related to, and resultant upon, the sonship of the believer. The Spirit-operation is the result, evidence

and intensification of the sonship. It creates that sense of unity with God that finds expression in the heart-felt ecstasy of the cry: “*Abba, Father!*”

But the thought is even clearer still in Rom. 8. There, in several verses, this indwelling of the Holy Spirit is described as the *deciding factor* as to whether the individual is in the way of *life* or *death*, as in vs. 8-9—

“*They that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit—IF so be that the spirit of God dwell in you.*”

V. 11—“*IF the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.*”

This cannot just mean “spirit” as disposition and frame of mind; there is manifestly more to it than that for it is the *power by which God shall “quicken your mortal bodies.”*

Nor can it possibly relate to the special Spirit-gifts of the first century that passed away, because it is spoken of as something that *has to happen in and to every accepted believer*—something their salvation depends on. It is the very means by which they are transformed and saved.

Vs. 15-16 contain the same thought concerning the inseparable relationship of the Spirit-indwelling to the sonship as we have noted in Galatians—

“*Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father! The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.*”

How does the Spirit of God bear witness with our spirit that we are God's children? John answers that when he says—

“*He that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us—by the Spirit which He hath given us*” (1 John 3:24).

Note that it is related to the keeping of the commandments, and it is the evidence of the God-abiding which is promised in John 14:23 to “*him that keepeth my commandments*” (v. 21).

In this passage again the whole tenor of the words show that they necessarily relate to *all* God's children, not just to those who had Spirit-gifts. John further says, in the next chapter (4:12-13)—

“*If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit.*”

The essential connection between this Spirit-operation and the believer's redemption and transformation is further revealed in Rom. 15:13. There Paul prays—

*“The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, **through the power of the Holy Spirit.**”*

We cannot escape the clear teaching of this passage—it is God Himself that fills His elect with the joy and peace of belief, *through the power of the Holy Spirit.*

This intimate inter-abiding of God and the believer by the Holy Spirit, dependent upon the eager obedience of love, is the glorious theme throughout the entire New Testament. And it is described in terms, and connected with conditions, quite different from the first century Spirit-gifts.

Perhaps the distinction between the two aspects of the Spirit's working is most obvious in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. In chapter 12 he speaks of the Spirit-gifts. (In his later remarks—chapter 14—it becomes clear that they were not using these gifts in an orderly way or to general edification). He concludes chapter 12—

“Covet earnestly the best gifts; yet show I unto you a more (Diag. ‘much more’) excellent way.”

—and then in chapter 13 he speaks of Faith, Hope and Love as this *“much more excellent way”* (the Spirit-gifts being merely external instruments for general instruction and edification).

Now this is the point:—the references to the indwelling of the Spirit of God *in the heart* (which we have just been considering) we find to be inseparably connected with—yea, the *very life and motive power* of—this more excellent way of Faith, Hope and Love. That is, this operation of the Spirit is the evidence of the indwelling of God, which in turn—as we have just read from John—depends upon the mutual relationship of pure love.

To Titus Paul said (3:5)—

*“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to **His** mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit **which He shed on us abundantly through Christ** (RV: the Holy Spirit which He poured out upon us richly).”*

The saving, says Paul, is by the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon us—no pouring out, no saving. To the Corinthians he uses this marvellous truth of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in strong words of exhortation and warning—

*“Know ye not that ye are the Temple of the living God, and that **the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?**” (1 Cor. 3:16).*

Let us particularly note that the way in which he applies this argument to emphasize and illustrate the great responsibility of the children of God shows that he regarded this indwelling of the Spirit as a universal privilege and characteristic of *all* elect believers generally—not just something (like Spirit-gifts) that just applied incidentally to *some* of them. Was it just the possessors of the Spirit-gifts who were the Temple of God, and to whom this argument of holiness applies? Later in the same letter he repeats the question with even stronger emphasis (6:19)—

*“What? Know ye not that your body is the Temple of **the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?**”*

Your bodies, he says, are holy, sanctified vessels to irradiate Divine, spiritual light to the world. Was it just those with Spirit-gifts who were “*the Temple of the Holy Spirit*” and “*not their own*”? No, that applies to *all in Christ*.

We must strive, by constant meditation upon these things, to reach a point where they are a fixed, continuous part of our character and consciousness—a point where these exalted conceptions set the pattern of all our acts and thoughts: “*Ye are the Temple of God—by His Holy Spirit He is dwelling and working in you, creating something for His eternal use.*”

How essential, then, is the awed and reverent reaction of Peter—

“What manner of people ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness!”

“What manner of people ought we to be!” We recall the words of Jude with which we began—

*“Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you **faultless** before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.”*

Let us let our minds dwell for a moment on this beautiful thought of faultlessness. It is a human and almost irresistible tendency of the natural mind to cut everything down to fit the puny limits of its own conceptions. That is why the revolutionary and transforming power of these teachings are so universally missed.

But let *us* not make that sad mistake. Let *us* humbly and reverently set ourselves to try to lift *our* minds to this Divine level, rather than pulling *it* down to ours. These words of Jude do not stand alone. They but express a glorious Divine principle that is common to all the apostolic writings:

“We should be holy and without blame before Him in love” (Eph. 1:4);

“To present you holy, unblamable and unreprouvable in His sight” (Col. 1:22);

“A glorious ecclesia, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:27);

“The God of peace make you perfect” (Heb. 13:20);

“That He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness” (1 Thess. 3:13);

“The God of all grace, Who hath called you to His glory, make you perfect” (1 Pet. 5:10);

“That ye may be blameless” (1 Cor. 1:8);

“That your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless” (1 Thess. 5:13);

“That ye may be blameless . . . the sons of God, without blemish” (Phil. 2:15).

“That ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless” (Peter 3:14).

A continual, eager, affectionate exposure of the mind to these Divine conceptions is the key to the process of which Paul speaks:

“We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18).

Let those who will decry this as an impossible fantasy. Let them struggle and wrestle with words and definitions in an effort to explain away all the transforming power of these deep things of the Spirit of God. Wisdom and love will not fight against these things, but will rather revel in the glorious immensity of the prospect, and will struggle to elevate themselves to the exalted level of the revealed Divine Will. Would the eternal Creator of heaven and earth use half-measures in working His glorious plan?

The final thought to which we are led is the most marvelous:

*“We are **His** workmanship” (Eph. 3:10);*

“The power that worketh in us” (Eph. 3:20);

“It is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do” (Phil. 2:13).

After three fervent appeals for relief from the constant distress of his “thorn in the flesh,” the Lord said to Paul—

“My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9).

Surely this is the most beautiful and satisfying explanation of tribulation in all Scripture! And how beautifully Paul in turn expresses the proper answer and attitude—

*“Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. THEREFORE I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake, for when I am weak, **THEN am I strong!**”*

Continuing our review of the passages that speak of the marvelous mystery of the direct working of God in us—

“The God of peace make you perfect” (Heb. 13:20);

“He that hath wrought us is God. Who hath also given us the earnest of the Spirit” (2 Cor. 5:5);

“The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing” (Romans 15:17);

“The God of all grace make you perfect” (1 Peter 5:10);

“The God of peace sanctify you wholly” (1 Thess. 5:23);

“FILLED WITH ALL THE FULLNESS OF GOD!” (Eph. 3:19).

What can we take from these teachings but that the great, all-wise Creator is taking out for His eternal glory a few from the passing multitude of the children of men, and is presently shaping their minds and characters to the heavenly pattern of the beauty of holiness; and that, in His incomprehensible mercy, the call has come to us to give up everything else and surrender ourselves completely to the operation of this Divine workmanship—to accept the incalculable grace and privilege of being *“filled with all the fullness of God!”*

Let us then try to constantly maintain, as the background of all our thoughts and actions, the broad and vast perspective to which Paul refers (Rom. 8:32) –

*“He that spared not His Own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall He not with him also freely give us **all things?**”*

All things are yours—the world, life, death, things present, things to come—all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's!”—1 Corinthians 3:23. —Bro. G. V. Growcott

Spreading The Word of God In The Midst Of Evil.

“Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you; and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith.” 2 Thessalonians 3:1-18

Sometimes when we hear or read news, or look at the world around us, we may mistakenly think that the times of the apostles, and of Christ were far different than today. We might do the Old Testament daily readings and think that ancient times were far different than ours. However, when we look closely at what was written, we see that Paul had to encounter situations and people in his time, that are a lot like what we see every day. Look at what he said in 2 Thessalonians.

“Pray for us that the word of God will spread. And pray that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men since not everybody has faith.”

When we try to spread the Truth to other people, we sure need prayers from brethren and sisters. Lots of people scoff at what we are teaching. In our experience with preaching on the internet, we find that although many people look at the Key Lesson Advertising, very few actually sign up to receive them. Maybe less than 1 out of 100 signs up who actually look at the advertising. Other people do sign up but then relent quickly and even deny they ever asked for them, even though it is easily shown that they did. Later as they read the lessons they mock them because they already believe something else and we are just too different from them to pay attention to. Then there are those who study many lessons, for many months only to decide at the end... it is not for them. They might be all caught up in their own lives, and too busy to give some of their life to the God of Israel.

Jesus warned us that preaching is like sowing seed. Some seed falls on dry and rocky ground, other on to good ground but shallow, and other on ground that later gets choked out with weeds. Some falls on very good ground and grows up into good plants.

How can we be most effective at finding people who want to believe and who will pay close attention to what they hear? We should consider the kinds of things that block people from listening to God. Maybe part of our job is to try and figure out what might be blocking them from hearing the Truth, and helping them remove that block so they can see and hear the God of Israel as he speaks.

Christ’s Words are important for today

Many people think religion is not for them. They are too modern and sophisticated for the words of the Bible. They have no idea how

sophisticated those words might be. People think that the words of Christ are for those who are dying or perishing and that their lives are going too well to worry about religion. But those people are deceived by their own minds. The Words of Christ apply to everybody even if they don't know it. The words are still timely and even would be newsworthy if people would look.

We live in what the Bible calls the end times or the latter days. We are in the time when God will set up a Kingdom that will never be destroyed (see Daniel 2:44-45). Many men and women have tried to set up kingdoms down through the centuries, only to have them come to ruin. God we are told, is the One who raises up and then takes down those various kingdoms and nations. (Daniel 4:17)

The Coming Judgment

In today's middle readings (Joel 3) we are told that a Day of Judgment is coming. In Joel 3:2 (NASB) it says "*Then I will enter into judgment with them there On behalf of My people and My inheritance,*" (see also Isaiah 3:14) God was angry with those people because they were so hateful towards Israel and towards the land of Israel. People are still hateful towards Israel today. In a recent quote it was stated: "Last June, Palestinian television broadcast a sermon in a Gaza mosque in which the *imam*, Ibrahim Madi, made the following statement: "*God willing, this unjust state Israel will be erased; this unjust state the United States will be erased; this unjust state Britain will be erased.*" The hatred of the Arabs as well as that of Palestinians towards Israel and towards those few as friendly towards Israel is still great. That has not changed. Sure there are some nations who have been kind to Israel at various times throughout our history, but not always and in fact, not usually. Even men who claim to love Israel are often seeking their destruction. It is stated in a recent article — "The Bush Administration loves to tout Israel as the only democracy in the Middle East. Ironically, true democracy in the region would most likely be the death knell of Israel." Since all the surrounding nations in the Middle East hate Israel, once the region becomes democratic, they would seek to eliminate the people they hate.

The modern state of Israel is there because God put them there, but they do not believe in the Truth. In fact, they are filled with wickedness like every other modern nation. A great problem facing Israel, especially since the great influx of emigration from Russia, is prostitution and human trafficking. God takes notice of such things. Churches teach that God only cares about men's hearts. They teach that if people's hearts are right then nothing else matters. But God notices.

If you read Joel 3 you will see the kinds of things God notices such as prostitution and slavery. We might think that such things are not our problem but they are our problem. Even for brethren and sisters in Christ those things are our problem because children, girls, women, boys and men are all bought and sold and are bartered with even in the American courts and down at the lowest levels in families today, even here in civilized towns and certainly in most other parts of the World.

Even in Israel, the land of God, prostitution and other kinds of human selling or leasing take place today. Instead of modern educated people becoming a model for other nations to view and follow, *a model of civilized society*, they are depraved and wicked. We know the reason this happens. Without putting God first in our lives by learning and obeying the Truth, people turn to just satisfying human fleshly desires for themselves and to make money off others.

Christ said – “*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*” Matt 6:33 If people put God first in their lives, they will find that many other things will work themselves out favorably. God notices when people turn to Him and changes their lives around.

The government of the United States spends large amounts of money on advertising to buy young men and women to fight in far off places to protect U.S. interests and ideas throughout the world. This reminds us of another passage in today’s readings “*Since you have taken My silver and My gold, brought My precious treasures to your temples, and sold the sons of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks in order to remove them far from their territory, behold, I am going to arouse them from the place where you have sold them, and return your recompense on your head.*” (Joel 3:5-7)

We might think that the silver and gold today is not taken from God to do these things. Because of that we might think that God does not notice. We can think what we like of course. But the Truth is, that money is not being used for what God cares about. God says to spend money to help people (Exo. 22:25, Prov. 22:22, Prov. 28:3, Prov. 28:15, Prov. 28:27, Prov. 29:7, Jer. 2:34, Exo. 16:49, Ezek. 22:29, Luke 14:39). We should make sure everyone has clothing and food and is able to learn about the Truth. (James 1:27) In reality the money is taken away from programs to do those kinds of things and instead spent to buy girls and boys to be sent overseas to kill and die for protecting the very same system that God is going to judge.

What is all this to us?

You may wonder why an exhortation would mention this. Christadelphians don’t get involved in politics. We don’t condemn it, we

don't condone it. However somebody does condemn or condone it. That somebody is God. God gives power and God takes down those powers when they do wrong things. God does take notice of these kinds of activity and as he stated in today's readings in Joel. He is going to judge the world for doing those kinds of things.

Joel 3:3-4 says, *“And they have cast lots for my people; and have given a boy for an harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink. Yea, and what have ye to do with me, O Tyre, and Zidon, and all the coasts of Palestine? will ye render me a recompence? and if ye recompense me, swiftly and speedily will I return your recompence upon your own head.”*

When we see people in government influence laws, nations, and tax spending to support their own companies and interests, they are directly conducting activities to feed their own pockets, their own income and their own mouths to drink – God takes notice. God said as stated above that they are going to be judged for that.

We as Christadelphians usually act like aloof observers who see things, and are saddened by them, but don't get involved. That is correct because we have all agreed never to become part of the political processes. We don't vote, we don't swear oaths, we don't protect ourselves or the country with weapons or with force. But we are not powerless against all this evil.

We have the most powerful of weapons available to us and we certainly use those weapons. That weapon is not one made with hands or with steel or gunpowder. We use the spiritual weapons we are commanded to use. (Eph 6:12) That weapon is the Word of God. The Word of God can bring down a nation if need be because it can teach people the Truth and then they will surrender their evil ways by repenting and will love their very enemies as is commanded by Christ. This in theory at least can bring about that much change in a nation.

In today's first portion readings from Nehemiah 8 we saw a people, though small, concerning themselves with re-learning the Truth of the Bible. They all organized themselves in a way so they could learn. Anybody who was interested got involved. The people reacted very emotionally. They were upset when they learned the Truth and didn't really know what to do. So they wept. But they were told not to weep. Instead they were told *“Do not be grieved, for the joy of Yahweh is your strength.”* (Neh 8:10-11)

That is the message we must make sure we teach when we tell people about the Truth. Sure they are going to be upset sometimes. When they see that their own actions, and the actions of everyone they know – even the religious ones – are not the Truth and are wicked to God, then they will feel bewildered and regretful. But no matter, we can encourage them with the

words “*Do not be grieved, for the joy of Yahweh is your strength.*” We offer a message of hope, not one of despair. People don’t want to hear or know the Truth. It is so much easier for them to block from their minds what might upset them. But it is far better in the long run for us and them to take a long hard look at the Truth, than it would be to just stay drunk with lies to block it all out.

We have a great message for the people around us to hear, and we must tell them. It is an ancient message. The judgments spoken of are still coming for most of the World, and the blessings spoken of are still waiting to happen too. “*But Yahweh is a refuge for His people And a stronghold to the sons of Israel. Then you will know that I am Yahweh your God, Dwelling in Zion, My holy mountain. So Jerusalem will be holy. And strangers will pass through it no more. And in that day The mountains will drip with sweet wine*”. The message we bring is one of hope and happiness for the physical world people live in. It is not a message about some place far away in spirit-world. It is a message for real cities and real lands and real people.

The Better Way

The passage in 2 Thessalonians goes on to say: “*May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ.*”

We need a real hope to bring to people. We need to learn to live and teach in a manner that will keep us from becoming discouraged and wanting to block out this world’s realities so we can just stay comfortably numb. That way to do this is to learn to lead a disciplined life that includes teaching others about the Truth, but is not the only part of our life. We need to balance that with also communicating with others who are doing the same things as us. That is fellowship and communication that the Bible commands us to have.

Brethren and sisters, this real hope should come up in every message we bring to the people around us. It is the message that God hates the wickedness that fills the world. Why is that hopeful? Because it means that He Himself is going to remove it. In the kingdom, there won’t be any more prostitution, drunkenness, human trafficking and other crimes. There instead will be a situation where every person will have enough to eat and drink. Everyone will have their own gardens and their own houses. Nobody will be afraid. And there will ultimately be peace that fills the earth.

Imagine a world where everyone believes the Truth and is taught it. Imagine a world where there are no more lies filling the land. Imagine a world where the money doesn’t all get used up on weapons and wars. We are promised that condition where it says in Isaiah 11:9 “*They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the*

knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.” Imagine a world where this is true, “And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” (Rev 21:3)

That coming world we hope for is what we are all about. We can start right now by teaching the better way. We can teach people about the Joy of our Hope and the love it produces in people who embrace that Truth. That message in itself is not for everyone. Many will still mock us as it mocked our Lord Jesus. Many will still be too busy or are already way too comfortably numb to really even comprehend what we teach. But we are convinced that there will always be a few out there that are women and men of faith who want to know and love God and are willing to give their lives to Him through baptism. Those are the people we pray we can reach and those are the people who gladly will hear the Word of God.

Bro. Michael Morrell

Bible Reading Notes —December

“Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.”

THE following inspired words of the sweet Psalmist of Israel contain all the encouragement necessary to engage in the practice of daily Bible reading. “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.” The “*Bible Companion*” provides a well-trying method of regular study, embracing the whole scriptures within the space of a year. According to this plan, the readings for December are the books of Job, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Hebrews 6 to 13, the epistles of James, Peter, John, Jude, and the Revelation.

JOB

This book portrays the divine principles by which the sons and daughters of God are made perfect through suffering. Job was a righteous man, “*perfect and upright, one that feared God, and eschewed evil*” (**chap. 1:1**). The divine pronouncement concerning him is, “My servant Job, there is none like him in all the earth” (**chap. 2:3**). He had an adversary, styled “Satan,” who sought to do him harm, and who stands as a type of all that

exhibit the mind of the flesh, and are antagonistic to the servants of God. This seems to be the inference contained in the Satan's answer to the question, "*Whence comest thou?*" "*From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it*" (**chap. 2:2**). For a time the adversary was permitted to have his way, and Job was put to the test. He was deprived of children, possessions, position, and health, but he maintained his integrity. "*The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord*" (**chap. 1:21**). Again, he said, "*Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?*" (**chap. 2:10**). After seven days' silence, Job's three friends discussed with him the principles underlying his afflictions. In reading the contributions of each of the speakers, it is imperative to remember the divine comment upon them. To Eliphaz, God said, "*My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends, for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right*" (**chap. 42:7**). Elihu was dismissed without comment, but of Job, God declared, "*He hath spoken of me the thing that is right*" (**chap. 42:8**). Having recovered from the first shock of his troubles, Job recognized that they were divinely contrived with a view to his eternal wellbeing. (See **chaps. 9:1 to 5**, and **13:15**.) "*Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.*" Observe his belief in resurrection, and immortality (**chaps. 14:14; 19:25**). The friends adopted the attitude that Job's sufferings were a punishment for his sins. "*Whoever perished being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?*" (**chap. 4:7**). They failed to realize that "*whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth*" (**Heb. 12:6**). Job recognized this fundamental truth. "*When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold*" (**chap. 23:10**). He freely acknowledged that wisdom dwells with God, whose ways, though inscrutable, are just and true (**chap. 28**). At length God Himself spoke to Job. He declared His wisdom, power, greatness, and love, as witnessed by the wonders of creation (**chaps. 38 and 39**). The divine reasoning is that God is supreme and unerring in all His ways, both in the mighty works of the universe and in the lives of all His servants. Man must not challenge or question His almighty workings. Job was prepared to acknowledge this sublime fact. "*I know that thou canst do everything*" (**chap. 42:2**). His example of patience, fortitude, and resignation is commended in both Old and New Testaments (Ezekiel 14:14; James 5:11), and his experiences foreshadowed the sufferings of Jesus. The lesson of the book is summed up by the apostle, who wrote, "*Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.*"

JONAH

This book, though derided by many professing Christians and by sceptics, received the endorsement of Christ. (See Matt. 12:40.) Its incidents circle around a remarkable miracle, the necessity for which will be apparent upon a moment's reflection. Jonah was a Jew, and as such shared all the

prejudices against Gentile nations. Yet he was sent with a divine message to Palestinians towards Israel and towards those few as friendly towards Israel is still great. The Ninevites would have been equally unwilling to receive his utterances unless they were accompanied by unimpeachable evidences of divine origin. Hence the necessity for the miracle. Jonah was commanded to testify against the wickedness of Nineveh, but he sought to escape the disagreeable task. He boarded a ship bound for Tarshish, in the endeavor to “*flee from the presence of the Lord*” (**chap. 1:3**). When the ship was endangered by a mighty tempest, the mariners attributed their peril to Jonah. They cast him overboard, but “*the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah*” (**chap. 1:17**). He was ultimately cast up on the land, and having been humbled though strengthened in faith by his experiences, he journeyed to Nineveh, and warned its inhabitants of impending judgments (**chap. 3**). The Ninevites repented, and God spared them. Many valuable lessons are taught in this book, chiefly the omniscience of God (see also Psalm 139), the depths of divine mercy, and the prefigurement in Jonah's experiences of the resurrection of Christ. The divine expostulations with the Ninevites also foreshadowed the calling of the Gentiles, thereby illustrating the words of the apostle that God is “*not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*” (2 Peter 3:9).

MICAH

Micah was contemporary with Isaiah, and prophesied in the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. He foretold the coming of divine judgments upon both Israel and Judah (**chap. 1:6 to 9**). His words concerning Israel were fulfilled during his own lifetime, in the carrying away captive of the people by Shalmaneser and Sargon, kings of Assyria. Judah enjoyed a certain respite, but ultimately suffered a similar captivity, as Micah declared they would (**chap. 2:10**). The destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, A.D. 70, is clearly alluded to in **chapter 3:12**. “*Zion, for your sake, shall be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps.*” **Chapter 4** contains a glowing picture of Israel's future glory, and of the blessings to come upon all nations by the beneficent reign of Christ. The prophecy will receive its fulfillment when Jesus returns to the earth, to be “*ruler in Israel*” (**chap. 5:2**). The whole chapter describes the work of Christ when he “*shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the Lord his God*” (**verse 4**). **Chapter 6** reveals the basis of acceptability to God. “*What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*” (**verse 8**). The closing chapter again reverts to the awful punishment that should come upon Israel, but contains glorious promises of coming restoration. The nations shall see and be confounded (**verse 16**) when Israel are delivered after the type of the former “*coming out of Egypt*” (**verse 15**). The keynote of the whole prophecy is contained in its last verse. “*Thou wilt perform the truth to*

Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old” (verse 20).

NAHUM

Nahum's prophecies were intended as a means of comfort to the faithful remnant of Israel who had witnessed the invasion of the Northern kingdom by the Assyrians. Was Assyria to become yet more powerful, and overrun Judah as she had Israel? Nahum foretold the overthrow of Nineveh, because it had exalted itself against God and had oppressed His people. “*The Lord revengeth, and is furious*” (**chap. 1:2**). **Chapters 2 and 3** describe the irrecoverable ruin of this proud city. History records the fulfillment of the prophecy in the successful attacks of the Babylonians and the Medes. Notice the prophet's references to devastation by fire (**chaps. 2:13; 3:15**). The unearthed fragments of Nineveh's palaces now exhibited in the British Museum bear ample evidences of the raging fires, and are a corroboration of the scriptural account. Nahum foretold that notwithstanding all the vicissitudes of God's people, Israel would be restored to divine flavor. “*O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows, for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off*” (**chap. 1:15**). This prophecy will be fulfilled when all the nations typified by Assyria are subdued by Christ, and Israel are exalted in the earth.

HABAKKUK

The time of Habakkuk's prophecy is established by the reference in **chapter 1:6**. “*I will raise up the Chaldeans,*” “*in your days*” (**verse 5**), thus indicating the period marked by the rise of the Babylonians as oppressors of Israel. The prophet declared that God's fury upon His people for their iniquities would be poured out through the instrumentality of this cruel race from the east. He mused in himself as to the time of Israel's bitter downtreading (**chap. 1:12 to 17**). **Chapter 2** contains the answer to his ponderings. Babylon in her turn would be punished and her downfall would surely come. Many allusions in the chapter indicate, however, that its wider application relates to the overthrow of all the kingdoms of men. “*The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak*” (**chap. 2:3**). The sequel of their overthrow is described, **verse 14**, “*The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.*” **Chapter 3** describes the manifestations of divine power by which the kingdom of God will be established in the earth.

ZEPHANIAH

Zephaniah's prophecy concerns God's severe judgments upon Judah for their transgressions (**chap. 1**), and upon Ammon, Moab, and Philistia, for their wickedness. It also contains gracious promises of ultimate deliverance for Israel, and for the whole world when “*I will turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him*

with one consent” (**chap. 3:9**). These words will be fulfilled when “*I will gather her that was driven out, and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame*” (**verse 19**). The partial restoration of the Jews to their own land, now an accomplished fact, is the sure guarantee of the early fulfillment of the prophet's words.

HAGGAI

Haggai was contemporary with the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple after the Babylonian captivity. The theme of his utterances was that the rebuilding foreshadowed a glorious restoration, when God would “*shake the heavens, and the earth, and the dry land, and the desire of all nations shall come*” (**chap. 2:6**). It is a reference to the coming of Christ as Israel's King, and the erection in the earth of a house of prayer for all nations. “*The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts*” (**chap. 2:9**). This glorious event will be the sequel to the overthrowing of the throne of kingdoms, and the destruction of the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen (**verse 22**). Such a prophecy can have no other application than to the work of Christ at his second coming.

ZECHARIAH

Zechariah's prophecy is, in the main, a series of visions descriptive of the work of Christ and his immortalized friends in establishing the Kingdom of God in the earth. The vision of the horses (**chap. 1**) concludes with the words, “*The earth sitteth still, and is at rest*” (**verse 11**). **Chapter 2** contains a reference to the time when “*the Lord shall inherit Judah, his portion in the holy land*”. **Chapter 3** speaks of the coming of God's servant “*the Branch*”. **Chapter 6** declares “*he shall grow up out of his place, and shall build the temple of the Lord*”. **Chapter 9** alludes to the coming of the king who shall “*speak peace unto the heathen*”. **Chapter 12** describes the restoration of Judah. **Chapter 14** foretells the conflict at Armageddon resulting in the destruction of the kingdoms of men, and the enthronement of the Lord as “king over all the earth” (**verse 9**).

MALACHI

Malachi, the last of the prophets in Old Testament times, lived in the days immediately following the work of Ezra and Nehemiah. He protested against the laxity which had crept in among the people who were formerly so enthusiastic in the Lord's work, and especially did he reprove the priests for their neglect and infidelity. He foretold the coming of Christ as the “*messenger of the covenant,*” and described the work he would perform in purifying the earth of all its evil elements. The following points should be particularly noted: the universal character of the Kingdom of God (**chap. 1:11**); the second coming of Christ (**chap. 3:2**); the delightful future of the

promised land (**chap. 3:12**); the keeping of books of remembrance (**chap. 3:16**); the rewards of righteous and wicked (**chap. 4**).

The readings from the New Testament for the month are: Hebrews, **chapters 6 to 13**; the epistles of James, Peter, John, Jude, and the book of Revelation.

HEBREWS

This epistle was intended to teach Jewish converts the superiority of Christ and the New Covenant over Moses and the Old Covenant. **Chapter 1** demonstrates Christ's superiority over the Angels, **chapter 3** his higher authority than Moses, **chapter 7** the greater dignity of Christ's Melchizedec priesthood than the Aaronic, **chapter 8** shows how the New Covenant is "*better*" than the Old, **chapter 9** the contrast between the sacrifice of Christ and the animal sacrifices of the Mosaic ritual. Many first principles are taught in this epistle; chiefly, the nature and character of Christ (**7:26, 27**), the purpose of his sacrifice (**9:26**), his second coming (**9:28**). **Chapter 11** teaches the imperative need for faith in God and His promises (**verse 6**), the nature of those promises (**verses 8-16**), and the practical effect of faith in those who possess it (**verses 33-40**). **Chapters 12 and 13** contain many exhortations for the guidance of faithful men and women, all of which are summed up in the statement, "*here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come*" (**chap. 13:14**).

JAMES

This epistle is largely devoted to exhortations for the observance of the followers of Christ. Notice how the apostle speaks of temptation, "*Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed*" (**chap. 1:14**). There is no countenance here of the doctrine of an outside tempter in the form of an immortal, personal devil. Observe the reference to Abraham as an example of faith and works (**chap. 2:22**). Mark the allusions to the root causes of war and all wickedness (**chaps. 3:15; 4:1**), and to the second coming of Christ as the only hope for mankind (**chap. 5:7**).

PETER, JOHN, JUDE

Attention is drawn to the following doctrines of Divine Truth taught by the apostles in the letters bearing their names: the inspiration of the Scriptures (**2 Peter 1:20**); the Fatherhood of God (**1 John 1:3**); the Sonship of Christ (**1 John 4:15**); his participation in human nature (**1 Peter 2:24; 1 John 4:3**); his sinless life (**1 Peter 2:22**); his atoning work (**1 John 3, 8; 4:9**); his resurrection (**1 Peter 1:3**); his second coming (**2 Peter 3:4**); his judgment seat (**1 Peter 4:17; Jude 6**); the reward of the righteous (**1 John 2:25**); the necessity for baptism (**1 Peter 3:21**); the mortality of man (**1 Peter 1:24**); the declension from the One Faith (**2 Peter 2:1; Jude 4**); the necessity for correct belief (**2 John 10**). These doctrines are comprehended

in “*the faith once delivered unto the saints*” (**Jude 3**) for which true believers should earnestly contend.

REVELATION

The understanding of this book is dependent upon a knowledge of “*the things concerning the kingdom and the name of Jesus Christ.*” It treats of the events leading up to and consequent upon the revelation (appearing, second coming) of Jesus Christ. Its scope is defined (**chap. 1:1**) as being “*to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass,*” *i.e.* from the days of John (A.D. 96) to the consummation of the Divine Purpose in the earth. These matters were revealed by sign, or symbols (**chap. 1:3**). The book consists of four main divisions, *viz.*, an introduction, the opening of the seven seals, the blowing of seven trumpets, the pouring out of seven vials resulting in the completion of the purpose. Each division is prefaced by a vision of the Kingdom of God. The introduction contains seven letters of warning and encouragement. The first six seals deal with the conflict between paganism and Christianity from A.D. 98 to 324. The seventh seal comprises the period covered by the trumpets and vials. The first six trumpets relate to the inroads of the barbarians upon the Roman Empire, the uprising of Mohammedanism, and the growth of the Papacy. The seventh trumpet covers the period of the vials. These date from the days of the French Revolution to the establishment of the Kingdom of God. A simple exposition of this interesting and important book will be found in the work entitled “*Thirteen Lectures on the Apocalypse,*” by Robert Roberts.

Will the American Elections Put Iraq in her Prophetic Place?

Iraq is to be allied with the King of the North in the last days. Iraq is the home of the Garden of Eden where sin began. She is the home of Babel, where the true religion was corrupted following the flood, and idolatry began through Nimrod. She is the home to Babylon, Israel’s conqueror and destroyer, and long time hated enemy. As such she was the typical King of the North, coming to destroy God’s people.

But today, we find Iraq in a different position. We find her governed by Southern Powers, the United States and Britain. These two nations sit inside Iraq, dictating policy to the Iraqis, and it is keeping her from taking her rightful position on the world’s stage. Both governments have maintained this policy in opposition to the will of their respective peoples. It has cost both British and American political parties dearly in regards to their national support.

No doubt, at the time of the start of the war, it was God’s will that Iraq should be crippled. Israel was under constant attack from the suicide bombers coming from Arab states. Iraq was the chief sponsor of these

attacks, giving 35,000 American Dollars to the families of the suicide bombers. It is hard for us to imagine just how much money that is to the destitute Arabs living in the Palestinian refugee camps, but this was a huge draw. But with Israel's protection accomplished through the removal of Saddam Hussein, it is also God's plan for the Southern Power to get out of Iraq.

Iraq is made up of three religious/political groups. The majority group is the Shi'ite Moslems, who reside in the south and east of Iraq. The second group is the Sunni Moslems. This was the religion of the Bathist political party of Saddam Hussein. This group inhabits the center and western portions of Iraq. The third group is the Kurds, who live in the northern portions of Iraq. The Kurds are less of a religious group, than a race. They are the largest race of people who have no country, in the earth today.

The United States' goal is trying to establish democracy in the region. None of the Moslems believe in democracy. They believe in Theocracy, that is, a political society governed by religious leaders. But the Shi'ites have been very receptive to the US goals, because they know they can control the government through their numbers. Then, when the Southern Powers remove themselves, they can institute a Shi'ite Theocracy, exactly as they have done in Iran.

The Sunni's also understand this, which is the reason they will not allow peace in the land. If the Shi'ites came to such a position as they occupy in Iran, the Sunni's will be hunted down and killed, generally under the name of the crimes committed against Shi'ites during Hussein's rule (which were horrible,) but at its root, they will be persecuted because of the hostility that exists between these two Moslem sects. So peace and coexistence between these two groups is impossible.

Now, the real reason that political parties in the United States do what they do, is to control the trillion dollar budget, and disperse it to their friends. All arguments by either side about ideals and political goals are subservient to this one thing. And since the American people have clearly spoken that they want out of Iraq, and will politically punish any party that does not work towards this goal, that will now happen. No doubt many face saving efforts will take place, but the final result will be the same. The US will remove itself from Iraq, the Shi'ites will win and join with the Iranians, and provide a united northern opposition front in the Middle East, aimed squarely at the mountains of Israel.

A question may legitimately be asked, as to whether the two Gulf wars are the antitype of the two Northern invasions of Daniel 11. Daniel 11:7-9 describes an attack by the North against the South were the North is totally crushed and annihilated. In type, this was the sons of Antiochus Theos

betraying a peace agreement with the South, resulting in the King of the South (Ptolemy Euergetes) coming to the King of the North and crushing them. Was the antitype Saddam Hussein, violating the Partition agreement and invading Kuwait, and being crushed by the Southern Powers in Gulf War I the antitype?

Then in Daniel 11:10-12 we read of the second Grecian war, where the Northern King (Antiochus the Great) again provokes a southern invasion by Ptolemy Philopater and the southern king is again victorious. Only the prophesy explicitly says, *“but he shall not be strengthened by it.”* If the US and Britain pull out of Iraq in its current political condition, truly the South shall not have been strengthened by the war, but rather will find a more formidable foe left in control.

And the prophecy says that in those days many shall stand up against the King of the South. And what we see now, is a Continental Europe, a Russia, a China, and even a Catholic Church standing up against the Southern Powers, encouraging them to remove themselves from the Middle East, further weakening them.

In Daniel 11, the two failures by the North, and the weakening of the King of the South are ultimately followed by a great northern victory, where, in Daniel 11:28, Antiochus Epiphanes comes down on the mountains of Israel, conquering all that dares to stand before him. This third Grecian war, in fact, sounds very much like the northern invasion and victories of Ezekiel 38. The King of the North sweeps down through the Holy Land, destroying all in his path, and coming into Egypt where he is finally stopped by a new power introduced into the war. In the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, that new power that stopped him in Egypt was the budding Roman power. In our day, that new power will be Christ and the Saints.

But of course, before the King of the North comes down to be destroyed by Christ and the Saints, the Saints must be gathered to him in the mountains of Sinai. So if this view of Dan. 11 is correct, then the next significant act in the World's history after the removal of the US and Britain from Iraq, would be the call to judgment and the formation of the army of the modern day Lawrence who will ultimate in the conquering of the world for God.

Bro. Jim Phillips

Call for Separation

We propose to rally to the right doctrine, and then to step aside from all who refuse to do this, or (which is the same thing) who refuse to repudiate the error and those who teach it. The community as a community has become corrupt. We propose to cease our connection with it on this account.

We will go out in the name of allegiance to the Bible as God's wholly-inspired and infallible word. This is a Scriptural line of action. To “*come out from among them*” is a matter of command when a community, as such, has become hopelessly corrupt. We have done it before when we came out of the sects which claim to be Christ's people. It is the only course that can extricate us from the false position in which we have been placed by the reception of a false and destructive doctrine by so many in our midst...

I cannot agree with those who say we should only separate from those who teach error, and not from those who believe it (which I take it is practically the same thing as 'refusing to repudiate'). The basis of all fellowship is identity of belief – not identity of teaching – though the latter would follow from the former. Some object to the flower, but not to the root. Let us take out the root of our present distress, and then the distress will end."
Bro. Robert Roberts —1885

I cannot agree with those who say we should only separate from those who teach error, and not from those who believe it (which I take it is practically the same thing as 'refusing to repudiate'). The basis of all fellowship is identity of belief – not identity of teaching – though the latter would follow from the former. Some object to the flower, but not to the root. Let us take out the root of our present distress, and then the distress will end.
Bro. Robert Roberts—1885

In withdrawing, we wash our own hands. We leave to God those whom we withdraw from. We are not authorised to judge or condemn them. But this document lays it down that we must not withdraw, unless we are prepared to maintain that the cause of withdrawal will make salvation impossible. This would erect an ecclesia into a spiritual judicature, deciding questions which the Lord has reserved for himself...

The time for withdrawal is when men drift into unscriptural attitudes of faith or practice. These we note and separate ourselves from, without reference to the question of whether the offenders can be saved, which we cannot decide. And the withdrawal is not putting them out but going out ourselves, as the term implies. We simply go away, saying we cannot be responsible.
Bro. Robert Roberts —1891

Complete Baptismal Submersion

Baptism is a burial with Christ (Col. 2:12,) and therefore a complete submersion of the: body, as, in fact the original word *baptizo* signifies; but we should hesitate to say, that the person submitting with full and loving intent to the institution failing, through some accident, to be entirely covered with the water, has therefore failed to put on Christ. The change expressed in these words is not the result of the mechanical process of being put under

water, but is a change which takes place *in God's mind* towards the person as a result of the act performed in the connection in which he has required it. This being so, we can hardly suppose that a slight accidental miscarriage in the administration of the rite would invalidate its efficacy as an act of obedience legally uniting the subject of it to Christ. However, it is best to be on the safe side. If there be any doubt, re-immersion will settle it. Unquestionably, the person *ought* to be buried in the water.

— *The Ambassador of the Coming Age, Volume 2, 1865*

Thoughts Gleaned By The Way

We may dream of having faith to “*move mountains,*” but the crying need just now is enough faith to move us to such an extent that we will be impelled to do the things we can and should do.

* * *

It is common to hear proposals for something new as a remedy for any and every evil. We even have suggestions that the world needs a new religion. Unquestionably it needs some kind of a change; but when Israel went astray, they sought something new in the ways of the heathen, and the inspired prophet admonished them to “*ask for the OLD PATHS, where is the good way, and walk therein*” (Jer. 6:16).

We are told that the Athenians “*spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear something new*” (Acts 17:21). The apostle Paul reminded them that these new things which they were seeking after were vain delusion, and that the true God who created all things was very near to all of them, whom they could serve and obtain eternal life.

When those who have known the truth go seeking after “*some new things,*” it is a sure sign of a falling away from the Truth.

* * *

The minister of a large congregational church recently wrote to a magazine editor saying that one of the questions often asked by members of his congregation was: “Why is the world in such a mess, and what can we do to build a better world?”

The minister seemed to think that the editor might be able to shed some light on this perplexing problem. It is a sad commentary on modern “Christianity” and the clergy that they have no answer to either part of this question – either the cause or the cure.

They know not that the cause is the native evil tendencies of the human mind in which dwells “*no good thing,*” and that God is leading the nations to their own destruction, “*because their wickedness is great.*”

They know not that God has a purpose with the earth and man upon it, and that the only remedy is the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to set up his

kingdom, break in pieces and abolish the whole human system, including the apostate system called “Christendom,” the very sinful system in which the clergy, newspaper editors and others are seeking to uphold and fashion according to their own ideas of what the world should be, in the vain hope that, through the efforts of mankind alone, war can be abolished and universal peace and brotherhood prevail in the earth.

“When thy judgements are in the earth, the inhabitants thereof will learn righteousness,” and not before.

* * *

One of the outstanding weaknesses of all human systems is man’s lack of power and ability to accomplish even the best of his intentions and the most laudible plan, while God’s plan cannot fail, because His power is limitless.

“Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou has established the earth and it abideth. They continue this day according to thy ordinances; for all are thy servants” (Psa. 119:89-91).

Aside from many other good reasons, it is just plain common sense not to trust in the help of man, but place all our reliance on Him who is all-powerful, and who has sent forth His Word which shall accomplish that which he pleases, and shall prosper in the thing whereunto He sent it (Isa. 55).

* * *

One of the strangest contradictions in human nature is the not uncommon case of persons of great intelligence and wisdom in most ways, showing almost total lack of wisdom and understanding in some things. The human mind appears to be incapable of thinking wisely on all subjects at the same time.

This is one explanation which may be given for some of the utterly stupid suggestions on the subject of religion sometimes offered by the wise and great; for true religion, when approached from the one and only reliable source of information, The Bible, is one of the simplest of subjects, that even the lowly and ignorant can understand.

God has arranged it this way; to the person of humble and contrite spirit, God has made His word easy to understand, while making it appear as foolishness to the worldly-minded. There is a saying that “we are all ignorant; only on different subjects.” It is no cause for shame on the part of the disciple of Christ to be unlearned in many things that form *“the wisdom of the world;”* in most instances it is vain.

* * *

It has often been said that one of the most pathetic sights in human experience is when a person who, having arrived at the age and condition

when mind and body are incapable of earning a living, find themselves penniless and objects of charity.

But there is something more pathetic than that. It is a person with one foot in the grave, having spent his life aimlessly, facing death and “*without hope and without God in the world.*”

But with the hope of eternal life and joy forever to sustain one, growing old, even in poverty, has no terrors for us. —*Bro. Oscar Beauchamp*

Analecta Apocalypticæ (8) **An Ecclesia Leaves Her First Love**

The Angel of the Ecclesia

You will observe that each message is addressed to “the angel” of the ecclesia to which it is sent. The common way of understanding this is to suppose that by “the angel” was meant the presiding bishop of each particular ecclesia. But there can be no doubt that, as in most scriptural things, popular exegesis is wrong here. Dr. Thomas's exposition is demonstrably the right thing — that “the angel” is the Apocalyptic figure for the eldership in each ecclesia, appointed and endowed for their office by the Spirit, ministered by the laying on of the hands of the apostles. This is proved by the recognition of the angel as a plurality, in the messages themselves. Thus, the seven messages, though addressed to the angel of each particular ecclesia, are said to be “what the Spirit saith to the ecclesias” (chap. 2:7, 11, 17, and so on). If each message was addressed to each ecclesia, then the “thou” and the “thy” addressed to “the angel” were plural in their scope. This is finally and conclusively established by the express mention of “some” being included in the ecclesial “thou.” Thus, to Smyrna, it is said, “The devil shall cast some of you into prison that ye may be tried, and ye shall have tribulation ten days; be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life” (chap. 2:10). Here “thou” and “you” are used interchangeably. To Pergamos, it was said that “Antipas” was “slain among you” (13); and to Thyatira, “I will give to every one of you according to your works” (23).

Illustrations might be multiplied, but these are conclusive. If it be asked how the eldership should be figured as an angel, we have the answer in the fact that, as men miraculously endowed with the powers and gifts of the Spirit of God for the perfecting of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11,12), they were collectively an angelism from Christ in the midst of each ecclesia — a messengership — men sent for a particular purpose, and officially representing the body in each case.

He Who Controls Ecclesial Destiny

Christ introduces himself as “He who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.” The lesson of this is powerful in view of the interpretation, that “The seven candlesticks are the seven ecclesias.” Christ walking in the midst of these candlesticks means that all things among the brethren are as open to his sight and knowledge as they are in each ecclesia to those who constitute that ecclesia. It means more than this. It means that he has not only power to see, but power to control, and to affect everyone as he sees fit. As he expresses it in the message to Thyatira: “All the ecclesias shall know that I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts, and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.” This power the Lord Jesus possesses by reason of his possession of the Spirit. “In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9). “He is the Lord of Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:17). Consequently, what Paul says of the “word of God” (which he is, made flesh) is true of him: “He is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the hearts, neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight, but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (Heb. 4:12-13). This fact is attested by his description as “he that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks”. He walked in the midst of the brethren in the days of John, in the sense of knowing, and watching, and affecting all their affairs. It scarcely needs to be remarked that if true in the first century, it is true now, and that, consequently, the affairs of the brethren are everywhere open to his view and subject to his manipulation.

Ephesian Ecclesia Commended

“I know thy works:” this fact follows from Christ's relation to the seven candlesticks. It is a comforting fact to everyone who is striving to walk acceptably before God, and perhaps failing to secure the approbation of men. It may seem to us as if our affairs were unknown and unheeded. Time goes on and nothing comes of it, and we may become “weary and faint in our minds”. Perhaps there were some in Ephesus who felt like this. They had been forty or fifty years in existence as an ecclesia before receiving this indication of the Lord's mind concerning them. We have not had so long a career as that. Let us bear up against the effects of apparent delay. The Lord is noticing, and so to speak, recording proceedings from day to day. When he comes, He will let us know what He thinks, and give us the results in a very substantial form. He will express His approval if our course admit of it.

He commended the Ephesian ecclesia for some things. He approved of their “labour and patience:” *“Thou hast borne and hast patience, and for My name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.”* He also spoke approvingly of them on this head: *“Thou canst not bear them that are evil,*

and thou hast tried them that say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars.” This is the best answer to those who accuse us of uncharitableness on account of our hostility to that which is opposed to the revealed will of Christ, and because of our application of the test of truth to the modern professors of apostleship or successorship to the apostles. If the Ephesian attitude in these matters secured the approbation of Christ, a British attitude will do the same if righteously sustained. And if we secure Christ's approbation, it matters nothing if the whole world condemn us.

Somewhat Against

Christ had “somewhat against” the brethren in Ephesus. They had “left their first love”. We must understand this in the light of scriptural definitions of love, and not according to the modern notion which limits love to sentiment. It means more than affection: it means love in practical manifestation. “This is love”, says John, “that we walk after (in accordance with) his commandments” (2 John 6). Jesus also says, “*He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me*” (John 14:21). Hence a return to first love is a return to first acts. This is the interpretation Jesus gives of it in the message, “Repent, and do the first works” (verse 5). Christ requires a continuance — a patient continuance, in well doing (Rom. 2:7). He declared it expressly in this form, “He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved” (Matt. 24:13). This is reasonable: for where would be the value of a man's friendship which cools off with time and tires in those practical manifestations which give it value?

Jesus threatened the removal of the candlestick in case of non-reformation (verse 5). As the candlestick stood for the ecclesia, this was equivalent to saying that he would break up the ecclesia if the brethren were not earnestly attentive to his requirements. This is another indication of Christ's control of providence; for how would he remove the candlestick? Not by open visitation but by the disintegrating action of adverse circumstances regulated by him. As he said to Sardis: “If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come upon thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee” (chap. 3:3). The threat however involved a further point. That is, it meant more than merely interfering with the existence of the community. It referred particularly to the withdrawal of that symbolic oil for the combustion of which in light-giving, the candlestick was a mere apparatus, and without which it was of no use. To withdraw the oil was practically to remove the candlestick. Oil symbolically used stands for the Spirit of God, as proved in many ways which we need not refer to. The Spirit of God was bestowed upon the ecclesias in the first century. It was this that constituted them the Spirit's candlesticks. Hence the threat was a threat of the withdrawal of the Spirit. The threat was duly carried into effect. The reformation desired did not set in. The Apostasy, which Paul declared to be in active progress before his death, got the upper hand

everywhere, and the candlesticks were removed in all senses, since which day, the light of inspiration has been extinct, except in so far as it survives in the writings of the Spirit — the oracles of God which are to us a treasure beyond price.

Final Commendation

Jesus expresses his satisfaction that the brethren in Ephesus “hated the deeds of the Nicolaitanes” (2:6), which he adds he also hated. Who these were in the specific sense, is a matter of some doubt. The name is a compound of two Greek words, *nikh* and *lao*, signifying victory and the people; and the Dr. [Thomas] suggests that it stands generally for those who obtained the victory over the people by their corruption of the truth. The objection to this lies in the mention of Nicolaitanes as a class extra in addition to the corrupters of the truth in general. They come after the reference in this message, to “them which are evil” and those “who say they are apostles”. Also in the message to Smyrna, they are mentioned in the same special way after the enumeration of other corrupters. “So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate” (chap. 2:15). This seems to point to a special feature. In the enumeration of the early sects to be found in ecclesiastical history, mention is made of one Nicolaus, who taught the community of wives among Christians, and whose followers are said to have been called Nicolaitanes. If there was such a doctrine and such a sect among the ecclesias, it would be easy to understand how it came to be singled out for such emphatic reprobation in the messages sent by Christ to them; for nothing could more powerfully tend to the demoralization and disruption of society or the corruption and destruction of individuals than the promiscuous intercourse of the sexes.

The Promise

The promise to the Ephesian ecclesia, like the other parts of the message, is couched in the language of symbol: “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God” (2:7). The meaning of the symbol is plain to those who apprehend the truth concerning Christ as the giver of eternal life. In this capacity, he likened himself when on earth to manna and also to a vine, without which a man must die (John 6:27-35; 15:4-6). How true we find this to be! All men are mortal. One by one we must fail and wither and die. Nature holds out no hope of renewal of life for animal organizations. Hope lies in the direction of Christ alone, who proclaimed himself to be the Resurrection and the Life, and who is, therefore, appropriately likened in this promise to a tree, having the power of imparting immortality to the eater; after the figure of the tree in Eden, of which had Adam partaken, he would have lived for ever (Gen. 3:22).

Arranged from the writings of Bro. Roberts by Bro. Bob Widding.

What Does That Mean?

“Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.” (Ex 22:18)

In October was Halloween and many “witches” of the religion of Wicca gathered in Salem, MA to celebrate. What is “Wicca” and is it witchcraft?

Wicca is a neo-pagan religion that has been growing in popularity and acceptance. The simple truth is there is no consensus amongst Wiccans regarding what the religion is all about. The reason for this is that Wicca, as it is practiced now, is only about 50-years-old. This belief system was cobbled together from a variety of rituals, religious traditions and beliefs. Since its establishment, many offshoots and variations have sprung up. Some Wiccans worship more than one deity, while others worship only “the God” or “the Goddess”. Still others worship nature, and call it Gaea, after the Greek earth goddess.

Most Wiccans will vehemently deny that Satan is part of their pantheon, citing major doctrinal differences between themselves and Satanists. Wiccans generally promote moral relativity, disdaining labels like “good” and “evil” and “right” or “wrong”. They have one law or rule, called The Rede: *“Do what ye will, harm ye none.”* Most practitioners of Wicca believe in reincarnation.

One major factor that contributes to the abiding fascination with Wicca is the use of spells and Magick (a deliberate misspelling to separate them from magicians and illusionists). Curiosity seekers as well as spiritual neophytes are most eager to delve into these mysteries. Some Wiccans claim magick is simply using their minds to control matter; others use it to appeal to their favorite deity to do them a favor. Because the Rede disallows witches from hurting others, witches who do practice magick call themselves “nature witches” or “white witches” to further distance themselves from Satanists.

Wicca is basically a religion that is about minding your own business and living peaceably with your neighbors and environment. So what is so bad about that? Romans 1:25 says, *“They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature (created things), rather than the Creator...”* If you are worshipping anything besides the Creator, it is idolatry.

Wicca spells bring false hope of reincarnation where the Bible says, *“...And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.”* (Heb 9:27) God says we get one opportunity at life, and that is all. If we don’t accept God’s way now, He will judge us as unprofitable servants. There are no do-overs. Mark 7:8 says, *“Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”*

God is God, and we are not. We have a decision to make. Are we going to take God at His word and adopt His view of the world, or not? Knowing God is not easy and takes a lot of discipline. Wicca is a religion that takes a pack of lies, ties it in a romantic ribbon, and searches out a well-intentioned, but lazy and gullible people to sell its hollow doctrines.

Deuteronomy 18:10-12 says, *“There shall not be found among you any one that ...useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD.”* Wicca witchcraft is a sin and God hates it. Why? Because it is an attempt to cut off our dependence on God and get answers apart from Him. This is what sin is all about. Sin isn’t just a heinous, socially disagreeable crime. Sin is our decision to disagree with God on any topic – to rebel against Him. Sin is saying, “God, I want to live my life MY WAY.” We are told in Romans 6:23: *“For the wages of sin is death...”*

We must choose life now while it is today, and follow God’s way not man’s.

Bro. Jim Sommerville