

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 The Berean Christadelphians since 1923.

Vol. X No. 8 (XCV)

August, 2007

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.....	Hengoed
EXHORTATION Jeremiah Son Of Sorrow	258
EXHORTATION Purity Of Fellowship – Home & Individual	269
THOUGHTS Am I A Wife	282
THOUGHTS Care For The Shut-Ins	283
THOUGHTS Hymn 47.....	284
THOUGHTSCollection For The Work Of The Truth.....	287
THOUGHTS Christadelphian Articles	250
THOUGHTSDr. Thomas – His Summary.....	287
Analecta Apocalypticae (15)	290
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?.....	292

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

HENGOED, Wales, Breaking of Bread – 10.45am; Sunday School – 12.45pm; Lecture – 2.30pm; Bible Class and Elpis Israel Class – held alternately in the homes of the brethren and sisters. Youth Evening – held every 2 weeks on Friday at the Aberdare Country Park Village Hall at 6.30pm.

Beloved Brethren and Sisters in the bonds of the Abrahamic Covenant,

Since our last Ecclesial News we have been blessed with another Study Weekend on the Psalms. The study took place over the weekend 16th to 18th March (2007) and we considered Psalms 30 to 34. We were very pleased to have the company on that occasion of Bro. Dale Lee, Bro. Brian Lee and Bro. Len Naglieri. It was extremely uplifting to share spiritual thoughts during that time, which was over far too quickly. We would like to thank the brethren, not only for their company, but for leading some of the studies on the Psalms. As always, we appreciate the efforts made in covering long distances to be present, and we are thankful to our Heavenly Father for the safe journeys everyone received. Sadly, Bro. Robert Bennett was sick during the weekend and was unable to attend all of the talks. So often, and in so many ways, we are reminded of the weakness of our frame. May the Day soon dawn that will herald the return of the Son of Man who will bring that change of nature we are all hoping to have.

While writing, please note that we plan God Willing to have another Study over the weekend 14th to 16th September (2007) and a Gathering over the weekend of 7th to 9th March (2008), if our Master has not returned by then. A warm invitation is extended to any who are able to be with us on those occasions. Please contact Bro. Steve Male for further details.

FRATERNAL GATHERINGS & ACTIVITIES

(To be held Yahweh Willing)

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

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

Study Class Topic: 2Thess. and Titus; Bible Readings; Discuss. Zech. 8-14

CANTON SUNDAY SCHOOL PICNIC..... Aug 25 - 26, 2007 Bro. Don Miller, 6695 Carriage Lane, North Canton, OH 44721 330-494-7717

NORTHEAST FRATERNAL GATHERING - DETROIT.....Oct 5–7, 2007

Bro. Fred Higham, 1-586-790-2156, fhigham@gmail.com

Jeremiah – Son of Sorrow

Jeremiah's life was a sad one and apparently a complete failure, nothing to show for it. There is no record of him ever convincing anyone of anything.

Externally, there was nothing but continuous and deepening tragedy right to the end. Internally, of course, he had the peace of God—the perfect peace assured to all whose hearts are fixed on God. This peace—the deepest inner layer of his consciousness carried him through everything. It made the struggle possible. But it was not an automatic, insulated, unfeeling peace. Christ had this peace. It made the outcome of Gethsemane possible, but it did not eliminate or neutralize Gethsemane.

Jeremiah's life, like Christ, was a life of suffering and struggle, of sorrow and rejection, and in both cases not for themselves, but for the sorrows of their people. More than any other, Jeremiah was the forerunner of Christ in this.

For 40 years, he gave faithful and courageous testimony to a hated and rejected message. The latter half, after Josiah was dead, was far worse than the first. He was universally despised as a traitor to his nation—Fan enemy to his people. He was ridiculed and beaten, put in stocks, and thrown in dungeons and cisterns and left to die.

He was called to his mission at an early age, and he protested his youth. But God said to him, verse 10 of chapter 1, *“I have this day set thee”*—a term meaning to give great authority, *“set thee over the nations...to root out, and to pull down...to build, and to plant.”* This to a young boy, who would have no standing as yet, even in his own village.

He was not only to foretell, but to bring to pass. Of course, it was all of God, but Jeremiah was the instrument.

Paul says, *“All things are for your sakes.”* If we are Christ's, then all world developments are solely on our account, and for our eternal welfare. It is a tremendous thought with tremendous responsibilities. We do not dare to be ordinary. The young Jeremiah had a great responsibility.

Verse 17 – *“Gird up thy loins...be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them.”* He must do his part with courage, or God would not stand behind him. He must publicly stand fast for God, whatever might come.

He was called in the fourteenth year of Josiah—one year after Josiah's reforms had begun. There are very few historical details concerning his first 18 years, under Josiah. There is no mention of his having had any part in Josiah's national reforms. But we can be sure that they worked together. We know he was publicly active all that time, because five years after Josiah's death, he says in chapter 25 that he had been rising early and speaking to them for 23 years. Jeremiah would not suffer any official abuse or persecution, as long as Josiah lived. Still his heavy message that the nation was doomed brought him continual ridicule and hatred.

Josiah's national reform was only on the surface; the people were wicked and idolatrous in their hearts. The doom of the nation was already determined by God, and this Jeremiah must proclaim.

His first message – chapter 1, verse 14 – *“Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land.”* Josiah was told the same thing, when the book of the law was found, and the curses in it were read to him. God said, 2 Chronicles 34, *“I will bring evil upon this place..., even all the curses written in the book.”* But Josiah was promised that it would not come in his day.

The chapters in the Book of Jeremiah are in very irregular order, that is, irregular from a chronological point of view. Many are not dated and are impossible to date chronologically.

Chapters 1-3 are in Josiah's reign. Chapters 4-20 are undated and undateable. These cannot help us line up the events of Jeremiah's life, but they reveal much about the battle he faced and his inner struggle concerning it.

Chapter 3 is the last one actually attributed to the time of Josiah. Chapter 5 says, *“Run through Jerusalem, and see if you can find one man that seeks truth, and God will pardon it.”* This would seem to be after the good figs had been taken away captive with Jehoiakim for their own good.

The tone of impending judgment is even more urgent in chapter 6, and the determination to reject God's law seems described in words that cannot fit the time of at least surface obedience under Josiah.

However, on this first point, it does seem that from the beginning, Jeremiah spoke with the impression of immediately impending catastrophe that actually took 40 years to come, causing the people to increasingly mock and deride him as a false prophet. He was somewhat like Noah in this respect.

And on the second point, Jeremiah clearly at times puts words into their mouths that they would never think of openly saying, but which were a true expression of their hearts. As in chapter 18, where he has them saying, "*We will every one do the imagination of his evil heart.*" (Verse 12)

God sees us and describes us, not by the surface appearance, but as with an all-penetrating X-ray. If we miss this fact, we miss much of the exhortation and lesson. It is not what we say or profess that God takes any account of, but what we do, and where our heart is.

These people were very ready with their lips to profess allegiance to God, and to go piously through the form of His service, but their lives were just ordinary, untransformed, animal lives like the people around them.

God is listening to, and carefully recording, our actions and not our professions, or even our vague and well-meaning, some-day intentions.

In chapter 7, verse 16 appears for the first time an expression of terrible significance, "*Pray not thou for this people...for I will not hear thee.*" We are told, and it is basic, that God is not mocked. He is exceedingly long-suffering, up to a point, which deceives many. But there comes a time in every life, when opportunity ceases. The door is closed. It may be a death, or it may be any time before, when God sees fit.

This same command, "*Pray not for them,*" occurs again in chapters 11 and 14. For those people, it was too late. Yet, God left Jeremiah with them to exhort and warn them to the end. What a burdensome task was his! To testify all his life to minds of flesh and hearts of stone.

In chapter 9, verses 1-2, he says, "*Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men; that I might...go from them!*"

It was essential for Jeremiah's ministry that he have the capacity for deep grief for his wicked suffering people, though they had no feeling for him but hatred and resentment. He longed for the relief of getting away from the continual struggle and confrontation. His task was to keep warning over and over, but it all fell on deaf ears. And he knew from the beginning that that was how it would always be. Why then keep on? Why continue to provoke the bitterness and the resentment? Yea, the anger and the retaliation. Simply because that is what God's wisdom required. And dimly we can begin to perceive the wisdom of that wisdom.

It was a time of great change—one of the historic turning points for the ages. Iniquity had reached its full, and the kingdom was to be blotted out. The people were hopelessly committed to sin. But the open door must be kept prominently displayed before them, right to the very end, though God knew that as a nation they would never use it.

The pitiful fact, that at the very end, the last miserable remnant of the people forced Jeremiah to go down to Egypt with them, is very revealing. He was their contact with God, though they always rejected the message from God that he brought, and they kept asking him for.

Chapter 11 is commonly attributed to the time when the book of the law was found in the 18th year of Josiah. Verse 2 – "*Hear ye the words of this covenant.*"

Verses 3-4 – "*Cursed be the man that obeyeth not the words of this covenant, which I commanded your fathers.*" And God instructed Jeremiah, in verse 6, to make a tour of the cities of Judah, to proclaim the law and the long-recorded penalties that were to accompany its violation.

Certainly, the discovery and publicizing of the original book of the law and the cleansing of the temple would be a very appropriate time for this tour and would add much to its force.

In verse 14 of this chapter 11, we have again those dreadful words, "*Pray not thou for this people.*" Possibly as a reaction to this tour of preaching, the men of Anathoth, his own neighbors, plot to kill him (verses 19-23). There is a very striking type of Christ at Nazareth. Verse 19 says, "*I was as a lamb or an ox.*" The word translated *ox* is only once so rendered elsewhere, and questionably there. It appears that it should be, as in the Revised Version, "*I was like a gentle, or tame, lamb.*" The word means *domesticated*, not *ox*.

He went among his own people, wholly innocent and unsuspecting of their malice, while they plotted to kill him. But God revealed the danger to him, verse 18, and pronounced their utter destruction for it, verse 23.

Apparently in reaction to this treachery of those he depended on, he cries – chapter 12, verse 1 – "*Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper?*" It is an age-old question, which we can all answer theoretically, but which most like

Jeremiah find it difficult to accept personally. And God does not give him a direct answer; in fact He doesn't give him any answer at all to the question. But rather, warns him to prepare and adjust himself to much worse to come.

This is certainly the most practical and useful answer, and directs our minds into the proper channel of preparation and submission rather than questioning. "*Who art thou, O man, that questioneth God,*" as read from Romans. And not only his neighbors, but – verse 6 of chapter 12- his very brethren and family will deal treacherously with him, and he must be ready to accept it without wavering or weakening.

Then in an obvious parallel to Jeremiah's grief, God speaks of His own dearly beloved turning against Him – verses 7-8. And His own neighbors – verse 14 – that is, the nations surrounding Israel are pressing His heritage. And so, Jeremiah would be comforted in his small sorrows.

Chapter 13 is the enacted parable of the girdle, taken and hidden by the Euphrates.

Chapter 14 concerns a very severe drought in the land. There is no indication of time or chronology. The chapter illustrates Jeremiah's difficult position and his inner suffering for his people. He was chosen to be a constant reminder to them of God's message of doom, and they hated and rejected him for it. And yet, he was one of them, and feels deeply for them, and cries out on their behalf in confession of and identification with their sins.

Verse 7 – "*O LORD, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it (that is, save us) for thy name's sake.*" God's answer again – verse 11 – comes like the voice of doom, "*Pray not for this people.*" But again, in the closing verses, Jeremiah makes another impassioned appeal, doubtless remembering, and in the spirit of Moses, who in the face of a similar declaration by God, was privileged because of his persistence, to be the mediator for whose sake God refrained from destroying the nation early in their history.

God replies again – chapter 15:1 – "*Though Moses and Samuel (not only Moses, but both of them together pleaded for Israel)...yet my mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of my sight.*"

Verses 2-9 go on to reveal the terrible severity of God once the day of forbearance is past. It sounds pitiless, and it is pitiless. There would be none to show them pity – verse 5. It sounds even callous and cruel, but it is just plain stark reality that men will not face. Just because God is so longsuffering, men think that they can skip along their merry way, pleasing themselves, ignoring God's law, wasting His goods on themselves for all is His, filling their time with anything but Him, as long as His great patience lasts. And then at the final showdown, come whining back to Him for mercy. He wants all their heart and He wants it NOW, when it means something.

This is what Jeremiah had to convey to them. He is caught in a terrible conflict between compassion and faithfulness.

Verse 10 – "*Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth!...Every one of them doth curse me.*" Simply because he gave them the facts.

In verses 15-18, he cries to God again. It was a cry for relief from his intolerable position. He had done all that God had required for many years. He had completely given up all natural things, and had entered wholeheartedly into God's service.

"*Why then (verse 18) is my pain perpetual?*" It is a marvelous secret of sympathy and identification. No man, no real man, no godly man, liveth to himself. It was Jeremiah's deep identification with the dying nation that was his perpetual pain. It could not end. That was his burden and his service. This was his fellowship with the sufferings of Christ, who similarly and even more deeply suffered for his people's sufferings.

Paul said, "*I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart, and I could wish myself accursed from Christ (dreadful words), for my brethren according to the flesh.*" He could see the terrible ages that lay ahead for Israel. This is very strong language and a bitterness of mind for others. And this is the same man who said to the Philippians, "*Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice.*" There is no contradiction, just a glorious divine paradox.

There is an element of weary despair in Jeremiah's inquiry, like John the Baptist in prison, and like John too, doubtless physical abuse was part of his suffering. It was the combined weight of many things, without and within. And there is an element, too, in his bitterness of questioning God.

Verse 18 – "*Wilt thou be unto me as a liar?*" Rather, as deceitful? It is not for us to judge him in his extremity, but to learn from his overall faithfulness. God answers him at this occasion very patiently and promises strength, if he will be patient. We remember that Job spake the same way under intense pressure and suffering. And the matter was properly settled between Job and God.

In chapter 16, Jeremiah is told that he is not to take a wife. This was a sign to the people of the terrible times of suffering and destruction that were to come. The barbarous abuses and cruel deaths of partners and children would only add to the burden of their misery. Jeremiah submitted uncomplainingly, entering completely into the will and purpose of God.

Chapter 20 is the last of this long group of undated chapters. It records, at the beginning, the beating and torture of Jeremiah by Pashur, the chief governor of the temple, because of his testimony in chapters 18 and 19. This is the first record in the book of actual physical violence against Jeremiah, though it is hinted at in earlier chapters.

This incident must have been after Josiah's death, and it is usually attributed to the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign. This was now to be Jeremiah's increasing experience. To be locked into an uncomfortable and immobile position in stocks after a severe beating was very cruel torture. Paul and Silas experienced the same. Jeremiah was in the stocks for a whole night and at least parts of two days.

The latter part of chapter 20, from verse 7 to the end, is another deep insight into Jeremiah's inner life and thoughts. Some of it may seem hard to understand and to harmonize. But we must view it overall as a unit—as the bitter conflict between flesh and spirit that can only be judged by its outcome and not by its details. We must see it in the light of Christ in Gethsemane, though of course none ever rose to Christ's perfection under trial.

Perhaps these were his very thoughts, while he was suffering cruelly in the stocks and exposed to public taunt and ridicule. Or, perhaps it was while he was sinking in pitch darkness in the filthy mire of the cistern, abandoned to die. Obviously, it was wrung from him under some great pressure. It was hardly while he was sitting comfortably and at ease in an armchair, as we probably are when we are reading it.

None who have not gone through such a lifetime of sorrow such as Jeremiah would be in any position to judge him. But these things are written for our admonition and instruction, and there is much we can learn from them.

Verse 7, still in chapter 20 – “*O LORD, thou hast deceived me.*” The word often means *persuaded*, though it is clear that Jeremiah here felt that he had been pressured by overwhelming divine influence to take on something that was proving just too much to bear.

Ever since he had begun to preach, he had met bitter antagonism and biting ridicule—the latter perhaps harder to take than the former. And when the awful march of events at last proved him right and cut off the ridicule, then the physical abuse intensified, as the nation grew more desperate and embattled.

Verse 9 is a clear struggle between the natural and the spiritual. All his natural inclinations were to abandon the battle, but faithfulness and a burning fear for God overcame all natural desires, and kept him at his lonely and dangerous post of duty.

Verse 10 – “*All my familiars watched for my halting.*” Those closest to him were always trying to catch something whereby they could accuse and destroy him. So Christ was stalked by enemies, who pretended to be his friends in order to catch him in his words.

Verse 11 – “*The LORD is with me as a mighty terrible one.*” This was his inner confidence, and clearly, from the race that he ran right to the end, this was what always won out in his inner struggle. And this really is the basic clue—perhaps the central reason the whole chapter was recorded. If this one assurance can be firmly held onto and kept in the forefront, everything else falls into place, and nothing else really matters. “*The LORD is with me.*”

Verse 12 – “*Let me see thy vengeance on them.*” He had been praying for them for many years, and God had repeatedly told him to stop praying for them. There is no difficulty here, in him calling for vengeance, though some have imagined such. We are listening to Jeremiah, as inspired prophet of God with a message of God, speaking of evil men whom God has condemned and cast off, but whom He has allowed to clearly abuse His faithful prophet who sought only their welfare.

Three times already we have had recorded, “*Pray not for this people.*” We are not in that extremity, and we are not under that instruction. Samuel was rebuked for continuing to mourn for Saul after Saul was rejected. He was taking the wrong side.

True righteousness is to see things as God sees them. There is a time for God's vengeance and for God's people to call for it. Elijah was right in calling down fire from heaven, but the disciples were not right on the occasion when they wanted to copy him. And so, we must neither criticize Jeremiah nor, in this case, copy him, unless we have divine instruction to do so.

Verses 13 and 14 are remarkable contrasts. “*Sing unto the LORD, praise ye the LORD.*” “*Cursed be the day wherein I was born.*” We must take them both together as a unit to get the correct picture. They certainly represent different aspects of a conflict. Jeremiah may have been wrong in the closing verses of chapter 20.

Job made a similar statement in the extreme anguish of his pain and grief. God commended him highly before all his critics, however, pointing out that in some things he had spoken foolishly, which Job himself humbly and readily confessed.

We must leave it between God and Jeremiah, but it was recorded for our learning, and we can learn from it, the extreme magnitude of the lifelong burden that God saw fit in His eternal purpose to lay upon the back of Jeremiah.

Paul, summing up a similar life spent day and night in hardship and divine service, called it “*a light affliction which endureth but for a moment.*” And that is true—that is a true assessment. Anything else and we are just pitying ourselves. At the very worst, that is all it is—a light affliction but for a moment, compared to the endless joy and glory of the promised divine nature. So, any self-pity is folly. It is charging God with foolishness.

Jeremiah was tried to his limit, and he held fast, though bitter cries of anguish were wrung from him. How little we do, or even ask to do, in comparison. How pitifully little is the very most we could do. Surely if we have any love or zeal for God at all, we shall grudge every moment spent on anything except His word and His service.

From chapter 21 on, most are dated and can be fitted into a chronological pattern by their events. We can now pick out the subsequent record of events in Jeremiah’s life in Jehoiakim’s 11-year reign, Zedekiah’s 11-year reign, and a few years in Egypt after that.

Very briefly, the events were these:

Chapter 26 – The beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim: The good Josiah was now gone. All four kings after him were wicked. Jeremiah stood in the court of the temple and again pronounced the impending desolation of the city and temple. The priests and prophets seize him and drag him before the princes, demanding his death, but the princes release him.

Chapter 25 – Jehoiakim’s fourth year: Jeremiah declares that he has now been warning them continuously for 23 years.

Chapter 36 – The same year: Jeremiah is told to write all of his prophecies in a book and have them read to the people at some great national assembly. Events are now closing in. Some, including Daniel, have already been carried captive. Egypt has been crushed.

It is Nebuchadnezzar’s first year. The next year, Jehoiakim’s fifth, the book is read publicly. The princes fear the message and arrange to have it read to the king. But as soon as he begins to hear it, he seizes it and cuts it and throws it in the fire.

That same year, perhaps at that very same time, Nebuchadnezzar had the dream of the image—the beginning of Gentile times.

Jehoiakim sent to take Jeremiah, but God hid him. We are told no more of Jeremiah during the remaining six years of Jehoiakim. But chapter 13, the girdle, and chapter 35, the Rechabites, probably come in that time.

At the death of Jehoiakim, his son Jehoiachin became king. Nebuchadnezzar came and took him to Babylon. Ezekiel was taken at the same time. Zedekiah was set up as king.

Chapter 29 – At the beginning of Zedekiah’s reign: Jeremiah wrote to the captives in Babylon, telling them to settle down for the captivity would be for 70 years.

Chapters 27 and 28 – In the fourth year of Zedekiah: The yokes of wood and iron and the death of the false prophet Hananiah.

Chapters 50 and 51 – Still in that same year: The prophecy of the complete destruction of Babylon sent to be read for the comfort of the captives there.

Chapter 21 – Zedekiah’s ninth year: The final size of Jerusalem begins. Zedekiah inquires of Jeremiah and gets the same message of doom.

Chapter 34 – An Egyptian relief army approaches, and the siege is lifted. Those, who because of the siege and pretending to serve God, had freed all their bondservants, now immediately put them back into bondage, when the pressure is off. And Jeremiah bitterly condemns their hypocrisy. How soon we revert when the pressure is off!

Chapter 37 and 38 – Zedekiah again inquires of Jeremiah, who says the Babylonians will surely return. Jeremiah attempts to go to Anathoth, his hometown nearby, for supplies. He is arrested as a deserter to the enemy, beaten and cast into a dungeon—an underground dungeon where he remains for many days, possibly weeks or months. It would be damp and dark and doubtless cold.

The Babylonian army, in the meantime, returns. Zedekiah, again, inquired of Jeremiah. Jeremiah pleaded not to be returned to the dungeon to die, and so he was put in the court of the prison. But right away, the princes are not satisfied and demand his death. Zedekiah is afraid to resist the princes. And so they are allowed to take Jeremiah and lower him by ropes into a miry cistern, leaving him there to die, and he sank in the mire. It would be a very fallow and corrupt place, where he could not survive very long. It seemed like the end. But Ebedmelech, a foreigner, stirred the king’s conscience, and Jeremiah was rescued and returned to the prison court, where he remained until the fall of the city.

At this time appear to come chapters 30-33, while he is in the prison. Among the most stirring and striking chapters in the Bible, concerning Israel’s final restoration. In them Jeremiah buys a field, as a symbol of faith that the restoration would some day come.

Chapter 39-44 follow. They are consecutive and bring us right to the end of the record. The fearful survivors profess to seek God's guidance through Jeremiah, but always they again reject him and His word when it comes. The city has fallen; the people driven away captive. Jeremiah chooses to remain in the land with the tiny remnant of the poor under Gedaliah. It looks like relief at last. But Ishmael assassinates Gedaliah and the Babylonian guard that are with them.

The people had said to Jeremiah, chapter 42, "*Pray for us unto the LORD...that He may show us the way.*" They had been saying this for 40 years. "*We will obey.*" Did they mean it? Doubtless they thought they meant it. Doubtless in their little stunted fleshly mind, undeveloped all their lives in spiritual things, doubtless they really thought they wanted to serve God. But the answer that came from God through Jeremiah did not please them. It did not appeal to the flesh, and the flesh was the basis of their thinking. So the poor shallow fleshliness of their whole approach to God is revealed and exposed.

How often do we pray for guidance without really meaning to follow the guidance? We have lots of really plain guidance already in the word of God. It tells us just how to conduct every minute of our lives—things to do and things not to do; things that will completely transform our lives, if we obey them. If we are not sincerely devoting our whole lives to doing just that, then there is no point to seeking any more guidance. Certainly there is point in seeking the basic wisdom and courage and intelligence to obey the plain commands that we already have, but we shall never be able to do it of ourselves. For it to mean anything, we must be prepared to make that obedience the supreme purpose and effort in our lives, or else we are just like Israel—keep asking, but not doing.

They forced Jeremiah to accompany them to Egypt, still clinging to this prophet to whom they would never listen.

His last prophecy, still warning and condemning them, is in chapter 44, in the land of Egypt. And still, they reject the message. They had convinced themselves that when they served the queen of heaven, they had been prosperous and blessed.

How easy to convince ourselves that a wrong course is right, just because it appears to have what we think are good results. I did this, and it worked out quite well, and so it must be all right. Thus we lull ourselves. What terrible surprises are in store!

In the final scene, as the curtain falls on all that is recorded of Jeremiah, we see him still after 40 years pleading with the last little remnant, now in Egypt, to put away their abominations and serve God with all their hearts. And their answer is still the same.

Chapter 44, verse 17 – "*We will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth.*" Rebellious to the end.

No man had less to show for 40 long years of labor of outward success or influence. But it was not in vain, neither for himself nor for others. Jeremiah, though rejected in his day and by his generation, will with Daniel stand in his lot at the end of the days, and will shine among the stars, who appeared as failures in their lifetime, but who in the deep working of God's great purpose have turned many to righteousness.

Bro. G.V.Growcott

Purity of Fellowship Within the Home And by the Individual

Second and Third John are little letters of John the Apostle, one addressed to a sister and one to a brother that warn of the two problems that would threaten the church forever. Those two problems are false doctrine and people grasping for authority and power. These things are evident because love is lost when those things prevail.

Fellowship in the house of Christ

Good afternoon brethren and sisters. You may or may not know how wonderful it is to see a large group of people willing to be here together in late spring, studying the Word of God. We know this is pleasing to our Father, because they are His Words we are reading and talking about. They are His Commands we are trying to keep. It is from His Son that we received the teachings we hold so dearly. The happiness we obtain from our fellowship is coming from doing the pleasure of our Father and that is why we are here.

In the Greek language this time together is called – *koinonia*. It means an intimate connection, fellowship or association. Some English words for intimacy come from this word *koinonia*. Intimacy is a topic that is often avoided. For example, some brethren and sisters hold back from stating the love they have for one another. Some of us avoid physical contact for a variety of reasons. The Bible does talk about such things. The command "*greet one another with a holy kiss*" is not mentioned in one, but rather in four places plainly in the Bible. I have noticed over the years that many brethren have no problem with greeting sisters with a holy kiss and sisters have no problem with greeting everyone with a holy kiss. But many times, certain social conventions get in the way of a kiss. This is not a problem, because, in reality, the translators of the King James Bible chose to translate the word *filhmati* (philo-may-tee) as the word *kiss*. This Greek word is not specifically a kiss, but rather means some physical token of love. We know that there are many simple social conventions to show a physical sign of love appropriate to the situation. A kiss, a hug, a hand-shake, your arm around

somebody, and other things you could come up with are all various physical tokens of affection that convey the intimacy we share in Christ. It is intimacy we must examine when we consider the following question. **How can we all, coming from so many different backgrounds, being so many different ages, with such a variety of physical and mental features, come together to grow and prosper in our mutual effort to be a pleasing family for God?** It is by the intimacy or the fellowship that we share in Christ that it is accomplished.

From many viewpoints, all Scripturally based, we could call ourselves a loving bride, a devoted mother, dear friends, and beloved sisters and brethren. Together we form a crowd of people that can take on a character of its own. Our weekly and daily interaction acts like a person, it is a kind of manifestation in a corporate way that acts like a person on its own. Maybe a worldly example is the notion of the corporation in business. A corporation according to business is considered a person on its own. When I studied “management” in college, I learned how corporations take on their own culture, their own style, and do things in a special way. An ecclesia is like that in many ways. We are bound together by beliefs that are from the Word of God. We also are bound together by our fervent love for one another as we are taught. Together we have lots of interactions, little subgroups, communications, etc. All of these things form a type of society or association. Our society together manifests a person which in itself can act as a kind of loving parent, one lovely and precious woman from whom we derive nurturing, and companionship, and benefit – in a word, our fellowship acts like a bride – the bride of Christ. With the ecclesia we hope we are pleasing to God and to His son.

2 and 3 John

The two letters I will speak of today are short. Their messages are big and important for a follower of Christ. One is addressed to a sister and the other is to a brother. We will refer to the sister as Kyrie. We’ll refer to the brother as Guy. Think of them as real people from a real time. Even though the Bible is written to us now, it was also written to real people thousands of years ago. Try imagining Kyrie and Guy as real people the letters were sent to. They are two people we might know, but are separated from us by the great distances of time and death. They were real in their time. Think of them as such, and compare them to yourself.

We are all different people who will remember some different piece of today’s message. Try to remember Kyrie and Guy – some lady and some man that believed the Truth long ago, when the world was younger than it is today. Think of Guy, a brother who was in some small ecclesia, trying to live his life. The apostle, or “the old man” as he called himself, wrote to brother Guy. Think of Sister Kyrie as some sister, living her life some place, with her children who had been baptized. That was pleasing to the writer. Was it a very tiny ecclesia comprised of just that family? Or a larger ecclesia that met at her house? We don’t know but the lesson is important for any member of any ecclesia. The message was this – as time passes, people would stop believing the Truth. They will turn truth to error and try to overthrow people’s faith. Also, there would be hateful false brethren who lord power over the ecclesias and destroy the work of Christ that way. If you remain a faithful and loving sister or brother in Christ, you will not be destroyed by these trials.

Paraphrase and re-translation.

I am about to take a wide license. I am going do our own little paraphrase of these letters. My translation may not be perfect. But I hope it will put into words the message intended. Remember to refer back to your regular Bible for a closer translation. With that in mind I will give a quick reading of these two short letters, as we received them today.

2 John – Dear Kyrie, it’s the old man writing to you and your children.

Let me first say, I love you all in the Truth. In fact, everybody else in the Truth loves you too. Because of the Truth, which is what is in us now and forever. May God – Our Father, give you grace and mercy and peace. It comes from God and from our Lord Jesus Christ, our Father’s Son of love and Truth.

I was really happy to hear about your children’s continued adherence to the truth as is the commandment from the Father.

Now I am asking you Kyrie, not commanding you, but reminding you about the commandment we started with – to love each other. And that love is to keep the commandments, walk in those commandments – those teachings that you have always heard.

Lots of “errorists” entered the world. They don’t believe that Christ was flesh. And that, in itself is completely against Christ and is the grand deception.

So, look at yourself so that we don’t lose all the work we have done, but rather, we keep working until our reward will be full.

Anyone who does not believe the Correct Doctrines is NOT OF GOD. But the person who stays in the correct doctrine has the Father and has the Son.

Don’t let those who don’t believe the correct doctrine be received into your house. If you accept and allow those kind of people, then you are fellowshipping evil.

I won't write everything to you that I have to say. I believe I'll be coming to visit you and see you personally. Then we'll really be happy. Your sister's children say hi. The End.

3 John – Hi well loved Guy, from the old man. You are truly loved.

I hope this letter finds everything going well for you and that you're in good health and having a prosperous life. I was very happy to hear how the Truth is growing there with you and how you live the Truth.

Well my close friend, you're doing a great job with the brethren and with strangers too. You are doing a great job with all of them. You are showing the love of Christ to the ecclesia. When the brethren visit you, you are doing well to provide such hospitality for them. As you know, they are doing the work of Christ, and it is important to receive and help them. We all do well to help them.

However, please notice the ecclesia with brother Diotrephes. He loves only to magnify his self-importance. He won't let visitors into fellowship. If I come there, I will remember that he has maligned and gossiped about us. He not only won't let brethren into fellowship, but he even goes after anybody who would fellowship them, and kicks them out.

We love you Guy, don't go along with these evil ways. Do the right thing. If you do the right thing then you are a true brother in Christ. People who behave that other way are not really in the Truth at all.

Brother Demetrius is a good guy. Everybody knows it. The Truth is obviously coming from him, and WE are saying he is fine, you had best believe it, and not that hateful gossiping slanderer Diotrephes.

I have lots of other things to write about, but I'll see you soon so I'll wait 'til then.

Tell each brother and sister individually that I said hi. All the brethren here say hi.

What's it all about?

These two little letters spell out the enormous dangers that would confront and challenge all ecclesias from small to large for the coming thousands of years before Christ returns. To ignore these warnings is to compromise the Word of God. Why would compromising the Bible be a problem?

We must stick to the Bible at all times. We must make it clear to everybody that we insist on getting it right. There are many people who call themselves Christadelphians but are not of our body. They say we don't need to be so strict with getting Bible teachings correct. Some say that warm feelings, activities and good music are far more important than correct doctrine. They argue too much strictness on doctrine becomes unneeded defense of the Word of God. They say we don't need to defend the Bible. They argue the Bible is so powerful that it can defend itself. Never be deceived in this way. They are stating a truth, but one that has nothing to do with insisting on correct doctrine.

Thwarting error is not trying to protect the Word of God. It is rather trying to protect our own faith from being destroyed. The work of avoiding error is our insistence that our faith is based on Jesus Christ. He is the Word of God made flesh. We want the correct Truth because we want the Correct Christ. We want to be saved, not lost. We know that True Beliefs are the only beliefs that can save us. I suppose our motives could be called selfish. But it is a selfishness that is good in one way. We protect our own faith or beliefs so that after all the work we have done for Christ over the years, we ourselves are not lost. It is very possible for people who are in Christ to fall away, and for all the truth to turn back into superstition, and a boring mass of hypocrisy.

How people fall away.

We don't want that. We know there are a number of ways that people fall away. Christ spoke of it in the parable of the sower and the seed. We should all be familiar with it. Some people fall away quickly because they have no root, the sun comes up the next day sometimes, and they wither away. That means that they never even get a chance to grow and bear fruit. We could understand this first case as those who do not have a good foundation of their faith. Maybe they base their faith on merely what their friends or family believed in it. Some get baptized because of fear, somebody died, or some bad news came on the TV, or maybe some near death experience of their own. Some narrowly escaped some tragedy. I know of people who were baptized after all of these events or reasons. Some get baptized to please their parents, so that they will be given money or a car, or enter the family business. These reasons could sometimes be providential motivations to study the Truth, and if the seed of faith in them is real and strong, they could grow into a strong sister or brother in Christ. But we need a firmer foundation to thrive.

Ecclesias use checks and assurances to test somebody's understanding of the gospel. We use a system of meetings, and an examination to assure the potential brother or sister is prepared with correct understanding of the Truth. We hope that is a protection for the candidate as well as for the ecclesia. However we should never be deceived into thinking this is an assurance that the person therefore has enough faith to last even after the first day. Our flesh wants to snatch away that faith, chew it up and spit it out. Our flesh wants to triumph over the mind of the spirit. One of the devices of our flesh is to use error. Our flesh wants to base our belief on our senses, our experience, and our whims. Our flesh wants to ruin our

faith quickly by convincing us that we don't need to read our Bibles, don't need to go to meetings, don't need to preach the Truth and a host of other excuses and methods to stop us from serving Christ.

Others have no root. In the interview for baptism they got a glowing report. The examiners say: "Oh, they gave such a good confession of their faith." The Sunday school gets praised for making another brother or sister, or the teachers get congratulated for their real good teaching. But after a bit, being a Christadelphian is apparently not as simple as it seemed. When the new brother or sister confronts some "cool-looking babe", or some "hot-looking guy" who goes to another church and who thinks our beliefs are ridiculous, and strictness of doctrine is revealed to them as unnecessary, their faith sputters, and burns out. The sun shines down, and it gets too hot. They can't take the heat and they get out of the kitchen. I know from experience that we must – we must, must, MUST learn the correct doctrines and insist on them at all times. Correct doctrines are an anchor, a rock, a shield, and shelter from the heat and storms we go through. If we are confident and strong in our conviction of insisting on correct doctrine, this characteristic should impress the cool-looking woman or the strong and handsome guy as a good trait. When our personality is revealed as somebody who will always – without fail, insist on correct doctrine, then people will know what we are about. If they don't like it, then frankly – who needs them? If they are impressed with it, then maybe, possibly, in time after they learn about the Truth and believe it, they too will be willing to become like us. That unwavering insistence on correct doctrine can pervade our being. It can make us not rigid and narrow-minded, instead it makes us unshakeable and single-minded.

Single-Mindedness

Single-mindedness means that there is one basis for the way we think. It does not mean we don't listen to a variety of techniques for approaching problems. Single-mindedness does not mean "my way or the highway." Instead, single-mindedness is more like saying "the law of gravity is a law." Single-mindedness does not mean being so narrow-minded and hateful as to judge somebody based on the color of their skin, or their family background, or their clothes. Single-mindedness allows us to consider everyone as a creation of God and somebody with the potential of being in Christ. Single-mindedness means that when we look at anyone, no matter what our flesh might tell us we remember the commandments of Christ regarding kindness to strangers, and love of our fellowman. But, at the same time, although we will be very willing to listen to them speak to us and discuss a wide variety of topics; it will never, ever enter our mind to question the Word of God, or our fundamental beliefs. Single-minded love never fails. It insists on God's Word as true without fail. Our rule will be primary and always adhered to. It insists on sticking to the correct doctrine as much as insisting on rules like not offering a bear a marshmallow balanced on your nose. In the real world there are inviolate rules. There are certain laws that if violated, result in our death. As Christadelphians we learn those principles and laws, so we stop questioning and ignoring them. Correct doctrine is fundamental to those laws.

The final failure of faith that happens to those who fall are the cares of the world. Those cares grab them slowly around their neck. They get into the throat and lungs, and they choke them to death. These things grow slowly, over time. Did you ever see a failed marriage? Sometimes it was slow and unstoppable. One type of dream girl for many people is one that will only care about that guy. Their love is strong and so they proceed and get married. He and she pledge each other their undying devotion. She says "I would follow you anywhere". And she means it, because she has nothing to lose. She wants to get away from being the girl at home. She has no other attachments, at least not that she is aware of. But in time, she starts having things proceed from her body. Those things grow into others who are very demanding, and quite rightly so. Babies become children and turn into adults and they take a lot of work and devotion. However, sometimes, spouses forget the devotion they were supposedly having to each other. And in fact, a popular oath that is sworn by people who get married is that they will forsake all others, but this is forgotten quite quickly. Over time, that forsaking begins to not apply to a whole host of people and places. Most of the people and cares of this world that choke us did not even exist when we began. It is similar in a marriage or friendship to being in Christ.

Many times each spouse builds a life for themselves. They make a house and they proceed in careers or jobs. These things could draw their attention away from the connection that they first vowed to maintain. After time, it becomes apparent that everything has choked away their first love, and there is nothing left but to maintain a total hypocrisy of a marriage, which is disgraceful to God, or people just say "forget it" to each other, and sadly move on.

Christ our husband demands our complete faith, complete adherence to truth and correct doctrine and is unwilling to accept ANYTHING coming between him and us. He said in Luke 14:26: *"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."* Does this mean we must put Christ first or not? I say it does. As in a very good marriage, nothing EVER comes between the spouses, it is insisted upon by Christ. If you want to be a Christadelphian Sister or Brother, then nothing can EVER come between you and Christ. This doesn't mean that you won't have a family or things or people or relationships. Of course you will. But, you will not let them come between you and correct doctrine. You won't let them choke you and rob you of your faith. Jesus Christ promises us that any of these things we have given up for him – family, friends, land, houses, any of it, won't make us lose our reward but will instead make us gain way more reward in this life, and in the Kingdom, eternal life. Mark 10:29-31: *"And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with*

persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last first.” I know there are some of us who have clearly lost family, friends, lands, houses, and even our whole life, but have stuck to the Truth in spite of it all. For some, maybe that is because the Truth is all they have left! But never mind, they have retained their faith and their integrity. They have gone through fiery trials.

All of this kind of faith, demanded by Christ is available to all of us if we decide right from the start that nothing will prevent us from knowing the correct and only Truth, believing it wholeheartedly, and letting it affect every minute of our lives. We will insist on it in our meetings, in our classes, when we sit and stand and when we go to bed or get up in the morning, when we sit down to eat, and when we walk in the way. The Word of God will be fundamental and that means the correct and true Word of God. When we are not sure about it, we will not give up until we are satisfied that we know the Truth and can explain it correctly.

In the ecclesia in the house of Kyrie, a good house, loving and kind, with believing children, some people had crept in and set up shop believing that Christ was not of our flesh. They believed he did not come in our flesh. That is the most evil, salvation-robbing doctrine ever invented. It apparently was spreading already in the days of the apostles. This is the false doctrine like the statement of the serpent to the first woman of God – Eve. That old serpent told the first lie and said “YOU WON’T REALLLLLLLYYYYYY DIE. You won’t DIE-DIE if you eat that forbidden fruit.” This is the same old serpent who teaches that Jesus was so great and good, as he was and IS, but they wrongly went beyond that, as their flesh teaches them to do, and say – So he didn’t REALLY Die-Die. They don’t believe he was the same kind of flesh as us, they don’t believe he came in the flesh. These hateful and wicked people teach that Christ was NOT TEMPTED IN ALL POINTS as WE ARE. How could he? They believe he could not sin. That is because they don’t believe he was actually a human. A human – the word HUMAN means DYING. It’s the same word we get dirt or “humus” from. The *Human Race* means the *Dying Race*. We also can say Adam’s Race because Adam means the Dirt we turn back into. Adam means red dirt.

This error that Jesus did not come in the flesh has led to all sorts of false doctrines such as the immortality of the soul, the doctrine of the holy trinity, the doctrine of the immaculate conception of Mary the Mother of Christ. It leads to all sorts of other weird and horrible doctrines which make people question the very point of Bible Study, because why bother if it’s all such a confounded mystery?

That error ruins the gospel message. Kyrie, the lady of that ecclesia written to by John was told to reject these false teachers, not to have the intimate association of fellowship with them. We can take a great lesson from this. Their ecclesia was filled with Love, as John said, and commended. At the same time, they were told NOT to fellowship these false brethren. Do you get the connection here. **You are still exhibiting commendable love of Christ when you refuse to have fellowship with those who teach error.**

What about Now?

What does all this mean to us? One thing to consider is the notion of bidding God Speed to people who don’t believe the Truth. Some translations write: “give a greeting” etc. The word is *chairo* (sounds like keerow). From it we get words like wishing somebody good cheer. Think about your personality, and how you deal with people. How often do you wind up being so nice, that you might accidentally act as if you are agreeing with somebody’s false beliefs? We must each remember that we have a responsibility far greater than only to ourselves. We may be the only opportunity a person ever has to be told that not everyone thinks it is “cool” or “wonderful” that they are pursuing a religious course that will end in their judgment or their endless death. This may sound dramatic, but there is more to it than just that, far more. What about it’s effect on us ourselves? We are bombarded with false doctrine in the form of legislation, of morality, people’s terrible choices of “lifestyles” that alienate them from God’s ways, and from outright perversion and immorality that could tempt us, or affect us spiritually in a negative way.

This does not mean that every moment we have to be completely staying away from people who don’t believe the Truth. The Bible says for example that if someone is having a feast – a party or dinner for example – and we are disposed to go, then we are at liberty to do so within reason. “*If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake.*” (1 Co 10:27). This is a case when we of course are at liberty to eat with non-believers. However, if it becomes apparent that it is part of their religion, as is stated in the following verses, we should not, because their conscience might be offended thinking that we now suddenly are in agreement with their false beliefs, and that would make us become partaker with their evil deeds.

What is our position in the world anyway? We are to shine as lights. “*Do all things without murmurings and disputing: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain.*” (Phil 2:14-16) We are to be a source of Truth to those around us. We cannot do that if we imply that false beliefs are correct.

But this passage in 2 John has a deeper meaning also. We are not to ever participate in religious activity, or what we call the close association called fellowship, with people who don’t believe the Truth. This bothers a lot of people. Some people feel that the warm and fuzzy feeling they like to term “love” requires their kind attitude to prevail and to extend to

everyone in exactly the same way. However, the Bible does say that love is often expressed in different ways, even though it always exists through all of our tasks and activities.

We all should know that all of the Law and Prophets hinges on the command that God is One and we are to love Him completely. We know the second is like it, love your neighbor as you love yourself. But love is an active and visible thing. The actual commandment to love our neighbor is something Jesus did not make up himself. He was quoting the Bible. Lev 19:17-18: *“Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.”* Or as it says in Proverbs 27:5: *“Open rebuke is better than secret love.”* We are required to tell our neighbor when they are wrong. This doesn’t mean to be cruel, insulting or sarcastic about it. We are to instead be patient and kind, meekly instructing those who oppose us.

A perfect way to make sure that people don’t get the impression we agree with false doctrine, is not to tell them that their false ways or ideas are intriguing, interesting, or cool. Sometimes we can just stay silent, other times, if they appear willing to listen, we should give a full explanation, and tact will be required. Tact is not required to just be nice or polite, tact is required because if we answer their errors with too much sharpness, or in a retaliatory manner, they probably will be instantly turned off to what we have to say, and the opportunity would be missed.

The sister Kyrie we are told of, was given a command regarding those who clearly do not believe in the Truth, these people believed the false doctrines of the Christendom – namely, that Christ has not come in the flesh. We term this doctrine as the clean flesh theory. When we know of brethren or sisters who teach and believe such false doctrines as this, we must not have fellowship with them. Where we draw the lines of fellowship are sometimes a little unclear, but we must determine what would signify our acceptance of their error, and what would signify a rejection of their error. Then, we should follow suit by doing the rejecting action. We don’t know if sister Kyrie did that or not. But we know that there no longer appears to be an ecclesia in her house, far away in Asia. It must have disbanded long ago. Was it from error, or did the light just flicker out as the lives of our ancient brethren lengthened and they died?

Brother Diotrophes.

Then there was the other Ecclesia with brother Guy. Studying the context of 3 John, we see a picture emerge that some of us may have experienced at one time or another. There is a faithful brother, who with his ecclesia, carries out the duties and jobs of a brother in Christ in regard to fellowship, the treatment of strangers and other matters. However, a brother from an entirely different ecclesia is troubling them. He is trying to say who should be in fellowship and who shouldn’t. This is a method of power and control grasped for by many people down through the centuries. If you study the history of the Roman church, you will find a long and sordid history of a power structure and a system of authority and system of interference by a “mother church” with churches not their own. The notion of authority grasped for by these churches was contrary to the teachings of Christ. The structure that binds us together is the body of Christ and the things we believe. Those beliefs are what govern us. For us the Spirit or power, is what we call *the Truth*. This is born out in a number of places in Scripture including 1 John 5:6 which says in the Greek – The Spirit is the Truth.

When I first joined the Christadelphians, for a while I thought this phrase “The Truth” was maybe some Christadelphian jargon. I did not have a problem with it being a type of idiom or buzzword. The Truth was a phrase easily acquired and used. But it turned out that it was not only a statement that what we believe is true versus what most others believe is not. The phrase “The Truth” is far more than that. It is the Scriptural name of the things we believe and in fact, is also the Scriptural term for Jesus Christ himself. *“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”* (John 14:6) A lot of people in churches will tell you that what is important is what they call a “Personal Relationship with Jesus Christ.” They use this as a way of accusing us of spending far too much time on correct doctrine. But in fact, that is in fact the only way To Know Christ, since the Truth is Christ – the words of Christ are spirit and life.

But Diotrophes, like many false brethren, wanted power and authority for himself. When people grasp for authority, in a sense they are trying to be God. God has authority. Matt. 20:25 says, *“But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.”* Brethren we are not princes of the Gentiles and never should presume as such. Jesus said that rather (v. 26), *“But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”* We are bound together by ideas and teachings, not by some power granted to us by a higher authority. We have only one priest – Jesus Christ himself, and he currently does not sit in a city on earth, but rather at the right hand of power in heaven. We choose not to lord authority. Sometimes, it gets frustrating to work this way, and it takes longer to achieve our goals. We can’t just tell people what to do and have them obey. We instead work things out and discuss them, and pray about it, and study how to do things. We try to arrive at a consensus on things while trying to stick to the Bible ways at all times. As is taught in *the Guide to the Formation and Conduct of Christadelphian Ecclesias*, we do not have or exercise authority.

What binds us together in fellowship is our shared belief in a common set of teachings of the Bible and of Christ. It is a matter of ideology and doctrine that we build our lives upon. We know that further than that, it is not the doctrines for just
268 - Berean 2007

the doctrines sake, it is because of who they all represent. Jesus Christ said – “*I am the way, the Truth and the Life, no man cometh to the father but by me.*” It is because of Jesus we are here, it is because of the things he taught and embodied that we have the way to come to God, our Father. Without Christ there would be no way. “The way would be sealed because it was built by those who are dead”, is a quote from a popular story. This is pretty much the case with false ways. The people of this world who don’t believe the Truth are termed in the Bible as the dead. Jesus for example, called a man to follow him who asked first if he could bury his father before following Jesus. Jesus said, “*Follow me, let the dead bury their dead.*”

The Bible talks about the false brethren, and those who refuse to follow Christ as the dead and worse. Jude calls them “twice dead.” Jude has a long few verses about such people. They speak great swelling words and try to get a following. We have seen this. Long complex documents are often crafted, which are very difficult for most people to even comprehend. The Bible message is simple for those who read it, study it, and teach it with love and devotion to its words. But people like Diotrephes only serve themselves. Whoever this person was, they were not to allow him to influence them. There should not be a place for power grasping brethren who are hating on others. We have seen whole fellowships ripped to shreds by those who grasp for power. We have seen the faith of many people hurt and ruined by those people that want to claim authority and grasp to be “in charge” of others. Sadly, they will be judged, and it is even sadder to think of those who have been forced out of the faith. Mark 9:42: “*And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.*” Brethren and sisters, we have been tossed a lifeline. We were pulled out of a sea, in a very true sense. The world, with its false religions, and insanity ruled over by madmen, is like a roaring sea. We were tossed a lifeline and pulled in to the ship of salvation when Christ showed us His Truth from His Word. When we enter this ship with Christ, we like him can have peace, because in the midst of the hardest of storms he could lay himself on a pillow and rest, even though in his temporal life, admitted the son of man had no place to rest his head. When we are saved by our beliefs from this troubled world, we can walk on the water in faith with Christ, if we keep our sight fixed on him, but if our faith wavers we sink back into the ocean and could drown. Diotrephes would have us do so. If we become like Diotrephes, then Christ would have us drown, he would have us be in the water with a gigantic rock tied on our neck.

Don’t ever be tempted to be Diotrephes. If you feel you already might be that kind of brother or sister, then stop today. It is not too late to change. But if you have forced brethren or sisters out of fellowship, not based on the Truth, but based on hate and loathing, then repent now, and try to bring them back. We can be humble, admit our error of taking the ways of hate, and try to change. A day is coming when it will be too late.

Conclusion

Ecclesias are like families. They are tiny organizations that meet together to derive benefit from their association, and to bring glory to Christ by their association and work. We must be like lamp-stands that hold up the Truth to the world around us. It’s a dark world we live in, but it is not black, because we can still shine the light of the Truth in it. The darkness that surrounds us is not the beauty that we see in God’s creation. The darkness we are in is not in the beauty of music, or smells or sights, or feelings. Those sensory things can indeed be beautiful, and God can be thanked for lots of those things. That’s why the food tastes and smells good. That’s why we enjoy pictures and sights that delight our hearts. The beauty of people’s faces and shapes and all of that are something else that we often thank God for, because He has made all these things beautiful in their time. Nope, those are not the dark and wicked world that would destroy us. The darkness comes from the men who would grasp for power and authority and the lies they believe and teach. Those lies are the errors that would draw us away from God. We never thank God for those errors or for the hateful ways of the power-hungry haters. Let’s never be like them. Instead let’s remember who loved us and died for us, and who taught us the right ways and invited us into his household of faith and peace, into the ship of his fellows. Together, in fellowship based on the Truth, we can help each brother’s and each sister’s travel together to the Kingdom of God. —Bro.

Michael Morrell

Am I a Wife?

Then do I always prefer my husband to my father and mother – and friends?

Do I allow him to accept his position given by God as head of this house; or, do I question his authority and judgment, placing my self over him.

Do I create in our home an atmosphere of love, joy, respect?

Can his heart safely trust in me, knowing what I will do when he is not here to see?

Do the household adornments I select reflect our Hope?

Does my behavior become holiness, not a false accuser, not given to much wine, teachers of good things?

Is my example to the younger sisters one that would be good to follow?

Does my example teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children?

Do I remember that I am part of his flesh?

Do I recognize and realize my responsibility as his helpmeet?

Are my goals and interest identical to his?

Do I honor my husband as Sarah did Abraham?

Do I submit willingly and happily, or do I reflect the world's view of women's rights, insisting on mine?

Do I tell others of his faults and of our problems, forgetting that a house divided cannot stand?

Questions on the Foregoing

Is it my constant desire to let my husband share my joys as well as my troubles?

Is it my incessant aim to share his troubles as well as his joys?

Do I seek to provide, from time to time, pleasant little surprises to break up the monotony of his daily working in the world?

Do I help him with his chores and responsibilities when needed, lifting the burden from his back – or am I an added weight to his troubles?

Do I fully appreciate him?

Do I give reason for children to arise and call me blessed; and my husband to have praise for me?

Do I open my mouth with wise words gotten from my readings, and in my tongue can there be found the law of kindness?

Do I read and study, not being totally dependent on him, so that my loins are girded with strength?

Do I prove by my actions that he is not my servant, but—My HUSBAND?

Do I regard him as my trusted spouse by placing implicit confidence in his integrity and judgment, or do I undermine him by insisting on “my way” - pouting, kicking and screaming if my suggestion is not taken?

Do I encourage him in his studies, keeping the children quiet and occupied?

Do I recognize his duties in the meeting, encouraging him in them, and not attempting to keep him from them; or, do I complain because he is not giving me the help and attention I desire because of his ecclesial duties and studies?

Am I acting as a wife by allowing him to act as a husband?

Is our relationship such that he always rejoices at the approach of the hour to come home to me?

If I “go first,” will my husband feel that he has lost his best mortal friend? (He will if I am really a WIFE).

Do I always remember him in my prayers?

Proverbs 31:10-31 ;Titus 2:1-15

Author Unknown

Care For The Shut-Ins

Saturday, 27th.—Was taken by brother Moore to see an old “sister Thomas,” who has been confined to the house a long time, of illness. She is poor and friendless, except that the brethren look after her. She has been in the faith for about twenty years, and greatly rejoices at the spread of the truth and the commotions in the world, indicative of the approach of Jesus. She is intelligent and hearty, but afflicted. It is our duty to share in the afflictions of the afflicted, by visiting them and helping them. To those who are well, visitation may seem a ceremony merely; but to those who are ill, it is a real service. Anybody shut up between four walls gets dreary. Even the truth fades from the view, and the mind wearies itself in striving to realise it, though the fundamental consolations can never give way. Now, visitors coming from the fresh air, with health on their cheeks, and light in their eye, and news and kindly words on their tongue, bring reviving to the languisher in bed. They confer a real pleasure and a positive benefit; and if they take the right view of it, it will do themselves a real good.

Of course, to go into the sick room may not be quite so agreeable to the senses as a walk by the roadside, but are we to be governed by pleasure? If so, death is our portion. Duty and benevolence are higher: the will of God is over all, and this sometimes takes us into paths and circumstances not agreeable. Pure religion and undefiled before God the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and the widow, and to keep himself unspotted from the

world. If any man teach otherwise, he consents not to the wholesome words of the Lord Jesus; and his religion, however much he may know, is vain. We must know, but we must also do. We must truly have the incorruptible seed of the word, but of what value will the seed be to us, if we bring not forth the *fruit* of that seed, in our lives and conversations? A tree is known by its fruits. A man may talk much about the gospel, and the truth, and so on, but if he lack the deeds that are well-pleasing to God, he is a wind-bag, a waterless well, a rainless cloud, a deceiver, and a wandering star. Specially odious is it to hear the unsanctified discussing the profundities of the splendid truth, of which they are unworthy.

Bro. Robert Roberts—1870

HYMN 47

O GIVE THANKS TO HIM WHO MADE MORNING LIGHT AND EVENING SHADE. Have we considered the greatness of the revolutions of the orbs that give us the morning and the evening?

SOURCE AND GIVER OF ALL GOOD, NIGHTLY SLEEP AND DAILY FOOD; We know and acknowledge often that all things come from Thee, **QUICKENER OF OUR WEARIED POWERS, GUARD OF OUR UNCONSCIOUS HOURS,** Who gives us our rest and renewal of strength.

O GIVE THANKS TO NATURE'S KING, WHO MADE EVERY BREATHING THING: from the expanse of the skies to the tiniest of microscopic organisms—the complexity of which we cannot truly comprehend but only imagine—Yahweh exhibits His glory.

HIS OUR WARM AND SENTIENT (capable of feeling or perceiving) **FRAME, HIS THE MIND'S EXULTANT FLAME;** His we are—in Him we live and move and have our being.

OH, HOW CLOSE THE TIES THAT BIND ALL THINGS TO THE ETERNAL MIND! Nothing happens to us without His knowing and controlling hand.

O GIVE THANKS WITH HEART AND LIP, pray without ceasing, **FOR WE ARE HIS WORKMANSHIP:** “*Known unto the Deity are all his works from the beginning of the world*” (Acts 15:18). If any one be a son of Deity he is one of ‘his works;’ for says Paul to the sons of Deity in Ephesus, ‘*We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works*’ (Eph. 2:10). Then every one of his children was known to Him by name when He laid the foundation of the *aion* and *kosmos* (both rendered *world* in the English Version) in the Abrahamic Covenant.” (Eur. 3A)

AND ALL CREATURES ARE HIS CARE—NOT A BIRD THAT CLEAVES THE AIR FALLS UNNOTICED: “*Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.*” **BUT WHO CAN SPEAK THE FATHER'S LOVE TO MAN?** “*Fear not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows*” (Matt. 10:29, 31).

Collection For The Work of The Truth

I observed, that one thing which appeared most important, because the subject of apostolic example, was the omission of the collection at the first-day assembly. In the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, verse 42, we are told that “The disciples continued steadfastly in the apostle’s doctrine, and *fellowship*, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” Now, the word translated “fellowship” means “*collection*.”

Then the apostle Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, 1st epistle, ch. 16., said: “*Now, concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by in store, as God has prospered him.*” The collection, therefore, is an act of fellowship amounting almost to a command where a common need arises; in fact, we may see in it an opportunity of unitedly “*honouring our Heavenly Father with our substance.*” Let “*every man give according as he purposeth in his heart, not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver*” (2 Cor. 9:7). We may in this particular take precept from the Law of Moses, for the apostle tells us that “*The law was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ*” (Gal. 3:24), that the brethren of the Lord were to be educated in divine matters up to the ideal in Christ cannot be doubted. What do we see in the Law of Moses to guide us here? At the very least one-tenth of the increase was devoted to the Lord. Many gave much more, as in the instance of Zacchæus, who gave “*the half of his goods to the poor*” (Luke 19:8).

While we are not legally bound by the provisions under the law, the object sought to be obtained by its precepts we should seek. The main feature was the recognition of God and an offering to Him out of the good things He gives to His children. And it is a beautiful and healthful thing to have the small gifts of those who cannot offer much, mingle with those who can give a great deal in one common (or fellowship) fund for the service of the truth on the first day of the week at the breaking of bread. When such a contribution is made in sincerity as to God and not to man, the doing of it must arise in an acceptable way before the face of Him who sees in darkness, and discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Christadelphian Articles

Discouraging treatment from, and disappointed expectation concerning some who obey the truth, are not confined to you nor to our age. Paul suffered more from this than ever we can. Human nature is the same in all ages. The truth will spring by the way side, on the rock and amongst thorns, as well as in the good ground. The net that catches the good fish encloses sharks and dog-fish as well. All will not turn out true brethren who embrace the truth. Our wisdom is to recognize the fact, and wait the unfolding of things without undue expectancy, knowing that only when the Lord maketh up his jewels, will there be a community of perfect sons of God, in whose society there will be no flaw or disappointment.

When things go wrong, take it as a matter of course, and preserve your soul in patience, seeking to support the weak, comfort the feeble-minded, and be patient with all, yet have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.—As to periodicals that strive about words to no profit, but the subverting of the hearers, their good words and fair speeches will in the end be found out by all who love the truth in sincerity. They may prevail for a time with babes in Christ, but when the babes become strong children, through the imbibition of the “*sincere milk of the word*,” having senses exercised, by reason of use to discern both good and evil, they will be treated in accordance with the apostolic exhortation, which says, “*avoid such*.”—As to not admitting articles hostile to the Christadelphian views of the truth, we must leave the discontented to grumble, and, if such be their mind, to turn somewhere else for the gratification of their polemical propensities.

We have a definite purpose in view, to which, for years, we have subordinated everything. That purpose grows stronger with time. That purpose is to advance the truth. We are convinced what this is. We seek to persuade others of it. If anybody will help us in this, we are glad of their co-operation, but we decline to throw open our pages to indiscriminate “discussion,” which is the delight of the class who are “*ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*.” We have no objections to answer hostile arguments, or harmonize apparent discrepancies. This, indeed, we are always anxious to do for the sake of the honest objectors, “feeling their way;” but to make the *Christadelphian* a debating magazine is not within the scheme of our policy. There is a great and serious work in hand—the development, upbuilding, encouragement, and purification of believers in the truth—and to this work we seek to stick as closely as possible, doing everything that will promote it, and avoiding everything that would weaken or obstruct it. Those who demur to this narrow line of action have nothing to complain of. We are only exercising the prerogative of a private individual. If they don't agree with it, let them strike out a course of their own

Bro. Robert Roberts—

1870

Dr. Thomas – His Summary

In 1851, I commenced *The Herald of the Kingdom and Age to Come*, which I continued to publish till the outbreak of the American war. I published in all eleven volumes. In the meantime I was writing and publishing, one after the other, the three vols. of *Eureka*. The first was out before the war commenced, and I think I succeeded in getting the second vol. into the hands of subscribers in the South before the interruption of the postal arrangements on the outbreak of the war. I have since published the third vol., *Elpis Israel*; then, eleven vols. of *The Herald*—which had some circulation in Scotland—and the first and second vols. of *Eureka* were my agency for operation upon society in this country, in the interval between my visit in 1850, and my second visit in 1862.

In 1862, I received an invitation from some friends in this country, to pay them a visit. Many were opposed to it, including those who had received what knowledge of the truth they possessed from my writings. The reason of their opposition, so far as it appears to me from observation, was this: they wanted to take just so much of what they had learnt from my writings as would satisfy conscience without making them unpopular. They wanted to be in a position to take what they pleased and leave out what they pleased, and throw in some of their own speculations and traditions, so that when it was all mixed up together, it would make something more palatable than the hard, severe, uncompromising notions of Dr. Thomas. The consequence was that that class of people did not want me to come over here. They are the people of whom you may have heard as Dowieites. But there were a few others (in the minority) who did want me to come, and they sent me an invitation, and I accepted the invitation of the minority.

I don't now recollect the various places I went to on the occasion of my second visit to the country. It has not made a very distinct impression on my recollection, but it has all contributed to the development of what exists at the present time. At that time, the meeting in Birmingham did not, I think, exceed a dozen persons. I recollect when I was in Nottingham, I saw brother Roberts who had come from Huddersfield on a visit to meet me there. I suggested to brother Roberts that it would be much better for him to come to Birmingham than to waste his sweetness on the desert air of Huddersfield. I thought something could be done in Birmingham. There was a nucleus here that I thought would work

with him. I also suggested he should commence a periodical. You know the rest. He did come, and he did commence a periodical, and he has been working faithfully in your midst from that time to this. His influence, diffusing itself from this as a common centre, is felt in various parts of England and America. That which has given him influence has been his faithfulness to the uncompromising proclamation of what he conscientiously believes to be the truth. This is the sort of influence we need at the present time. We don't want numbers based upon a sandy foundation. We want numbers—many or few—based upon the rock of the divine testimony—men who understand what they are about, and are able to tell others what they have believed and done, and why.

After remaining in Britain nine months I returned to America in February, 1863. I there occupied myself principally in writing the third vol. of *Eureka*, and other things which I need not mention in detail. Well, some time ago, someone suggested in Detroit that it would be desirable for me to visit this country again. I believe he gave the hint to brother Roberts. At any rate, an invitation came. I accepted the invitation, and am in your midst at the present time. Since my arrival to the present time, (about ten months) I have been engaged in the old business of endeavouring to teach men to throw off allegiance to the superstitions of the apostasy, and substitute an intelligent scriptural belief of the truth, as the basis or preliminary to an apostolic obedience, that they may be able thus to purify their souls through the spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren.

The influence I have had has not been mine. The influence that brother Roberts has exerted has not been his; it has been the influence of the truth. If we hadn't had the truth, we could have made no impression upon society at all; but we have been able as mere instruments to bring tangibly before the public mind those ancient truths and principles that we can all read for ourselves in the Scriptures of truth, and which having interested those who hear us and others, has caused them to search the Scriptures, to see if these things are so or not. The result of their searching has been that they have come to the conclusion that they are true, and under the influence of affection for the truth, they have yielded that obedience which the truth demands, and we find ourselves collected together in the present circumstances.

There appears to me to be something providential in the whole affair: to think that an unknown person as I really might be considered in 1848, scarcely knowing whether I could find a single acquaintance that would give the least encouragement to what I had believed and obeyed, and getting such extraordinary audiences, and an opportunity of circulating those things among thousands and thousands of people as I did in these days. The result is very extraordinary. I am satisfied that if it had been mere personal influence, the present result would never have taken place. When men have a divine power that they are able to wield, it is that power that produces the result; and what that power is Paul has declared: "*The gospel is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth.*" Therefore he said he was not ashamed of it. He knew what the gospel was, and what God intended it to accomplish. That is our position. We know what it consists in, and are able to show scripturally what it is. When this is done, it is the power of God in operation. The results produced are the effect of God's power upon the minds of men, and not the result of my influence, brother Roberts's influence, or any other brother. I am satisfied of this, that if we continue faithful to the truth, and do as Jude exhorts us to do—to contend earnestly for the faith originally delivered to the saints, we shall produce an effect on society which is only now in its beginning, and the time will come when we shall command attention, and make the officials in the ecclesiastical world tremble. I don't mean to say that we shall be able to produce the full effect before the Lord comes; but when the Lord comes he will take the matter in hand himself, and will not withdraw his hand from the work already commenced until the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and he shall reign—politically, civilly, ecclesiastically, as the Chief of the nations, for a thousand years and beyond.

Bro. John Thomas—1870

Analecta Apocalypticæ (15)

Apostolic Doctrine Opposed to Present Day Sons of Balaam

In the twenty-three points already enumerated we have shown the identity of the clergy with the sons of Balaam in the apostles' days; but, in order that the antichristian character of the clerical orders of all sects may be complete, we shall also enumerate the points, the principal ones at least, in which the clergy of our times and the apostles and their co-laborers, are opposed.

1. The apostles preached "the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the Aions to their glory" (1 Cor. 2. 7). The clergy know nothing of this;

2. When the apostles preached they "declared the testimony of God" contained in the writings of Moses and the Prophets; and their own personal testimony to the resurrection of Jesus, together with the revelation of the mystery made known to them by the Spirit (1 Cor. 2. 1; Rom. 16:25, 26; Eph. 3: 5,9). This is all Sanscrit to the clergy -- they cannot attain to it.

3. The apostles not only showed what was testified in Moses and the Prophets, but they reasoned upon it for its exposition, that the people might understand, and believe it; and they commended them for not taking what they heard for granted; but searching the scriptures daily to see if what they said were true; that their hearers' faith might rest on the written testimony of God (Acts 17: 2,11,12; 1 Cor. 2: 5). The clergy have no taste for such a procedure: reasoning on

things religious is with them a step towards infidelity. The less reasoning the blinder, or more implicit, the faith; and consequently the more passively obedient to clerical dictation and rule. In their system "ignorance is the mother of devotion;" so that in their flocks the most stupid are the most humble and devout.

4. The apostles proclaimed the return of the Lord Jesus to the Holy Land in power, to replant the Twelve Tribes of Israel therein; to unite them into one nation; to re-establish the kingdom and throne of David; having raised the dead, and changed the living saints, to place them over Israel and the Nations as God's kings and priests to instruct and rule them according to His appointments: to give the world a righteous administration through them; and in a multitude of details, to bless them in Abraham and his Seed, as promised in the Gospel (Luke 1:31-33,52-55,68-75; Matt. 16: 27: 19: 28: 25: 31,34; Luke 14: 14; Acts 17: 31; 15:16; Apoc. 2:26: 5:10: 20: 6). All this is treated as fabulous by the House of Jezebel!

5. The apostles preached "the Gospel of the Kingdom" for the obedience of faith (Acts 20:24,25; Rom. 16: 26). They preached the same gospel Jesus proclaimed before his crucifixion (Matt. 24:14) and the same that was preached to Abraham, and his posterity in Egypt and the wilderness (Heb. 3:17: 4: 2; Exod. 6:6-8; 23: 20-33; Gen. 12: 1-3; Gal. 3: 7,8,9). All this to the clergy is as a story to a deaf man.

6. The apostles taught that "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. 11 6). This the clergy in works deny, when they give sinners in the grip of "the King of Terrors," ignorant, and therefore necessarily faithless, of the first principles of the Oracles of God, but professing to be penitent, absolution, and what they term "the consolations of religion;" as if the doctrine of Christ had any consolation for villains whose existence has been a life of crime; and whose only repentance is sorrow at the stoppage of their career by conviction and retribution. By works the clergy deny the indispensability of faith, when they rhantize the face of a babe for the regeneration of its "immortal soul!" Surely if Balaam's ass were here, and a clergyman should bestride it on such a mission, the intelligent creature would break silence again, and with the voice of a man rebuke the madness of the seer!

7. The apostles taught that without resurrection there is no future life (1 Cor. 15: 12-10). The clergy deny this in teaching that souls live in heaven and hell before it, if it ever occur, which some of them deny.

8. The apostles taught, that the obedient to the faith are sanctified by the Abrahamic Covenant dedicated by the offering of the body of Jesus (Heb. 10:9,10). Clerical sanctification knows nothing of this. The clergy profess to be sanctified; but of sanctification in relation to a covenant made nearly 4,000 years ago, and confirmed by the crucifixion, their ignorance and unbelief of the things covenanted, prove that they know nothing.

9. Jesus and the apostles taught, that the inheritance of the Saints is the earth, the world, and all things pertaining to them, with eternal life and glory; and to be possessed in the Day of the Lord Jesus after the resurrection (1 Cor. 3: 21-23; 1 Thess. 2:12; 1 Pet. 5: 10). The clergy teach that the saints' everlasting rest is beyond the skies.

10. The apostles taught men to believe the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ; and thereupon to be immersed in that name for remission of sins; and they did it (Acts 8: 12; 2: 38). But the clergy ignore all this, and say, "Believe and be saved;" and to babes, "Be saved without belief!" Hence, they teach two salvations; the one, salvation by faith; the other, salvation without it! By faith of what? "That Jesus died for you." This, and a penitentiary sorrow, will atone for a life of crime; and swing a soul from the gibbet into supernal and eternal glory!!! Oh Balaam, what wilt thou not teach for hire!

11. The apostles taught that Jesus was of the same flesh as the sons of Adam, having all the faculties and emotions common to them; and that, when he was crucified, sin was condemned "IN" that flesh (Rom. 8:3; 1 Pet. 2: 24; Heb. 2: 14,16,17). Balaam denies this. He taught in the life-time of the apostles, and maintains it in our day, that the nature called Jesus was not similar to that of Adam after the fall; but like a different flesh, such as they suppose he had before he fell essentially a self-sustaining, incorruptible, and immortal flesh; and that the body born of Mary was not derived from her substance, but the result of a fresh act of creation! This is denying that Christ came in flesh; a clerical heresy which destroys the apostolic doctrine of the condemnation of sin in our flesh; and abolishes Jesus, the crucified, a covering for sin.

12. The apostles taught that death had been cancelled, and immortality, that is, deathlessness, or life and incorruptibility, brought to light by Jesus Christ in the Gospel of the Kingdom -- that the writing of death against the saints had been crossed, or blotted, out; and incorruptibility of body and life for them procured by his resurrection as the earnest of theirs (2 Tim. 1: 10). But Balaam and Jezebel ignore this. They teach the philosophy of their heathen forefathers concerning immortality; and by their speech and deeds deny that immortality is for those only who believe the promises of God covenanted to the fathers; and yield obedience to the law of faith. Balaam's clerical posterity are "the children of disobedience," and totally opposed to all such doctrine as this.

13. "The World" is today precisely what it was in the days of the apostles. "Woe to the world," saith Jesus, "because of offences!" "The world," he continues, "hates me;" and then says to the apostles, "because ye are not of the world, the world hates you. In the world, therefore, ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." And again he saith, "I pray not for the world."

Their Lord having commanded them to go forth, and preach the Gospel of the Kingdom, left them. They soon after found that the persecution visited upon him came upon them, as he had predicted, saying, "If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you:" so that it became a rule experimentally verified, that wherever and by whomsoever the

doctrine of Jesus Christ is believed and advocated, it is opposed, and its faithful adherents are reproached. This was Paul's experience, who says of the apostles, "We are made a spectacle for the world, even to angels and to men. Unto this present hour we hunger and thirst, are naked and buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labor, working with our own hands; being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat; we are made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things unto this day."

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

What Does That Mean

What Does that Mean will continue, God Willing, in the next couple of months. Bro. Jim Sommerville has a busy schedule this summer and will continue the articles as soon as possible.