

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.

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

CHRIST IS COMING SOON AND WILL REIGN ON EARTH

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 some visitors. As those who live in isolated circumstances will know, this is always a source of refreshment, comfort and strengthening. In September we had the company of Bro. Dale and Sis. Kathy Lee, and also Bro. Brian Lee, all from the Windsor, North Carolina ecclesia. We also had the company of Sis. Rachael Johnatty-Theaker with her family. It was great to be able to share discussions around the great and precious promises that were made unto the Fathers, and which we have become heir to. It was during this time that we had our Autumn Study Weekend based on Scripture numerology (considering number one to six). It was again an occasion when the life imparting words of the Scriptures up-built us in the One Hope of our calling, and everyone felt they had learned more of the things that comprise the wisdom of the Deity. We were very thankful once again to Bro. Dale and Bro. Brian for providing studies during that weekend.

We also very much enjoyed the visit of Bro. Len Naglieri of the Boston ecclesia during the weekend 09 to 11 November. Bro. Len was able to stop over with us on a business trip along with Bro. Bob Bent of Texas on his way to Kenya. We enjoyed the company of both brethren and appreciated the efforts they made in going out of their way to spend some time with us. Bro. Len also encouraged us by providing the Sunday morning exhortation for us, and Bro. Bob gave the public address on the Sunday afternoon. As usual the time went far too quickly and we sought Yahweh's blessing on their respective journeys. We pray for the day when separation will not be needed and we will enjoy the company of the faithful of all ages.

While writing, please note the intention, God Willing, to hold our Gathering over the weekend of 7th to 9th March (2008), if our Master has not returned by then. Please contact Bro. Steve Male for further details.

With love in Elpis Israel and on behalf of the brethren and sisters of the Hengoes Ecclesia,

Bro. Phillip Hughes

FRATERNAL GATHERINGS & ACTIVITIES

(To be held Yahweh Willing)

HENGOED FRATERNAL GATHERING.....Mar 7–9, 2008

Bro. Stephen Male, 8 Gwaun Henllan, Ammanford, Carmarthenshire, SA18 2FD, West Wales, UK. Telephone +44 1269 591924

NORTH CAROLINA–VIRGINIA STUDY WEEKEND.....May 31–Jun 1, 2008

Bro. Dale Lee, (757) 620-6639, dleecpa@cox.net

LAMPASAS FRATERNAL GATHERING.....June 13–15, 2008

Bro. Ricky Hurst, PO Box 1381, Goldthwaite TX 1-325-451-4075

HYE FRATERNAL GATHERING..... July 23–29, 2008

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

Study Class Topic: Hebrews 1-13; Bible Readings

I Will Return To My First Husband

“I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her ... and I will give her the Valley of Trouble for a Door of Hope” (Hosea 14:15).

The book of the prophet Hosea is one of the most beautiful and powerful of the prophetic books. Hosea is the prophet of the love of God, the gentlest and tenderest of the prophets — the John of the Old Testament. He speaks of the truest, and most patient, and deepest of loves in the face of the greatest of unfaithfulnesses.

He prophesied during the closing years of Israel's kingdom, just as Jeremiah and Ezekiel did later for the kingdom of Judah.

Like them — only in an even deeper and more intimate way — he enacted in his own life the sorrow and tragedy of his people.

To Jeremiah, God said, in Judah's last days —

“Thou shalt not take thee a wife, neither shalt thou have sons or daughters in this place. . .”

“For I have taken away My peace from this people, saith the Lord, even loving kindness and mercies” (Jer. 16:1-5).

Ezekiel's prophetic burden was more terrible than this. God said to him—

“Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shalt thy tears run down ... forbear to cry; make no mourning for the dead.”

And Ezekiel says —

“At even my wife died, and I did in the morning as I was commanded” (Eze. 24:16-18).

But Hosea's task was yet more difficult, more personal, and more prolonged. He was commanded — as a testimony of God's great, unmerited goodness and love to Israel — to love, and marry, and nourish and protect, a faithless and licentious woman, who should abandon him but who should eventually, after long patience and kindness, be reconciled to him in faithfulness and truth.

Hosea prophesied during the reigns of Jeroboam II of Israel, and Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah of Judah.

Jeroboam II was the second last of Jehu's line, to whom God had promised four generations. Jeroboam's son Zechariah, who followed him, was murdered after a six-months' reign.

Hosea's period of ministry was about forty years — the last forty years of the northern ten-tribed Kingdom of Israel, just as Jeremiah prophesied during the last, sad forty years of the Kingdom of Judah.

Hosea began his prophecy in a time of prosperity for Israel. The land had been in great distress before Jeroboam began his reign, but God in His pity for the sad condition of Israel, even though they were wicked, greatly strengthened and helped Jeroboam and enabled him to recover Israel's lost territory and defeat her enemies and even extend his rule over Syria to the north.

It was one more opportunity for Israel to recognize and appreciate God's goodness and love, and the wisdom of drawing nigh unto Him in faithfulness.

But Israel did not respond. Because of their apparent strength and stability, they could not believe the end was so near. In spite of God's help, they and their king intensified their wickedness and idolatry. God often blesses, as a last invitation to repentance and reform, before pouring out His judgments on sin.

Such was the background of Hosea's prophecy, as the powerful but evil reign of Jeroboam II drew to its close. Israel did not realize it, but this reign was to mark the end of any real security or stability for the nation. In the remaining twenty-five years of the Kingdom, six kings were to rise and fall, and the dark shadow of Assyria, to whom they had first turned as an ally, was to grow swiftly and terribly until it completely destroyed and blotted out their nation, and carried them away.

Israel had looked to Assyria as a friend and helper, but worldly alliances are always disastrous in the end.

Hosea begins his prophecy —

“Yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and I will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel” (1:4).

Hosea's message sheds much light on the relationship between God's love for His people and their necessary chastening and disciplining.

While it manifests the great beauty and the transforming, appealing power of His infinite patience and affection, it clearly speaks in the strongest terms of the sorrows and bitternesses and hardships that must inevitably arise from disobedience and wickedness.

Its basic message is the great tragedy of Israel's blindness and unnecessary, self-caused miseries in the face of God's choice of them as the special recipients of His love — a choice not as a matter of respect of persons, but as a witness and example to all the world of the beauties of His character and the glories of His purpose.

Even in judgment, its tone is sorrow rather than anger, and the severest condemnations always look forward to eventual reconciliation.

The book of Hosea contains many deep lessons on the subject of marriage and divorce — deep spiritual principles of patience and kindness and hope, and faithfulness, and a love that bears and endures all things, and never fails.

The beautiful story of Hosea impresses us more than anything else could with the great depth of meaning in the words of Jesus to the Pharisees —

“Because of the hardness of your hearts, Moses suffered you to put away your wives.”

“Because of the hardness of your hearts” — because of your pettiness, your carnalness, your fleshliness, your smallness of mind and heart, your obsession with your own comfort and satisfaction and pleasure, your inability to comprehend the true beauty and meaning of unselfish love and sacrifice — the true meaning and purpose of life —

“He that hateth — disregardeth — his life for my sake shall keep it unto life eternal.”

Consider the lives of Hosea, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and others — living tragedies enacted for the manifestation of God's goodness and the bringing of many sons to glory.

These things teach us that our lives mean nothing except as they fit into the purpose of God, and contribute to that purpose. The lives of these faithful men of God were not tragedies when seen in light of their glorious eternal consummation, and the comfort and instruction and benefit they have brought to others.

Much more than we realize, our reasoning on many things is based on the hardness of our hearts. Let us let our minds dwell on this story of Hosea, which so wonderfully illustrates the divine wisdom of love and self-sacrifice and infinite forbearance, which to the mind of the flesh is foolishness.

In the great sweep of the divine purpose with mankind, our own petty little passing circumstances do not have a fraction of the importance that we in our self-centeredness attach to them.

All that matters in the few brief troubled days of our pilgrimage is the glory of God and the advancement of His gracious plan of eternal salvation for those that love Him.

Let us constantly, joyfully thank God we are permitted to play a part in that glorious plan. Nothing else has any importance.

“The beginning of the Word of the Lord by Hosea. And the Lord said to Hosea” —

“Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms, for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord” (Hos. 1:2).

And she bore him a son, and the Lord said (v. 4) —

“Call his name Jezreel, for yet a little while and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel.”

“And I will break the bow in the valley of Jezreel.”

Jezreel is one of the fortresses commanding the valley of Megiddo, or Esdraelon. It is on the slopes of Mt. Gilboa, where Saul died, and it controls the gateway between the mountains down to the Jordan valley, the main entrance to Israel from the east. This is Israel's historic battleground, right back to the days of Gideon.

The *“blood of Jezreel”* that was soon to be avenged began with the treacherous murder of the faithful Naboth by Jezebel.

Jehu was raised up to destroy the house of Ahab for this wickedness, which he did at Jezreel, but because of his own subsequent wickedness and following in the ways of Ahab, all the bloodshed associated with Jezreel is held against him and his house, including his killing of Ahab's family.

Jehu had boasted, *“Come and see my zeal for the Lord.”* He manifested a great zeal for vengeance and destruction, and condemnation of others, but such a zeal — if it is not accompanied by righteousness and gentleness and mercy and tenderness toward the weaknesses of others — is merely an ugly, hypocritical, Pharisaical manifestation of the evil of the flesh.

Jezreel has a double meaning, which comprehends both Israel's judgment and her redemption. Basically it means, “God will sow.” It is the name of God combined with the root word related to seed, planting, and conception — both animal and vegetable. It also comprehends the meaning of the “seed or offspring of God” — the Fatherhood of God — the family relationship. “We also are His offspring,” as Paul told the Athenians — both naturally, and also potentially in a spiritual sense, as John expresses it —

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God.”

Jezreel also means “God will scatter” — as seed is scattered, but with the idea of an eventual reaping and gathering —

“He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd doth his flock.” (Jer. 31:10).

Hosea's own name means “Savior” or “Salvation” — another form of Joshua or Jesus. He typifies God in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. His life story is an exemplification of Paul's words concerning Christ (Eph. 5:25-27) —

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the ecclesia, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word.”

“That he might present it to himself a glorious ecclesia, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should BE HOLY AND WITHOUT BLEMISH.”

Hosea portrays the glorious truth expressed by Paul to the Romans (5:8)—

“God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

“And she conceived again, and bore a daughter. And God said unto him,”

“Call her name Lo-Ruhamah — ('Not having obtained mercy') — for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel.”

“And she bore a son. Then said God, Call his name Lo Ammi — ('Not My people') — for ye are not My people, and I will not be your God” (vs. 6-9).

And so the basis of the allegory is laid in Hosea's wife and three children. The three names represent three successively increasing stages of divine abandonment — Jezreel, Lo- Ruhamah, Lo-Ammi — Scattered, Unloved, Rejected.

In spite of these pronouncements from God, so strikingly manifested to Israel in Hosea's own life, the chapter immediately continues (v. 10) —

“Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered;”

“And it shall come to pass that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are NOT My people, there shall it be said unto them, Ye ARE the sons of the living God.”

“Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land, for great shall be the day of Jezreel”

“GREAT SHALL BE THE DAY OF JEZREEL” — Great shall be the day of the Seed of God —

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will sow the house of Israel and house of Judah with the seed of man, and with the seed of beast...”

“As I have watched over them to destroy, so will I watch over them to plant, saith the Lord” (Jer. 31:27).

Chapter two repeats the same theme, with different figures and details, ending with the same assurance and promise.

While chapter one was based mainly on Hosea's children and their names, chapter two, under the allegory of his unfaithful wife, is a representation of God's infinite patience and love and kindness toward Israel, and their repeated unfaithfulness and corruption. The lesson is for us, for we continually fail and are so often unfaithful to the beautiful character of godliness —

“Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband. . .”

“For she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool, my flax, mine oil, and my drink. . .”

“For she did not know that I gave her her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold” (vs. 2-8).

She attributed her prosperity to her own efforts, and her intimacies with foreigners.

All that she had, all that she could ever have, even her life itself, and her every breath, was of the love and mercy of God — but she did not know. Hosea says later —

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.”

— Lack of the knowledge of God — lack of a realization of the universality of His love and goodness. Paul emphasizes this point to the Lycaonians —

“God left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness” (Acts 14:17).

We take so much for granted, when we should be continually awed by God's goodness. We attribute so much to other causes, to our own efforts and accomplishments, when we should be in constant humble recognition that we of ourselves can DO nothing and ARE nothing, and ALL good is of God.

“She shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them: she shall seek them, but not find them ... Then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now” (2:7).

Here is the patience and longsuffering of God — waiting till she learns by bitter experience that there is no good but in Him.

This is a divine characteristic to be marveled at in thankfulness, but not to be presumed upon. Paul says in warning —

“DESPISEST thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to REPENTANCE?” (Rom. 2:4)

But still there must be divine longsuffering and patience in infinite measure, or none at all could be saved. This is the beautiful lesson of Hosea's personal allegory.

And this is the great lesson of the book for us — the lesson of the unmerciful debtor — the lesson that we have been given so much unmerited blessing that we should be eager and anxious to give all we can on our part — that we have been forgiven so much that patience and mercy and love and longsuffering should be our joyful manifestation of thanksgiving toward God and desire to expand our hearts and minds and be like Him in the limitless pouring forth of goodness.

How small and cramped and ugly is the natural mind of the flesh! How vast and glorious and beautiful is the mind of the Spirit!

Any impatience, or bitterness, or unkindness, or condemnation of others, put us into the position of the evil, small-minded unmerciful debtor who was graciously forgiven a fortune but who without mercy extorted a few pence from his unfortunate neighbor.

Jesus' comment on the punishment of this evil man was —

“So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also to you if ye from your hearts — FROM YOUR HEARTS — forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.”

It was from Hosea that Jesus drew those memorable words to the self-righteous, hypocritical Pharisees —

“Go thou and learn what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice.”

The greatest of personal sacrifice is repulsive to God if it is in self-glory and harshness, and not in the spirit of humbleness and mercy and tenderness and an expanding love toward all mankind.

But in spite of God's great love for His people, they must go through a long and terrible night of suffering for their foolishness and sins.

Vs. 9-13 of chapter two describe Israel's Lo-Ammi period — *“Not My people”* — cast off, rejected, scattered and afflicted. No people has suffered like this people — the chosen and beloved of God.

Then vs. 14 to the end describe, in pictures of great beauty, the various aspect of the ultimate victory and triumph of God's ever patient love for His people, as typified by Hosea —

“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her” (2:14).

Once again God will deliver His people from Egyptian darkness and bondage. Once again will He take them apart to Himself in the wilderness, and renew the covenant, and prepare them for the possession of the land.

“And I will give her the valley of Achor for a door of hope” (v. 15).

Here is summed up the whole theme of the prophecy — The valley of Achor — the Valley of “Trouble” — shall become a Door of HOPE.

All that they have passed through will be found to be the loving provision of God to lead them into hope.

“And she shall sing there as in the days of her youth.”

The Song of Solomon is the song of the Bridegroom and the Bride. The Song of Moses and the Lamb, the great Song of the Redeemed, will be an antitype and memorial of when Israel sang in their joy of deliverance on the shores of the Red Sea.

“At that day thou shalt call Me Ishi — ('My Husband') — and not Baali — ('My Lord').”

Here is a change of relationship.

Jesus said to his disciples, at the last supper —

“Henceforth I call you not SERVANTS, but I have called you FRIENDS.”

Paul expresses the same thought in describing to the Galatians the glorious new relationship that the redeemed bear to God through Christ —

“We WERE in BONDAGE under the elements of the world, but God sent forth His Son to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of SONS.”

“Wherefore thou art no more a SERVANT, but a SON.”

In his enacted allegory, as we read in chapter three, Hosea, at God's instruction buys back to him his wife who had abandoned him and had sunk to the miserable position of a bond-slave, just as Israel had abandoned God and sold themselves into slavery by their sins.

“And in that day I will make a covenant for them with the beast of the field, and with the fowls of heaven.”

“And I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth” (v. 18).

Here are the glories of the millennium so greatly needed today — peace and harmony among all mankind, and among the whole animal creation.

“And I will betroth thee unto Me FOREVER, in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and mercy, and faithfulness” (vs. 19-20).

All things shall be made new again. All the estrangement of the past shall be forgotten in the final glorious reconciliation.

“I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel” (vs. 21-22).

The curse shall be removed, the long silence of rejection and estrangement broken, and all nature shall be in tune and in intimate, harmonious communion together, and eagerly responsive to Jezreel — the redeemed Seed of God.

“And I will sow her unto Me in the earth” (v. 23).

She shall be the blessed and honored means whereby the whole earth shall bring forth the fruits of righteousness unto the glory of God —

“And I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy, and I will say to them that were not my people, Thou art My people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.”

These first three chapters conclude the personal allegory of Hosea. Chapters four to fourteen are the more literal and detailed application to the nation of Israel — their sins, the judgments to come upon them, and the ultimate reconciliation.

In chapter thirteen the prophet climaxes his message. After speaking of their long desolation by the four savage beasts of the Gentiles — the lion, the bear, the leopard and the unnamed wild beast (vs. 7-8) — he continues, in v. 14, with the wonderful prophecy with which Paul similarly climaxes his resurrection chapter, 1st Cor. 15 —

“I will ransom them from the power of the grave: I will redeem them from death.”

“O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction.”

Paul's application of this to the transformation of the faithful in Christ from mortality to immortality gives it a far deeper significance than just the political resurrection of Israel to which it primarily applies.

We are taught by this, as we are so often taught elsewhere, that as Hosea was an allegory to Israel, so Israel is an allegory to us.

Therein lies the great significance of the final words of the prophecy —

“Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? Prudent, and he shall know them?” (14:9).

“Who IS wise?”

God said sadly through Hosea —

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (4:6).

How much do we care about knowing these things? How much real, sincere effort have we put in this past week to learn and understand the lessons of God's Word through which we have been passing in our daily readings? To what extent have we meditated upon it and prayed for understanding?

Let us face these questions honestly. Are we truly ANXIOUS and concerned to learn more and more about God and His Word?

It is so easy to just go through the motions and think we are in the Truth, without ever having the real love of and yearning toward the knowledge of God which is essential to salvation. This is what marks off the true disciple from the common run of mankind.

These divine words are life. They are essential meat and drink. In them alone is the power of love and of holiness and godliness and of overcoming the flesh.

“WHO IS WISE: AND HE SHALL UNDERSTAND THESE THINGS?”

Bro. G.V. Growcott

Make A Difference In Our Salvation

We have been blessed with yet another week of opportunity in which we can make a difference in our salvation. With the minutes, hours and days passing us by, we all fall into the mindset that we know the Lord's return could be at any time, but are we ready? As was mentioned last week, a quote of Bro. Ross – "If you were accused of being a Christadelphian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?"

It really amazes me to think that fall is on the horizon; it seems like spring just started. How our time does really fly! We will soon be involved in a new year, and days closer to our judgment. I was listening to the news last week and became very interested in a story that was being covered by the media. The news flash was that there is growing concern over a rising movement in Russia. This movement is calling themselves Nashi. The group is made up of young people under the age of 30. There are thousands of them signing on to this group. Their sole purpose is to bring back Communism to Russia and Eastern Europe.

To me, this surely is the beginning of the Bear coming out of hibernation and preparing herself to spring forward. A bear coming out of hibernation has a ravenous hunger and wants to consume a large amount of food. Russia, like a bear, is awaking to consume the countries around her. Prophecy is unfolding around us on a daily basis. It does not have to be a shocking event to prepare the way for Christ's return. It is unfolding a little more each day.

This brings us to the Bible readings in Luke 8, where we find Jesus gathered with the multitudes preaching the Kingdom of God. We all have heard the parable of the sower—

"A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it."

So how does this apply to our current involvement? Well, when Bro. Thomas first began to preach the Truth back in the mid 1800's, people did still somewhat fear God. Life was built around the family unit, and the Bible was a focal point in their lives. People were still interested in learning about the Bible and its teachings. Christadelphians became a religious community, and a lot of time and energy went into preaching the Truth. Large groups of Christadelphians were in existence during these times. But over the years since that time, we have dwindled down to a few ecclesias here and there. Times may have changed, but the Word of God has not. The true scriptural teachings, which we know as the Truth, are the same as in ancient times.

During the time of Adam and Eve, God gave instructions for serving Him, and starting with Eve, and then Adam, they rebelled against God.

Cain rebelled by worshiping God in his own manner, instead of in an acceptable manner as God wanted him to worship. Abel worshipped God in a way that pleased God. We know that Cain then killed his brother in an act of fleshly jealousy. Cain's failure was that he allowed his own fleshly thoughts to guide his actions. And the generations of Cain followed in his footsteps, striving to fulfill their own fleshly desires, ignoring the ways of God. The descendents of Cain built up civilizations around wealth and material possessions.

The world at that time declined to a state of godlessness with the pursuit of self-pleasure. Crime increased; there was a decline in morality. This continued until the time of Noah. As we know God could at that point no longer tolerate the wickedness that was upon the earth and the evilness of mankind.

These circumstances do not sound any different from the times in which we live. Our society is rapidly declining, with the imagination of man's heart growing more evil everyday.

Noah warned the people of his time of a flood that would then change man's existence by destroying the people of that time; and He began again with Noah and his family.

In our present day we know and preach the return of Christ which will again change man's existence into serving God in a kingdom here on earth. This is no different from today. There are so many out there that have been exposed to the teachings of the Truth. They may have been raised in Christadelphian families or been taught by association with Christadelphians.

We read in Matt 13:11, *"Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of heaven, but to them it is not given."*

However, being exposed to the Truth does not guarantee that the seed will be sown into good soil. Just like the seed that the sower throws out, the teachings of the Truth may not fall on those who have an open heart. The Truth can wither away in

favor of the cares that this life has to offer. Think of how many each of us have known in our life time who have learned the Truth, but for one reason or another have left.

We read of this in prophesy, as in I Tim 4:1, *“Now the spirit, speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of the devils.”*

In Matt 13:18-23—

“Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understand it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy received it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understand it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”

We can do the Bible readings every night; we can attend all the meetings, but we have to put the Truth into our hearts. When the Truth is in our hearts, we don't have to proclaim that we are Christadelphians, because we live our lives separate from those around us. We shine forth our belief in our words, actions and thoughts. If we are doing this, then we can be accused of being a Christadelphian and the evidence is in how we live.

We have to remember each and every moment of the day that we are not here to serve ourselves. God has put us here for His pleasure, and if we are not serving Him like He has asked us, then we give Him no pleasure.

God does not force us to let the roots of the Truth grow strong within us. He gives us a choice. We can feed and nourish the Truth in our daily lives, or we can let it get choked in the day to day cares of this life. It is up to us.

But we have to remember that knowing the Truth is a blessing, and if we reject the blessing of this gift, then we are rejecting God. Who can stand before the judgment seat of God and explain why we chose to reject Him?

It is our responsibility to be obedient to God's commandments. Our obedience begins in being baptized. However, being baptized is not enough. Serving God is not just in one act of obedience. It is in how we conduct our daily lives. Our fleshly thinking can convince us that we are in control of our life—that we have some control. However, God is in control. The only real control we have is to follow the commands set before us to the best of our ability, or to serve the flesh. We get to make the choice—the way of death or the way of life.

We have to be in connection with God and the only way for us to do this is through prayer. When we stand apart from the world, we show our faith that what God has said, He will do.

In verse 16 of Luke 8 we read, *“No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light.”*

If we are living in faith, then our light will shine forth to those around us. They will realize that we are different. We don't want to blend in with the ways of the world; we want to show that we are separate.

It is extremely hard to have faith, especially when we become adults. Time and experience hardens our faith. But faith is hoping for things not seen, and this is a hard thing to do. When little children are told something, they have faith and believe in it. As we are told in Matthew, we must become as little children to be saved. Adults are cynical and have learned that they have to see to believe. But having faith sets us apart, and we must be like little children in having faith that God will do what He has said. Our faith and hope have to be truly within our hearts and not just on our tongues.

Matt. 18:1-5—

“At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.”

Even though we all face trials and hardships in this life that we must live, it is our faith that God has promised us a better life. Therefore we all must keep His promises in our heart in order to maintain our faith. The ways of the flesh can easily lead us astray and change our thinking. This is what pulls us away from the blessings of the Truth—believing in the cares of this life instead of believing in God's promises.

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. We all must follow Matt 24:13 – *“But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”*

Bro. Mike Neely

400 Silent Years - The Macabees

We left off with the introduction of Antiochus Epiphanes. He was the powerful King of the North from BC 175 to 163 whose history had been pre-written in Gabriel’s message to Daniel in Chapter 11 beginning at v21. Although he had a strong army he depended on art rather than arms for his victory. He endeared himself to the people and other nations with his generosity, practical jokes, and flatteries. None suspected his takeover of Syria.(v21) *“And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries.”*

Meanwhile, we have the corrupt High Priest in Jerusalem whose family is working with him as Publicans for the King of the South. Joshua, a member of this family goes to Antiochus and offers him a large sum of money if he could be the High Priest in Jerusalem. He promised to do all in his power toward Grecianizing the Jews, even to the changing of their name from being Jews to “Antiochians.” This offer delighted the ruler, and Joshua, changed his name from Joshua “YA saves” to Jason, a Greek hero. He constructed a gymnasium, and furthered in every way the adoption of Greek learning, fashions and games. Four years later Jason, this pseudo-priest, sent a younger brother, bearing the tribute-money to Antiochus. Jason reaped the same deceit and treachery he had sown. The younger brother decided he wanted the lucrative and honorable position of high priest for himself. He offered a higher price to Antiochus and obtained the position. He returned to Jerusalem with enough support to leave no doubt who was in control. He proceeded to rob the temple of its golden vessels to pay the tribute-money, kill any in the priesthood who opposed his actions and abandoned himself to gross wickedness, all the while wearing the sacred miter inscribed with, *“Holiness unto the Lord.”* A priesthood that had begun so well under the leadership of Ezra, now an anything goes rationalistic, pre-Sadducean political party.

Antiochus Epiphanes invaded Egypt in 171BC and soon a rumor reached Jerusalem that he was dead. Jason decides to attempt a comeback for the high priest position. He gathers thousands of Jews and soon Jerusalem has civil war fighting for control of this priestly position. Although warring internally, they were all celebrating and rejoicing over the death of Antiochus. When Antiochus learns of this he sees it as an uprising and revolt against him and his authority. He becomes enraged and led his armies like an overwhelming flood through the land, assaulting Jerusalem with wrathful energy. In three days Jerusalem was sacked, over 40,000 Jews slain and an even greater number torn from their homes and led away as captives. He forced his way into the temple, carried off the golden candlestick, the table, the incense altar, and erected an idol-altar on the altar of burnt-offerings, upon which he sacrificed a great sow, and with a broth made of it sprinkled and defiled the entire temple.

Gabriel tells Daniel of this drive into Egypt and the attack against the Promised Land. (v25) *“And he shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army; and the king of the south shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army; but he shall not stand: for they shall forecast devices against him.”* The king of Egypt although having a great and mighty army, was driven out of the kingdom by his own men. (v26) *“Yea, they that feed of the portion of his meat shall destroy him, and his army shall overflow: and many shall fall down slain. And both these kings’ hearts shall be to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper: for yet the end shall be at the time appointed.”*

The Elohim interrupted the manipulations of these kings to reinforce the fact that we spoke of in our last talk. God has a set plan; the deceitful works of these kings would not prosper. God is in control of the affairs of the nations. He had appointed that the power of Rome, that fourth and dreadful beast must stand up on the scene first. Indeed the King of the North will come down and the King of the South will have his great army defeated; but this was only a fore shadowing of future events. The end when the King of the North comes into the land and defeats the king of the South will be a future date, not related to the decrees of these two kings.

Gabriel continues to reveal that Antiochus would return from Egypt and invade the land of Israel as we have just reviewed. (v28) *“Then shall he return into his land with great riches; and his heart shall be against the holy covenant; and he shall do exploits, and return to his own land.”*

He returned to his own land with over 80,000 prisoners and slaves. But he then returns to Egypt. (v29) *“At the time appointed he shall return, and come toward the south; but it shall not be as the former, or as the latter.”* This excursion would not be as victorious as the former. Upon reaching Egypt Antiochus meets an old friend from Rome. Instead of

accepting the friendly right hand which Antiochus held out to greet him, his old friend placed into his hand a copy of the decree of the Roman Senate bidding Antiochus to leave Egypt at once. Antiochus said he must have time to consult with his advisors and asked for time to consider it. Popilius took his rod and drew a circle on the ground around Antiochus, telling him he could have as much time as he desired; but he needed a yes or no answer before he stepped outside of the circle.

Antiochus, alarmed, submitted and left Egypt, determined to vent his rage against the Jews again. He fell upon the defenseless people as a mad man in rage. Pretending peace, he entered unopposed, and on the Sabbath day fell upon the wretched inhabitants, slaying thousands and carrying many away captive. The walls of city and homes within were demolished and the city set on fire. (v30) *“For the ships of Chittim shall come against him: (IE Europe headed by Rome) therefore he shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant.”* So Hellenized were the High Priest and his followers that they actually assisted Antiochus, knowing it would be in their best interest to cooperate rather than oppose.

(V31) *“And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, (June BC 167 the Mosaic sacrifices were forbidden) and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate.”* Christ used this history, which occurred approximately 200 years before his day, as a warning to his disciples and to us. *“When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)”* Mt 24:15 We must be aware of what is happening in the world around us and relate that to what God has warned us would happen. There is a plan, a set time, a time table that is right on course whether we understand it or not!

Antiochus compelled all people to worship his gods and no others. In Jerusalem, the temple was dedicated to Jupiter Olympus, in whose honor sacrifices were instituted, and the miserable Jews that remained among the ruins were forced to take part in the horrid services, and to eat the unclean sacrifices offered to those idols. Defilement could not go any further, Israel had been made to know the full the tender mercies of the heathen, whose culture and brilliancy they had been so attracted to. This outward contamination was but the manifestation of what God’s holy eye had seen long before in his people. He gave them over to what was in their hearts, and brothers and sisters He has promised to do the same for us, if our hearts are as theirs were. *“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God”*

Antiochus and his minions knew no mercy. They spared neither age, sex, nor condition. Young and old, men and women, priest and people, rich and poor, suffered alike in those fearful days of vengeance. Women who attempted to keep the law and circumcise their sons, were led publicly through the city with their babies at their breasts and flung bodily from the city walls, thus literally being broken to pieces. Any who were discovered observing the Sabbath day were apprehended and burnt alive. Judaism and the worship of God absolutely forbidden in Israel.

I will relate one incident as an example of many. One woman and her seven sons were apprehended together and dragged before the infamous king, who commanded them to cast off their faith and to become worshipers of his gods. As they boldly refused, the first son was seized in the presence of his mother and six brethren, his tongue torn out, and other body parts cut off and tossed into the fire. He was then slowly roasted alive over the fire in front of them. Again the alternative was presented to worship and live, or be faithful to Yahweh and die. Unyielding, the second son was taken and flayed alive before the eyes of the rest. And so the horrid trial went on till only one son was left, the youngest. The king personally pleaded with him to renounce his faith and bow to the gods, promising riches, ease and honor for himself and his mother. Fearing he might weaken, the devoted woman pleaded with him to accept death and fear not the tormentors, so she may see him again with his brethren.

He defied the king, rebuked him for his wickedness; which so enraged the monarch that he treated him worse than all the rest. The writer to the Hebrews uses these people as examples of faith. He says, *“others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”*

Would you die for Christ? This sounds like a hypothetical question and seems very foreign to those of us in the west who presume upon the freedom of religion we have grown up with. However, throughout history there have been times, as we are looking at now, and even today in the Middle East, where it becomes a very real question. Would you die for Christ? It is an interesting question, and one which most of us will never know the final answer to as, by God's grace and mercy, we will never be put into that position. So let's ask a more realistic question. Instead of asking, would you die for Christ? I will ask

you, will you live for Christ? It is really a silly question to ask ourselves if we will die for Christ if, in fact, we are not already living for him. If we put trivial things like our creature comforts, pursuit of wealth, leisure and pride above Christ now, it is highly unlikely we would put our very being on the line in the future. If we can't sacrifice our life now, what makes us think we will do it if called upon to do so in the future? Paul says, *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me"*.

Back to the Elohim Gabriel's history written before hand (v32) *"And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits."* There were those who apostacized, and who were willing to follow the foreign religion. They forsook the old ways in favor of the new, to enable them to become accepted as "citizens of Antioch" with all the associated privileges; *"but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits."*

Among this latter class was an old priest living in a town about 15 miles outside of Jerusalem. Antiochus sent ambassadors through Palestine demanding that the priest or ruler of each town offer a sacrifice to Zeus on behalf of the town. This old faithful priest, Mattathias of the house of Asmonaeon (Hasmon) was called upon to set the example for his people by coming forward to offer the pagan sacrifice. Mattathias came forward and refused. He declared without reservation, that neither he nor his sons would hearken to the king's words. Knowing it would mean the death of the old respected priest; a townsman came forward and offered the sacrifice on behalf of Mattathias and the town. The enraged priest approached the altar and killed both the apostate Jew and the ambassador of Antiochus. Thus a second Phinehas arose in Israel. The die was cast, the king was openly defied, the aged Mattathias with the help of his five sons destroyed the altar and fled into the mountains, crying, "Whosoever is zealous of the law, and maintaineth the covenant, let him follow me," This part of Jewish history reads like the time of David. Jews from all over came to Mattathias into the mountains, all the devoted, the old, the discontented, those in debt, and distresses, rallied to the standard of Mattathias until he has a good band of fighting men.

They were at a distinct military disadvantage compared to Antiochus' forces. There were out numbered, out equipped, out trained, but their biggest disadvantage was as devoted Jews they would not fight on the Sabbath day.

Antiochus' forces marched against them one Sabbath, surrounded them and murdered many of them, for they would not defend themselves. After this Mattathias established the principle that fighting in self defense was permissible on the Sabbath day. Although Mattathias may not have been wrong in his understanding, we find the Jews using this principle going forward, that the law had to be interpreted in a practical way. As history progresses we find the Jews expanding this principle to interpreting the law in a self serving way. What is in my best interest? Then it must mean this or that. Do not we learn from history? Should we not question ourselves? Even if what we are doing is not wrong, are we establishing a precedence? Will others fall because of us? Paul says, "All things are lawful to me but not all things are expedient."

Soon after the beginning of the revolt, Mattathias died, but Hasmonaeon rule continued in Israel for the next 100 years until Rome installed Herod over the area. Mattathias had urged his followers to choose his 3rd son as their military leader; and not to turn aside from the service he had committed to them, till the land and the temple were cleansed of the pollutions of the heathen. This 3rd son, Judas, was a brilliant military leader. He was nicknamed "the hammer" or "the hammer of God." Judas the hammer; or Judas the maccabee. The choice was a good one; the Maccabees, as his followers become known as, were able to annihilate Antiochus's armies. They were gorilla warriors, making surprise attacks in the middle of the night, spreading terror and confusion, here and there, unexpectedly in the enemy's encampments. Antiochus underestimated the zeal and determination of these gorilla warriors. They were willing to die for their faith, but they were no longer going to die passively. (v34) "Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help:" Judas Maccabee with 3,000 decimated an army of 47,000. Another and greater army, haughty and defiant, was sent to annihilate the Jewish company. Judas, strong in faith, but leading a small company fasted all day. His men were weak and discouraged as they saw their mighty fore approaching. "How, shall we be able, being so few, to fight against so great a multitude, and so strong?" they asked. Like a second Asa, Judas replied; "With the God of heaven it is all one to deliver with a great multitude, of a small company." His faith was not disappointed. The Jews threw themselves, in apparent recklessness of faith, upon their disdainful enemies, and scattered them like chaff before the wind, and completely defeated them. Proving the words of Moses that if they were faithful that, *"One should chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight."*

News of these events threw Antiochus into a fury; he raged like a mad man as he heard stories of success after success of Judah and his bands. He assembled a great army led by the king in person, that would once and for all utterly annihilate the detested Jews and any vestige left of that nation that had dared to defy so mighty a king. The King of the North divided their hosts into three companies and prepared to attack. Judas and his men with less than 1/10 the men and without the Calvary and armaments, spend the day in prayer and fasting clothed in sackcloth. As they waited and watched, faithful sentries noted

every move of the over-confident Syrians. Before daylight, scouts came to Judas to tell him that the main division of the enemy was already on the move, hoping to surprise the sleeping Jews. The little army of Israel was roused at once. When the host arrived at the Jewish camp, they found it deserted, for Judas and his men were already marching down upon another division of the Syrians by a different road. Suddenly the cry of Judas, "Fear ye not!" rang out on the still air, and a loud blast of trumpets sounded the assault. Like men who knew neither fear nor danger, the Jews flung themselves upon the great army before them, and in a few moments the enemy was scattered in all directions. The first host, ignorant of what was going returning at this time, and supposing that the Jews had fled their camp and were being chased by the Syrians, marched his men directly into the midst of the host only to find the camp in disarray, the tents burning, and Judas and his men bearing down on them. The great king of the north was disgracefully defeated.

Judas and his men entered the temple, and removed all the statues of Jupiter grinding them to powder. They cleansed the temple of all signs of paganism and re-dedicated it to Yahweh. This is the dedication spoken of in John 10:22 "*And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter.*" The dedication is remembered even today in the observance of Hanukkah. It is said that when Judas entered the temple the oil supply had been desecrated and only a small vial remained, but that this lasted the full 8 days of re-dedication of the temple. Hanukkah extends for 8 days. One candle is lit on the first day, two on the second etc. symbolizing that the light of faith is certain to grow, even if only a small remnant of the faithful remain. The Jews see the lighted Menorah as a symbol of God's words to Zechariah, "*Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit says the Lord of host*".

Back to Daniel 11 in v34 "*Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries.*" Many joined Judas because of his success, attempting to keep one foot in each camp. V.35 "*And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed.*"

Judas would meet temporary defeats in order to test the sincerity of the others. After taking Jerusalem, Antiochus sent reinforcements and defeated the Maccabees, who were placed under siege in Jerusalem. However, Antiochus had troubles at home, more pressing than the Jewish insurrection so offered conditions of peace. The Maccabees would go unpunished, the Jews could continue to practice their religion and be given limited self rule. A council of Maccabean army officers, scribes and elders of the Jews accepted the compromise against Judas advice. Judas and a few of his loyal followers left the city, but their fears proved correct. Hellenized Jews with Antiochus's support began executing the loyal followers, and once again, the people turned to Judas for help. With an ill-equipped army of 800 he marched against superior forces and lost badly. Judas was killed, and others were severely tried. V.35 "*And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed.*" This was not the set time to favor Zion, the great king of the north will be defeated by Israel but at the time appointed which is yet future.

The death of Judas and others would severely try the faithful. Had God withdrawn His protection and help? Should they continue the struggle? Could they continue the struggle? Why did this happen? "To try them and to purge and to make them white." "To try" = to smelt as with metals. This is the method by which the value and durability of metal is achieved. Brothers and sisters this has been the experience of the ecclesia in every age. Chastisement will, and must come for each of us. Never let the distressing circumstances of life destroy the glory of our high calling. Never get discouraged, always keep the big picture in sight.

After Judas death Jonathan his brother led the Maccabean revolt. Although he was ill equipped for war, he was victorious in the field of diplomacy. The successors of Antiochus Epiphanies faced more important problems than the Jews. Jonathan was able to establish himself as governor of Judah and as high Priest. His brother Simon became governor of the coast of Philistine. The Hasmonean period or Maccabean period extended over 100 years. Israel was able to enjoy self-rule once again, and greatly expanded their territory. However, once again, we see a time of prosperity resulting in disaster for the Truth. At the end of this period we have the "fullness of time" finally arrived. Conditions so bad, that God could stand them no longer. A godless nation; and yet a very religious nation. A state of affairs that we can all relate to as we see Christianity today, self confident in themselves as righteous and posed to oppose Christ just as the Jews did 2,000 years ago. To quote Christ once again, "*let him that readeth understand.*"

Bro. Jim Sommerville

The Daily Readings

The wisdom of daily reading becomes more and more apparent. This lesson cannot be too strongly enforced, or too distinctly apprehended among those who have fled to lay hold of the refuge set before them in the Gospel. Their life depends

upon it. They are in danger of being blinded to it. Away from it, we are open to a hundred plausible deceptions which lay hold with a death-grip all the more fatal because soft and sweet.

Spiritual decay potently prevails where the reading of the word is neglected. A lamentable mistake is made by those who conclude they have no time to read. What should we say of persons concluding they had no time to take their food? No more insane would this be than the other hallucination in its ultimate effect. Man lives not by bread alone. He may live an animal life by bread alone: but animal life is a brief affair. There comes a life afterwards that springs from the word now stored into the heart; and deceived is the individual who excludes the Word of God from his daily consumption on the plea that he has “no time.” What is he so busy about?

What should we say of a man in the cabin of a sinking ship, who should neglect preparations for the lifeboat on the plea that affairs in the cabin left him no time? This is a dying life—dying, dying, dying; and slaves of death are those who allow its transient concerns so to fill their heads and hearts as to shut out the “one thing needful.” A wise man will not be found perishing so. He will not be cheated on any pretext, out of that bread which shall be unto him “life everlasting.” If he is ever so poor, or ever so close-worked, he will find twenty minutes a day, at least, to sit at the shrine of God, and be taught by the voice that speaks to him as from over the mercy-seat of the ancient tabernacle of the testimony. And if rich, he will smite the golden beast with the rod of his authority, and order it to be in the corner for a time every day, while he listens to the Maker and Possessor of heaven and earth.

The man—poor or rich—who acts not thus, is a fool; for what does the struggle of life amount to, apart from the attainment of that good which shall not be taken away? To a complete vanity. The poor man sweats out his three-score and ten, and lies down to be no more remembered. The rich man, by much contrivance, draws the coin from his neighbour's pockets, and, having scraped much to his corner, comes to his weary end, closes his eyes in disappointment, and dies like the fool with his barns, with a fearful awakening in store, when God, whom he has cheated, will mete out his portion of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversary.

Seasons of Comfort

Awaiting Christ's Return

That of human beings who have died since the commencement of human life upon earth, none are actually alive except Enoch (Heb. 11:5), Elijah (2 Kings 2:11), possibly Moses (Deut. 34:6; Matt. 17:3), and those who rose from the dead at Christ's resurrection (Matt. 27:52, 53). In these cases, either death did not occur or resurrection took place. In all other cases the approved dead are alive only in the sense of divine purpose (compare Rom. 4:17; and Luke 20:37, 38).
Bro. Robert Roberts—1897

“There be some standing here who shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”—(Matt. 16:28.) In this and all the other places where this saying of Christ is recorded (Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27), the saying is followed by the account of the transfiguration. This suggests that it is the transfiguration Christ alluded to. The only question is whether, scripturally, such language can be understood of that event. This question is answered by Peter, one of the spectators of the transfiguration, who applies it in this way. His words are “We have not followed cunningly-devised fables, when we made known unto you the POWER AND COMING of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were EYE WITNESSES of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice from the Excellent Glory, ‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ And this voice which came from heaven we heard *when we were with him in the holy Mount.*”—(2 Pet. 1:16–18.)

The transfiguration was a dramatic representation of what will be established in permanent reality when “Jesus Christ shall judge the living and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom.”—(2 Tim. 4:1.) In seeing this, Peter, James, and John, before tasting of death, saw the Son of Man coming in his kingdom; just the same as John afterwards saw him coming “in righteousness to judge and make war.”—(Rev. 19:11.) John saw many things in vision which will afterwards become reality.

Bro. Robert Roberts—1870

Another recorded post-removal participation in mundane affairs was his [Elijah] appearance on the mount of transfiguration, where, with Moses, he “*spake of the decease which Jesus should accomplish at Jerusalem*” (Luke 9:30–31). Dr. Thomas has always believed that this appearance was actual, and that of Moses also. The term “vision” applied to the transaction has been held to exclude this view, since “vision” is defined in Acts 12:9 as that which is in contrast with reality. This contention may be right as regards the common use of the term, and yet allow of the things seen in a case like the transfiguration—seen for visional purposes—having been real in themselves. Jesus was real: the glory was real: the voice was real: the overshadowing cloud was real: and Moses and Elias may have been real. It is a matter about which positive

ground cannot be taken; but it is interesting to think of the possibility of Elijah having been really there present in personal interview with the Lord, holding converse on the approaching climax of the Lord's work on earth—the Lord's death and resurrection. It would shew Elijah in a state of personal interest in that part of the work of God to which we stand related. It would be natural that such should be the case. Elijah was alive: and if he sent a letter of reproof to an idolatrous King of Israel, it was equally in place that he should personally and encouragingly confer, with "the Son of God, the King of Israel," on the approach of the great act of obedience—the laying down of his life for all the children of God—in which Elijah, though not permitted to see death, must have been as much interested as the least of those in need of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

The presence of Moses would be no barrier to this view; because if Moses were really there, it would be by the exercise of that resurrection power which more than once was exercised before the days of Christ. The exercise of this power in the raising of Moses would not displace Christ from his position of "the first fruits;" since Moses might merely rise to renewed natural but miraculously prolonged life against the day of change to spiritnature in the presence of Christ at his coming. Christ as the first to be glorified, and the dispenser of glory to all his brethren, would be in the position of the first fruits, however many God might see fit to sustain in natural being against that day.

The cases of Moses and Elias in no way lend countenance to the popular view of the death state, since Elias did not die, but was bodily removed, and Moses, if there, must have been bodily raised.

The reality of Elijah's participations, since his removal, in the divine work on earth, in the two recorded cases, is in harmony with the revealed fact, that he is destined to take an active part in the work of Israel's redemption, from the transgression and down-treading of the Gentile ages. To this Jesus refers, when he says, in answer to the enquiries of his disciples, "*Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things*" (Matt. 17:11). If he added, "*But I say unto you that Elias is come already,*" it only shows that two co-ordinate truths are consistent, though in apparent conflict when viewed superficially. John the Baptist came in "*the spirit and power of Elijah*" (Luke 1:17); and therefore his coming was a coming of Elias (appropriate to the nature of the preparatory work to be done for the first appearing of Christ). This does not interfere with the fact that the personal Elias himself will come in his own spirit and power, to do a work of preparation of a different nature from that of John the Baptist, as the different situation of things connected with the second appearing of Christ requires.

There are details with which, of course, Elisha and his attendant "*sons of the prophets*" were not acquainted. Their work related to the state of things then existing in the midst of the tribes of Israel. For this work only were their qualifications suited. These qualifications involved the power of displaying in a large measure the visible hand of God, at the exhibition of which we shall look in the further contemplation of the life of Elisha.

The Visible Hand of God—1883

Thoughts Gleaned By The Way

"From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, the Lord's name is to be praised:" Psalm 113:3

Praise to the Lord is not to be spasmodic, neither reserved for special occasions. But the children of God, surrounded as they are with manifold blessings, spontaneously give forth praise to the Giver of every good and perfect gift.

* * *

"By his light I walked through darkness." - Job 29:3 -

The natural human mind is enshrouded in impenetrable darkness so far as divine teaching is concerned. That darkness cannot be dispelled by human reasoning, speculation or philosophy.

He who seeks true wisdom and spiritual understanding by searching through the tomes of worldly "thinkers" is only plunged deeper into the morass of jumbled, contradictory thought and philosophy which is the product of the natural mind of sinful man. Paul said: "The world by (its) wisdom knew not God."

Such thinkers can neither understand the past nor know the future of God's purpose with the earth* and man upon it. It is only when we turn the searchlight of divine truth upon a matter that we can walk through thick darkness, confidently and securely, as a path of light is opened up for us all the way.

"The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is as darkness. They know not at what they stumble" (Prov. 4:18,19).

“And lo, thou art unto them as a lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words, but they do them not.” - Exodus 33:31,32 -

Is this not the same attitude as the one who says - “That was a fine lecture,” or “that was a wonderful exhortation,” and then straightway forgets what it was about and makes no effort to abide by the divine truth given in the “lovely song.”

Just as the very eloquent words of the prophet were lost on the children of Israel to whom he spake, so the word of exhortation, no matter how well delivered, will not profit us unless we keep it in mind and try hard to apply it to our own ways.
—Bro. Oscar Beauchamp

Ecclesia of Women

The professors of the truth in Paisley number fourteen. Only three of these are men—the women forming the major portion of the ecclesia. This, of course, will depress outward activity somewhat, but need not affect internal vitality, living power, or lively faith, hope and love. The language of the Psalmist, expressing the mind of the Spirit, desires that “our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace.” They will doubtless perceive the usefulness and importance of “corner stones,” without which the building could not stand. Having been hewn out of the quarry, in a natural, rough, unshapely condition, the process of polishing must be commenced, and continued, until the clear, smooth surface reflects the graces of truth, purity and love. Considerations of this kind should stimulate each one to put forth greater energy and more zeal in the work of building up the scattered portions of the household of Christ.

Bro. John Thomas—1870

Suggestions For Reading And Studying The Truth’s Works

1. Read a paragraph at a time. Stop and without looking at the book go over it in your mind to see if you understand and remember the main thought.

2. Neatly underline the main thought, or a word or words which will give you the thought when you review the book. This helps in finding what you know is in the book. Don’t overdo underlining, or it loses its value.

3. Neatly, write any important thought (a word or two) at the top of the page, for reviewing the book and for finding it in the future. I would suggest a light pencil for all this, until you work out a system you know will be permanent.

4. At the back of the book (there are always a few blank pages – at least the inside of the back cover) make a neat, vertical list of all thoughts and expressions you may want to find: (for example)—

Elpis Israel

Natural man evil – 1

Mystery of the Gospel – 3

Pre-Adamic Angels – 9

Six Days Creation – 10

5. Use a loose-leaf binder to make an index of all important points you read. Keep the wording brief, with book and page number.

6. It is better to read a little (the right books – brethren Thomas and Roberts) and review and classify and index as you go along, than to read a lot hastily that you will not remember or be able to find again when you want it. Build slowly but soundly.

7. As you are going through a book, and periodically later, just leaf quickly through the book page by page, noting the underlined and the headings, and the list at the back.

8. Make your Bible an index as far as possible. As you read anything useful about any passage, note neatly in your Bible beside that passage the book and page number—EI 40 (Elpis Israel, page 40); Eur. III: 232 (Eureka, vol. 3, page 232); 89:73 (Christadelphian, 1889, page 73). If possible put a word or two that will give you the gist of what is said.

9. Read purposefully and prayerfully. Think about why you are reading—not just for interest, or knowledge, but for guidance. Take it seriously. Think seriously about it, as you start and as you proceed. Have a sense of purpose and determination to learn and grow.

Do Something For Somebody Quick

Are you almost disgusted with life, little man? I'll tell you a wonderful trick That will bring you contentment, if anything can, Do something for somebody, quick!

Are you awfully tired with play, little girl? Wearied, discouraged and sick I'll tell you the loveliest game in the world, Do something for somebody, quick!

Though it rains, like the rain of the flood, little man, And the clouds are forbidding and thick, You can make the sun shine in your soul, little man, Do something for somebody, quick!

Though the stars are like brass overhead, little girl, And the walks like a well-heated brick, And our earthy affairs in a terrible whirl, Do something for somebody, quick!

~Unknown~

A Favorite Poem of Bro. G.V. Growcott

Analecta Apocalypticæ (19)

The Woman Jezebel

As we have shown in our exposition of the apocalyptic "Balaam and "Nikolaitans," there existed a class of teachers calling themselves "christians," contemporary with the Apostles, who taught "another gospel," and set forth a Jesus, which Paul styled "another Jesus; "both of which, that is, the Jesus and their gospel, were different from the real Jesus and the true gospel, proclaimed by the apostles; and subversive of the divine teaching concerning them. This class of teachers, styled by Peter "false teachers;" and by John, "false prophets and" deceivers who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh" which heresy, or falsehood, he says, "is the Deceiver and the Antichrist" wherever found (2 Pet. 2: 1; 1 John 4:1; 2 John 7): this class, I say, had become numerous and influential by the end of the first century; and were to be found sowing tares in all the field of the apostolic labors. They were the "reverend divines" and "D.D's" of the Nineteenth Century in embryo — the self-styled "apostles" to whom "the Clergy" of our day are the undoubted "successors." They taught the same doctrine as our clergy, and therefore they are unquestionably the same class.

Now false teachers, prophets, and deceivers are aggregately represented in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, by a woman of vicious and profligate character. Thus, the Spirit in Ezekiel 22:25, in speaking of the leaders of the people in Jerusalem, says, "there is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof; like a roaring lion ravening the prey, they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things. Her priests have violated my holy law, and have profaned my holy things. Her prophets have daubed souls with untempered mortar, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith Yahweh Elohim, when Yahweh hath not spoken." These priests and prophets, who were princes in Jerusalem and Samaria, are represented in the next chapter by two lewd women, "the Daughters of One Mother," Aholah the elder, and Aholibah her sister. "Thus were their names," says the Spirit; "Samaria is Aholah, and Jerusalem, Aholibah." Then follows the indictment against them, in which their apostasy from the Mosaic Law in its simplicity, in their blending it with the abominable customs and principles of heathenism, is likened to the intercourse of harlotry and adultery. The priests and prophets of Samaria were Aholah the harlot daughter of the comely and delicate woman, Zion under the law (Jer. 6:2); and the same class in Jerusalem were Aholibah, the younger harlot of the same mother, "more corrupt in her inordinate love than Aholah."

In the New Testament, the disciples of Jesus Anointed, who, though not all "elders," "apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers," are all "living stones built up a spiritual house, a holy and royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people" (Eph. 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:5,9; Apoc. 5: 9,10). And so long as they held fast the name, and did not deny the faith, of Jesus Anointed, they are styled apocalyptically "the Woman," and "the Woman of the Lamb" (Apoc. 12:6,14,16,17; 19: 7,8). But when a schism of this one body was elaborated by false teaching, the teachers and those who followed the teaching, ceased to be of "the Woman of the Lamb," but became "a woman," or an adulteress.

Such had become the situation of affairs by the close of the first century. There were two women in the Roman Habitable claiming to be the Spouse of Christ; the one, "a Chaste Virgin, begotten and espoused to one husband, the Christ, by the word" (2 Cor. 11:2; 1 Cor.4:15; Eph. 5: 26); the other, a woman, drunken and adulterous, and the Mother of a progeny of Harlots, and of the Abominations of the earth (Apoc. 17:1-6; 14: 4), all of them, mother and daughters, begotten of the

traditions and commandments of men, making void the word of God. Between these two women there was rivalry and indignation. The adulteress proclaimed that she was rich, and increased in goods, and had need of nothing; and invited the world, in all its filthy garments, to her embrace. This is what is proverbially styled “the World and his Woman,” called by his friends and boon companions, “THE CHURCH.” Scripturally, they are Ahab and Jezebel, the adversaries and destroyers of the saints; and wherever any of their prophets are found ministering before the people, there the principles of the flesh, and the gospel-nullifying traditions of men, are glorified and prevail; because, “being of the world, therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them” (1 John 4: 5). This is an unmistakable criterion. The world will not listen to the counsel, and support any women, but Jezebel and her daughters. Whatever “preacher” will present himself in the name of Jezebel, him will the world listen to with open mouth and ears; for the principles he inculcates are what the flesh approves.

The Type and Antitype

The apocalyptic woman that had been manifested in John's day was styled “Jezebel,” because the character of the class of false teachers was analogous to that of the wife of Ahab, known in Jewish history by that name. Hence, the literal Jezebel was made the *type, or pattern*, of the class, which became the figurative Jezebel. There was no literal woman named Jezebel in Thyatira claiming to be a christian, any more than there was a literal Antipas and Balaam in Pergamos of these names; at least history gives no account of any. Therefore the typical Jezebel must be that Jezebel of the Old Testament. The study of her history and circumstances must be virtually the study of her *antitype*, and that antitype is the adulteress, or pseudo church, of false teachers, in which the abettors of Balaam's teaching were embodied; and who differs from Balaam in this that she is the adulterous exhibition of what Balaam taught. Her name in Hebrew is Izabel, which is compounded of *not* and she *dwells*. As if the Spirit had said, she dwells not with me; that is, the teachers and their disciples who teach and seduce to commit prostitution, and to eat idol sacrifices, are not my spouse. Thus by conferring this name upon them, the real spouse of Christ in those days was vindicated by the Spirit. No wonder the Apocalypse was unpopular with those who held the doctrine of Balaam in those days, as it hath also been to this day with the same class. They know they do not teach the word, and that they can define neither the name nor the faith of the Spirit; and they know that they teach for the hire paid them by the house of Ahab, or the world; and that they love the wages of unrighteousness. How then can a book be popular with such which proclaims them to be not the spouse of the Spirit; but the harlot community prostituting itself for hire to an ignorant, superstitious, and besotted world?

But Izabel or Jezebel, is not only etymologically an appropriate type of the clerical orders of Christendom, whose constituents are “the prophets” of the world; the origin, and character, and fate of the woman are also typical of the origin, character, and fate of the “reverend divines,” and doctors of divinity, who minister to the itching ears of those who heap up to themselves teachers after their own lusts, and are turned aside to fables. Jezebel was the daughter of Ethbaal, the idolatrous king of the Zidonians, whose name imported dedication to Baal the false god, the lord of the people; whom Balaam had before taught the Israelites to serve with fornication and idolatry. Now the origin of the clergy is analogous to this. They were begotten in idolatry, or in Baal. “The Lord saw folly in the prophets of Samaria; they prophesied in Baal, and caused his people Israel to err” (Jer. xxiii. 13). Peter also testifies this of certain prophets, styling themselves christian teachers, in his day. In writing to the elect he says, “there will be false teachers among you, who privily will bring in damnable heresies. These, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption. They have eyes full of an adulteress (full of Jezebel) and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls; a heart have they exercised with covetous practices; cursed children, who have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the Way of Balaam son of Bosor, who loved the wanes of unrighteousness. They are wells without water, clouds that are carried of a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.” Such were the clergy in their origin. The generation of the clerical Jezebel in our day, however, differs from the generation of their brethren and fathers in the days of Peter in this, that our clergy never were the children of God, and were never in the right way; therefore, though the accursed preachers of other gospels than the true one, they are not “cursed children:” and have not “forsaken the right way,” because they were never in it. “The Way of Balaam” is emphatically the Way of the Clergy in all post-apostolical and pre-millennial generations. Their eyes are full of Jezebel, whose original practice is proverbially “the ministerial sin.” They speak evil of the things they do not understand; and they undertake to teach what they know nothing about; and therefore, they are “wells without water.”

These clerical prophets in Balaam, and therefore in Baal, in undertaking to speak to the edification, exhortation, and comfort of souls, being of a class represented by a woman, “called herself a prophetess.” They became an ecclesiastical woman prophesying deceits. She was begotten of falsehood, so that the father of the clergy is “the Devil, who was a liar from the beginning.” “Except ye be circumcised and keep the law of Moses, ye cannot be saved.” This was the first element of the falsehood enunciated to christians by teachers in the presence of the apostles. They set up the dogma, that a Gentile must believe the gospel, be immersed, be circumcised, and keep the law, in order to get salvation. This was the first lie taught for truth after the ascension of Jesus; and those who taught it, constituted in themselves, and therefore originated, the anti-

apostolic order, familiarly known in our day as “the clergy.” Hence, the clergy are Judaizers to this day — commanding to fast, to abstain from meats, to keep holy days, and sabbaths.

But the falsehood which generated their order was not complete till the principles of heathen philosophy were commingled with the Judaic dogma. This was effected when they denied the resurrection of the body in affirming, as Justin testifies they did, that what they call “souls” went immediately to heaven at death. This Judaized Heathenism constituted what Paul calls “a lie,” and “the Mystery of Iniquity” — a system of falsehood formative of the clerical order, which gave them a parentage like that of Jezebel. The principles styled Baal (for Baal having no real existence, was only a system of ideas, so called, that lorded it over those who acknowledged it), gave origin to the clergy who worship Baal and preach him everywhere. The Sidonians believed in immortal souls, in their going to heaven at death, and in a place of torment, where the wicked burned in fire eternally. They also believed in sacrifice to propitiate the Deity, and in making long and noisy prayers, by which to induce him to hear them. Our clergy have not advanced one step beyond this since the days of Jezebel. She believed these things, and were she personally in existence now, she could have no scruples in becoming a member of any clergyman's church in this city, Catholic or Protestant. It is true, the clergy now hold a few principles, or rather opinions, unknown to Jezebel and her clergy, the original prophets of immortal-soulism. They believe in a Jesus of whom she had never heard; but their belief in this other Jesus whom Paul did not preach, does not at all interfere with their hearty adhesion to the Baal-System of Ideas. Their eyes are full of Jezebel, and she was full of Baal.

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

What Does That Mean?

“Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation.”—(Jude 9)

That the devil here is not the popular devil is evident from the fact that he wanted to get hold of “a body,” which the popular devil is not supposed to care anything about, he being mainly on the look out for “souls.” What devil was it? This is your question.

Well, there are two incidents of Scripture history to which it may allude, and Jude refers to it as to a thing known. There is, first, the “scene” exhibited to Zechariah the prophet (chap. 3:1–5), in which the adversaries of Israel appear, by one of their number, in the presence of the angel and Joshua the high priest. “Satan (*margin*, an adversary) standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord (that is the angel) said *The Lord rebuke thee, O, Satan.*”

A reference to Ezra 4:1–4 will show the nature of the antagonism brought against Joshua and his coadjutors, at this time. If this is what Jude refers to (and the identity of the words imputed to the angel would seem to shew it), then the “body of Moses” was the body politic of Israel, which was the body of Moses in the same sense as the church is “the body of Christ,” and the devil would be the adversary that stood up against Israel to frustrate their re-organization, represented by the individual who appeared in the company of Joshua. The other incident is more in the nature of a supposition than a fact. It is recorded that Moses died and the Lord “buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor, but *no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.*”—(Deut. 24:6.)

It has been suggested that after the death of Moses, the Israelites made an attempt to discover his grave, so as to obtain the body for embalmment and worship, and that the angel appointed to lead the camp interposed in the way described by Jude. The former is the more probable explanation.

Bro. Robert Roberts