

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

LAMPASAS, Texas

We received the following note: "In another note relative to this site, **David Lucas** (David L) was immersed this morning, (July 5th), and is now a member of the Lampasas Berean Ecclesia." - Jim Phillips

FRATERNAL GATHERINGS & ACTIVITIES (To be held Yahweh Willing)

TENNESSEE FRATERNAL GATHERING.....Oct 3-4, 2009
Bro. Jim Rankin, 115 Sherwood Dr., Camden, TN 38320 USA. 1-731-584-6039

The BCAA

A website called Berean Christadelphian Audio Archives, or BCAA for short, has made available a large selection of talks on MP3.

The address is www.bcaudioarchives.blogspot.com. Please bookmark this link as we will be updating this archive with new material as much as possible.

The main purpose of this site is to restore and make available lectures, exhortations, and study classes. Some of these talks are decades old and have seldom been heard. The quality of the material will vary; they have been transferred from audio cassettes and reel to reel tapes. Some have occasional distortion and tape flips.

It is an ongoing project, and we have lots of material to work with. However, we are always looking for tapes, and if you have some talks that you would like to share, please email either Brother Craig Kiley (craigkiley@yahoo.com) or Brother Noah Brown (sbsugar@gmail.com) and we will be happy to transfer the talks to .mp3 format and post them.

Any comments and questions are very welcome; we want this website to become a resource for brethren and sisters worldwide.

Berean 2009—2

Be Ye Therefore Perfect.

I have been always strongly impressed that these three chapters, (Matthew 5, 6 and 7), are the living and vital heart of the Truth. If we are familiar with these teachings and sincerely trying to obey them at all times, we are on the way of life. If we are not, we have no chance of life.

These three chapters, commonly known as the "Sermon on the Mount," contain 40 commands. They are presented in various ways, but are all actually commands of Christ, to which he refers when he says (John 15:14)

"Ye are my friends, IF ye do whatsoever I command you."

He sums it all up in his final words. If we hear and do, we build on rock, and will stand forever. If we hear and do not, we build on sand—our house will collapse and fall.

Let us consider some of these commands in order:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit."

Or, as a command: "Be poor in spirit."

This is perhaps the most striking command of the whole address. The word "poor" here means the lowest degree of abject poverty and destitution. It means beggar.

"Spirit" is disposition. The "poor in spirit" are those who fully realize the true destitute status of perishing mortal man, as compared to glorious and eternal things. What is man? —dust, a vapour, a breath, a shadow, with an urgent, desperate, crying need for help and strength of God.

Those who perceive this are blessed, happy; they have taken the first step toward immortality.

* * *

"Blessed are they that mourn."

Or, more simply: "Be mourners."

The blessing does not include ALL mourners, any more than the first does all poor. It is those who mourn in the right way for the right things; those who have deep fellow-feeling for others' sorrows—for the burden of the sorrow of this sad world; those who realistically face the facts of life—

"It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting; For that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to heart." (Eccl. 7:2)

It does not conflict with the command to "Always rejoice!" Paul said (2Cor. 6:10) that he was *"sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich."*

* * *

"Be meek." (5:5)

Meek means yielding, gentle, mild, patient, calm and soothing; not aggressive or self-assertive or bossy; cheerfully putting up with wrong and present disadvantages for the sake of eternal good.

Meek people are self-controlled people and they have great power for good influence. It is a training in controlling the flesh. It is the attitude that can best help others.

* * *

"Hunger and thirst after righteousness." (5:6)

Hunger and thirst—the basic, most essential needs and desires. The blessing is for those whose whole hearts' desire is not for personal gain or advantage or pleasure, but for righteousness and holiness and godliness—in themselves and throughout the earth.

* * *

"Be merciful." (5:7)

In Nazareth Revisited, bro. Roberts strongly emphasizes the necessity of keeping all these teachings in balance. We may tend to over-emphasize those that naturally appeal to us, and give others insufficient weight.

An adamant, forceful stand for righteousness is essential, but equally so is mercy and compassion and patience and understanding. We are fighting sin—the common enemy. We are not fighting people. People we are trying to win and save.

We naturally tend to be very critical of the errors of others, and very compassionate to our own. Let us reverse the process. It is much more healthy and productive and scriptural.

* * *

"Be pure in heart." (5:8)

The saddest aspect of the perverted morality of these last dark days of human ignorance is that corruption and vulgarity are being glorified as reality and honesty, and deeper bondage to the flesh is heralded as emancipation and freedom. Decency and purity are condemned as prudery and hypocrisy.

Truly the world is full of hypocrisy, as the new generation of rebels say, but the problem is not solved but worsened by destroying the good things that the world is hypocritical about.

More than ever it is essential that we, as Christ's brethren, realize and emphasize that purity and cleanliness of heart and deed and word and thought are as vital and important and desirable and timely as ever.

The Bible—God's Word—is the ONLY standard for right and wrong, purity and impurity, cleanliness and filthiness, wisdom and folly. Without this standard, man steadily degenerates to the beast, though he glorifies his corruption with high sounding words.

* * *

"Be peacemakers." (5:9)

Peace can only be built on one foundation: "First pure; then peaceable" -

"The work of righteousness shall be peace" (Isa. 32:17).

"There is no peace, saith my Elohim, to the wicked" (Isa. 57:21).

But the emphasis here is on the desire and effort for peace and harmony and reconciliation; the basic bent of the mind—developed through meditation on God's Word—to seek to harmonize conflicts, to reconcile estrangements, to remove barriers of misunderstanding and enmity. To accomplish these things, there must be complete renunciation of self and personal desire.

Christ, in perfect self-sacrifice, made peace by the blood of the cross, reconciling and uniting Jew and Gentile in one New Man in himself.

He is the great example of bringing reconciliation to others by personal holiness in himself. He reconciled men to each other, and mankind to God.

* * *

"Rejoice and be exceeding glad when you are privileged to suffer for righteousness' sake, for great is your reward in heaven."

Suffering is not to be rejoiced in for its own sake, or from self—pity. That, though common, is fleshly perversion. It is to be healthily and intelligently rejoiced in as a necessary means to a glorious end—as an assurance and evidence that God is working in us and through us to accomplish His divine purpose.

* * *

"Be ye the salt of the earth."

Our responsibility in all we do or say is to be an element of purity and soundness in an increasingly corrupt and degenerating world.

We are to be the element that keeps God from destroying the whole, as in the Flood, or Sodom and Gomorrha.

But if the salt has lost its freshness and tangy saltiness, what good is it? This is our zeal and dedication and fervent activity for good toward all, without which we are nothing.

* * *

"Be ye the light of the world."

A high commission indeed! Similar to the salt, but a different aspect. The salt is the preserving influence, the inner striving and prayer, the life of godliness and purity. The light is the manifestation, the guidance, the enlightenment, the beacon pointing the way in the darkness of human night.

Let your light shine that men may glorify God. Our lives and testimonies must be a manifestation to lost and groping mankind of the reality and desirability and beauty of holiness.

* * *

"Think not that I am come to destroy the Law" (5:17).

The Law of Moses demanded perfect holiness. The Law drew a sharp line between clean and unclean. The Law, said Paul, was *"holy, just and good."*

The common idea is that Christ came to lower the requirements, so that man could get life with less effort and less inconvenience—to sweep away all the flesh-crucifying rules under a big, blind, blurred blanket of tolerance and indulgence, falsely described as "love."

Nothing could be further from the Truth—

"Whoso shall break one of the least of these commandments shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven" (5:19).

"Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of heaven" (5:20).

In the eyes of the people, the Scribes and Pharisees were the very pinnacle of righteousness, but it was a superficial and external fulfilling of the Law. Jesus is about to expound a deeper, infinitely more searching and piercing law. He is going to bring out the real spirit of the Mosaic Law, showing how much further it goes with its commands into the innermost heart of man.

* * *

"But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother (without a cause) shall be in danger of the judgement" (5:22).

The Law says, *"Thou shalt not kill."* I say, in expounding the Spirit of the Law, that thou shalt not be angry at anyone, for anger is simply murder locked up in the heart.

"Without a cause" is not in the best manuscripts. The RV and Diaglott and all modern versions omit it. It destroys the whole force of the command. The command is not—

"Thou shalt not be angry without a cause."

But— "Thou shalt not be angry — Period."

Anger is the prerogative of God, and we are not God.

In man, anger is loss of control, loss of perspective, a victory for the mind of the flesh. We can accomplish nothing good when we are angry. We lose all influence for good. Anger is infantile immaturity—

"The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

* * *

"Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

If you are aware that your brother has anything against you; is in any way estranged or upset (regardless of whether it is justified or not); the command of Christ is, "BE RECONCILED."

Jesus does not discuss where the fault may lie. That is unimportant. The important part is—Seek reconciliation, continually, always. Not just go through the motions once or twice, like a technical Pharisee. He says—BE reconciled: keep at it: never give up the effort.

If these commands were obeyed, there could be no ecclesial problems. If they are NOT obeyed, says Christ, we are just building all of our life-long efforts on the sand of the flesh.

* * *

"If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out" (5:29-30).

In all these commands, we must get at the deep principles that underlie them. They are all far deeper and more broadly applicable than the specific form in which they are worded. But this does not lessen their power, but enforces it.

Christ here is clearly using the right eye and right hand to emphasize the extreme urgency of putting away ANYTHING, however precious to us, that might hinder us in the race for life.

This principle, faithfully carried out, would eliminate many, many things from our encumbered lives, and release much time and money and energy for the work of the Lord. Are we building on rock or sand?

* * *

"Swear not at all. Let your communication be Yea, yea and Nay, nay" (5:34-37).

Various reasons are given. One is the complete helplessness of weak, mortal man to control anything or make any certain determination for the future. But the deepest reason:

"For whatsoever is more than this—a simple affirmative—cometh of evil."

Speech is a very important aspect of godliness. Control of the tongue is essential to pleasing God. We must learn that EVERY word we utter is important and related to our salvation—

"For every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof at the judgment."

What a terrible volume of condemnation we are building up for ourselves with our idle and often malicious chatter!

If we hope for life, every word must be carefully checked and weighed.

* * *

"Resist not evil" (5:39).

This goes very, very deep. Of all the commands this is perhaps the most directly contrary to both the reactions and the wisdom of the flesh.

Why not resist evil? Why not rather fight evil with every possible means available?

First, because it is so commanded. We must obey rather than question. But still we must question to the extent of trying to get the fullest value and purpose of the command.

The present world is built on violence. All governments were established by violence. If we resort to any force, or even threat of force, we are identifying ourselves with the violent world, the "Kingdom of men."

We are making their violence our tool and ally. The threat of naked violence lies behind all the world's "Legal" processes, and gives them power.

We are called out to be separate-harmless sheep in the midst of a world of wolves.

The fact that this command to resist not is directly opposed to the strongest and most vicious motion of the flesh is one big, obvious reason for the command. The whole purpose of our present probation is to overcome the flesh and train the Spirit.

But there is a deeper and more constructive and positive reason. It is given in verse 45—

"That ye may be the children of your Father, for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good."

WHY does God send His rain on the just and on the unjust? Because His present loving purpose is to call men to life, to call sinners to repentance. And to be His children, this must be OUR whole purpose of life. Everything must be subordinated to this, for the present.

There are two ways of life—the way of self-assertion and self-advantage; and the way of manifesting love and goodness toward all with a view to awakening love and goodness.

We cannot be half-and-half. We must make our choice between them. Christ is the perfect example of the way of love. He went through life completely unselfish, completely unresisting, and he has had more influence for good than all other men put together.

The non-resistant, Christlike life is the ONLY pattern of life, if we desire to do eternal good. Truly a time of judgment upon evil will come, and if we are worthy, we shall be used with Christ to carry out God's will at that time, and establish the universal triumph of righteousness, but our present duty is to try to win men to God by the Christlike way of good for evil.

* * *

"If any sue thee at the law, and take thy coat, let him have thy cloke also" (5:40).

Not just resist not evil, but give to the evil more than they demand. Is it folly? Or is it the highest and most beautiful spiritual wisdom, so far above the mind of the flesh that the flesh cannot even comprehend it?

Do we—in deed, word and thought—obey this command to yield to the evil more than they take from us? Or are we still foolishly building on the sand of the worldly thinking?

* * *

"Give to him that asketh of thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away" (5:42).

Some day, perhaps very soon, we must face the man who gave us these commands, and who said he would measure our love for him by them.

We know in our heart whether we are being obedient to them, or whether we are allowing the mind of the flesh to water them down and explain them away, or ignore them altogether.

* * *

"Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; pray for them that persecute you" (5:44).

These are very wonderful, powerful words. Many have been won from evil to the way of life by a Christlike example. Infinitely many more, of course, have not, but they do not count. They are just part of the perishing background of the glorious divine plan.

God is drawing a precious few out of the innumerable multitudes of the ages unto Himself, and the magnet is this free, glorious, unmerited, spiritual love of which we are called to be a part.

* * *

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect" (5:48).

Does He really expect us to be perfect? What He expects—what He DEMANDS—is that we strain every effort in that direction. He requires no more than the very best we can do, but He will accept no less.

The command leaves us absolutely no excuse for relaxing our efforts at any point short of perfection. The great example that is set before us in this verse is GOD HIMSELF, and as those who aspire and claim to be His children, we must always strive to be like Him.

* * *

"Take heed" — be careful— "that ye do not your alms before men: let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth."

Some, in justification of parading their virtues, have tried to see a contradiction between this command and the one to—

"Let your light so shine that men may see your good works and glorify your Father."

But the wise will see no contradiction. The light must shine. We must manifest to men at every moment and in every contact the best example we can of the Christlike life.

But in the matter of doing individual good to others, every effort must be made at privacy and secrecy.

Why? The reason given is, "Otherwise ye have NO REWARD of your Father." Why not, if we are sincerely trying to do good to others, as commanded? Because (verse 2) such as do it openly have their reward already.

All who have studied the human heart—both their own and others—in the light of God's Word, will recognize that any avoidable publicity of good deeds has an element of self-glory which immediately makes it ugly and offensive to God.

* * *

"When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking."

And public prayer especially should be simple, brief and unembellished. Mere repetition, he says, is vain and worldly. We must always remember with deep reverence that we are talking to God in reality and sincerity, and not giving a public performance to influence and impress others.

* * *

"Forgive men their trespasses."

We must forgive-freely and fully, from the heart. This is absolutely essential to a Christlike character. Ill-feeling and resentment and taking offense and unforgiveness and fleshly sourness make divine beauty of character utterly impossible.

And we must forgive EVERYTHING—whether forgiveness is sought or not. It is very self-gratifying to graciously forgive when forgiveness is asked in repentant humility. There's little virtue in forgiving under those conditions. But Christ prayed for forgiveness for those who were in the act of putting him to cruel death, and Stephen did the same.

* * *

"Moreover, when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily, I say unto you, They have their reward." (6:16)

Fasting comes under the same instruction of privacy, and this principle is all-inclusive. Any self-denial or sacrifice for the sake of service to Christ must be secret to have any value in God's sight.

* * *

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, for where your treasure is there will your heart be also" (6:19-23).

This is perhaps the most comprehensive and searching of the commands, as it deals with the whole direction and motive and purpose of life.

"Treasure on earth" is ANYTHING related to the present, passing, mortal life.

The natural way is to accumulate treasure of many different kinds. This is so universally taken for granted as the wise and profitable thing to do that to question it is heresy, and to violate it is considered the height of stupidity.

Christ completely cuts the foundation out from under the whole natural pattern of life.

Verses 21-23 are an explanation of the importance of single-mindedness, as related to where our treasure in life is. The natural desire is to want treasure both in heaven AND on earth—to seek both salvation and present advantage. But Jesus says—

"If thine eye be single, thy body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, or double, thy whole body shall be full of darkness."

Singlemindedness is the only true enlightenment and peace. We must decide whether we want heavenly things or earthly things; we cannot have both—

"A doubleminded man is unstable in all his ways. Let not the man think he shall receive ANYTHING of the Lord" (James 1:7-8).

* * *

The next command is even more specifically to the point—*"No man can serve two masters...ye cannot serve God and mammon"* (6:24).

"Mammon" simply means riches, wealth, present gain, worldly things. We can be of no use or desirability to God unless we are entirely devoted to HIM to the exclusion of everything else.

Everything else — ALL natural things—must be very secondary and very unimportant to us, in order to please God. Therefore:

"Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, what ye shall drink, or what ye shall put on. For all these things the Gentiles—the people of the world — seek" (6:25-32).

God wants us to be very different from the world, with our minds on very different things.

It does not mean we need not work to provide these things. Paul is the best example of what Jesus means here. Paul labored diligently to provide for necessary things, not only for himself but for others also; and he commanded that if a man refused to work, he should not be given food.

But these daily things had no interest or importance to him except as basic necessities that had to be taken care of. And in his utter devotion to the work of God he says he was often hungry, thirsty, ill-clothed and sleepless.

* * *

"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness."

This must be the centre of our interest and desire. This is the pure and single eye, the body full of joy and light.

* * *

"Take therefore no thought for the morrow" (6:34).

We know that reasonable plans must be made, especially where other people's welfare and convenience are concerned. We find Paul planning where he will go and whom he will meet. But he manifests no concern about providing for his own future support or welfare. The basic principles are clear, and the more firmly we lay hold of them, the closer we are to life—

The future is entirely in God's hands. He has guaranteed to take care of His children. Today alone is our concern.

We must, today, use what He has given us in His work, having faith in Him to provide for the future. He guarantees care in the future ONLY if we properly use today.

* * *

"Judge not, that ye be not judged" (7:1).

Probably no command is more often broken than this. Much of our conversation is judgement, criticism or condemnation of others.

This is an evil condition, and displeasing to God. We must truly judge circumstances and conditions where our own conduct is affected, or where fellowship is involved; but unless it is necessary for us to

judge others in order to know what we ourselves should do, we should very carefully refrain from forming any judgment of another, and especially we should not express judgment.

This is a very important first principle of the Truth. The warning is-

"With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged" (7:2).

Therefore, it is always wisdom to judge with mercy and kindness and compassion and fellow-feeling, wherever we must judge at all.

When we indulge in the flesh-satisfying practice of judging and criticising others, we are not only directly disobedient to this command—we are also manifesting that we do not have the mind and spirit of Christ, and therefore are none of his.

* * *

"Give not that which is holy unto dogs" (7:6).

This seems to be a counterbalance to the command not to judge. It parallels another command elsewhere—

"Be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

We are not being harmless, but very harmful and fleshly, when we talk about the faults of others.

But though we must view all with love and compassion and sympathy, still we must use care in exposing the things of God to the unholy and profane.

I believe the reference is more to the inner aspects of the Truth, the intimate aspects of association and fellowship, rather than to preaching the Truth. Paul's injunction to "Lay hands suddenly on no man" would be parallel.

This is a fitting and balancing warning in conjunction with the command to judge with compassion, lest out of misguided love we make the mistake of being too lenient in guarding the purity of the Truth. The Truth and the fellowship of the Spirit are holy and sacred and must be jealously guarded from the worldly and profane.

* * *

"Ask and it SHALL be given you" (7:7).

This is certainly the most glorious of the commands. Let us note well that it is a COMMAND. We must believe it, and we must ask.

We can never hide behind a plea of weakness or inability to obey, for here we are commanded to ask for whatever strength and wisdom we need, and God guarantees it. (Mark 11:24):

"What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, BELIEVE that ye receive them, and ye SHALL have them."

With that guarantee of success, there can be no excuse for failure.

* * *

"All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the Law and the Prophets" (7:12).

The "Golden Rule"—best known and perhaps least obeyed command of all. It has a pleasing, soothing sound, and many pay it zealous lip-service, but how it rarely is practised!

Note that Jesus says this command is "all the Law and the Prophets"—this is the whole spirit of the Old Testament, as well as the New.

* * *

"Enter ye in at the strait (that is, narrow) gate, for few there be that find it" (7:13).

The Golden Rule has summed up the spirit of all the previous commands, of all the Word of God. Now comes the urgent exhortation to FOLLOW this heavenly way of wisdom, joy and life that he has outlined, though the vast majority are going the opposite way.

The information that few will ever find the way of life, though terribly saddening, is a tremendous revelation and emancipation.

It completely frees us from what would otherwise be the almost insurmountable barrier of finding ourselves going in the opposite direction from all the learned and powerful-

"Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes" (Matt. 11:25).

The Scriptures teach us that the majority, and especially the wise and powerful, have ALWAYS been wrong concerning the real facts of life and eternity-blind guides of the blind, leading their pitiful victims only to the grave.

* * *

And thus the final command and urgent warning:

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits." (7:15-20)

Here is a place where we must judge—not in condemnation, but in self-protective discernment—care concerning being misled into association with such as have all the appearances of zealous, harmless, hard-working sheep.

How are we to judge? *"By their fruits."*

Now, many apparent "fruits" we may find the sheep and wolves have in common-

"Have we not prophesied in thy Name?"

"And in thy Name done many wonderful works?"

We must search deeper to discern the wolves. We would perhaps prefer not to face this issue, but to leave all judging to Christ. But here is the last and crowning command—*"Beware of false prophets."*

It must be very urgent to be put as the closing warning. It would not be faithful to ignore it. It must be a real danger.

We must endeavour, whatever the present cost in friendship and association, to faithfully keep that which has been entrusted to us, and which previous generations of faithful brethren have preserved and defended. Where false teaching is tolerated, there can be no true fellowship, though many may themselves not follow the falsehood.

Jesus closes with the two builders; one on Rock, one on Sand. The builders on the Rock are those very few who hear these wonderful teachings of Christ and faithfully OBEY them, even to the end.

—Bro. G.V. Growcott

I Have Put Off My Coat Song of Solomon Chapter 5

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, we have come to the focal point of the gathering where we center our minds on the emblems. We will consider Song of Solomon chapter 5—a song that paints a different mood than the previous ones. The bridegroom is absent; he has withdrawn himself. He had come to his bride and found her sleeping and the door locked.

Verse 2 – *“I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.”* Israel knew that the time of her messiah was come. Their hearts longed for deliverance, but when he appeared, she was asleep.

Verse 3 – *“I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?”* She was afraid to go with him for fear of defilement. Jesus associated with the publicans and sinners and with Samaritans and spoke against their rituals, which they depended upon for righteousness. She had put off her garments; she was asleep and naked when the knock on the door came.

By the time she awakens and recognizes who was there, he is gone. It wasn't until the day of Pentecost that the true bride recognized her failure. *“Men and brethren, What shall we do?”* was their question. The true bride then begins her long search for him. She is found by the watchmen—the spiritual leaders—those in charge of protecting and keeping its people safe. They abuse and mistreat her. We will let the bride tell the story:

Verses 6-7 – *“I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him: I called him, but he gave me no answer. The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.”* Christ warned his true bride that she would be mistreated and persecuted.

Here we have a repeat of what transpired in chapter three. *“I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer.”* The bride is out searching for the bridegroom, yet unable to find him. She understands that he has promised to return and redeem her; yet the bride, those who truly recognize Christ for who he is, will allow nothing but his presence to satisfy her. So she ventures out into the public and is mistreated. The question is—Why would she put herself through this? Why continue to go out in search of him when it only means trouble? Why not just go along with your daily business like everyone else? Her response is verse 8 – *“I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love.”* (lovesick)

What is the most important and urgent message for him to receive from her? Note: that it is not how much she has endured, not how long she has suffered, not her blows and wounds, not the injuries and affronts she had received from the watchmen and keepers of the wall, nor any other things. Only this one thing, which was most on her heart, uppermost in her mind, and under which she must die, if not relieved, *“Tell him that I **am** lovesick.”* So strong is her desire for him that nothing else matters! Brothers and Sisters, is that the way we feel about Christ's absence? Are we really a true bride, lovesick for our absent lord?

Why should the bride endure this mistreatment and problems for her beloved? Verse 9 – *“What is thy beloved more than another beloved?”* Why be different and deprive ourselves of the great things the world has to offer? What is so special about your beloved, about your religion? Are we not asked this question? Why not join the local church and help the community? Why stay separate? *“What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?”* What does Christ mean to you? Are you really willing to sacrifice present advantages to serve him? Is it all worthwhile?

Many are simply motivated by the thought of “what's in it for me?” What will I get out of it? If we must give up a lot—why? The answer is **love**—*“Tell him I am love sick.”* Nothing else is important to the true bride. Paul said, *“Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.”* Moses esteemed *“the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.”* And the example Christ gave us is, *“who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God”* (Heb 12:2). *“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for*

our sins.” This whole book is about love. This gathering is to develop a frame of mind—a disposition and character of love for the bridegroom.

The bride answers that question by giving a detailed description of her beloved—a review of the chief characteristics of God manifested in the flesh (the bridegroom, of whom we hope to be incorporated). The question we must contemplate this morning is, How many, if any, of these characteristics do we presently manifest? Where are we lacking, and what are we doing about it?

The bride, the true ecclesia, then describes her beloved. What is the first characteristic we see? What is uppermost and most important? Verse 10 – “*My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.*” Whiteness shows purity—righteousness which was the foundation of Christ’s character and that which must be the foundation of ours. The word *white* connotes *shining, brightness, brilliance.*

Listen to how the gospel writers attempt to describe Christ when they saw him transfigured the way the Father always viewed him. I feel they are struggling to put into words that which words cannot define—the whiteness of the bridegroom—

Matthew puts it, “*And his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.*” Mark says, “*And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.*” IT BECAME WHITER THAN YOU CAN MAKE ANYTHING WHITE. Luke records, “*The fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering.*”

Verse 10 – “*My beloved is white and ruddy.*” The root word for *ruddy* is *adam*—red. This shows the two-fold aspect of Christ. Although the righteousness aspect of his character is overwhelming, it would be all in vain had he not been one of us with the same nature—the same problems, the same struggles.

Verse 10 continued – “*...the chiefest among ten thousand.*” *Chiefest* is literally *a standard-bearer, ensign or banner*—the one we rally around for victory and conquest. He is the conqueror of sin and death, and if we live under his banner, we will be partakers of the victory he will celebrate.

Verse 11 – “*His head is as the most fine gold...*” Gold is faith and fine gold has been refined or tried in the fire. The beloved—the head of gold, tried and refined—our head. The covering of the ark, the Mercy-seat, was pure gold. Ultimately every member of the body must appear as he is and be united as one to the head. God told Ezekiel, “*Son of man, the house of Israel is to me become dross.*” That was all that was left—that was all God could find. Brothers and Sisters, our trials are designed to refine, purify, and make us more valuable; however, we can become nothing but dross also. The beloved’s head is pure fine gold, in all points tempted or tried like as we are yet without sin; faithful even unto death. The betrothed finds in her beloved a true sympathizer and comforter in her times of affliction, trials and sorrow.

Verse 11 continued – “*His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven.*” We read in Num 6:18 about the responsibilities of the Nazarite, “*And the Nazarite shall shave the head of his separation at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall take the hair of the head of his separation, and put it in the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace offerings.*” The hair of his separation offered as a sacrifice to God—the strength and goodness devoted to God, which allowed him the fellowship with God through the peace offering. We think of Samson; long hair equals strength and black speaks of health. Gray would indicate changing, going downhill, growing old and tired, but black is young and healthy.

Verse 12 – “*His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set.*” The eyes not only receive information and transmit it on to the brain but also reflects what is in the brain. The eyes show fear, anger, love, etc. Dove’s eyes show a mild, harmless, chaste and faithful disposition. The dove was the only bird offered as a sacrifice. It was a clean bird but never eaten. The Jews used it to symbolize harmlessness. In its sacrificial use it set forth the principles of innocence or perfection, less expensive than a lamb but showing the same principles. In chapter 1:15, the bride is praised by the groom

with the words, *“Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves’ eyes.”* When the day arrives for Christ to look into our eyes, he must see a reflection of himself. If our eyes reveal anything else, then we have fallen short of our goal. Let us examine ourselves now while there is still time!

When speaking of eyes, we cannot omit the concept of perception and discernment—his perfect knowledge and understanding of all things, his ability to read the innermost thoughts and know our needs. This can be both comforting and a bit disconcerting. However, knowing this should cause us to examine ourselves, our words, our thoughts, and our deeds. His eyes see all.

His eyes are *“washed with milk, and fitly set.”* We are to *“desire the sincere milk of the word.”* Eyes washed with milk means pure and godly vision, a cleansed and enlightened outlook, viewing all things—understanding all things—by the light of the Gospel of Truth. They are clear, and fitly set, neither farsighted, seeing only things afar off; nor near-sighted, seeing things only at short range. They are perfect eyes and properly focused.

Verse 13 – *“His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh.”* Bro. Growcott commenting on this verse says, *“The flower-bloom of eternal youth and beauty. All things, except Christ, grow old and die. Nothing in this life is lasting, but of him it is said—‘Thou hast the dew of thy youth.’ ‘They shall perish, but thou remainest...thou art the same: thy years shall not fail.’* The greatest of present joys must so quickly pass into sorrow, and loss, and final loneliness. But Christ is ever young and ever new. It is hard to really enjoy anything we know must at last and before long pass away. We have all experienced intense pleasures which in their very enjoyment have been sadness from knowing that in a short time they would be over and would never return. On only a slightly larger scale, this is life itself. But there is more to *‘cheek’* than this. *‘Cheek’* or *‘cheeks’* occurs 11 times in Scripture, other than in this Song. In all but two (and even one of these is related) there is a reference to submission, to smiting and affliction—*‘They smote the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek’* (Mic. 5:1). *‘If any man smite thee on one cheek, turn to him the other also’* (Mt. 5:39). *Cheek*, therefore, inescapably turns our minds to patient submission to abuse and loss and suffering for righteousness’ sake. It is this that gave Christ all his value and his beauty, and his present never-ending bloom of youth.”

Verse 13 continued – *“His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh.”* We use the term *“lily white”* and think of purity, but this does not seem to be a scriptural idea. Bible lilies do not appear to have been white. The Bible lilies’ colors ranged from pink to purple, and the scriptural significance was that God bestowed its beauty and inherent glory, as contrasted with human, superficial beauty and glory. We read in Mat 6:28: *“And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?”*

When we compare the work of man to that of God we find this difference. The closer we scrutinize the work of man the more defects we will find, while just the opposite is true when we examine those of God. When we view a picture from across the room we can enjoy its beauty, but looking at it up close it appears to be just blotches of paint. If we were to get closer and examine it under a microscope we would see bubbles and holes and roughness; something very unattractive. If, on the other hand, we were to examine a field of lilies up close, we would find each flower in and of itself very beautiful. If we placed one of the flowers under the microscope, instead of their beauty diminishing, new beauties and still more delicate discoveries that have escaped the naked eye are found.

The same is true when we compare the words and teachings that were spoken by Christ contrasted to that of man. When we examine man’s works closely we find spots and blemishes in the most admired of men’s works. But the more Christ’s words are searched, the more minutely they are studied, the more their perfection appears. New beauties are brought into light every day; and the discoveries of science, the

researches of the learned, and even the labors of the unbelieving infidels, all alike conspire to illustrate the wonderful harmony of all the parts, and the Divine beauty of the whole.

How better could you describe his lips than *“lips like lilies”*? We have on record one of the strangest reasons that officers have ever given for failing to arrest their suspect. *“Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him? The officers answered, Never man spake like this man.” “And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?” “...the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”* How sweet were those lips to the sick, the lame, the blind, and weary. To them it would be like sweet-dropping myrrh, a delightful perfume; life giving, bringing health, happiness and redemption. To them and to us. So we should be able to say, *“His lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh.”*

Verse 14 – *“His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl...”* Rings are a symbol of sonship, royalty and authority. Nearly every reference to rings in Scripture, from Pharaoh's ring given to Joseph, to the father's ring given to the Prodigal Son, carries this meaning. An inseparable part of the beauty of Christ is his relationship to God and his universal majesty and authority based on his faithfulness—a ring of gold: *“This is My beloved Son.” “All power is given to me in heaven and in earth.”*

Verse 14 continued – *“...his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.”* This word *“belly,”* in most all cases is translated *“bowels.”* It means internal organs. A Hebrew lexicon sums it up as *“inward parts,”* and that is what is meant. Psa. 51 – *“Thou desirest Truth in the inward parts.”* The burnt offering had to be without spot and blemish, but when handed over to the priest the priest would skin it, flay it and inspect all the inward parts for blemish, the inside as well as the outside. The bridegroom's inner organs are described as *“bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.”* The word for *“bright”* literally means *“elaborately worked so as to shine.”* Heb. 10:5 contains the thought, *“A body hast Thou prepared me.”* The point is in the preparing—the inward working, developing, perfecting. Anything in this life that contributes to this process is good and a blessing from God. That is why *“sorrow is better than laughter”* (Ecc. 7). But anything that detracts, no matter how enjoyable it may be for the moment is a curse.

“Finely wrought ivory overlaid with sapphires.” Ivory was always a symbol of splendor—here, of course, of the true inward splendor of a perfect character—absolutely beautiful *“inward parts.”*

Verse 15 – *“His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold...”* Here are represented strength, beauty and stability, resting upon a foundation of tried faith—standing in strength. David in despair cried out, *“If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?”* The beloved stands and offers us the opportunity to stand with him.

Verse 15 continued – *“...his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.”* The bride now refers to the entire appearance of her beloved. As Lebanon exceeds all other mountains in the land for magnitude and for beauty so she looks at her beloved. He will be the head of that great mountain that will fill the whole earth.

Verse 16 – *“His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely.”* This is not the common word for mouth, but rather, as the margin shows, *“palate.”* The idea involved is taste, rather than speech. Speech was covered in the reference to the lips. Here the reference is to the discernment and choice of that which is wholesome and good, and the rejection of everything that is in the slightest way fleshly or evil or impure. Job asks, *“Doth not the ear try words? and the mouth taste his meat?”*

The lesson is that taste, appeal, desire, is not an unchanging force to be catered to, but a delicate capacity to be trained, developed and shaped to spiritual ends. The first time we prepare a talk or teach a class or talk to an outsider about the Truth may not fit our taste buds but we can develop. A child's untrained taste rejects the wide variety of taste and desires only sweets. The adult learns that bitterness mixed with the sweetness is a much richer and more satisfying experience. *“How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!”*

She concludes her description of her beloved: *“Yea, he is altogether lovely.”*

Bro. Growcott says: "The beauty of Christ is his perfection. Nothing out of harmony; nothing to detract; no danger of later discovered flaws to disappoint and disillusion. Nothing to fear from the cruel, unsparring microscope of intimate familiarity. The more minutely we examine him, the more beautiful he is revealed to be. This is the pattern God has set before us—the ideal to which He would have us ceaselessly strive—the ultimate to which He will finally elevate the faithful."

"This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend."

"Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."

Bro. Jim Somerville

Trouble

There is nothing like trouble for weakening all carnal affinities, and leading the mind to seek God, and to rest on His Word, and to build on His promises.—Nothing like trouble for helping us to see the emptiness of this life at its best and the enduring reality and glory of that which is to come.

Bro. Robert Roberts.—1885 Second Letter to the Elect of God in Trouble

Time Tries All Things

Time tries all things, and the writings of Dr. Thomas, or, at any rate, the earlier writings, have now been subjected to the test of fifty years' [150 yrs now] developments. They have not been proved incorrect, very much the reverse. His anticipations, engendered by the study of the prophetic writings, have been singularly well realized.

The Christadelphian, 1901

Stewardship

"It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: hut the honor of kings is to search out a matter"—Prov. 25:2

IT is the glory of God to conceal the riches and the greatness of His mercies, and His glorious plan of the ages, but it is the honor of those called to be kings and priests in His Kingdom to search out those treasures that are hidden in His Word. What an exciting and rewarding thing it is to search out and discover these treasures!

Unlike the world in its endless quest, we are never disappointed; never is our search fruitless or unprofitable. The gems of the Truth are real, unperishable, satisfying. We discover, like David, that the Word of God is sweeter than honey and more to be desired than fine gold.

Yes, how good it is to search and to find! *But—we are not always anxious to search. Searching requires real effort on our part, and it is far easier—far more natural—to be concerned with temporal things.* Our will and our affairs easily take precedence over the Master's will and affairs. Christ said—

"Seek ye FIRST the Kingdom of God."

Let us take particular notice of the word "first." We are so apt to relegate the things of the Kingdom to "last" rather than "first," because the natural man is ever present to find some important reason why his affairs should come first, and God's work, **last**.

Our earnest wish and desire may be to enter the Kingdom— but wishing and desiring will avail little unless accompanied by intense and conscious and consistent effort and applications.

We MUST give ourselves WHOLLY to the Truth's service if we hope to succeed. Paul's instruction to Timothy was—

*"Meditate upon these things, give thyself **wholly** to them."*

We have been called to be stewards — stewards in the Household of God. We all know that we will be called upon at the judgment to give an account of our stewardship.

Have we used the goods entrusted to our care for GOD'S use and pleasure? Or have we fine homes, cars, and things the world seeks fleshly pleasure in—pleasure boats, hi-fis, television, [computers] etc.— things that should not even be mentioned among the children of God — things that consume our time and resources and energy, and alienate us from the wholesome transforming effect the Scriptures COULD be having upon our characters?

It's either one or the other. We cannot be both. And half-and-half is worse than nothing at all. Either we are seeking to please the flesh, or we are striving as good stewards to please the Father. We are given many examples of good and bad stewardship in the Bible, and we are given ample instruction as to what is required of a good steward. Is all this loving instruction in vain?

Christ loved his brethren and gave his life for them. As faithful stewards our first concern should be for these brethren for whom Christ died, how we can strengthen and feed the flock of God. Our service in God's House should be ministering to their spiritual need as well as their physical.

Are we esteeming our brother better than ourselves if we allow temporal considerations to come before our brother's welfare?

Where a man's treasure is, there is his heart also. Are our hearts in the right place?

We must give up all those things that pull us away from the works of a good steward, that tends to entice the weak flesh of our natural man to partake of worldly pastimes, so prevalent in this pleasure-seeking, godless world. What saith the Scriptures?—

"All that is not of the Father is of the world."

"Whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

"What concord hath Christ with Belial?"

"He that is not with me is against me."

We have to be very careful not to encourage friendships with the world unless they show signs of interest in the Word of God and are willing to study and share the joy of reading and meditation with us.

How long will it take us to learn that the price of faithful stewardship is ALL?—

"Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not ALL . . . cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33).

Jesus' disciples forsook all and followed him. The man who found the pearl sold ALL that he possessed to buy it. Are we giving our all, or are we in the class of Ananias and Sapphira, who foolishly held back part of the price? Do we give up only those things which do not interfere too much with our comfortable circumstances?

Are we faithful stewards? Let us turn to the Scriptures where there is a ready answer for every need. Are you a husband? Love your wife as Christ loved the Ecclesia, give her honor as the weaker vessel, be compassionate and courteous, rendering blessing for blessing.

Are you a wife? The Scriptures speak expressly to you. Reverence your husband, be compassionate and courteous, adorning yourself with a meek and quiet spirit, rather than the outward adorning of fine apparel, being always in subjection to your husband.

Are you an elder brother in the Truth? Are you sober, grave, faithful, temperate, charitable, patient?

Are you an elder sister? Do you behave as becometh holiness, are you careful not to be a slanderer—a gossip? (How natural and easy it is to speak carelessly and unprofitably of others!) Are you teachers of good things, discreet, chaste, keepers of the home, good, obedient to your husbands?

Are you a young brother or sister in the Truth? Are you sober-minded, uncorrupt, grave, sincere, sound of speech?

Such a long list of virtues for each of us to cultivate! How much attention are we giving to them?

Life as a good steward is a serious and all-consuming thing. It cannot be treated lightly. God Himself has laid down the rules and we must conform our lives to them, if we hope for acceptance at the end.

—Bro. John F. Packer

Thoughts Gleaned By The Way

Hid From the Wise

"It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given"~Matt. 13:11

MODERN science is comparable to a little boy searching the seashore for pretty pebbles and shells, giving not a thought to the great mysteries and beauty contained in the vast ocean which splashes at his feet. Just so; scientists spend their lives and billions of dollars in an effort to discover a few of the wonders of nature, and gratifying the vanity of man to search out the things unknown to the common man, giving no thought to a far greater mystery, and one which vitally concerns man's eternal welfare—

"The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven."

Science has discovered the mystery of the atom, but has rejected the "mystery of godliness."

They have burrowed into the earth; they have probed the depths of the seven seas, and now seek to explore the entire universe in search of "scientific knowledge," but give scant attention to Him Who created all these things; and the God in Whose hand their breath is, and Whose are all their ways, have they not glorified. In discovering the mysteries of nature, science has brought glory and fame to many men and has created many things which have given to mankind the things which are greatly desired by the common run of humanity.

In relation to purely natural things, the present might be called the age of better things—better food, better houses, better clothing, better **means** of transportation, better medical care, and a multitude of other things which are considered better by the multitude.

But "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" reveal the "better things" which concern eternal salvation; mysteries which God has—

"Hid from the wise **and** prudent, and hast revealed unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight" (Matt. 11:25-26).

It seemed good in the purpose of God that all the glory of eternal salvation should go to Him Who designed it and alone could bring it to pass.

Human glory leads only to human pride, arrogance, exaltation of the flesh, despising the things that pertain to God and His Word; and then, the grave. *Science and worldly wisdom and philosophy have not*

contributed one iota to the spiritual welfare of man. Rather, they have detracted from man's spiritual development while exalting the material.

Holy men of God, who have contributed to spiritual advancement, have been men of low estate. Therefore God chose *"the poor of this world, rich in faith"* to be heirs of the **kingdom**. He called—

"Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble."

But he has called those who are despised by the world; those who are considered foolish, weak and debased, *"That no flesh should glory in His presence."* —*Bro. Oscar Beauchamp 1965*

Meditations – Deity's Ways No. 3

"Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers" (2 Cor. 6:14). The context of the passage makes clear Paul's meaning. 'Unrighteousness,' 'darkness,' 'Belial,' 'infidel,' 'idols,' are terms which include all outside the truth. In the aggregate such constitute the world. Within its boundaries is not only the 'open and notorious evil liver,' but also the well-meaning and pious alien. Everyone in fact who knows not God's purpose, and is not working with Him for its development. Paul's command embodies a principle—the principle of separation. To company with the world is unavoidable, but to yoke or join ourselves to it is unscriptural. "Love not the world"—"Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

Marriage is a yoke that cannot be removed. It is for life. Therefore, of all yokings with the world, marriage with the alien is the most disastrous. Such a union entails disagreement, diversity of aims and principles, and an absence of sympathy, companionship, and co-operation, except in relation to the comparatively unimportant affairs of the present life. He who joins himself to an alien burdens himself with a double share of sinful flesh. The man of God is commanded to grow in the truth. Can he best accomplish this by uniting himself to one who cares not to converse upon the truth, and who deems its calls distasteful? He is also commanded to work for the truth. Can he best do this by joining himself to one who murmurs, frowns, and unkindly criticises every effort made in this direction? He who allies himself with an unbeliever heavily weights himself in the race for eternal life, and shuts himself off from much godly comfort and help which he sorely needs.

How does the matter stand with one who, on obeying the truth, has already an unbelieving partner? Paul says that such an one is not to separate (1 Cor. 7:13). The command in reference to yoking in 2 Cor. 6:14 applies to a voluntary act. One allied before becoming acquainted with the truth, and not through a wanton disregard of God's will, would doubtless receive from Him compensating help and comfort. It is sometimes contended that the union of a believer with an unbeliever is justifiable when entered into with the object of influencing for good. Apostolic teaching, however, emphatically forbids doing evil that good may come (Rom. 3:8). Besides, experience says that this good rarely, if ever, comes. Study the history (penned for our learning) of those who have been unequally yoked, and note how the flesh, and not the Spirit, has preponderantly prevailed:— Gen. 6:2–6; 26:34–35; Jud. 3:6–7; Ezra 9:2–14; Neh. 13:26–27; 2 Chron. 21:6. Those who are in doubt upon this question, and wish to take heed according to the Word, should also consult Deut. 7:3–4; Jos. 23:11–12; Exod. 24:16.

Another form of unequal yoking is business partnership with the alien. No brother, keenly alive to his separate condition and holy calling, would venture an alliance with one who has not obeyed the truth. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" Between one in the truth, and one out of it, there can be no agreement, be the latter as upright as he may. The motives and aims of the alien, and of those who are

truly following Christ are totally dissimilar. With the former, the principles which actuate are solely of the flesh, and the object striven for is worldly prosperity. With the Saint, the object is the providing of things honestly in the sight of God and man, and a subservience in everything to the commandment. To join (as in business partnership) with the alien is certainly a strange and dangerous way of redeeming the time, of working out our salvation in fear and trembling, of making our calling and election sure! No, a wise man will steer clear as much as possible of the world. As a good soldier, he will disentangle himself from the affairs of this life (2 Tim. 2:4). To voluntarily share the responsibilities of an alien's conduct, is neither expedient nor wise. Some see no harm in such alliances, but how different is the ring of their sentiments from that of apostolic teaching. Let us recall it. "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth," "Be holy," "Be perfect," "Keep thyself pure," "resist not evil," "having food and raiment, let us therewith be content," "hating the garments even spotted by the flesh." "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God," "let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch, and be sober." "Be ye as men that wait for their lord." This standard is high. Let us not lower it because we think we are unable to attain to it. If we try to obey, God will help. To the upright, the merciful and forgiving.

Paul's statement in 2 Cor. 6:14, has been rendered thus: "Be not *diversely* yoked with unbelievers." It is probable that Paul had in mind the Mosaic prohibition in Deut. 22:10—"Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together." The apostle, in a similar way, drew upon another Levitical enactment—"thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn." To this he added the suggestive comment, "Is it for the oxen that God careth, or saith He it altogether for our sakes? Yea, for our sakes it was written." What deeply-laid lessons are contained in the word! Well might the Psalmist pray—"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law." "In Thy light shall we see light."

Addressing Ezekiel, God said:—"Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: *for they are a rebellious house* " (12:2). The concluding words of this sentence reveal the cause of Israel's afflictions. Israel's condition is now the condition of the whole of Christendom—spiritually deaf and blind. And rebellion is the root of it. Christendom rebels against the Words of God, and contemns the counsel of the Most High (Psa. 107:11). Unscriptural behaviour leads from the way of understanding. Christ alluded frequently to this spiritual cause and effect. Listen—"If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, *and ye shall know the truth* , and the truth shall make you free." Again, "If any man will do his (God's) will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." Let faithful brethren take care lest they infringe and fall. Let the unfaithful reflect and reform. What deplorable results has unchristlike conduct produced! May we not confidently say, on the basis of the foregoing testimony, that our recent trouble (resulting in some cases in partial or complete repudiation of the truth) has been due to this?

"With lies ye have made the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life" (13:22.) How applicable is this to the prophets of to-day! Who, among the faithful, is not saddened by the lies sent forth in the name of the Lord? And how doubly saddening is their effect! Pious, well-meaning, self-sacrificing dupes perishing from lack of truth! The Deity's accusation goes farther. The prophets, in addition to lie-telling, strengthened the hands of the wicked by promising life. Is not this repeated in modern theology? God has laid down the conditions of salvation—a definite belief, and an observance of specific commands. False teachers introduce another way, which is lax, compromising, and flesh-pandering. Let not the wise be partakers in this sin. "They that forsake the law, praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them."

God accused the spiritual teachers of Ezekiel's day with having prophesied "out of their own hearts," and with having followed their "own spirit," "having seen nothing." In this we have another feature which

marks the similarity of his and our times. The religious world is insane with the carnal predictions of its instructors. They make void the gracious promises of God, and bar their deluded followers from the way of life. The earth to be destroyed, Heaven to be the abode of the righteous, and eternal torment the destiny of the wicked—these and kindred visions are emanations of their own spirit, and are in direct opposition to the utterances of the Spirit of God, which they claim to possess. In this matter the Bible—the book of the Spirit—is our witness. Unfortunate, indeed, is the man who loses confidence in this unerring test.

In Ezekiel's day the cry was heard—"The Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord seeth not" (9:9). How this sound dings in our ears to-day! Some will say we are mistaken, and point, perhaps, to the universal weekly confession, "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth." But actions speak louder than words. The habitual conduct of those who make this confession betrays their scepticism. Believe in God, and worship Mammon? Believe in God, and delight in the world's amusements? Believe in God, and make no effort to curb the sinful impulses of pride, vanity, and temper? Believe in God, and embrace no opportunity to converse upon His Word? Impossible! Those who are guilty in these matters are like Israel of old—they draw nigh with their mouth, and honour with their lips, whilst their hearts are far away. Let us not be seduced by the unbelief of the age. It is productive of every evil. Because of it the land, as in the prophet's time, is filled with iniquity and perverseness. "Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark, and they say, 'Who seeth us? and, who knoweth us?'"

Ezekiel lived on the eve of dire calamity and trouble. To announce this was a part of the prophet's mission. How the announcement was received is shown in the scoffing proverbs of the time: "The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth." "The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are afar off." How discouraging must this have been to Ezekiel! But how useful and comforting is his experience to us! Trouble and calamity, far exceeding that to which the prophet stood related, is immediately ahead. This is no speculation; God has most positively revealed it. His servants to-day know it, and are earnestly proclaiming it. But how few, very few, receive their testimony! The disposition of Ezekiel's time everywhere prevails. The false cry of "peace" is to be heard—"sudden destruction" will speedily follow. Because of these things the prophet's experience strikes home. "Take, my brethren, the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience." Let us follow Ezekiel. Let us ignore the opinion of the multitude, and with confidence wait the fulfilment of the word that God has spoken. At any moment may the declarations again be realised: "The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision. There shall none of my words be prolonged any more, but the word which I have spoken shall be done."

The necessity for prayer must be seen before it can be engaged in with the confidence which the Scriptures enjoin. Prayer is not a matter to be resorted to as a kind of last chance—with the hope that it will succeed when other means have failed. The Spirit's instructions respecting prayers are explicit and repeated. Its importance may be gathered from the number of allusions to it in Paul's epistles. In his two letters to the Thessalonians alone there are no less than fourteen references to prayer and thanksgiving! Paul not only commanded them to pray, but he persuaded them, and set the example. "Pray without ceasing," said he. "In everything giving thanks." For this, he added was the will of God concerning them. Twice he gave utterance to the request, "Brethren, pray for us." And as regards his attitude to them, he feelingly said, "Night and day," "without ceasing," "we give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers." How this language evinces the worth of prayer! Such teaching should reach the dullest. Remember that Paul was a teacher "in faith and verity."

Gibbon writes: "The doctrine of Christ's reign upon the earth was at first treated as a divine allegory, was considered by degrees as a doubtful and useless opinion, and was at length rejected as the absurd

invention of heresy and fanaticism.” How pregnant is this extract with instruction! It exhibits the unchanging character of human nature in relation to divine revelation. Observe the stealthy encroachments of error. The truth is first reduced to allegory, then considered doubtful and useless, and finally cast aside as an “absurd invention.” Let us be on the alert against this insidious and ever-prevailing tendency of the flesh! Bible history has shared the same fate as Bible doctrine. In apostolic days, all Bible record was received as history, the early fathers changed it into allegory, and the time has come when men hesitate not to pronounce it fiction. Brethren, take heed! The Bible is true! That it is partly true, and partly false, is the pernicious teaching of the Scribes and Pharisees of the nineteenth century. If Christ were now among us, we may be quite sure that he would say as he said in the past—Beware of their leaven!

God’s law is very thorough. No surface obedience will meet its demands. It addresses itself to the root of all motive. Unless the heart is reached, and rightly influenced, there can be no acceptable service. The truth must be affectionately believed—no mere intellectual assent will suffice. When believed, there must follow a similar joyous heart-rendered obedience—Hypocrisy is a certain prelude to shameful condemnation. Two illustrations will evidence the piercing character of divine law. “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” Christ’s comment upon this is, “Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” Again, “Forgive men their trespasses.” In reference to this Christ said, “If ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother,” the anger of God abideth upon you. And so with the whole round of our obligations. Pray let us examine ourselves. “If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.” “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” It can, however, be reformed, provided its owner be willing to submit to the self-abnegating process which the word inculcates. To act as though God were like ourselves—able only to judge by appearances—is fatal. The day that is coming will reveal to such as think thus, appalling things! Our Lord is coming, “who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will manifest the counsels of the hearts, and then shall every man have praise of God.”

—*Bro. A.T.Jannaway*—1887

Analecta Apocalypticae (39)

OPENING OF THE FIRST THREE SEALS

The first seal being opened, John, responding to the summons "Come and see", beholds a white horse with a stephaned rider holding a bow, going forth on a conquering mission. Remembering that it was declared that the time was "at hand" for the beginning of the future things shown to John, what event or phase of things is there in the time immediately after the communication of the Apocalypse to answer to this symbol? We will best obtain an answer by asking what we are to understand by the horse. It is common to employ animals to represent political powers; e.g., the British lion. What power represented itself by the horse? Strictly speaking, there was but one State in the days of John, and that was the Roman State (leaving the barbarous parts of the earth out of the account). If the horse is a symbol of the Roman State, we ought to have no difficulty in discovering in the Roman State in the days of John a condition of things answering to the arrowless and victorious Bowman astride the white horse. As a matter of fact, the horse was one of the symbols of the Roman power. This is conclusively shown by Mr. Elliott, who cites extant coins and other evidences to show the use of the horse as the symbol of Roman power. The horse being white would indicate a work of righteousness and peace, to which the body politic of Rome was being subjected by the party represented by the rider with the stephan, having a bow but no arrow. What party could this be? The apostolic enterprise at once suggests the answer. This enterprise was a conquering enterprise of a certain sort, having the Roman Empire as the arena of its operation. It

was an enterprise achieved without bloodshed, so far as the aggressions of the apostolic party were concerned. As Paul said, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds" (2 Cor. 10:4). Again he said, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities and powers (that is, the ruling authorities—see Titus 3:1), against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12). The bow is a symbol of speech: the victory was to be won by the use of the tongue, but without arrows as weapons of offence. This was the nature of the war carried on by the Spirit of God through the body of Christ in the days of John. It was a war of ideas,—of truth against error, of righteousness against wickedness, therefore fitly represented by an archer without arrows, and an archer wearing the stephan, the token of victory; for the apostolic testimony did in the end vanquish Paganism in the Roman state. True it is, that the faith was soon corrupted and overborne. Still, a great change was accomplished in the Roman Empire by the apostolic enterprise. Paganism was driven from the throne, and the world was brought into a nominal subjection to Christ and the apostles, which was a great gain and a preparation for the more effective form of their work which is yet to come.

If it be asked why the work of the apostles should appear to be restricted in the symbol to Rome, the answer is found in the fact that their mission was essentially a mission to the Roman habitable which comprised the entire civilized world at that time. The Roman empire, as shown in the map, supplies the geography of their work. Their "sound went out into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world" (Rom. 10:18). It was proclaimed to every creature under heaven, in the apostolic sense of the words (Col. 1:6, 23). The apostolic work continued after the death of the apostles by means of the ecclesias founded by them, conducted as they were by spiritually-endowed leaders. While it was in progress throughout the world, peace and liberty prevailed to a great extent during the first seal period (about eighty years) represented by the reigns of Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, and of the Antonines, called the family of the Antonines in the same way as we talk of the family of the Georges. Historians speak of this as the happiest period in the history of mankind on account of the absence of war and the prevalence of general prosperity—a period fitly represented by the white horse ridden by the predestined victor of the arrowless bow.

When the Antonines ceased to reign, a great change came over the Roman world, as indicated in the symbolism of

THE SECOND SEAL.

Here the horse is red (signifying bloodshed), and the rider is not an arrowless Bowman, but a man with a machaira in his hand. This ought to be translated a dagger: the implement most commonly used in assassination, and most appropriate to represent a time when assassination became the order of the day. Marcus Aurelius, the second of the Antonines, was succeeded by his son, Commodus, a mere youth, who differed from his predecessors in being a dissolute tyrant, who shamed public decency, and who squandered the resources of the State in debauchery and profligacy. The senate grew secretly impatient of his ways, but dared not for a time show their feelings. At length, one of its members waylaid Commodus in a passage as he was leaving the theatre, and presenting him threateningly with a machaira—the great sword or dagger of the second seal—said, "The senate sends you this", and attempted to kill him. The attempt failed and the emperor escaped. Direful consequences followed. Fired with feelings of revenge against the senate, whose hostility he had suspected, he attempted to effect their destruction by wholesale assassination. Terror reigned for a time, and the best blood of Rome flowed in torrents. At length Commodus himself fell a victim to the flood of violence he had let loose. Then there was more red-horse work. Commodus, falling before the assassin's stroke, left no successor. The senate appointed one in the person of Pertinax, who after two months endeavour to reign wisely, was assassinated by the discontented soldiery, whose allowance he abridged. The imperial purple, after being sold to the highest bidder by the soldiery, then became a bone of contention between the three leading generals of the army. A time of intestine war and confusion ensued, and paved the way for the experiences of

THE THIRD SEAL.

In this the horse was black, and its rider a man holding a pair of balances. When bread is eaten by weight, it is a sign of scarcity and famine. The blackness of the horse shows distress, and the words addressed to the balance-holder indicate its source. John heard a voice proclaiming, "A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine". These are high prices for wheat and barley, when worked out according to modern standards, and point to scarcity. But how came the high prices and the scarcity? Not from bad harvests but from heavy taxation on the part of the government, the official balance-holder of the Roman horse. This heavy taxation was the result of the reckless extravagance of the reigns of Caracalla and Elagabalus—dissolute monsters—who for ten years, first one and then the other, lavished away the treasures of the people and exhausted the resources of the empire in their prodigal favours to the army among whom they lived, and on whose support they depended. Taxation was brought to such a pitch that vast tracts of country went out of cultivation—the tiller of the soil feeling no encouragement to raise crops merely to hand over to the revenue officers. The result of this was public distress on a large scale. It became common for parents to expose their children to destruction rather than burden themselves with the impossible task of providing for them. An idea of the extent of the taxation, which crushed alike every part of the empire, may be gathered from the fact that when a change in the government was brought about by the exasperated people, taxes were instantly reduced to one thirtieth part of what they were during the reigns of Caracalla and Elagabalus.

Alexander Severus came to the throne after the assassination of Elagabalus, and his reign illustrated the admonition of the voice that John heard: "See thou hurt not (or act not unjustly by) the oil and the wine". As much as to say, that although wheat should be at famine prices owing to the fiscal extortions of the first part of the seal, there would be an amelioration of the burden towards the second part. This is what happened. Severus practised rigid economy in every branch of the administration: he relieved the provinces from the oppressive taxes invented in the former reigns, and reduced the price of provisions and the interest on money. He sought to promote learning and the love of justice in contrast to the profligacy of his predecessors, and acted on the conviction that the best way to secure the love and loyalty of his subjects was to promote their well being. All his efforts, however, to change the colour of the horse were finally unavailing. The evils resulting from the previous reigns were too deeply planted to be removed in a short time, and though for a few years there was considerable relief, the army, becoming discontented with the economy of Severus, proved a final obstacle to his reforms, and by their hostility paved the way for the dreadful experiences of the fourth seal, which we must defer till the next article.

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

Hints For Bible Markers

It may be thought by some this is a repeat of old material. How many who may think this have their bible marked or commands memorized? Marking these verses is an important step in keeping God's way firmly implanted in our hearts. How many find the command to give yourself to His service without reserve a difficult command and therefore try to serve two masters? How many times while walking do we feel the sun or rain on our face and thank Yahweh for the day he has made? If a man be self-serving, no doubt, thoughts of God rarely, if at all, come to mind. We can not manifest that perfect righteousness which was seen in Christ. We can however, present our "bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God." This is our reasonable service. Casting your cares upon God, thanking Him for our many blessings, including being called to His service is a thing that a man of God would choose to do. David speaks of "seven times in a day" indulging in the luxury of prayer. Daniel prayed three times in a day. We must let the peace of God rule in our hearts.

The Commandments of Christ

As collected and organized by bro. Roberts

I. CONCERNING GOD

Have faith in God; cast your care upon Him: He knows your need and will provide.

And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. (Mark 11:22)

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? (Matthew 6:25)

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. (Philippians 4:6)

Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. (1 Peter 5:7)

Give yourselves to His service without reserve, recognizing that you cannot serve God and Mammon.

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. (Matthew 6:24)

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. (Romans 12:1)

In everything give thanks to Him: for this is His will and pleasure concerning you.

Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; (Ephesians 5:20)

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. (Colossians 3:15)

And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. (Colossians 3:17)

In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. (Hebrews 13:15)

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