

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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ECCLESIAL NEWS.....	Denver, Conway, Canton, Detroit	
EXHORTATION	I Did As I Was Commanded	283
SIGNS	Missile Defense Shield.....	152
THOUGHTS:	The Temple	290
.....	Encouraging Words No.1	292
.....	Forbearing One Another In Love	336
.....	Thoughts Gleaned By The Way.....	336
.....	Meditations – Diety's Ways No. 4	336
.....	Separation	336
Analecta Apocalypcticae (41).....	The Fifth and Sixth Seals.....	342
BIBLE MARKING	The Commandments of Christ	352

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

Denver, Colorado; Sunday School –10AM; Memorial Meeting-11 AM Bro. Dave Sargent, 4555 Red Forest Rd., Monument, CO 80132 (719) 487-1440.

We acknowledge it has been quite some time since we've reported news from our ecclesia, and now that we do, we have great news to share! Sister Gerry Osborne (bro. Lynn's mother) asked to join us in fellowship, and we are very happy to now walk alongside sis. Gerry as a member of our ecclesia. We are sure our walk towards the Kingdom will be mutually beneficial.

This news helps us here especially as we are saddened by the loss of bro. John Osborne (bro. Lynn's father) who fell asleep in the Lord in August. Both bro. John and sis. Gerry have labored many years in the service of the Truth.

Over the last couple years, we've had the pleasure of welcoming the following brethren and sisters around the table of our Lord for which we were encouraged and strengthened in the service of the Truth; Bro. Steve & sis. Sharon Osborne; bro. Jeremy Osborne; sis. Joanne Osborne; sis. Jessie Prentice; bro. Mark & sis. Carol, Dylla; bro. Thomas Dylla; sis. Carolyn Dylla; bro. Dave Humphreys; sis. Carolyn McLaren; bro. Mike & sis. Leslie Morrell; sis. Jaymie Phillips; sis. Amy Hurst; bro. Noah & sis. Julie Brown; sis. Kay Stinchcomb; bro. Philip & sis. Cheryl Hughes; sis. Esther Hughes; bro. Fred & sis. Ruth Higham; We are additionally thankful to the brethren who ministered to us through the word of exhortation.

And although the timing didn't lend itself to share a Sunday together, we are also thankful to be visited by bro. Len & sis. Pam Naglieri; bro. Curtis & sis. Cindy Hurst; and bro. Harry Phillips; With these brethren and sisters, we were blessed to spend time together and visit around the daily readings.

It's interesting to see the political and economic situations develop around the world and in our own country. To some, their heart fails them for fear. Others wonder how things could fall apart so quickly....and the rush to "green up" the world to stop this global warming – how shortsighted is man's vision! What do these events mean to us? Can we not see the hand of Yahweh preparing the nations for the return of His Son? Can't we just feel how near we are to the "fullness of time" when God will bring about His promised purpose for this earth? What a privileged time we live in to be able to see these things develop in front of us. May these events strengthen the faith of each of our brethren and sisters as we prayerfully look forward to the day when all the knees in the world will bow and acknowledge the greatness of our Father in Heaven.

Our Sunday memorial meetings take place within the various homes as we rotate in turn. About 90 miles separate our homes so we share in the travel. We love to have visits from our brethren and sisters whenever the opportunity arises, so please include us on your travel plans.

With love from your brethren and sisters in Colorado,
Bro. Dave Sargent

Berean 2009—318

CONWAY, AR - 2904 Dickens Circle, Conway, AR 72034. (501) 329-5013, cell 764-6217, piano.techno1@gmail.com. Skype: bob.widding. Readings, Exhortation, Memorial Service, Eureka class Sunday 8:15 a.m.

Dear brethren and sisters,

Loving greetings in Yahshua Anointed.

We were pleased to have company in July. Brother Fred and sister Ruthie Higham, and sister Kay Stinchcomb, TJ and Tiff visited for a couple of days on their way home from the Hye Gathering. Since then, Mary and I have been meeting with the Detroit Berean Christadelphian Ecclesia via Skype, and it has been a blessing in every way.

Lord willing, we look forward to the Berean Gathering in Tennessee in October.

Brethren and sisters who will be traveling through the greater Little Rock area are invited to visit. Please call first, if possible.

Fraternally,
bro. Bob Widding

CANTON, Ohio – Sunday School, Sunday 10:00 AM; Breaking of Bread, Sunday 11:00 AM; Bible Class Tuesday 6:00 PM; at Mayfield Senior Center, bro. Beryl Snyder, 4095 Prosway S. W. , Massillon, Ohio, 44646

Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Philemon 1:3)

The year is again drawing to a close and the time of our probation still continues. We have been granted a little more time to perfect our characters. Are we able to look back on the year and say we used the time to improve our walk in Christ? Are we better prepared for that day when we shall stand before Jesus, because our Heavenly Father has given us a little more time?

Since our last account we have had the enjoyable association of bro. Chip & sis. Joyce Edwards, bro. Fred (thrice) & sis. Ruth (twice) Higham, bro. Ricky & sis. Julie Hurst (twice), bro. Steve & sis. Elizabeth (twice) Male, bro. Jeremy Osborne, sis. Jo Ann Osborne (thrice), bro. Steve & sis. Sharon (twice) Osborne, bro. John & sis Mary (thrice) Phillips, bro. David & sis. Kelly (twice) Sommerville, bro. Jim (twice) & sis. Kathy (thrice) Sommerville, sis. Kay Stinchcomb (twice), and bro. Jim & sis. Terri Rankin (twice). We thank brethren Fred Higham (twice), Chip Edwards, Jeremy Osborne, and Steve Male who have so zealously endeavored to help us by their words of exhortation.

Last year we had the pleasure of hosting the N.E. Gathering which considered *The Song of Songs*. We would like to thank all those who made the effort to be in attendance. We would be remiss if we did not also thank the wonderful effort put forth, for our edification, by the speaking brethren.

Also, in the last year, our bro. John and sis. Mary Phillips relocated to Tennessee and became members of the Holiday ecclesia. We entrust them to their care. We are sure they will be a welcome addition around the Masters table.

We live in the era of Christ's return. We see the times heralding the long awaited return. We know neither the day nor the hour but we can observe times and seasons which are known by those who know the truth. Therefore, in this time of gentile ascendancy, we can rejoice at the prospect of long promised deliverance, while groaning at the innumerable evils that abound.

Bro. Beryl Snyder,
Recording brother

DETROIT, Michigan –Memorial, 10am; S.S., 11:15am; Wed. Night Class, 7pm; Bro. Fred J. Higham, 20116 McKishnie, Clinton Twp, MI 48035, 586-790-2156

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Loving Greetings in Jesus' Saving Name,

This summer we were blessed with a visit from Bro. Len, Sis. Pam, Bro. Ben, and Andrew Naglieri while on their way to the Richard Gathering. We were pleased to welcome them around the table of the Lord and we enjoyed words of exhortation given to us by Bro. Len. We were thankful to have them with us.

We also have enjoyed the company of Sis. Lisa Readman around the table of the Lord several times. We are pleased to report that on September 20, 2009, we welcomed Sis. Lisa as a member of the Detroit Ecclesia. Being so few of us, we feel that we can encourage each other, as we look forward to the soon coming Kingdom.

We have also enjoyed the company of Bro. Lynn Osborne as he passes through here delivering trailers. We appreciate the words of exhortation he has given us.

By way of Skype, we have enjoyed the company and fellowship of Bro. Bob and Sis. Mary Widding. Bro. Bob has given us some good exhortations to edify and encourage us along as we work out our salvation. We look forward to being with them every Sunday.

We know that by the signs of the times, the time is growing near to the time when we will be standing before Jesus to be judged. We pray that we will be acceptable to Him and be given the wonderful gift of immortal life.

Love in the Bonds of the Truth, Bro. Fred J. Higham

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

HENGOED FRATERNAL GATHERING.....May 21–24, 2010

Bro. Steve Male, 19 Glas Y Gors, Aberdare, CF44 0BQ, Wales, UK. Email tiscali.co.uk

LAMPASAS FRATERNAL GATHERING.....June 11–13, 2010

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

HYE FRATERNAL GATHERING..... July 26–Aug 1, 2010

Bro. Mark Braune, 209 Ranger Drive, Buda, TX 78610, USA. 1-512-295-2868, email markbraune@gmail.com

The Study

Class will be on the book of Daniel

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—283**

I Did As I Was Commanded

“Son of man, the place of My Throne, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel FOR EVER. And My Holy Name, shall the house of Israel no more defile”—Ezekiel 43:7

EZEKIEL (God Strengthens) was one of the 3 great pillars who carried the purpose of God through the terrible epoch of the destruction of God's Kingdom, and the beginning of the dark Gentile night of Nebuchadnezzar's Image that has lasted 2500 years, and is only now coming to an end.

Ezekiel's name occurs just twice in the whole Bible, both in his own book (cha. 1 and 24). He is addressed by God 92 times as 'Son of Man,' a few more times than this term is applied to Christ himself. Ezekiel clearly was a man of sign. Neither Ezekiel nor his book are mentioned in the New Testament, but Revelation is obviously linked to his prophecies in very many aspects.

When he began his ministry to and among the captives in Babylon, Jeremiah had already been prophesying at Jerusalem for over 30 years, and Daniel had been prominent for 7 or 8 years at the court of Babylon. Ezekiel and Jeremiah were priestly prophets; Daniel was of the royal line of David.

Ezekiel was carried captive to Babylon at the same time as king Jehoiachin. This is usually dated 597 BC. Daniel had been carried captive about 9 years earlier in 606 BC—the first deportation, from which the basic 70 years captivity dates, to Cyrus' proclamation in 536 BC.

Each of these 3 men had a vital function to perform: Jeremiah in the land, Ezekiel with the captives in Babylon, and Daniel in the Babylonian court and government. All was clearly under God's control, though it looked to the natural man like the total collapse of God's power and purpose. Certainly with Daniel in favor and authority the Jews would be well treated. And even more importantly, we see in both Daniel's and Ezekiel's books the controlling angelic hand openly revealed.

We are told the captives with Ezekiel were the better part of the nation: the 'good figs' (Jer. 24), as contrasted with those left behind in the land. Like Jeremiah, Ezekiel—in a dark day of destruction and scattering—revealed the divine explanation of why it was all happening, and foretold for Israel a final day of regathering and righteousness and glorious worship, the center of a purified earth in prosperity and at rest.

Ezekiel was of the priesthood (1:3), and it appears to have been his mission to be the center of divine approach and intercession for the exiles. God said through him (11:16) that He (God) would be a 'little sanctuary'—or Holy Place—to them in their captivity. It is very fitting, therefore, that Ezekiel was the one to reveal the pattern of the great House of Prayer for All Nations hinted at by several of the prophets.

Ezekiel's prophecies are all dated, and the whole book is in strict chronological order, except in one group for the obvious purpose of association. Ezekiel's recorded prophecies were made over a period of 22 years (5th to 27th of his captivity). That is, from 6 years before until 16 years after the destruction of Jerusalem. His prophecies are all dated from the year Jehoiachin (and Ezekiel) was taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. This is the great dividing line.

His book contains 48 chapters. It pivots around one central event—the final siege and destruction of Jerusalem. This comes in ch. 24 and divides the book exactly in half. Everything before that point is denunciation and condemnation for the wickedness and abominations that made the destruction of the Kingdom inevitable—the glory removed. Everything after that point is consolation and promise—the glory returned.

The last half is subdivided again: 8 chapters of judgment on Israel's enemies; 16 chapters of promise concerning Israel's reestablishment. These figures are all too regular and significant to be chance: 48 is 12 4s. The last 16 chapters for Israel are subdivided 7 and 9: 7(33-39) the latter days; 9 (40-48) the glorious House of Prayer.

Chapters 1-24 (of judgment) were before the siege of Jerusalem; 25-33 (against Gentiles) at time of the siege; 34-48 (of comfort) after the siege.

The great dividing point at cha. 24 is also marked by a great personal tragedy for Ezekiel: a staggering trial of affection and faith, in which—as 'Son of Man'—he faithfully symbolizes both God and the nation.

PROPHECIES IN 5th YEAR OF CAPTIVITY - 592 BC - CHS. 1-7

Ch.1: Ezekiel's mission opens in the fifth year of his captivity with the vision of the Cherubim and glory of God: the most spectacular and detailed revelation of divine manifestation in all Scripture. Nothing approaches it for splendor except the closing chapters of Revelation: the New Jerusalem, the Lamb's Bride, and the dwelling of God with man—to all of which it is closely related. It is a picture of the New Creation of Deity, and thus counter balances Gen. 1, and parallels the first chapters of John's Gospel and First Epistle.

It was fitting and merciful that such a picture should be revealed at such a time. Though perhaps little understood, to the faithful it would be an assurance that the glory, though departing, was not forgetful of the true seed of Abraham. The 4-fold Cherubim of Glory—the Living Creature—is a pictorial representation of the Redeemed of God in their glorified state: resplendent in divine power and wisdom, and vibrant with ceaseless activity and joy. This is the Yahweh-Elohim manifestation: He Who Shall Be Mighty Ones. This vision also closely parallels Rev. 1—John's Son of Man, Multitudinous Christ, symbol.

Ch.2: In the midst of the vision, Ezekiel is addressed. He is called to his mission and warned that he will be among briars, thorns, and scorpions. Clearly the 'good figs' were a small minority, even of those carried away, but there would always be a faithful few.

Ch.3: He was told from the beginning Israel would not hear. Like Jeremiah, his mission was doomed to failure before it began. And yet, in a larger sense, it was a complete and eternal success, as shall all the works be of those who work with God. None can ever fail who, by faith and wisdom, drop everything in this life and give all their efforts to making themselves part of the Cherubim of Glory. It demands full time.

A short time before Ezekiel's ministry began, Jeremiah had written to the exiles (Jer. 29) telling them the captivity would be 70 years long, to settle constructively in Babylon, and not believe the false prophets promising an early return. This laid the foundation for Ezekiel's work.

Doubtless he would describe the vision of the Cherubim to those who had ears to hear, for he was a prophet to them, and its purpose was comfort and encouragement. But his first specific message was—

Ch.4: The enacted parable of the siege. He is to draw the city of Jerusalem on a tile and lay siege to it. Then he is to lay bound on his left side 390 days and on his right side 40 days. These, he is told, are the years of the iniquity of Israel and Judah.

The 390 clearly refers back to the years since the division of the Kingdom at the beginning of Rehoboam's reign. The 40 appears to be the previous period, from the 4th of Solomon, when the Temple was begun, to the 4th of Rehoboam, when Judah turned aside from God, or perhaps it was the whole of Solomon's reign. The general application is clear: 390+40 years of wickedness to be atoned for by desolation.

Now Jeremiah says the captivity should be for 70 years; and Lev. 26:43 says the land shall 'enjoy her sabbaths' while she lieth desolate. It is a remarkable fact that the sabbath years in 430 years come to exactly 70. It is all the more remarkable because it means adding 2 irregular fractions. One year in 7 were to be sabbaths of rest for the land (Lev. 25:4), plus 1 year in every 50, the jubilee (Lev. 25:11).

One-seventh of 430=61.4; 1/50 of 430=8.6; 61.4+8.6=70 years.

And carrying the 430 forward from the carrying-away period, 606-586 BC, comes just to the period of re-establishing of independence under the Maccabees, 176-156 BC. In fact, the year of the Maccabean revolt (168 BC) was just 430 years from the year of Ezekiel's captivity (597 BC): the year he dates everything in his book by.

Ch.5: Another enacted parable of judgment. Ezekiel is to shave off his hair and beard with a sword (RV is clearer: AV has 'razor'). It would be all his hair and beard, to fit the symbol, and it would be a matter of personal shame and embarrassment (and doubtless ridicule) to Ezekiel, just as Isaiah's going 'naked and barefoot' (20:2) would be. They typified the nation's shame and degradation. Shaving the head was a sign of mourning (Deut. 21:12; Job 1:20; Isa. 15:2, etc.), but it also implied a process of cleansing from defilement (Lev. 14:8).

The hair represents the people of Jerusalem: its living glory and ornament. 1/3 he burns: those who died by famine and pestilence in the city in the siege. 1/3 he smites with the sword: those killed in the taking of the city. 1/3 he scatters to the winds: those who survived and were driven away captive. A few of these last he puts in a fold in his garment, for protection and preservation: those assembled under Gedaliah. But these are taken out again and burned, for Gedaliah was slain and the survivors killed and scattered.

Ch.6: The mountains of Israel shall be desolate. Between this prophecy and that of ch. 36—the repopulation of these same mountains—is 25 centuries of weary retribution because Israel was unfaithful.

Ch.7: The end is come! God would bring the worst of the heathen upon them, because of their disobedience and worldliness.

PROPHECIES IN THE 6th YEAR OF CAPTIVITY (591 BC) CH 8-19

Ch.8: The vile abominations and corruptions that have taken the place of the true, appointed worship of God. This vision is dated just 3 years before Nebuchadnezzar's final siege of the city. These are the conditions that make its destruction inevitable.

Ch.9: The destruction of Jerusalem symbolically begins: 6 men with slaughter-weapons come from the north. Six is the number of man. There were 6 generals of the Babylonian army (Jer. 39:3). Ezekiel's 6 men were God's supervising angels, and their slaughter-weapons were the Babylonian generals and their armies.

The 6 are directed by a 7th man in linen with an inkhorn, who puts a mark on all in the city who mourn for the abominations being committed. Then the 6 are directed to slay all the rest.

We cannot take from this the absolute guarantee that everyone who died in this siege was wicked, and everyone who lived was righteous, for the record shows differently. But it does comfortingly manifest God's complete control and supervision of every detail. God watches and marks every one. There are no mistakes; no oversights. All sin will be punished: all righteousness at last rewarded.

Ch.10: In the midst of the judgment, the glorious Cherubim—the Redeemed—of ch. 1 appear again. This may seem out of place, but it is not. The Cherubim are the end-product of all God's works. As a purpose and a conception, they are always present: always in the background. All things are for their

sakes (2 Cor. 4:15). Their presence gives purpose and meaning, and even hope, to these terrible times, assuring that all is working together for eventual, eternal good for those who love and serve God—the Cherubim of Glory being prepared.

In 9:3, the Shekinah-Glory of God's presence begins to leave the doomed Temple. In 10:18 it departs further, completely leaving the Temple and going to the Cherubim. The Cherubim are the eternal reality of the divine purpose. The Mosaic Temple was but a temporary manifestation of that reality. The Cherubim were originally in the Tabernacle and the Temple because God's purpose was for the time being centered in those buildings. But because of the continual accumulation of wickedness, the Glory was being taken away.

And it did not return, even when Israel returned, and the nation was re-established, and the Temple rebuilt. The Law continued another 600 years, but it was an empty form. The living heart was gone. There was no Priest with Urim and Thummim. It was just a marking time until Christ should come. We shall see this aspect again in ch. 21.

Ch.11: Further abominations revealed, and further judgments, but there is promise (17-20) of eventual regathering and purification. Then (21) the Glory completely departs—and the vision ends.

Ch.12: The carrying away enacted, and the attempt of Zedekiah to flee in the night from the victorious Babylonians. But he should be caught and taken in chains to Babylon: but still he should not see Babylon. We know the terrible way that puzzle was solved.

Ch.13 is against the false prophets and lying diviners. 'Peace!'—and there is no peace. The tottery wall whitewashed to make it look strong.

Ch.14: The elders come to Ezekiel, pretending to seek God, but not with a complete heart for Him alone, which He demands. They served Him superficially, but they had idols of self-will in their hearts, to do with their time and wealth as they wished. Noah, Daniel and Job together—men of outstanding righteousness—couldn't save the land now.

Ch.15: The barren, leafy, self-luxuriating Vine. Nothing is more useless. Ordinary trees are at least good for wood and construction if they have no fruit, but a fruitless vine is good for nothing but a brief fire.

So with God's people. They do not help the world's work. They are called to be separated from that. They are God's Vine, designed only for spiritual fruit. They are useless for the world's ordinary building. If they do not fulfill their one purpose—fruit to God and light to the world—they are parasites: of less value to God than the people of the world.

Ch.16: A long, detailed allegory portraying Israel as a cast-off, abandoned baby girl, whom God rescued and nourished, and showered love upon, and raised to adulthood, and at last made His wife.

But she turned from all His love and kindness, to friendship and corruption with the world and His enemies, in spite of all His patience and entreaties, and repeated forgivenesses. But still at last, after long and bitter separation and tribulation, He will receive her back to Him.

How little did the Jews of Jerusalem realize that within 3 years, all that seemed so permanent would be destroyed, and they would have begun their long dark centuries of endless, restless wandering.

Ch.17: The riddle of the foreign eagles and the Israel cedar. The top twig Jehoiachin plucked off, and carried off by the Babylon-eagle; and Zedekiah set up in his place. The warning is against Zedekiah's treachery and folly in rebelling against Babylon and plotting with the Egypt-eagle.

Then again the bright ray at the end: using the same figure of tree and twig, the glorious Kingdom of Christ is promised. Even in their direst portends, the prophets never go far without promise of blessing.

Ch.18 deals with divine principles of justice. Israel complained they were being punished for their fathers' sins, and they could quote certain statements of God Himself that seemed to support them, as that He was destroying Jerusalem because of the blood that Manasseh had shed 50 years before (2 Kings 24:3); and that He would 'visit the sins of the fathers upon the children to the 3rd and 4th generations' (Ex. 20:5).

The answer is 2-fold. First, the nation was being judged as a nation because it continued such sins as Manasseh's. A nation is like an individual. If it continues to sin, it is finally punished for all its past sins.

If it repents, those past sins will be forgotten. Similarly, the rest of the quotation about the 'sins of the fathers' changes it from injustice to mercy and patience: it is the '3rd and 4th generation of them that hate Me' that at last receives God's deferred wrath.

Second, national judgments were one thing, and the just suffered in them like the unjust. But in the ultimate eternal judgment—which is the only one that really matters—each individual stands alone and is rewarded or punished according to his own record.

A righteous Jeremiah or Ezekiel may necessarily suffer in the general calamities with the wicked nation he ministered to, but that was just a passing aspect of the development and training for God's eternal glory. We 'must through much tribulation enter the Kingdom' (Acts 14:22), and that tribulation will be doubly welcomed and accepted with joyful patience, if it is incurred in ministering to God's people.

Ch.19: The Judah-lioness and her cubs. A lamentation for Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin, Judah's last 2 home-appointed rulers, trapped and carried away. A warning to then-reigning Zedekiah, Babylon's appointee.

PROPHECIES IN 7th YEAR OF CAPTIVITY - 590 BC - CHS. 20-23

Ch.20 catalogs Israel's long, continuous history of disobedience, right from the beginning; leading at last to this casting off of the Kingdom. In Jerusalem, Jeremiah was saying the same to them—

“The children of Israel and the children of Judah have only done evil before Me from their youth . . . This city hath been to Me as a provocation of Mine anger and fury from the day they built it even unto this day” (Jer. 32:30-31).

Ezekiel (vs. 33-38) adds important details of the final regathering we don't get elsewhere. God will gather the Jews out of the nations, but no rebels shall enter the land. Somewhere in between they are assembled and the wicked are purged out. Probably but a small remnant will actually reach the land. The purging process could take many years.

Chapters 21-23 are the final culminating indictment of wicked Israel, in 7 distinct sections, each beginning 'And the work of the Lord came unto me.' The terrible sword of the Lord has been drawn, and it cannot be re-sheathed. It must now do its work relentlessly unto the end. As God said at the same time to Jeremiah: 'Pray not for this people.'

Chs.21: The king of Babylon stands at the crossroads, casting lots on whom he should attack, and the lot fell on Jerusalem. Then follow those well-known words of doom to both Zedekiah and the nation (v.25):

“Profane wicked prince...whose day is come when iniquity shall have an end!”

'Crown' of v.26 is the royal crown, but 'diadem' is the word used only and always for the High Priest's mitre. Christ is the Heir of both the throne and the highpriesthood. Both are now suspended until he comes.

This is important. There was a restoration under Cyrus, but it was just an empty shell, like the Ark-less Tabernacle in the days of Saul. God was with them in a degree and required the Temple to be rebuilt, as we see from the prophecies of Haggai in the days of Zerubbabel.

But it was never again the same. The Shekinah-glory never returned to the golden cherubim above the Mercyseat. There never arose a High Priest with Urim and Thummim. The 'tabernacle of David' remained fallen; though the nation must continue as such in some form until the true Heir to both crown and mitre should come and be presented to them.

These verses are another interesting link in the chain of evidence showing Christ to be the Heir of both the Kingship and the Priesthood.

Ch.22: 'Judge the bloody city!'—priests, prince, prophets and people all alike in wickedness and abominations.

Ch.23: The climax of condemnation. The 2 lewd women: Aholah (Israel) and Aholibah (Judah). 'Aholah' means Her Own Tabernacle. That was the 10-tribed Israel and their manmade worship. 'Aholibah' means My Tabernacle Is in Her: Judah, supposed seat of true divine worship.

The whole chapter is the presentation of their relationships with the world under the vivid and striking figure of sexual corruption and abomination. This is how God views any mixture of His holy separated people with the dead and corrupt world that knows Him not. It is the same vital lesson that James emphasizes in the same bold figure—

“Ye adulterers and adulteresses: know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?” (4:4).

Friendship with the world is so easy and so seemingly pleasant and harmless, but let us never forget that it is not so to God. In His sight, 'The whole world lieth in wickedness' (1 Jn. 5:19), and any relationship with it and its institutions that is not necessary and in the service of God is utter abomination in His sight.

Let us ever bear Eze. 23 in mind. We, if we really are God's people, are the only living (it is a very high calling), and all the rest of the world are dead—all outside the covenant-relationship, no matter how close to us in the flesh. And contact is defiling, unless it be contact whose motive, like Christ, is to give the leper cleansing (Matt. 8:3) and the dead life (Lk. 7:14).

Ch.24: We now have reached the end. The chapter begins—

“In the 9th year, in the 10th month, in the 10th day of the month, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying: Son of Man, write thee the name of the day, even of this same day. The king of Babylon set himself against Jerusalem THIS SAME DAY.”

The final siege had begun. In the parable of vs. 3-14, the city is the caldron, the people are the flesh in it, and the roaring fire shall burn, not only until the contents are destroyed, but until the caldron itself is utterly melted and disappears, for there is no other way to cleanse its corruption. What God cannot cleanse, He must destroy.

And now, simply to enforce the lesson on wicked Israel, a terrible thing happens to Ezekiel. God suddenly—and without warning, without any time for preparation of farewells—tells him (v. 16) that his wife, the desire of his eyes, his most precious treasure, will die that day.

And all that day while he is expecting it, and all the next day after it has happened, he must not pause in his duties, but go right ahead with his work for God, and give absolutely no sign of grief or mourning.

And he simply says, 'I did as I was commanded.' Was ever man more bitterly tried? It is one of those things which natural man finds so hard to understand of the ways of God, for His thoughts are so much higher than man's. God's thoughts are on eternal good. Man's are so limited to the passing present.

Both Ezekiel's mortal life and his wife's were at best but brief flashes in the broad sweep of history. Parting must come, sooner or later, in the deepest and sweetest of human relationships. But if they are for God's Kingdom, then the brief separation is nothing: just a merciful taking away from the evil to come: “He giveth His beloved sleep” (Psa. 127).

If they are not for God's Kingdom, then their present life is utterly meaningless and purposeless anyway, like the passing buzz of an insect.

“At even my wife died: and I did in the morning as I was commanded.”

Obedience: that is all that mattered, or had any meaning and purpose.

The lesson was to shock and awake wicked Israel, and we can only hope some were saved by it. God would take away everything they considered precious and worthwhile, and they would be in such misery and distress that they would be unable to mourn or weep. How often has that been repeated in their long sad history!

They asked what it all meant—and he explained it to them. Then his mouth was closed, and his testimony to them was cut off—completely silenced for 3 years, all through the siege and beyond, until the news of the city's destruction reached them in Babylon.

So ends the first half of the book.

—*Bro. G.V. Growcott*

Missile Defense Shield

This is hugely important to the time of the end. That missile shield to protect Europe from Russia was very out of place. I would add that both Sarkozy and Merkel, which are essentially pro American governments in France and Germany are also out of place, and this will not help their prospects.

Anti American sentiment in Europe will increase under this decision, as it should at the time of the end. The Americans reversing course at the behest of Russia, will allow anti American activists to portray the US as an undependable ally, which of course, she will be to Europe.

I was quite interested in President Obama's new plan to build an anti missile defense system, and put in on the sea. This accomplishes two things. It turns the sea of Tarshish (Mediterranean) into even more of a western lake, even increasing the size of the Tarshish Navy (though that is yet to be set in stone) and also, it makes the Tarshish defenses even more susceptible to the east wind which shall blow against it.

“For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together. They saw it, and so they marvelled; they were troubled, and hasted away. Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail. Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind.” Psalm 48:4-7 —Bro. Jim Phillips

The Temple

What will be the size of it? What will be the shape of it? There are no grounds for absolute certainty. There are strong grounds for the view presented by brother Sulley in his temple book: but we should not be justified in making the reception of this view a condition of fellowship. It is sufficient that the general truth is received. Any view that may be entertained as to details is not inconsistent with the general truth.

—Bro. Robert Roberts

Encouraging Words No. 1

“BUYING up opportunities” (Eph. 5:16—R.V.) is a duty which God has laid upon us, and numerous are the examples inciting us to fulfil it. Mary bought up an opportunity when she sat at the Master's feet instead of engrossing herself in fussy hospitality. Tabitha did likewise, when she chose to occupy herself in making garments for the widow and orphan rather than absorb her time in self-gratification. Lois and Eunice bought up their opportunity by instructing their youthful charge, Timothy, in the great things of God's law. Abigail bought up an opportunity when she reasoned David out of his rash purpose of avenging himself upon his enemies. David in his turn bought up an opportunity in listening to godly counsel and turning from his evil errand. Sisters, how fares it with us as touching this injunction? Are we where Mary was—sitting (though in a figure) at Christ's feet? If not, we may be sure we should not be found where Mary was if Christ were upon earth. Do we, as did Tabitha, consider the poor? If not, there is a strong probability that we should not have been occupied as was Tabitha had we lived in her days. Are those of us who have children in our care, striving, by constant earnest tuition in the scriptures, to make them Timothy-like? If brought face to face with an angry David should we be sufficiently instructed and faithful to reason him out of his sinful intention? And when reproof and counsel come our way, do we, David-like, turn from our folly and bless God and our *reprover* that we have been held back from sin? Sisters, our lives are full of opportunities; wise are we if, like the worthies of old, we recognise them and buy them up.

Reading forms an important item in carrying out the injunction under consideration. It has been said of the people of to-day, that they “revel in snippets and scraps which are always trivial, often worthless and not infrequently pernicious,” whilst in the public libraries the huge demand for novels is notorious. It is because men and women forsake the bread of life for this deleterious stuff that the days are so evil. This kind of reading may gratify the natural man, but it will hinder, not help, in the attainment of eternal life. The commandments of Christ are conspicuous by their absence from such literature. What reference does it contain to the promises, to Bible reading, to the weekly remembrance of Christ in the breaking of bread, to separateness from the world? Or what admonition does it offer concerning a daily watching for Christ's return by conforming ourselves to his wishes in such of life's affairs as marriage, friendship, dress, conversation, etc.? It was not reading such as this that Paul commended to Timothy, or that enabled Dr. Thomas to unfold the faith once for all delivered to the saints, or that qualified brother Roberts to expound the commandments of Christ in their practical bearing upon our daily life. Neither was it mental food of such a description that gave Mary and Hannah the deep spiritual understanding which shines forth

from their poetical utterances—utterances which have been divinely preserved for the instruction of all subsequent generations (Luke 1:46–55; 1 Sam. 2:1–10). God has endowed us with brains, and it is only reasonable that He should, in connection with our attainment of salvation, call upon us to rightly exercise them. “Without faith it is impossible to please God,” and faith is the outcome of bringing the mind in contact with Bible subjects—with divine thoughts and principles. The emanation of the human mind—be it the gossip of the trifler—the jest of the humourist—love, hate, hope, or fear as portrayed by the novelist—or even the narration of the benevolent doings of the would-be benefactor—can no more produce faith than they can make the dead to live. Faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17). The hearing, however, must be of a particular kind—not that popularly known as “going in at one ear and out at the other”—it must be such as will cause the recipient of the things spoken to “ponder them in her heart,” to “meditate,” to “consider,” to “commune with thine own heart upon thy bed.” Only by a faithful reading and hearing can we equip ourselves for buying up opportunities in other directions.

Sis. C.H. Jannaway—1906

Forbearing One Another In Love

“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love.” Ephesians 4:1, 2—

The main central thought in the above passage is the apostle's plea for a walk worthy of the great vocation wherewith we are called.. The words “forbearing one another in love” are added as explanatory of such a walk.

The original Greek word from which we get the word “forbearing” is only so translated in one other passage in the New-Testament—

“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

“FORBEARING one another, forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye” (Col. 3:12,13).

In the other 13 places where this same original word occurs, it is translated “bear with” 4 times, “endure” twice, and “suffer” 7 times.

The meaning the lexicons give for this word is “to hold back self.” That is forbearance: HOLDING BACK SELF, so that we may each esteem our brother better than ourselves.

Such a relation between the brothers and sisters in Christ is a direct command that forms the basis of all their activities and service in the Truth—

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

“Look not every man on his own things, but every Man also on the things of others” (Phil. 2:3,4).

But Paul says this forbearance must be done “in love.” Not just as a matter of duty. If love is there in our hearts - the kind of love the first commandment enjoins upon us, toward God, with all our strength, mind, soul and body - this love will then extend to all things pertaining to God, especially to His people.

John tells us that if we cannot love our brother whom we have seen, we then cannot love God Whom we have not seen. It is easy to put our brother ahead of ourselves—to hold back ourselves—IF we love him; but it cannot be done in any other way.

The superstructure of that building of God for the habitation of Himself through the Spirit which we are called upon to build by the indwelling influence of the Spirit Word, is based upon love for God and for our brothers and sisters. When Jesus was asked, “Which is the great commandment in the law?” He replied—

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matt. 22:37-40).

But it, may be asked, Can we not come to the meeting as on Sunday morning, and partake of the emblems of the Lord's sacrifice, as individuals, without necessarily having to love all who attend, regardless of what they are like?

This command—the Memorial Supper—as well as all the other commandments, is obeyed, not by simply partaking of the bread and wine, and sitting through the service. God wants our hearts, our love, our trust, our confidence, our reverence; He wants our minds continually stayed upon Him as the great source of all love, mercy, life, wisdom and power. He wants us to have a feeling of oneness, of fellowship of love among ourselves; for we are all the children of God by the faith we have in Christ Jesus.

Who are we to withhold from God's elect that feeling of love and tenderness which He Himself holds toward them as well as toward ourselves? Without this as the underlying principle of all our actions, we may go through the routine of following in detail many of the commandments that have to do with our walk in the Truth, only to find at the last that we have missed the greatest thing of all - the FOR BEARING OF ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE.

We are part of a whole, members of a Body, closely knit together, with Christ at the Head and God over all. As such we cannot act independently, nor without regard to the rest of the Body, any more than our hand or foot, our eyes or ears can perform their function without the co-ordination and sympathy of the rest of the body—

“Grow up into him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ: From whom the whole Body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the Body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Eph. 4:15-16).

The state of our hearts in relation to our brethren must be such as we hold toward Christ himself; for he identifies himself with his disciples, so that what we do to them, we do to him—

“Whoso shall receive one such little child in my Name receiveth me.”

—Bro. Emmitt W. Banta

Thoughts Gleaned By The Way

“I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.” Jer. 23:5

God has a plan for earth's redemption; and that plan will succeed, where all the devices of man have failed; for He, and He alone, has the wisdom, power and goodness to make it a success. All who place their hope in a man-made order will perish with it.

The divine plan was revealed to David in a covenant God made with him and David speaks of it in 2 Sam. 23; He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.

“And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth even a morning without clouds...He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation and all my desire” (vs. 1-5).

In Isa. 9:6-7 we again have a reference to this plan of God to restore peace and blessedness to the earth through a seed promised to David,

“Unto us a child, is born; unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end; upon the throne of David, and upon his Kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and justice from henceforth even forever.”

We have a record of this covenant which God made with David in 2 Sam. 7. The covenant provided.

1. That David's people Israel would be planted in a place of their own to move no more, neither to be afflicted anymore (v. 10).

2. That God would establish a royal house in the line of David which would be perpetual (vs. 11-13).

3. That David would be given a seed, a greater Son, who would reign forever before him, or in his presence.

This seed promised to David was Christ, who not only came in the royal line of David, but by divine appointment has the sole right to David's throne. If one doubts, read Acts 2:30.

“Therefore (David) being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne.”

Christ is not seated on David's throne (Rev. 3:21). Christ's throne, which is the Davidic throne, is in ruins. David's people, for the most part, are still dispersed, and the land over which he ruled is still to a large extent *“trodden down of the Gentiles,”* and the city of Jerusalem, the place of David's throne, is now the scene of continual strife between rival factions.

The spirit of God in Ezekiel 21:25-27, in speaking of the overthrow of the kingdom of Israel says,

“It shall be no more until he comes whose right it is, and I will give it him.”

As to whose right it is, let us note the words of the angel to Jesus' mother.

“The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end” (Luke 1:32-33).

But one will say that David's throne has been transferred to heaven, and that Christ is now sitting upon it. If this is the reign of Christ spoken of in the Scriptures, then where are the blessings promised? If Christ has been reigning for 1900 years and has accomplished no more than we see in the world today, how long must we wait for that era of blessedness of which David sang? That *“morning without clouds”* seems far away yet.

Is Christ reigning over the *“house of Jacob,”* the 12 tribes of Israel? If so, why are they still scattered in unbelief of him? If Christ is reigning on David's throne, then why does he not exercise his prerogative of Prince of Peace, as Isaiah tells us He will do when *“the government shall be upon his shoulders”*?

Not only does the Word of God discountenance any such notion that Christ is now reigning on David's throne, but common sense alone tells us that everything in the world today is contrary to such an idea.

* * *

Before God's covenant with David can become a reality, and the earth redeemed from the curse of war, crime and injustice, the following MUST come to pass:

1. God will send Jesus, the Prince of Peace, to the earth again (Acts 3:20, 21).

2. The ancient kingdom of Israel must be restored as the first, community in Christ's Kingdom, which, beginning as a little stone or mustard seed, shall ultimately fill the whole earth (Eze. 37: 2-23; Dan. 2:44).

It is in the restoration of the ancient kingdom of Israel that Jerusalem, the place of David's throne, becomes the capital city of the world, for—

“At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and ALL nations shall be gathered unto it, to the Name of the Lord TO JERUSALEM, neither shall they walk anymore after the imagination of their evil hearts” (Jer. 3:17).

Let us note here that at that time there will be universal recognition by *“all nations,”* that Jerusalem will be the seat of the earth's government, and there will be a general submission to divine authority by all people on earth.

3. David must be raised from the dead and immortalized; for God promised him that his seed, Christ, should reign in his presence, and Peter in Acts 2:29-35 tells us that David is both dead and buried, and he had not ascended into the heavens; that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne.

In this he saw the resurrection of Christ, a guarantee of his own resurrection, and that Christ would remain seated at the right hand of the Father until the time comes for his enemies to be made his footstool; when, as David foretold:

“The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion; rule thou in the midst of thy enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power” (Psalm 110).

Israel is not now willing to accept Christ, neither are the Gentile nations ready to submit to him. Not until the greater Son of David rules in Jerusalem on the restored throne of Israel, exercising all the power and authority which God has given to him, will the turbulent nations of the earth be willing and able to study and pursue war no more.

Not until the heavy hand of divine judgment falls upon the Godless people of the earth; not until man is stripped of his own glory and humbled beneath the mighty hand of God, will peace, order and righteousness flow to all mankind.

4. No order of peace and good will, justice and equity, can be established in the earth until the power to rule mankind is taken out of the hand of sinful, fallible and godless men and given into the hands of him who shall rule in—

“The spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord” (Isa. 11:2).

His co-rulers will be the immortalized saints, who, in their sojourn in mortal flesh were the weak ones of the earth, but who have manifested the principles of love, peace and righteousness, which will characterize the divine order soon to come.

In Rev. 2:6 Christ promised:

“To him that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations.” And again In Rev. 5:9-10, the redeemed sing a new song in honor to the Lamb that was slain, saying—

“Thou hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth.”

Thus the meek of the earth today will be the world rulers of tomorrow, assisting Christ in administering divine government with which all nations will be blessed.

5. With Christ enthroned in Jerusalem (Isa. 2:3-4)—

“The law shall go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” And he shall, *“judge many nations, and shall rebuke many people. And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore “*
—Bro. Oscar Beauchamp

Meditations – Deity’s Ways No. 4

The truth in the present day is like the book of the law in the time of Josiah—hidden away and lost sight of. Certain ones have lighted upon this priceless treasure. The truth has revealed to such that there has been a wholesale departure from the way of God, that the world around is utterly sunk in iniquity, and, that, as in the case of Josiah’s contemporaries, the wrath of God is impending. Let those who in these days have found “the book of the law” diligently follow Josiah’s example, by making themselves acquainted with its contents, by humbling themselves before God, and by actively and persistently endeavouring to enlighten their neighbours. Josiah’s character is that exhibited by all the faithful, viz., 1st, a supreme regard for God and His word, and, 2ndly, a practical love for others. *“To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.”*

Before the kingdom can be reached, there is much weary travelling to be endured—travelling which tends to lessen if not to dispel the delight with which the journey was commenced. Oftentimes we are tempted to murmur or to wish we had not started. Our experience in this matter may be likened to some of the long trips occasionally taken for recreation and health. The prospect of the destination and its accompanying good is joyous. The journey is begun with cheerfulness and freshness. In time, however, it

grows tedious, and gradually produces the inclination to grumble, and the wish that it had not been undertaken. But time carries one through it. The end is reached, and the pleasure realised. What is the lesson? In our spiritual pilgrimage, let us not bemoan its attendant hardships, but cheer up! Let us reason like men upon the situation. Let us recognise its comparative shortness, and buoy ourselves with the joy to which we are hastening, remembering that the fatigue which we are now experiencing will intensify the happiness when attained.

An upright, reflective man without the Bible, must of all men be most miserable. He sees things around all wrong—bitterly wrong—and he realises that he and the wisest of his contemporaries are impotent to right them. History tells him that matters get worse, and not better. Reasoning upon the past, he is deprived of hope in looking towards the future. The logical force of his principles shuts him up to the comfortless proposition that what has been must, so far as he can tell, ever continue to be. He asks why are things so? But he asks in vain. How transcendently beautiful is the Bible solution! Let it be prized by those who know it! What is the solution? That the time is rapidly approaching when all evil will be abolished, when the earth will be freed from the curse which now affects it, when all its inhabitants will be sinless, deathless, and glorious, when there will obtain “*glory to God in the Highest*” and peace and goodwill among all men. Is not this divine? The skeptic may confidently be asked, Is this an unreasonable and improbable finality?

“*How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*” Thus spake the Father (through Christ) to Israel. What condescension! Consider the tenderness, the regard, and the love which underlie the expression. But the charm of the passage for us lies here: Israel’s God is our God, and His character remains unchanged. He is still “*very pitiful and of tender mercy*”—“*as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.*” This is difficult to realise in the midst of the evil and darkness that prevail. Apart from the eye of faith, it cannot be perceived. It remains a fact, however, whether the mental vision be obscured or not. Remember Christ—the Son of God’s love! He was the subject of adversity, humiliation, cruelty, shame, head and heart aches, and yet not forsaken by God! The angels had charge concerning him in all his ways! The attainment by him of life, fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore is an irrefragable proof of the Father’s unceasing care and compassion.

The infallibility of the Bible is stamped by the Apostolic injunctions concerning the “One Faith,” and the oneness of mind to be maintained in regard to it. Paul wrote to the Roman believers: “*With one mind, and one mouth glorify God*”—To the Corinthians: “*All speak the same thing*”—To the Galatians: “*Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free*”—To the Ephesians: “*Giving diligence to keep the unity of the spirit*” (R. 5.)—To the Philippians: “*Stand fast in the one spirit, with one soul striving for the faith of the gospel*” To the Colossians: “*Walk ye in him (Christ) rooted and built up in him, stablished in the faith*”—To the Thessalonians: “*Prove all things; hold fast that which is good*”—To Timothy: “*Hold fast the form of sound words*”—To Titus: “*Hold fast the faithful word*”—To the Hebrews: “*Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines.*” Obedience to these commands is impossible apart from some unerring guide—some infallible court of appeal. He who has this is also in a position to heed the following admonitions: “*Receive with meekness the engrafted word*”—“*As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.*”

Between Christ and the Bible there is, whether designed or not, a remarkable and instructive similarity. It is to be traced in their origin, nature, name, moral character, claims, mission, teaching, characteristics, works, history, preservation, incorruptibility, and God’s will respecting them. The Word of God existed before it was sent forth, either in its written or personal form—“*In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.*” This word embraces God’s purpose concerning the earth and man upon it. He created them not in vain, but to manifest His glory (Isa. 45:18; Num. 14:21). “*This word, which by the gospel is preached, endureth for ever.*” The Bible is an elaboration of this word in its multifarious bearings, but all converging upon its consummation. History confirms the verity of Deity’s utterances, foreshadows heavenly things, and exhibits the working out of the purpose. Christ likewise exhibits these features. He was the word made flesh (John 1:14) Deity’s purpose in embryo—the life made manifest—the seed which will bud and blossom and fill the earth with fruit. God was in both Christ and the Bible—they are one. “*Search the Scriptures*”—“*They are they*

which testify of me,” said Christ. In like manner Christ testifieth of the Bible. To believe one involves a belief in the other. *“Everyone taught of God”* cometh to the two.

Flesh and blood is a very unsatisfactory tabernacle—unsightly, unhealthy, and in a state of unarrestable decay. So bad is it that its occupants groan. How different was the building when first erected, when pronounced by the Deity “very good.” Our first parents have the reputation of spoiling it, but subsequent tenants have done much to make it worse. Its owner is so displeased with it that He has decreed its utter destruction. Men have been warned of its dangerous and crumbling condition, and have been urged to flee from under its roof. Some have heeded the warning, many have not, and in consequence have perished. Man cannot live without a house. A recognition of this is not popular, hence the apathy in regard to the state of affairs. God has provided another house, which is “eternal in the heavens,” “glorious,” “incorruptible,” “undefiled.” This house will descend at the appointed time, and will constitute the everlasting abode of those who will have prudently secured a habitation in it. There are many restrictions attached to its tenancy. This will be discovered by-and-bye to the disappointment and dismay of many who will have acted as if an entrance into the new house were as easy an entrance into the first. Each applicant will have to show that he has means (1 Tim. 6:18; Jas. 2:5); that he has had a proper education (Ephes. 4:17-18); that he has ability (1 Cor. 6:2); that he has suitable attire, and good deportment (Matt. 21:11, 12; 1 Cor. 6:9-10).

It is of importance that Paul’s authority and reliability be realised. God bare him witness—it is upon this that our assurance concerning the infallibility of his teaching may rest. To question Paul is to insult God. This is involved in the apostle’s claims:—*“We speak not in words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the holy spirit teacheth”* (1 Cor. 2:13.)—*“I command, yet not I, but the Lord”* (1 Cor. 7:10.)—*“If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord”* (1 Cor. 14:37.)—*“As God is true, our word was not yea and nay”* (2 Cor. 1:18)—*“We are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ”* (2 Cor. 2:17)—*“For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed”* (2 Cor. 10:8) —*“If I come again, I will not spare since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me”* (2 Cor. 13:3) —*“Now the things which I write unto you, behold before God, I lie not”* (Gal. 1:20) —*“Stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle”* (2 Thess. 2:15.) What unspeakable comfort springs from the fact that we have such a guide! How assuring for poor, hesitating, fallible man! Paul’s writings may be received with the simplicity of a child—without reservation and question. What a contrast between these writings and the productions of ordinary men!

What a consternation there would be if men were only to read the Bible with the same credulity with which they read the daily paper! Newspapers have recently said much about a universal war which they affirm is sooner or later inevitable. Their surmises, their predictions, and their reasonings have caused no small amount of stir. But how insignificant and uncertain are their utterances when compared with what the Bible reveals upon the subject. Just a few of the inspired sayings:—*“Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: beat your ploughshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears: let the weak say I am strong”* (Joel 3.)—*“I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle”* (Zec. 14:2)—*“There shall be a time of trouble, such as there never was since there was a nation even unto that same time”* (Dan. 12:1)—*“I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone”* (Ezek. 38:22.) These statements are certain, as true as history. How mad is the world to ignore them! The scripture saith not in vain, *“Behold ye among the heathen (nations), and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you.”* Yes; when it is too late, men will find out that God’s *“testimonies are very sure,”* and that destruction followeth the despiser of them.

Man dreads and abhors death. The Creator would not have implanted in him these instincts if the grave had been his proper and originally intended destiny. This is a correct and logical inference, notwithstanding that the shallow minded skeptic affirms the contrary. Apart from the Bible, death is an inscrutable enigma. If death claimed only the wicked, we should perhaps be able to trace its design. But death takes wicked and righteous alike. There exists in man an intense desire for eternal life, and there

must be a reason why its attainment (looking at the matter apart from the Bible) has been cut off. The preservation of a death-stricken race is in itself an argument that the grave is not the goal of man in the generic sense. Turning to the Scriptures, how divine is the explanation which they afford of death! They reveal that death is the result of sin, that the institution is wise because it prevents an eternal perpetuation of evil, that it is but temporary—the race being destined to ultimately escape it by being brought into harmony with the mind and will of God. The proclamation of this purpose has been contemporary with the reign of sin. Man has ever been unbelieving in regard to it, and few indeed have accepted the invitation to be incorporated in it. Nevertheless, God’s purpose stands firm, though it tarry. Impatience at delay is natural to man. Human schemes provide for this peculiarity, by awarding heaven, endless torment, or annihilation—at death. The contrast the Bible plan presents in this respect is an evidence of its superhuman origin.

Bro. A. T. Jannaway—1887

Separation

From time to time we come into contact with those not in fellowship with us and while we may be (and should be) courteous and to some extent friendly, yet—even in the case of blood relationships—there should always be a consciousness of the vital differences that exist, which form a *barrier* to that free, brotherly intercourse enjoyed with those whose mind and attitude towards the principles of the Faith are identical with our own. The warning, therefore, and especially to young brethren and sisters is—never *seek* the company of those not in fellowship, unless you have good reason to do so.

But we do meet such from time to time, and frequently they will say, “What a pity it is that we are divided, since we all believe the same things! “But the fact is that we do *not* all believe the same things, for while many among them, earnest and sincere, hold the various elements of the faith as we do, yet on the *doctrine of fellowship* they fail sadly.

Moreover, there are many among them, who, though they once held to the doctrine, now uphold it no longer, and once the doctrine of fellowship is allowed to slip, the door of the ecclesia is opened wide to every sort of error, which, given time, can only end in complete apostasy.

Let us consider briefly some of the main objections that are raised to our position. For the sake of brevity, we put them as question and answer.

(1) Why argue over differences between brethren long since dead? It was all a clash of personalities.

The answer is: The differences are as real today as ever they were. The separation was a question of *principle*, not *personality*—and it is still so with us.

(2) Do you consider yourselves better than us?

Our answer: The Truth requires us to take Christ for our standard, and not to compare ourselves one with another—Christ will judge our motives and actions in the day of account.

(3) *We* do not approve of mass withdrawal, or “casting brethren and sisters out.” How do you justify such action?

To that we reply: If an ecclesia fails to deal faithfully with known error, then after due notice, faithful ecclesias must withdraw from it until the matter is put right. We do not “cast out;” we withdraw, as is scripturally enjoined.

(4) Even supposing you were the “few in Sardis,” is there need to separate?

Let our Bro. Dr. Thomas answer that objection. In *Eureka* he writes:

(a) “In John’s day . . . there were those who were Jews inwardly without regard to flesh, and those who *said* they were Jews but were liars. The first class were in scriptural fellowship with the apostle . . . in Sardis, for example, only a few names remained undefiled.”

(b) “Apostolic Christendom was divisible into two sections—real and nominal Christians . . . it would be utterly impossible for the two classes to remain together for ever.”

(5) Christ in his parable of the wheat and tares said, *“Let both grow together until the harvest.”* Should we not leave the judgment to Christ?

Answer: This was the Lord's command to the angel reapers, and not a call to wheat and tares to grow harmoniously together. The parable does not apply to ecclesial relationships.

(6) To withdraw is to anticipate the judgment seat; is not judgment Christ's sole prerogative?

The obvious answer to that objection is: If to withdraw fellowship is to anticipate the judgment seat, then what becomes of Paul's plain *command* to withdraw from every brother walking disorderly and not after the tradition he had made known in his teaching? Our position is identical with that of our Bro. R. Roberts, who wrote to those from whom he and those with him separated on the question of the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible:

“We do not say you are not brethren, or that Christ will refuse you at his Coming; we judge ourselves. We say we cannot be implicated in the position which you feel at liberty to hold towards the new doctrine that has been introduced. We desire to regard you with feelings of friendship and brotherly love; but so long as you retain connection with a false doctrine of so dangerous a character, you compel us to stand aside in the spirit of Paul's recommendation, which, while telling us not to count you as enemies, but to admonish you as brethren, at the same time directs us to have no company while things are on a footing that does not allow of it.”

One of the consolations we have in conforming to the doctrine of fellowship, is that we are following exactly the course that Bro. Roberts took in his day, and that our understanding and interpretation of the doctrine of fellowship is precisely the same as his was. His convictions on the matter were well expressed in the following words:

“There is prevalent at the present time a lamentable looseness in regard to what must constitute the Basis of Fellowship. It arises partly from ignorance, and partly from an over-anxiety to increase numbers and keep together divergent elements. This must inevitably result in serious trouble or grave declension . . . the Truth's interest is at stake; and, no doubt, much depends upon our action as to whether it is yet to be maintained in its purity and simplicity, or lapse into Laodiceanism...”

“A man believing the Truth, but willing to wink at its denial among those in fellowship, in any of its essential elements, becomes, by this willingness, an offender against the law of Christ, which requires the faithful maintenance of the whole. Faithful servants of Christ cannot unite with such, on the ground that though he hold the Truth himself, such a man is responsible for the error of those whom he would admit, and, therefore, becomes the channel of a similar responsibility to those who may endorse him in fellowship: “He that biddeth him God-speed is partaker of his evil deeds'.”

“It is the duty of the friends of the Truth to uphold it as a basis of union among themselves by refusing to receive those who deny any part of it, or, those who would receive those so denying.”

“Paul commands withdrawal from 'any man' 'who obeys not his word,' delivered by epistle.' He commands the brethren to hold fast the traditions taught by him, ' whether by word or epistle '.”

That is our position today, and it is our duty faithfully to uphold it until death, or, if the Lord will, until Christ returns. To maintain it requires earnestness, vigilance, and sincerity on the part of all. It is not the sole duty and responsibility of seniors; indeed, they may sometimes be the offenders.

Slackness or allowing an error to go unchecked can soon work disaster both in an ecclesia and in a fellowship.

For example, a brother may claim to have discovered something new in the way of Scripture interpretation, although actually there is nothing new to discover. His alleged discovery runs directly counter to other plain Scripture teaching; he airs his wrong ideas to others. If they do their duty, he will be immediately taken to task, called upon to renounce his views, failing which, after earnest entreaty and warning, the ecclesia will be notified and he will be withdrawn from. But if they shrug their shoulders, and “let it pass” as some of his peculiar ideas, he may be emboldened to put his view forward from the platform. It then becomes an ecclesial matter, and if the ecclesia acts faithfully, then failing any response to their call to renounce the wrong view, he will be withdrawn from, as will all who sympathize with him even if not sharing his views. But if again, the ecclesia for any reason takes no notice and no action, that

ecclesia is unsound in the faith, and it is the duty of other ecclesias, when the matter becomes known to them, after due interval for earnest and patient remonstrance, to withdraw fellowship from that ecclesia.

Only in this way can the Truth be maintained in its purity—it is not sufficient for brethren (or ecclesias) to make their protest against the error and then continue as before.

This is the course being followed by some from whom we have been compelled to stand aside, and as a consequence they have in their midst error of all kinds in doctrine, and looseness of all sorts in practice.

It is not, however, our desire or intention to dwell upon the errors of those from whom we have separated. Our concern should be to be watchful of ourselves. The exhortation to all, in view of the clear scriptural instructions, is to do our part faithfully, diligently reading and studying the Word, so that error may be readily detected, and faithful exposition encouraged and upheld.

Let us remember that the Lord Jesus still, by his Spirit, walks in the midst of the ecclesias. He knows our works. Could he say of us *“Thou holdest fast my name and hast not denied my faith”*? If we honestly believe that he could, then come his words:

“That which ye have already hold fast till I come.”

Let that be our determination. We have the Truth, as received from our beloved forerunners. Let us—(and this to the younger ones who, in the continued absence of the Master, must in time replace the older ones among us)—let us determine to maintain it in its absolute purity until the end. There is a rich reward awaiting us if we hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for He is faithful that promised. What joy to be greeted in that day with the gracious words: *“Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”*

—Bro. C.H.L.

Analecta Apocalypticae (41)

THE FIFTH and SIXTH SEALS

The fifth seal changes the scene. “And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth'? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them that they should rest for yet a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled” (6:9). Plainly on the face of it, this symbolism carries with it a picture of persecution, and this exactly coincides with the phase of public affairs in the Roman empire. Diocletian, who, in a great measure, terminated the public calamities of the fourth seal by the vigour of his administration, proved a great persecutor of the Christians, who were increasingly numerous as a party throughout the empire, though increasingly degenerate from an apostolic point of view. His animosity towards them originated in the idea that the calamities of the fourth seal period were due to them. This idea was fanned by his associate in the government Galerius, who was a zealous devotee of the gods of Pagan Rome, and stirred up Diocletian to attempt the destruction of the Christian name. After many importunities, Diocletian assented, and an imperial edict was issued, enacting the punishment of death to all who should hold secret assemblies for religious worship — (that is, who should obey the commandments of Christ to meet for the breaking of bread). It was also ordered that all who had possession of the Scriptures should give them up to be burnt, and that anyone refusing to make a profession of Paganism should be incapable of holding any office, and should be put beyond the protection of the law. Twice, within fifteen days after the issue of the edict, the imperial palace was found to be on fire, and as this was attributed to the action of the Christians, it greatly increased the severity of the measures adopted against them. A great number of the most respectable of society were thrown into prison. Every mode of torture was put in practice against those thus imprisoned, and many bloody executions took place. While multitudes of professors saved themselves by renouncing Christianity, and giving up the Scriptures to be destroyed, many remained faithful, and were put to death. These terrible visitations upon believers extended throughout the Roman Empire, and added thousands to the number of victims under the altar. The sufferings of the saints, both in body and mind, were of great severity during this terrible season, and are fitly expressed in the prayer put into the mouths of the dead souls under the altar: “How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?”

You are aware that the sects around us make large use of this prayer to prove that the dead are alive and conscious. They forget that the scene of which it is a part is a hieroglyph or symbolical representation. Even taken literally they might see, if they would but reflect, it cannot favour their views. They imagine souls to be in heaven: but here they were under an altar. They imagine souls to be invisible and immaterial, but here John saw them, and white robes were given to every one of them. It is a piece of symbolism in perfect harmony with the truth that man is mortal, and that slaughtered saints are dead. The harmony is seen when we ask "What is the altar?" It is a symbol of Christ, as we learn from Paul's teaching in Hebrews generally, and notably in chapter 13:10. What is meant by the souls being under the altar? We discover this in Paul's other statement, that "our life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:2). Christ has the power to bring all his people to life again, and will exercise that power (John 6:39-40; 17:2). A dead saint, especially one put to death for his faith, is in a peculiar sense "under the altar", in Christ's safe keeping for resurrection and vindication at the appointed time.

But what about the dead souls speaking, and making this prayer and receiving answer about those not yet slain? It is the dramatic and enigmatical illustration of their position and relation to the purpose of God. It is not the stultification of literal truth. It is not an uncommon thing to impute words to things incapable of speech by way of expressing their moral relations. Thus God said to Cain, "Thy brother's blood CRIETH unto me from the ground"; commenting upon which Paul remarks (Heb. 12:24) that the sprinkled blood of Jesus "speaketh better things than that of Abel". Thus also the corpses in the tombs are represented as rising to greet the king of Babylon at his burial, and saying, "Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like one of us?" (Isa. 14:10). Thus also trees are considered as speaking one to another (Judges 9:8-15). The souls under the altar, their speech, the answer to them and the clothing of them with white robes, is the symbolical presentment of a time of persecution that prevailed during the reign of Diocletian, and the promised investiture with immortality that awaits all who suffer death for Christ's sake.

Literal truth must govern all our interpretations of symbols and parables.

THE SIXTH SEAL

The sixth seal shows us a different state of things altogether. It introduces us to something that we may look upon as in the nature of a retribution for the evil deeds performed under the fifth seal. "And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" (6:12-17).

What is there in Roman history, succeeding to the reign of Diocletian, at all corresponding to this symbolic picture of a universe in tempestuous dissolution? Looking at the political universe which was the subject of the symbol, we have not to go far to see. Following close on the fearful persecutions of the fifth seal, we behold the Pagan world in a state of violent and revolutionary turmoil ending in the overthrow of Paganism, and of the entire system established on the basis of the national idolatry, the old order of things in Rome (a thousand years old) upset, and a new order of things established. The son of one of Diocletian's colleagues was the instrument of this momentous revolution. His name is of world-wide renown. Constantine, the son of Constantius, who ruled the west, was brought up with a bias in favour of the Christians, inherited from his father. His father very much disapproved of the persecutions ordered by Galerius and Diocletian, and successfully used his authority in shielding the Christians from the extreme measures dealt out to them in other parts of the empire. His son Constantine early took their part, and perceiving them a growing party in the State, proclaimed himself their protector. On the death of his father he was proclaimed His successor by the army of the West, to the dismay of the reigning emperors in Italy and the east, who were supporters of the Paganism of the State, and who viewed with alarm the elevation of a man of known capacity who had proclaimed sympathy with the Christians. The difference of feeling between them soon led to war, and this was ended in the ruin of Paganism. Constantine exhibited a celerity and skill in his movements which baffled and overpowered his enemies. He marched to Italy and was over the Alps before almost the news of his intentions had reached the Imperial Court in Rome. Every battle was for him a victory, and in a short time he found himself in Rome the unchallenged ruler of the principal part of the empire. This was a great change for the Christians, who were emancipated from all their disabilities and received into imperial favour. After a short peace with his colleagues of Illyricum

and the East, the war was renewed. It was felt by all that the issue was between Paganism and Christianity. The two elements had long been fermenting one with the other throughout the State, and the hour had come to decide which was to have the ascendancy. The question was effectually decided by the extraordinary success uniformly attending the arms of Constantine. The armies of the Pagan emperors were completely defeated; and Constantine, the befriender of the persecuted Christians, became sole master of the empire. The constitution of the world was completely changed. The earth had been the subject of a great quake, lasting for years and resulting in all the effects portrayed in the symbolism; the sun of the political universe — the Pagan emperorship (both high-priest and defender of Paganism) had become darkened or eclipsed; the moon, or ecclesiastical element of the Roman polity — the Pagan clergy — the priests of the gods — shining by the borrowed light of the throne, even as the moon by the light of the sun — disappeared in blood; the stars of the political firmament, the numerous magnates of various kinds and degrees exercising authority in the empire, by the goodwill of the emperor, fell out of their places with the overthrow of their master, to give place to Christian successors. The heaven or whole sphere of established imperial authority, was rolled up and put aside as a thing of the past the various mountain and island kingdoms and principalities subsisting under Rome, moved out of their places, and all orders and ranks of Roman society, having participated in the persecution of the Christians, recognized in the public calamities occurrent, the retribution inflicted by “the God of the Christians”, and were panic stricken to the extent of desiring concealment, even in death, from the terrors that swept through the length and breadth of the Roman Empire. One of the Pagan emperors of the time, dying in torments, protested in his agony that he had not been guilty of persecution of the Christians. It is to be gathered from the writings of the age that all recognized the Constantinian revolution as a retribution from the God of the Christians, which it doubtless was.

This change was one which affected the entire civilized world. Rome wielded universal empire over the civilized races of men, so that what affected Rome affected all the earth, and a change so radical, effected so violently, could not better be represented than by the symbolism of the sixth seal. It was a change that took considerable time to accomplish. It was not the work of one year. It occupied several years. When accomplished, it wrought a wonderful change in the position of the friends of Christ. From being proscribed and hated and hunted down and destroyed, they became the favourites of the authorities, upon whom were lavished the revenues and the favours formerly bestowed on the Pagan priesthood. Such a change naturally gave enlarged scope for their development and consolidation. This appears to have been one of the providential purposes served by the overthrow of the Pagan adversary, as we may gather from the symbolism immediately succeeding the sixth seal, viz.: “And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads”.

Wind when used as a symbol signifies trouble in the form of war. This may be seen by reference to Jeremiah 4:11-13. “Angels holding the four winds” is an intimation that the events leading to war are subject to divine control. This control is in the hands of Christ (Matt. 28:18), to whom the angels are subject (1 Peter 3:22); and to the angels the present world hath been put in subjection (Heb. 2:5; Psalms 103:21; Daniel 10:20-21; 11:1-2). “The four winds” stand for all winds, or war from whatever quarter; consequently, in the picture before us we have human turbulence all over the earth in divine restraint, causing peace, that there might be a situation favourable for the performance of the work of sealing the servants of God. What is this? We have been caused to know this experimentally.

A seal is an implement for making an official mark of identification or authentication on prepared substance. Wherever the seal is impressed, it makes the same mark. If the substance with which it is brought in contact is not suitable, the seal does not make a mark, or makes a defective and therefore useless one. This is the literal, of which it is easy to see the spiritual counterpart in the operations of the gospel. Speaking of these, Paul says to the Ephesians concerning Christ, “in whom, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy spirit of promise which is the earnest of our inheritance” (Eph. 1:13). God gave the holy spirit to believers in confirmation of the gospel (Heb. 2:4; Mark 16:20). In this way, He attached His seal or sanction to the work. But there is a higher operation to the seal. The truth contained in the gospel given by the Holy Spirit in the apostles is the seal of God, which, when brought into contact with “honest and good hearts”, makes a mark or impression thereon which is God’s seal on the man, by which all the called or sealed are distinguished from other men, and because of which, God will claim them. The seal-mark is the state of mind caused by the knowledge of the gospel. This is the explanation of the seal being applied to the forehead in the symbol. The forehead is the symbol of the

understanding; and to be sealed in the forehead is to have the truth impressed on the understanding by the preaching of the gospel. Such a work on a large scale requires a time of peace; for when war is in the air, men's minds are too pre-occupied to give the requisite attention. This is the reason of the peace that followed the Constantinian revolution — a peace divinely provided and preserved — that the sealing work might be effectually done.

It was to be done by an angel who, in the common version, is described as “ascending from the east”. This ought, however, to read, “having ascended from the east”. The work was to be done in the west, among the Roman populations, but the agency performing it was from the east, even from Jerusalem, in which the work was begun (Luke 24:47). Consequently, an angel, “having ascended from the east”, was an appropriate symbol, the more so when we realize that in the east where the work began, the apostasy had prevailed to its near extinction.

The work was to result in an Israelitish development. John “heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.” The tribes are enumerated, and out of each tribe were twelve thousand. What is the enigmatical significance of this? We have already seen it in the consideration of Christ's allusion to “those who say they are Jews and are not but do lie.” “Salvation is of the Jews” (Jno. 4:22). The hope of the gospel is the hope of Israel (Acts 28:20). It is based on promises made to the fathers of the house of Israel (Rom. 15:8), “unto which promise,” said Paul before Agrippa, “our twelve tribes instantly serving God day and night hope to come.” The extension of this hope to the Gentiles was not an alteration of its character, but an alteration of those to whom it was extended. Every Gentile receiving and submitting to it became engrafted into “the good olive tree” of the stock of Abraham (Rom. 11:17). He ceased to be a Gentile and a stranger (Eph. 2:12), and became a fellow citizen in the commonwealth of Israel, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:19-20).

Consequently, the work of the gospel, where it is really done, must always have an Israelitish result. It turns Gentiles into Jews, making them partakers of the hope of Israel, and no longer “strangers from the covenants of promise” (Eph. 2:12). This is a very different thing from the popular work of “saving souls” so-called. It is a work of saving souls truly, but not immortal ones, and not by asking them to feel themselves great sinners and believe that Christ died for them, but by asking them to become enlightened in the covenants of promise confirmed by the Lord's death, and summoning them to surrender to the claims and commandments of the truth — claims appropriating a man's entire individuality in the present evil world, and commandments affecting the shape of his every-day life and the state of his every-day affections. When the work is successfully done, the development of “children of Abraham” is the result. Now how better could this be enigmatically expressed than by representing the sealing as affecting the twelve tribes of Israel?

When the work was performed, John saw as the result of it, “a great multitude which no man could number of all nations, kindred and people and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.”

Here we require to pause a moment. Does this mean that the result of the work to be done in the Constantinian era was to be visible in the Constantinian era? Were the people sealed in their foreheads to be seen in a saved state as the immediate results of their sealing? Were the symbolic 144,000 to be manifested in their glorified completeness in the generation that saw the overthrow of Paganism and the removal of all impediments to the execution of the work of the gospel? The placing of this scene immediately after the sealing, makes it seem as if it were so: but it cannot be so for a variety of reasons. A consideration of the context is sufficient of itself to enable us to see this. John, contemplating them, was informed in answer to a preliminary question “Who are these who are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?” “These are they who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple, and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more nor thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them nor any heat. For the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”

It is evident from this that the sealed multitude, as John saw them, were the whole multitude of the redeemed in that state which is only introduced by the Lord's coming. The 144,000, whether we understand the number literally or figuratively, is comprehensive of all the redeemed, as is evident from what we read of them in Rev. 14:1-5. Consequently, as seen in Rev. 7, they were seen in the state which they are finally to attain long after (even at the end), and not at the time of the sealing. Their constituent members are several times seen in the succeeding portions of the Apocalypse, in the very tribulation from

which in the seventh chapter they are said to have “come out.” Thus in chapter 8:7, they are “made war against and overcome;” and in chapter 17:6, the Roman harlot is “drunk with the blood of the saints.” Most conclusively, of all, we know that the dead in Christ are the DEAD in Christ, and that not until “the Lord himself descend from heaven with a shout” shall “those who are asleep rise first, “to ascend, with the living to the state in which John saw them (I Thess. 4:13-17). Why then was the scene of the saints in glory introduced in connection with the process of the sealing to be accomplished in the Constantinian era? Doubtless, to show the real result contemplated in the sealing. The two things — the work of the gospel and the end to which God purposes it shall lead must always be taken together. The one cannot be understood without the other. No reasonable explanation can be given of the process through which those who are called in Christ are put in the present life apart from the life for which it is intended as a preparation. Paul well observes “If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable.” The spectacle of the sealed class in the victory over death to which their sealing leads, is a natural companion picture to the representation of the sealing work. The two things are divided in time, but connected in reason. Therefore, John saw them in connection, yet as separated scenes. Though John saw one after the other, it does not follow that the one comes immediately after the other in fact. He says, “After this, I beheld, and lo! a great multitude,” etc. How long after is not indicated. Doubtless John would see the one scene next after the other; but as this was only to show that glory came after sealing and suffering, we must look to other sources for information as to the interval separating the one from the other. When Paul says, “If we suffer we shall also reign with him” (2 Tim. 2:12); and Jesus, “Blessed are ye that hunger now: ye shall be filled”, and “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10) — in these and many other such cases, it seems as if the two things were immediately sequential. They are sequential in their relation, but not in the succession of time, as we know. The reigning and the comforting are when Christ comes.

It remains to ask if the Constantinian era was characterized by the sealing work shadowed forth in the hieroglyph? The answer is in harmony with what would seem natural under the circumstances. What more natural than that the testimony of Christ should become more extensive and effectual under the protection and encouragement of the authorities than when the authorities were arrayed against it for its suppression? We have not much reliable information of what went on: but so much as we know from writers of the Constantinian era, is in favour of the conclusion hinted at. The people answering to the sealed were not to be found in the eastern section of the Roman empire. Of that part of the world, Dr. Thomas says (in Eureka, vol. ii., p. 328): “I have searched through Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret, the Greek ecclesiastical historians of the period of the sealing, but have been unable to find any footsteps of angel-sealers contending for the faith delivered on Pentecost. All in the east seem to have been occupied on one side or the other of Homoousianism, evincing thereby the absence of any divine sealing operation in their foreheads. The countries whose

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It is in the African portion of the Roman west where the people in question are to be found. When I speak of Africa, you will of course understand that it is not the Africa of David Livingstone's travels that is meant, that is to say not that portion of Africa that has become so prominent in connection with his name. It is not the Africa of Zulus and missionaries and elephant hunts, but the Africa of Carthage and Rome — the extreme northern part of Africa where it borders the Mediterranean Sea for hundreds of miles. If you look on the map, you will see the Mediterranean Sea is nearly a lake, with Europe on the north and Africa on the south. When you understand that the Roman Empire embraced all the countries bordering that lake and therefore a belt of northern Africa, you will understand what is meant when Africa is talked of in

this connection. It was not a country of wild men and savage life, such as we associate with the name of Africa, but a Country of civilization, embracing towns and villages and farms.

In the African portion, then, of the Roman empire, appeared in the early part of the fourth century (the time required by the symbol) a people apparently answering to the work of the angel-sealer. We know little of them except from the testimony of their enemies; but this little is illustrative of their character. The Dr. says they were an intensely anti-Catholic people. They denied the christianity of Catholics and would have no fellowship with them. They rejected Catholic baptism as null and void. They repudiated Catholic dogmas and contended for "the simplicity which is in Christ". They were uncompromisingly hostile to all things not according to the testimony of Jesus Christ. They declared to the Catholics that they were not Christians, and could not be saved as long as they continued members of Constantine's church. Ecclesiastical historians write of them as schismatics and heretics, but what they say as to their principles points to their identity with the community founded by the apostles. They were a numerous people extending, almost as numerous as the Catholics, to many towns and villages, and even provinces in northern Africa. They were known as Donatists, and though much connected with them is unsatisfactory and obscure, it is evident that this large community of people contained, in their bosom at least, the faithful and apostolic element of the professing Christian body of the age. They claimed their faith to be Apostolic as distinct from the Catholic, and declared that the true church had ceased to exist in all parts of the world where they were not. Their separation from the Catholic Church began upon a question of discipline. They maintained, at a time when it was proposed to elect a questionable character as a bishop, that the Church of Christ should consist of just and holy men, or at least of those who appeared to be such, and that men of manifested wickedness should be put away — a principle distinctly apostolic in its character. It would be interesting to go into further particulars about them; but for the purpose of these lectures it is sufficient to take notice of the fact of the existence of such a people at the time of the world's history requiring it, under the symbolism of the chapter we are considering. Berean 2009-351

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

Hints For Bible Markers

Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. The calling to which we have been called leaves no time for the foolish, childish, worldly entanglements and entertainment. Even the legitimate cares of this life can lead us to destruction. There is "But one thing is needful:" (Luke 10:42) and it is not "the things that are in the world." Our example is Christ. "This is the way, walk ye in it" (Isaiah 30:21) The purpose for marking Christ's commandments in our bible is for us to be able to keep them before our eyes, on our minds, and in our hearts. Jesus said, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;" (John 8:31) That we might be a light unto the world if we follow in his steps. If we are following in his steps we will pay serious attention to the things of the Truth. For fear that at any time we let them slip, giving "diligence to make your calling and election sure." (2 Pet. 1:10.) We must honor God through obedience to His commands. If we truly love the things of God they will be upper most in our hearts and minds. Our lives will be found in pursuit of "things above not on things on the earth."

The Commandments of Christ

As collected and organized by bro. Roberts

Set your affections upon him, and not upon the present world at all.

(1) If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. (2) Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. (3) For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. (4) When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. (Colossians 3:4)
Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (1 John 2:15)

Take him for an example and follow in his steps.

(21) For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: (22) Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: (23) Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: (1 Peter 2:21 – 23)
For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. (John 13:15)

Abide in him: do not let him slip from your memory and affections.

If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. (John 15:7)
Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. (Hebrews 2:1)

Call him to remembrance every first day of the week in the breaking of bread, as he has appointed.

(26) And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. (27) And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; (Matthew 26:26 – 27)

(To be continued next month if the Lord wills.)

352—Berean 2009