

THE BEREAN CHRISTADELPHIAN ECCLESIAL NEWS

A monthly magazine devoted wholly to the Berean Christadelphian Ecclesial welfare, with the object of providing Ecclesial news, exhortations, articles and information of fraternal interest to the Brotherhood. Defending the original, foundation principles upon which the Truth was uncovered from darkness and upon which the Christadelphian movement was developed. Opposed to the dogmas of papal and protestant christendom. Upholding the Truth as The Berean Christadelphians since 1923.

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

CHRIST IS COMING SOON AND WILL REIGN ON EARTH

Ecclesial News

LAMPASAS, Texas – Sunday School 9:50am-adult class Elpis Israel; Memorial 11:00am; Eureka class 1:15pm; Wednesday Bible readings 7:30pm in Lampasas and Austin area. Bro. Lee Freeburg, 200 Gabriel Forest, Georgetown, TX 78628; 512-869-2008, email freebs@netzero.net

Greetings in the one true hope,

It has been some time since we have sent out news from this ecclesia. And as many already know we have gained some new members this past year, one by way of baptism three by way of transfer. We were pleased to baptize **David Lucas** and wish him well in his walk Zionward. Brother Jim, sisters Kay and Jaymie Phillips joined our meeting and we welcome all four as new members.

Our annual Sunday School program was held recently and it was a real joy to see our Sunday School grow in knowledge as they develop a love for Yahweh.

Our ecclesia is once again going to hold a young peoples' get together. The date for this gathering is Friday January 1st. - January 3rd. 2010. More information can be obtained by contacting either Brother Jason Carroll or Sister Becky VanPelt. We encourage all our young people to come if possible.

Our ecclesia is going to host the Hye quarterly once again the first Sunday in February. We plan to have some classes on Saturday, January 31th. Brother Jim Sommerville will do three sessions on Jerusalem. More information on this gathering will be forth coming. We hope many will join us on this occasion. E-mail Brother Lee Freeburg at freebs@netzero.net if you would like more information on either of these events.

Bro. Lee Freeburg, Recorder

EDMONTON, Alberta - S.S. & Study Class 10 A.M.; Memorial 11:20 A.M.; Bible Class 8 P.M. in homes. Bro. Steve Armstrong, Box 16, Site 440, R.R. #4, Stony Plain, AB. T7Z-1X4. Phone (780) 963-7115. Email, stevearm@cruzinternet.com

It has been quite some time since I have written an update in the *Berean Christadelphian Ecclesial News* magazine, and I wanted everyone to be aware of some recent developments in the Edmonton Ecclesia.

Our newest Edmonton member, Bro. Noel McChesney, is again in the process of battling cancer. This is a very difficult time for both Bro. Noel and Sis. Brenda and I would encourage you to keep them both in your prayers. Also, I'm sure they would appreciate cards, e-mails and letters of support and encouragement.

Bro. Arthur Luard was also suffering with cancer and has fallen asleep in the Lord awaiting his Master's return. Sis. Margaret could use some cheerful words of encouragement via e-mails and letters, and of course, we should keep their family in our prayers.

On a happier note, we have recently completed a series of four lectures and are happy to be able to share that we had 10, 2, 0 and 6 visitors respectively, not including our Sunday School students and members who are always refreshed by hearing the basic Bible teachings such as are taught in lectures. We are now looking forward to the Edmonton Study Weekend on November 14 & 15, with our study topics being centered around "Worship Through the Ages".

We all look forward eagerly to the time when our Saviour has returned; when there will be no more sorrow, sickness or death for those called and chosen to Worship in the Kingdom Age. May we all work toward being there so that we can worship and serve our Father with purity and perfection.

Your Brother in Christ,
Steve Armstrong

NAKALIRA, Kenya, Sunday School 9:30 AM, Memorial 10:30 AM evening Bible students Friday Bible class 2:30 PM, Brother Paul Walukana P.O. Box 65-50216 Kamukuyuwa, Kenya E-mail: paulwalukana@yahoo.com Phone: +254-735-191-850

Beloved Brothers and Sisters, Loving greetings and Shalom in Christ,

It is for some time since our last contribution of news.

We are all well and thankful for the BCAF programmes. This year we have been blessed with several visits of Brother Epa Wekati of Kimukungi Ecclesia, Brother and Sister John and Caro Simiyu of Mayanja Ecc, the visits were of great value. On October 31, 2009 with gratefulness and overwhelming joy we announce the baptism of two; Sister **Gladys Wafula** and Sister **Miriam Chikombe**, after a good confession of their faith.

The right hand of fellowship was extended on 1 November 2009.

The exam was supervised by Bro. Epa and Bro. John with forms used both written and oral.

May God watch over our new sisters and bless them for their good decision made for the Truth in this dark period of Gentile times.

Work continues for those seeking fellowship. Prayers are earnestly requested for His continued blessing upon the work which goes forth.

Food for thought: Psalms 133: 'Behold how good and how pleasant brethren to dwell together in unity'. Luke 9:23-26: 'Count the true cost of discipleship.' Luke 8:16-18: The parable of the lamp. 1 Thessalonians 5:17&19: Pray without ceasing - quench not the Spirit.

HYMN: 161 for exhortation 1 John 4:11

Brethren, let us walk together
In the bonds of love and peace
Can it be a question whether
Brethren should from conflict cease?
TIS IN UNION,
HOPE AND JOY AND LOVE INCREASE.

While we journey homeward, let us
Help each other on the road;
Foes on every side beset us,
Snares through all the way are strew'd;
It behooves us
Each to bear a brother's load.

When we think how much our Father
Has forgiv'n and does forgive,
Brethren, we should learn the rather
Free from wrath and strife to live,
Far removing
All that might offend or grieve.

Then let each esteem his brother
Better than himself to be;
And let each prefer another,
Full of love, from envy free;
HAPPY ARE WE,
WHEN IN THIS WE ALL AGREE

On behalf of Nakalira Ecc.,
Your fellow labourer by grace in the Masters' vineyard,
Bro. Paul Walukana

ODIADO, Kenya, Sunday school 9:00 a.m., Memorial 10:00 am, Wednesday 3:00 pm Bible Study Friday 3:00 pm lectures (friends) Bro. Humphreys Odaba Budedu, P.O. Box 142 Bumala- 50404 Kenya.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Loving greetings in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and to all of the household of faith. It is with extreme pleasure that we bring some good news from this part of God's vineyard that we had a successful Bible School which started on 19/8/2009 and ended on 23/8/2009.

The following brothers and sisters from Bungoma attended the bible school at Odiado ecclesia. Bro. Epa Wekati of Kimukungi, Bro. Stephen Juma, Bro. David Mukoro, Bro. Caro Juma, Bro. Nyongesa Wilberforce Bro. Jeremiah Walunywa, Bro. Elphas Juma, Sis. Eda Wanyonyi, Bro. John Simiyu-Mayanja, Bro. Caro Simiyu, Bro. Enock Simiiyu, Bro. Moses Wafula-Nakalira, Sis. Cynthia Tyler, Sis. Gladys Wafula, Sis. Mary Walukana, Bro. Roggers Musebe-Kimilili.

And the following topics were taught;

1. The great drama - Bro. John Sandaku
2. Immortality - Bro. Enock Simiyu
3. The destiny of the ignorant -Bro. David Mukoro
4. The promises -Bro. Stephen Juma
5. 144,000 on Mt. Zion -Bro. Epa Wekati
6. Born of flesh/water/spirit -Bro. Moses Wafula
7. Resurrection & judgement -Bro. John Simiyu
8. Baptism & isolation -Bro. Roggers Musebe

On 23/8/2009, Bro. Roggers Musebe gave us a wonderful and encouraging exhortation to be humble, confident and responsible on what we are doing and Bro. John Simiyu presided over the breaking of bread and wine in remembering Christ's death.

We thank all our brothers and sisters for devoting their time for the bible school at Odiado and God willing next year in August will be the same. All are welcome.

May we all brothers and sisters continue to prepare for our Masters return.

We also report that Sister Judith Odaba has been diagnosed to be with arthritis and has been in ward for 7 days, therefore we call upon for brothers and sisters to pray for her for she is still strong in the Word of God.

Love to all and greeting to all in hope,
Brother Humphreys O. Budedu.

FRATERNAL GATHERINGS & ACTIVITIES

(To be held Yahweh Willing)

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
Class will be on the book of Daniel.

The Study

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.

He Must Increase: I Must Decrease

“He that hath the Bride is the Bridegroom; but the Friend of the Bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice: this my joy, therefore is fulfilled” (John 3:29).

In Luke 3, we have the ministry of John Baptist, the *“voice crying in the wilderness, preparing the way of the Lord.”*

The story begins in chapter 1. After a silence of 400 years, God once again openly manifested Himself to His people, and the wonderful events which fill the Gospels begin.

The last previous Word of God had come through Malachi, who closed his prophecy, and the Old Testament, with the promise of the coming of Elijah to turn the nation back to God.

At the national hour of prayer, as an aged priest stood offering incense for the nation in the Temple, in the Holy Place, on the altar of prayer, before the veil — the angel Gabriel appeared. He had, 600 years before, appeared to Daniel, and he was to appear again soon after to Mary.

There could have been no more fitting place or time to indicate that all things are through the power of prayer. And his first words were:

“Fear not, thy prayer is heard” (Luke 1:13).

The priest was Zacharias, and the message was that though his wife was barren, and they were old, they should have a son.

It was to be a child of promise, a special operation of the power of God, like Isaac, Samson, and Samuel.

And he was to be a Nazarite from birth, again like Samson and Samuel.

And he was to be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb.

We are impressed through all the events of Luke 1 and 2 — the announcements and births of John and Jesus — with the constant repetition of the theme of intense and overflowing joy in the purpose of God — both by angels and by men.

It is an aspect worthy of deep consideration. Joy is a spiritual thing, and it should be much deeper and more prevalent among us.

We do not get and keep CLOSE enough to these things. We are missing so much that we would be experiencing by a deeper and more intense application. Joy is spiritual healthiness and robust well-being, and we are far too weak and sickly in this respect.

This attitude of ecstatic praise should be the rule among God's children and not the occasional and seemingly unnatural exception.

This is manifest more naturally and freely among some of the smaller, simpler sects, who are not afraid of the ridicule of the world, and it is to our reproach that it is not more natural among us.

The Psalms of David, which are the mind of Christ, portray to us the true godly attitude. Truly they are filled with the burden of the passing sorrows of the present, but also with the unrestrainable and overflowing joy of the Spirit in all God's marvelous works and wisdom.

We do not fill our minds enough with the contemplation of eternal joys but far too much with petty, passing, depressing present things.

"Thou shalt have joy and gladness" (Lk. 1:14).

"Joy and gladness" is God's will and purpose for His people. All His appointments are to this end. The closer we truly get to the way and mind of God, the greater will be our joy and gladness.

Dissatisfaction and unhappiness are elements of the flesh — inevitable accompaniments of selfishness and desire.

The deceptiveness of the flesh is nowhere more clearly manifested than in its prompting to seek and expect joy and gladness outside the way of God. This is the essence of the temptation of Christ which he, in the wisdom of the Spirit, instantly rejected.

"And many shall rejoice at his birth" (v. 14).

And we must be among them! Rejoicing MUST be the basic tone of our lives. We must continuously rejoice in these things.

Regardless of, and in spite of, present problems and disappointments, deep rejoicing will always be our principal characteristic, IF our faith is real, and if we truly believe what God has said. Any other frame of mind is a reproach against God's love and goodness. We are denying by our actions our professed faith in God's glorious assurance that (Rom. 8:28):

"ALL things work together for good to them that love God."

Paul, who said (Rom. 9:2-3):

"I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart for my brethren, my kinsmen after the flesh."

Paul also said (Phil 4:4-7):

"Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice!"

"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

These statements are not contradictory, nor mutually exclusive. They are rather complementary. They make up the full pattern of godliness which Paul so well manifested.

Both are essential to true Christ-likeness, but the rejoicing and the peace must be the broader and deeper and over-riding, and more inward, emotions. Until we develop this basic frame of mind in ourselves, and radiate it, we cannot do anyone any good. We drive people from the glorious Truth of God, rather than attract them to its joy and beauty and goodness.

God is good, and God is love, and good and love will finally fill the earth, and everything in its own way is leading forward to this final victory.

There are no mistakes or failures in the triumphant divine plan.

We must always keep the sorrow and the rejoicing in their respective relationships. One is small and passing; the other infinite and everlasting.

“Thou shalt be dumb, because thou believest not my words.”

The dumbness of Zacharias was a blessing in the form of a punishment, and so beautifully illustrates the wisdom and goodness of God's ways.

He would not believe without a sign, so he was given a sign that rebuked his unbelief, yet at the same time strengthened his faith. It both humbled and comforted him, and also taught him wisdom.

He was a righteous man, well pleasing to God (v. 6). But at the moment of visitation — the great moment of his life — the moment for which Israel had been waiting 400 years — he was not quite ready. He was caught off guard.

And yet he was in the very act in which his mind should have been most attuned for a divine communication. He stood before the altar — before the veil — offering the incense of prayer for the whole nation.

Six months later the same Gabriel appeared with similar abruptness to a poor, obscure young girl of Israel, as she went about her own private way, but how much more maturely does the young woman react to the sudden angelic visitation and much stranger message, than the old priest!

The lesson is to live more deeply in the world of faith, and constant consciousness of spiritual things.

“And Mary arose, and went into the hill country of Judea, into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth” (vs. 39-40).

(The term translated “cousin” in verse 36 is a term of indefinite relationship and usually translated “kinsman,” as in Luke 2:44).

Upon seeing Mary, Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit to prophesy and glorify God, and Mary was likewise, and the babe John leaped in the womb for joy. This is an important aspect of the whole picture concerning John and his work — joy, and the power of the Spirit. It comes out again and again.

All was of the Spirit of God for the joy of mankind. The greatest event in human history was just beginning to unfold — spoken of by the angels as “Tidings of Great Joy” — the event for which all the ages had waited — the event around which all revolved — and all the participants are deeply moved with the joy of the Spirit.

At the birth of John, Zacharias' tongue was loosed, and he, too, was filled with the Holy Spirit and praised and glorified God. Of John, Zacharias said (v. 76):

“Thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest, for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways.”

John's mission was to arouse the nation to repentance, and to introduce the Messiah to them:

“To give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins” (v. 77).

From the beginning, this aspect was emphasized — that the salvation men need is from themselves — from their own natural, death-tending characteristics and desires.

“Through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us” (v. 78).

“Dayspring” means arising or dawning. A new day was dawning for Israel. The Sun of Righteousness was to be manifested. This is a clear reference again to the last chapter of Malachi, the promise of the “*Sun of Righteousness*” to “*arise with healing in his wings.*”

This reference to light is very frequent in relation to the coming of Christ, as in Isaiah 9:2:

“The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light, they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.”

Light from darkness was the first act of creation.

The natural state of men is darkness, and all his natural thoughts and actions are foolishness. Only spiritual thoughts and actions are light. Paul presents this vividly (2 Cor. 4:6):

“God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts.”

“To give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

The apostle John says of the same event (John 1:6-9):

“There was a man sent from God whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light.”

“He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.”

“That was the true Light which lighteth every man who cometh into the world.”

It can be our privilege and joy, if we choose, to come out from walking in natural death-tending darkness, into that lifegiving Light.

Just accepting the Truth is not in itself coming in the Light. We are only in the Light when we are consciously choosing to repudiate all the thoughts of the flesh and to walk according to the principles of the mind of Christ.

John said, at the beginning of his first epistle (1:5):

“This, then, is the message which we have heard of him.”

— this is the basic message, this is the key point, the heart of the matter:

“God is Light, and in Him is no darkness.”

“If we say we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the Truth.”

And walking in light, as John goes on to show, means walking in love toward everyone. He says (1 Jn. 2:10-11) —

“He that loveth his brother abideth in the Light.”

“He that hateth his brother is in darkness.”

An act that is not done in love — through enlightened godly love — is an act of darkness — an act of disfellowship from God — no matter how self-righteous it may be. Everything we do must be tested by this test. Our “*zeal for the Lord,*” like Jehu, is often really the flesh, when we pride ourselves it is the Spirit.

When we act, or speak, or think, in anger, or annoyance, or impatience, or selfishness, or resentment, or for any motive except kindness and love, even if it be — as we suppose — in defense of the Truth, we are in darkness, and are disfellowshipping ourselves from God Who is Light and Love and Goodness.

“The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit” (Lk. 1:80).

What does it mean, to “*wax (or grow) strong in spirit?*”

It means, by study, and meditation, and prayer, and practice, to be strong in spirituality and control of the flesh — to be strong in the mind of the Spirit.

We cannot actually weaken the flesh, but we can continually strengthen and build up the Spirit. This is the whole purpose of our lives, and every moment not consciously engaged in this is wasted. Every time we subdue and control the natural thoughts and reactions of the flesh, we strengthen the Spirit — we *“wax stronger in Spirit.”*

This was how John spent thirty years of preparation in the desert for his so brief, but so important, ministry —

“The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the desert until the day of his showing unto Israel.”

Thirty years' lonely preparation in seclusion — then a brief ministry of a year or so — then imprisonment and death at the whim of a wicked woman. This was the life story of him of whom Christ said there had never been a greater born of woman.

Luke 3 records that John began his ministry in the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar, and mentions various local rulers of the time. As close as can be determined, this appears to have been 26 AD.

All was under Rome, but there were different degrees of semi-independence and local control. Pilate was the Roman representative, directly controlling Judea and Samaria. His period of office was AD 26 to 36, so we know all the events in John's and Christ's ministries are within that period.

“Herod, tetrarch of Galilee” is the Herod all through the ministries of John and Jesus — the one who killed John and mocked Christ in conjunction with Pilate.

“Tetrarch” literally means *“ruler of a fourth part,”* but it was used generally of a ruler of any portion of a country.

Iturea and Trachonitis, where Philip ruled, was the area northeast of Galilee. Abilene was still farther to the north.

“Annas and Caiaphas being the High Priests” (v. 2).

Actually there would by the Law be only one High Priest. Annas had been High Priest but had been removed by the Romans who used the office as a political one.

The official High Priest at this time was Caiaphas, Annas' son-in-law, but Annas still controlled the office. At his trial, Jesus was taken before Annas first, then before Caiaphas. Both were evil men.

“The Word of God came unto John in the wilderness” (v. 2).

There was a direct moment of divine call to go forth on the mission from which he had so long been in preparation. His message was —

“Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.”

“Repent” in Scripture means “to turn, to change, to think and act differently.” It was a call to turn from fleshly things to spiritual things, from earthly things to heavenly things — to prepare for the heavenly Kingdom.

It was not understood by the people. They flocked to him; they considered him a great prophet. There was a national flurry of excitement and show of repentance but it was passing and short-lived. Jesus sums it up later when speaking to the people of John (Jn. 5:35) —

“Ye were willing FOR A SEASON to rejoice in his light.”

Shallow, superficial, imperfect conversion — partial dedication — half-way faith — worldly godliness — is the greatest enemy of salvation.

Mark says, “*All men*” — that is, the generality of the common people, not the rulers —

“*All men counted John that he was a prophet*” (Mk. 11:32)

Truly he stirred the nation. He was a “*burning and a shining light*.” But there was no permanent national effect, for the depth of the teaching, and its vital bearing on all daily activities of life — which is the only true religion — was never comprehended. This is so often sadly the case in the Brotherhood today.

It was the same nation that within three years rejected the Messiah whom John proclaimed, and clamored for his death.

John's ministry filled a very important and necessary part of the plan of God. The time had come for the Law of Moses to end. Jesus said (Luke 16:16):

“*The Law and the prophets were until John.*”

Jesus began a new dispensation, in which the Law of Moses could not fit. The Law had served its interim purpose —

“*Till the Seed should come to whom the (Abrahamic) promise was made*” (Gal. 3:19).

Clearly a connecting link was necessary as a foundation for Christ's work — a divinely-appointed transition from the Old to the New.

John was that vital link. He was of the priesthood and rooted in the Law. He was universally recognized by all the nation as a true, divinely-sent prophet.

And when he had become fully established and accepted, he introduced Christ to them as the long-promised Messiah —

“*The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29).

And then John gradually faded from the picture —

“*He must increase, but I must decrease*” (John 3:30)

When we think of John, we cannot but think, too, of his noble namesake in the Old Testament, who in some ways filled the same relation to David as John did to Jesus —

“*He must increase, but I must decrease.*”

“*He that hath the Bride is the Bridegroom, but the friend of the Bridegroom, who standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice.*”

“*This my joy therefore is fulfilled.*”

In the strange beauty of the symbol, the friend of the Bridegroom, who stepped aside for him, is also part of the Bride, so his loss was eventually his gain. So with John; so with Jonathan.

“*And he came to all the country about Jordan*” (Luke 3:3).

— that is, to the plain of Jordan, just north of the Dead Sea, near Jericho.

“*The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of Yahweh. Make straight in the desert a highway for our God*” (v. 4).

Of John, when his course was run, Jesus said (Matt. 17:12):

“*Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed.*”

“*Likewise shall also the Son of Man suffer of them.*”

And of the fickleness of the nation Jesus speaks in the parable of the children in the marketplace (Luke 7:33) —

“John came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and ye say, He hath a devil.”

“The Son of man is coming eating and drinking, and ye say, Behold, a glutton and a winebibber!”

“Then said John to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him”:

“O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”

“Bring forth, therefore, fruits worthy of repentance.”

“Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.”

Gabriel had said to Zacharias (1:17) that John should —

“Make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

It was not that shallow, wavering multitude with whom his real work lay. Nor can his success be measured by its rootless natural results. He was a part of the great, unfailing purpose of *“preparing a people for God.”*

John proclaimed no new doctrine. It was not his mission to proclaim a new doctrine. For he was sent to turn the hearts of the children to the fathers — back to the faith of the faithful fathers of the nation.

John's great message — and it was not new, but it was very necessary to be re-emphasized— was that preparation for God's Kingdom required personal transformation and purification; and visible, tangible fruits of character and conduct —

“BRING FORTH FRUITS ... Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.”

“And they asked him: What shall we do then?” (v. 10) — what is the fruit required?

His answer must have been a great surprise. They were doubtless prepared, in their shallow enthusiasm, to do something spectacular, like Naaman — something spectacular and self-satisfying, but that would not interfere inconveniently with their normal way of life.

His answer is so simple, and yet so searching. His answer comprehends all the essence of the Old, for both Christ and Paul say all the Mosaic Law is comprehended in one word, and John's answer is the simple, practical application of that one word.

And it comprehends, too, all the essence of the New. It is the one basic principle the Old and New have in common —

“Thou shalt love thy neighbor AS THYSELF”

— thou shalt think, and act, and live your lives, in terms of general universal welfare, and not selfish, exclusive, personal welfare.

It is expressed in many and varied ways in Scripture and illustrated by many and varied examples, but it is never more simply and effectively put than it was by John to the enquiring multitude.

He puts an attractive theoretical principle in the form of an awkward and embarrassing practical challenge to sincerity —

“He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none: and he that hath meat, let him do likewise” (Luke 3:11).

Food and raiment — all the necessities of life. And we are commanded NOT to go beyond the necessities (1 Tim. 6:8) —

“Having food and raiment, BE THEREWITH CONTENT”

— stop there, and turn the balance of your efforts and attention to eternal, worthwhile labors: lay up treasure in heaven where it is safe and lasting.

How many of us have more than two coats? — and yet there are still so many who have none. We can find them very easily if we really want to take the trouble to care.

Is this perhaps being a little too literal? — a little too searchingly and uncomfortably literal?

It is for each one to say what these things mean to him; for each one to work out between himself and God. But we can be assured that John was not expressing mere idle words, and that the way to the Kingdom he heralded lies only along the rarely trodden path that he points out so clearly.

Christ is the great example, and Paul a worthy illustration of following that example —

“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.”

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”

“Look not every man on his own things” (Phil. 2:4)

“Love seeketh not her own.”

“Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor.”

In the providence of God, John sufficiently — even though but shallowly and temporarily — cleansed and aroused and purified the nation, that God could manifest Himself through Christ among them and make a deep impression on many individual hearts that John had stirred to hope and expectation.

We are aware of the difficulty that even the sincere ones experienced in trying to fit Christ as he was into their conception of what the Messiah should be —

“We have heard out of the Law that Christ abideth forever, and how sayest thou that the Son of man must be lifted up?” (John 12:34).

And when Jesus was asked —

“Why say the scribes that Elias must first come?” He answered (Matt. 17:12):

“Elias is come already, and they knew him not.”

“Then the disciples understood that he spoke of John the Baptist.”

Elijah truly comes at the end, before the great day of Christ's manifestation to Israel, but there had to be an Elijah for the first coming, for the first coming was a real and true offering to the Jews of the Messiah and the kingdom.

God knew that Israel would reject Christ, and that this would not be the day of his glory to which the coming of the literal Elijah was related. It was so foreseen and foretold, and in the wisdom of God the working out of the plan of redemption depended on Christ's rejection.

But, still in the offering of Jesus to them, the promise of the forerunner must be fulfilled, to carry out God's part and to remove any justification of their rejection —

“This (John) is Elias, IF YE WILL RECEIVE IT” (Matt. 11:14).

If they had accepted Christ, John would have been the complete fulfilment of the Elijah prophecy, but God knew it was not to be.

John was sent to prepare the nation — to raise the national expectancy — to focus attention on the manifestation of Christ.

This was the principal purpose of his baptism. It was a transitional, introductory appointment, to lead to Christ, to prepare for Christ, and to provide the avenue by which Christ should be manifested.

It was a typical, national purification, because for three years God was going to manifest Himself intimately among them in His only begotten Son. John said, of the purpose of his baptism:

“That he should be made manifest to Israel, THEREFORE am I come baptizing with water” (John 1:31).

Baptism is a recognition of uncleanness and a seeking for cleanness. John's baptism was another link between the Old and the New.

The Law had its washings and purifications. The principle of symbolic cleansing by water was already established. The wisdom of God carried it a step further in John's ministry, and made it a public act and testimony of repentance from sin, and allegiance to righteousness.

The way was thus gradually prepared for the full significance of baptism as a death to the Old and a resurrection to the New — an entering into, and becoming part of, Christ and his sacrificial death and life bringing resurrection.

To further establish the smooth continuity, Jesus — as he began his ministry — associated disciples with himself by baptism, and gradually came to baptize more disciples than John (John 4:1). Thus was the transition gently made —

“He must increase, but I must decrease” (Jn. 3:30)

But baptism had still not yet been revealed in its full significance as related to Christ's great sacrifice for sin.

John proclaimed a principle that the Jews were now going to have to see clearly — a principle illustrated and established in their own history, but which the nation had never understood.

It is a principle later greatly emphasized by Christ and Paul, and shown by them to go right back to the beginning in the selection of Isaac and rejection of Ishmael; the selection of Jacob and rejection of Esau —

“They are not all Israel who are of Israel, but the children of the promise are counted for the seed” (Rom. 9:6-8).

John said to them (Luke 3:8) —

“Begin not to say within yourselves: We have Abraham to our father.”

This was the national delusion, and it can be equally deluding today. Christ's brethren are not such simply because they belong to an ecclesia or a fellowship.

Membership of itself is no guarantee. It is essential, truly, and part of the required obedience, that we assemble with those of like Faith, and that we keep separate in fellowship from error.

But standing before God depends — not on mere membership — but on the character of our day-to-day and moment-to-moment activities and interests.

We are *“in Christ”* ONLY if the everyday course of all our thoughts and acts are in Christ.

The principle John emphasized is still vital: It is not ritual and relationship but righteousness and reality that constitute sonship to God.

We are in fellowship with the Father only when we are thoughtfully and consciously walking in the Spirit-Light.

John was utterly single-minded and intense in his unsparing denunciation of wickedness, regardless of what was involved.

Because of his testimony against Herod's wickedness, Herod shut up John in prison, at the instigation of Herodias, his wife.

While in prison, John sent to Jesus, saying (Matt. 11:3) —

“Art thou he that should come or look we for another?”

This question by John presents somewhat of a puzzle. We must try not to read too much into it, nor too little. It was recorded for our comfort and admonition, and we must seek its lessons.

It is a great and helpful revelation of his inner feelings. It cannot be that John actually doubted that Jesus was the Messiah. This, he himself, on the direct evidence and testimony of God, had established. But he was perplexed. He sought assurance and reaffirmation.

It was a supreme test and trial for John to be confined to a dungeon while Jesus, whom he had announced as the Son of God and the long-promised Messiah, went about the country teaching, with no message for John, no hint of recognition of his plight, no explanation, no indication of what John could expect.

We are so strikingly reminded of Elijah himself when, after his so courageous stand on Mount Carmel, he fled in disappointment and despair before Jezebel.

John did not lose faith, but he seemed to lose heart and hope. The weak human flesh was spiritually exhausted by the long intensity of the struggle. John was mortal. He needed to be strengthened and comforted, and reminded of the glorious and unchanging realities.

In this perplexed appeal of John from the dark dungeon to the one whom he had joyfully and courageously hailed as the long-awaited Messiah, we feel a closer fellow-feeling with John than in any other part of his life. He was truly one of us, though he looms so great in the purpose. He struggled against the same mortal frailty, and out of weakness was made strong. Like Job, he could not understand and he agonized for an explanation of a seeming contradiction.

Jesus did not give him any explanation. He did not even answer his question. John must, like Job, endure his unexplained testing in faith unto the end.

But Jesus did give him this — fresh, powerful, conclusive evidence to strengthen his faith and encourage his patience, and he reminded him there were great blessings for those who held fast to assured realities in spite of passing appearances, and who did not weary or stumble at unexplained problems that lay behind the veil of God's wisdom.

We can not really say Jesus was rebuking John for being offended or stumbling. Rather it would seem he spoke to strengthen John's obvious struggle against the natural temptation of the flesh to be impatient under trial. His message was to help in the trial without hindering its purpose.

Jesus himself required and received angelic strengthening in Gethsemane. In the extremity of the trial there, he asked a question — *“Can this cup pass?”* — that it is not easy for us to fit into the pattern of his complete knowledge of what was before him, and his unreserved self-yielding to it.

But there is no question of his faithfulness, obedience, or sinlessness.

The record of these things is to help US to overcome — to encourage us with the example of others who have overcome. It helps us to realize that there are many things about temptation, about the flesh, about the ways of God, about others, about ourselves — that we can not understand.

It is well we DO realize the pitiful limits of our understanding in so many things.

Jesus did not send one word of direct encouragement or approbation to John by the messengers. There was just the calling attention to the miraculous, beneficial manifestation of the Spirit in works of life and healing, and a reminder of the blessedness of a patient, trusting faith unmoved by any stumblingblocks —

“Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.”

The wisdom of Christ's reply lay in the fact that John's real need was not an explanation, but the realization that true blessedness consists in a faith that will joyfully and thankfully hold fast through anything, without explanation.

This alone is really faith at all. Jesus knew what John needed and that he would overcome, for as soon as the messengers were gone, Jesus spoke to the multitude of John's true greatness —

“Among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.”

We are told no more about John's thoughts, feelings, and sufferings. A little later on they all came to an end, at the hand of Herod's executioner.

It seems sad that a righteous man like John should be cruelly cut off by wicked hands, but in the wisdom of God he had done his work.

We must get GOD'S viewpoint, and we must get a true view of the purpose of this present life as simply a brief preparation for an eternal reality. It was not suitable that John should continue, once Christ had been introduced to the nation, and begun his ministry.

John's work was done.

John's whole purpose was to prepare the way for Christ. He was the last of the prophets of the old dispensation. If he had lingered on when his work was finished, it would have detracted from the power and success of that work, and hindered the transition from the Old to the New.

The sword of Herod, rather than a calamity, was a wise and merciful provision of God to clear the way for the new, and to give His beloved rest. And, as the forerunner, he must precede his Master in this also. Of John's death, Jesus said:

“They did unto him whatsoever they would”:

“Even so shall the Son of Man also suffer of them.”

The picture at the beginning is joy, and at the end it is sorrow, but it is not the sorrow of those who have no hope.

Rather it is through the sorrow that the promise of the joy is fulfilled, and we meet now in rejoicing to commemorate an event that at its occurrence plunged all God's people into sorrow and despair.

Looking back, now it is all past, we see the sorrow as a passing and necessary factor in the wisdom of God's love to produce the final Joy. And so — in the end — all sorrow will be seen to be.

—*Bro. G.V. Growcott*

“What Communion Hath Light With Darkness?”

Not having grown up in the “Truth” makes this time of year especially difficult. Hearing the sounds of Bing Crosby singing White Christmas while walking in various stores brings back childhood memories. The sound taking me back to the sights and smells of that childhood event, with family, friends, and let's not forget, presents. It warms the heart of the flesh to remember such things. But permit us a closer look at those memories.

My parents starting early in November would tell me to behave or Santa Claus would not bring any presents. There is several things wrong with this thought. When we are old enough to know there is no Santa Claus, we have learned a lesson, it is acceptable to tell a lie. This goes directly against the commands of God.

“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor”. (Ex. 20:16)

“Thou shalt not bear false witness”. (Matthew 19:18)

It is a deliberate lie. There is no such creature as Santa Claus. He does not bring presents. Gifts are purchased by family members. Do we think for a minute that the Son of God would go along with such foolishness. Would any true brother of Christ wish to be associated with it?

“Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;” (Colossians 3:9)

Christmas diminishes the teaching of being obedient out of love of God. When God calls us to a knowledge of Him he does so that we might come to love Him. Out of that love comes obedience to Divine commands and it is His love that grants us the sure mercies of David.

“And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” (Deuteronomy 6:5)

“Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.” (Matthew 22:37)

“And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” (1 John 4:16)

The fitting and proper love of God, which is with a perfect heart, is more important than we may first realize. If we look at Asa, a king of Judah, where in 2 Chronicles 16 many dreadful defects of character are shown, but in the end the God’s pronouncement was “the heart of Asa was perfect all his days.” (2 Chronicles 15:17) Compare him with Amaziah, also a king of Judah, whom Yahweh affirmed “did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, but not with a perfect heart.” (2 Chronicles 25:2) Paul declared,

“And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity [agapē = love], I am nothing.” (1 Corinthians 13:2)

This is the same word Jesus used for love when chastising the Jews. *“But I know you, that ye have not the love [agapē = love] of God in you.”* (John 5:42) Paul says without that love he was nothing.

Christmas trains us in the ways of covetousness. It is another lesson learned, *I want, I want, I WANT.* Some mythical god will supply us with the things **I WANT.** But the Lord says:

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's. (Exodus 20:17)

Thou shalt not covet; (Romans 13:9)

There should be no “I want” in regards to the things of the flesh. This world has absolutely *nothing* we should desire, our hearts should be on the things to come. With these thoughts is the way to direct our children. The word covet used in Romans means to long for. That is exactly what Christmas teaches us to do. This is a hard thing not to do. Especially if your mail box is like mine, full of ads trying to sell some product. Saying things like, “you are not a good husband if you don’t buy your wife diamonds”, “your husband doesn’t love you very much if he doesn’t buy you diamonds, or you are not a good parent if you don’t buy your child this product.” Our world is made up of greed. We always want more and are never satisfied. You can not satisfy the flesh. Coveting things, products, toys, [all are things of this world] is deadly. We must abstain from this type of thinking. We must teach our children to abhor it. To flee it as they would from a burning house.

“For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.” (Ephesians 5:5)

“Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.” (1 Corinthians 6:10)

If we must covet, we should not covet the things of the flesh, we ought to covet the things of the spirit. *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” (Galatians 5:22-23)*

Christmas feeds on the thinking of the flesh. It was created by the mind of flesh for the flesh. This pagan ritual is not found anywhere in the Bible. God does not direct us to celebrate it. Christmas is carnal! There is NOTHING Christ-like about it at all. Christmas does not bring us closer to God. It leads in the opposite direction. What brings us closer to God is conformity to the **command** to meet each first day of the week and remember the sacrifice, done in obedience, of His son. That is spiritual. We can not be in conformity with the things of the world. We need to demonstrate our difference from the world.

The pagan belief in Christmas takes all glory from God. It claims a god of man’s imagination will provide for our wants. Santa Claus, Saint Nicolas, and the Christ-in-manger child are ALL some form of PAGAN god claiming to provide for us. The one true God of Heaven and earth tells us that He will provide all things that are necessary. We may want more, but we are in His care. Provision is made for our needs. We are to curb our wants or lusts. Jesus tells us God will provide.

“Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Matthew 6:31-33)

According to Wikipedia there have been various parallels drawn between Santa Claus and the Germanic or Norse god Odin. Some of the Christmas holiday customs concerning Santa Claus come from areas where the Germanic peoples were Christianized. They kept their traditions and they metamorphed into our modern day Santa Claus. Records show Odin during the Germanic holiday of Yule leading a great hunting party through the sky. He rode an eight legged horse who could leap great distances, which compares to the eight reindeer of Pagan Claus. Children would place their boots, filled with carrots, straw, or sugar, near the chimney for Odin's flying horse to eat. Odin would then reward those children for their kindness by replacing the horse’s food with gifts or candy. This gave rise to the modern practice of hanging stockings “by the chimney with care.”

Saint Nicholas is the common name for Nicholas of Myra, a saint and Bishop of Myra (Demre, in Lycia, part of modern-day Turkey). He had a reputation for secret gift-giving, such as putting coins in the shoes of those who left them out for him. He was a Catholic priest who, over time, changed into Santa Claus. He is the patron saint of many people, cities, and countries including New York.

The manger child is worshiped as god-the-son not as the true Son of God. He is the embodiment of the trinity. What brother of Christ would want to have himself and family associated with such mummery. Christmas is a fusion of the idolatries of Egypt, Babylon, Rome, Scandinavia and Druids of England. It is to Catholicism that Christmas holds its current popularity. We would do well to completely avoid all pretensions toward it.

The lights and pretty colors are all designed to bring pleasure to the mind of the flesh. We see none of the beauty and righteousness of the Son of God in these purely pagan institutions. Where do we see Jesus in obedience to his Father, denying himself, crucifying the flesh? What is seen in this institution of Christmas is the satisfaction and glorification of the fleshly mind. Christmas is a thing to be abhorred and avoided.

“for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14)

READ EUREKA

—Bro. Beryl V. Snyder

Encouraging Words No. 3

WHAT profit is there in considering the lives of Old Testament characters? This question, from an apparently earnest, truth-loving sister reveals the dangerous working of the outside influences of unbelief.

The point of the question lies in the shortcomings, actual or alleged, of Bible characters. Although not so intended by our sister, it is a thrust at the Bible, and is another form of the old complaint laid against Christ: "This man receiveth sinners."

A closer acquaintance with the Scriptures would reveal that many, if not all, of these much-called-in-question incidents are necessary to the correct presentation of important historical situations, such as the origin or condition of families and nations. And not only so, they are, for the most part, embedded in a mass of the most valuable evidence as to the Bible's divinity. Thus, in connection with Noah's conduct, is revealed Ham's wickedness and the prophetic forecast of the consequent degradation of his posterity as seen at the present day. Apart from Hagar's history, the account of the origin of the Arabian nation would be wanting, together with the wealth of prophetic evidence with which the narrative is studded. Without the record of Rebecca's alleged shortcomings, no explanation would be discoverable as to how Jacob took Esau's place as successor to the first-born's privileges.

In this way, incident after incident can be fitted into its proper niche by those who, instead of arrogantly and ignorantly assuming the position of judges, critics, and censors, humbly sit as disciples to the spirit's teaching. The sceptics' methods, however, are not to learn, but, like certain of old, to "speak evil of things which they know not"—they emphasise and wrench into prominence where the Scriptures give no warrant for so doing, and pass over and suppress that which the Scriptures insist upon and place in front. They have eyes and ears for nothing but what "they know naturally as brute beasts." The sceptic calls for little concern. Until he shall humble himself to receive the first and great commandment (Matt. 22:37, 38) he is not in a position to instruct or to be instructed concerning the second—he is best left in the position assigned to him by God (Psa. 14:1; Prov. 16:22).

But with you, sister, it is far different. Drop the sceptic's perversions and wrestings, and seek the whole counsel of God. Receive the God-given examples of the Bible for what they were intended—not as illustrations of absolute sinlessness (you must look to the Lord Jesus for that), but as men and women, the trend of whose lives showed unmistakably that they believed God, which belief (not their absolute sinlessness) was counted to them for righteousness. The requirements of the Scriptures neither admit of a continuance in sin, nor do they compel absolute sinlessness—were it otherwise woe would it be to frail humanity.

The standard of attainment is a belief of the promises, and the use of this belief as an incentive to purify the life by obedience to God's precepts. Concerning righteous conduct—you will find no difficulty in arriving at Scripture teaching—the instruction upon this head is not covered over or hidden away. Is it a question of wine or strong drink? Then hear the Spirit's pronouncement: "Not given to much wine" (Tit. 2:3); "Walk . . . not in . . . drunkenness" (Rom. 13:13); "If any man that is called a brother be a . . . drunkard . . . with such an one no not to eat" (1 Cor. 5:11). Is it a question of the justifiableness, or otherwise, of polygamy? Then listen again: "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife"—not wives—"and they twain shall be one flesh" (Matt. 19:5); "The husband of one wife" (1 Tim. 3:2); "Let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband" (1 Cor. 7:3).

The power to resist the insidious workings of unbelief can be derived from the Bible itself—this Book is a weapon equal to the task of piercing any monster of unbelief. A sword is useless, however, to the one who never handles it.

Sister [or Brother], it rests with you to learn how to employ the divine weapon.
—*Sis. C.H. Jannaway—1906*

Counting The Cost

“Which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it. Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish” (Luke 14:28).

After speaking these words, and further elucidating his thought by the reference to a king going to war against another with a larger army, Jesus makes the following comment -

“So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.”

Great multitudes were following Jesus at this time, as recorded in v. 25 of this 14th chapter of Luke -

“And there went great multitudes with him.”

These multitudes of people were following him with some interest in his work, aroused by the miracles he performed, and because they had eaten of the loaves and fishes with which he had fed them. But Jesus was endeavoring to open their eyes to a fuller understanding of the true learning of discipleship, such as would be required of those who would find favor with their Lord.

Jesus made it plain that to be his disciple one must cut himself loose from all other connections and relationships so that he would be free to devote himself fully to the demands of his calling.

As Jesus has said, it is wise to sit down first and count the cost, before taking the initial steps necessary to become a disciple of Christ. Great issues are involved that deeply affect the whole course of the present life, and at the same time determine what our eternal destiny will be on the other side of the grave.

Are we willing to pay the price that Jesus requires of his disciples? If we are young, it will not be easy to forsake the associations we have had with our friends of the world; but this must be done; for as we become a disciple of Christ, our former friends become as strangers to us. The only real friends we will have henceforth, are the people of God. These we must learn to love. They will be a source of joy and companionship to assist and encourage us; as we join hands in the common cause against the forces of evil in the world and in ourselves.

It will not be easy at first to relinquish—our evenings of pleasure at the theater, television, or at the various places where the people of the world pass their time away - for want of something better to do.

But these things can no more find a place in our way of life, for each moment of our time in the Truth is precious to us as an opportunity to grow up to maturity in Christ Jesus.

Yes, the cost is great; for we must be ready to give up father, mother, sister, wife or children; or even our own lives if necessary, for Christ's sake. It is better that these things all be worked out in our minds, and our course of action clearly determined before baptism. Jesus plainly shows that we cannot be his disciple and at the same time have a divided mind in relation to other things.

The spirit of Christ through Isaiah said -

“The Lord will help me; therefore will I not be confounded; therefore have I set my face like a flint and I know that I shall not be ashamed” (50:7).

It will be much in our favor if we can enter the struggle for eternal life having fully determined in our minds that we will follow the course of life as set forth in the scriptures regardless of the hardship and trouble that may be involved.

When the tribes of Israel were about to enter the promised land and destroy the seven nations there, Moses gave commandment concerning the preparation of the army on the eve of battle. Anyone who couldn't go into the fight with a strong faith and singleness of purpose; or whose affairs at home might cause uneasiness of mind or divided attention, *“let him go and return to his house.”*

This was also the case with those who might be afraid-

“And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart.”

The truth of warfare is best accomplished when the face is *“set as a flint,”* and there is no thought of wavering, no matter how hard the way. Paul's instruction is helpful -

“Lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way, but let it rather be healed” (Heb. 12:12-13).

It is easy to give up the passing and fleshly things of our past lives if we will consider for a moment how utterly worthless they are, as compared with the great and eternal things held before us in the divine program of redemption.

The world is about to experience the greatest change in all its history, and the things that now appeal so strongly to the people will then be as stubble for the fiery judgments of God. There will be no place, in that age that follows, for the things that the world now delights in.
—Bro. Emitt W. Banta

Forgive As We Are Forgiven

The Lord's prayer contains the request from Yahweh to “forgive us as we forgive those that sin against us”. The forgiveness we ask God for, hinges totally on our forgiveness of others. If we are not willing to forgive, then we will stand before our judge in the last day unforgiven! This should encourage us to truly look at our hearts and lives and find a way to let go. Our forgiveness of others should not hinge upon them asking for forgiveness, or demanding re-payment of some sort, it must always be extended.....immediately! Peter asked Jesus, “how many times should I forgive my brother”—his answer was until 70 times 7. A human being's life span according to the Bible is 70, therefore, the exhortation is

to forgive for life. Jesus, Stephen, and Paul all forgave, even in the midst of their accusers putting them to death or punishing them.

We must be reminded that our forgiveness from God hinges on our repentance, a change of direction, and a following of His principles and commands. Let us not confuse personal forgiveness with tolerance of scriptural error. Forgiveness that we extend, is to those who may have wronged us, even though God's forgiveness may not be extended to those same individuals, that is His ultimate decision. It lifts so much weight off of us to look at things this way, let God be the judge, remove all hatred and grudges from your shoulders, and pursue earnestly the divine principles that lift us to a position of being truly at one with the Father.

—Bro. Dan & Sis. Sandy Jackson

Meditations – Deity’s Ways No. 6

The decay of the Turkish Empire [1887], the universal preparation for war, and the indifferent and unbelieving condition of the world to the coming of Christ, are signs which tell us in trumpet tones that Christ is near. The two first are matters of public admission—every newspaper refers to them. With regard to the third, who can deny it? One of the daily papers gave reports (some of considerable length) of 24 sermons which were delivered on Christmas day, and not one contained a single allusion to the future advent of Christ! No, Christ is not looked for. Broach the subject of his coming in business, and you will evoke ridicule and contempt. Introduce it in travelling and you will find that any petty question of the hour will be deemed of greater interest. Suggest it among your own familiar acquaintances and you will make yourself singular and objectionable. Let any who doubt this put it to the test. *“Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth.”*

The sceptic considers the Bible exhibitions of divine power puerile. Could he suggest a wiser display, and one which would have the effect as has the Bible display, of making unbelieving men believing? The marvels of the Exodus were not wrought to gratify man’s love for the marvelous, but to lay a basis on which his obedience could be claimed. By means of miracle, the Deity established His name in the earth as the omnipotent Creator. The foundation then laid stands firm to-day. This fact contains the answer to the sceptic’s question—“Why do not these marvels happen now?” The doubt as to the *possibility* of the miracles is too unreasonable to consider. It is only the fool who has said that there is no God. Admit the existence of God, and you are forced likewise to admit that with Him all things are possible.

The Bible is indeed a miracle. It is marvelously brief, yet full. It carries us back nearly 6,000 years, and forward another 1,000. It gives a comprehensive knowledge concerning innumerable subjects. And all within a volume! It is the only book which can make wise unto salvation! During the last 41 years, no less than 750,000 volumes have been added to the library at the British Museum, and yet the whole number put together cannot accomplish the mission of the Bible. Remove the Bible, and we should at once be plunged into a sea of inextricable confusion. Man’s writings bear the impress of unreliable authorship. They are contradictory and bewildering. In these respects, the word stands out as a gem among worthless paste. God’s goodness is shown in the brevity of His revelation. If we know the Bible, and nothing else, we know sufficient for eternal life. Outside knowledge is useful, but not essential. This truth is the destroyer of the pride of learning—it places the learned and unlearned upon a level in relation to God. *“Let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me.”* This knowledge is derivable from the Bible alone.

The glory to be revealed in the saints pertains both to nature and position. How thrilling in its contemplation! The prevailing darkness and mist make it difficult to ascend to the truth in this matter. Bible history, however, will give us material assistance. Take for example Solomon's life. His fame was in all the nations round about. He exceeded in glory—in wealth and splendour—all the kings of the earth. All the world sought to Solomon to hear of the wisdom which God had put in his heart. But Solomon's glory pales before that of the earth's future rulers—"the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the saints of the most high, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." Solomon was mortal—weak, erring, and corruptible. Christ and the saints will be spirit beings—almighty, infallible, and deathless. Christ has already been exalted to the divine nature; the glory and brightness of his appearance struck Saul with blindness (Acts 22). The saints will partake of this effulgence—"then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Both Christ and the Bible partook of the human (Heb. 2:14; 1:1, 2), but in both cases, the human was controlled by the divine (John 8:28, 29; 10:35). This is a great mystery, but wise men will not reject it on that account. Of Christ it is said "*in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto his brethren that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God.*" This thought is very suggestive when brought to bear upon the Bible. The Bible was not written by God, nor by an angel, but by man. Is not the reason to be found in the characteristics of the book itself? It does not address man from a lofty pinnacle in terms above his comprehension. It speaks to his heart, through his own kith and kin, in touching, tender, forcible appeals. To the Jews, whose standpoint of observation was the flesh, Christ was a stumbling block. "*Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know.*" The faithless stumble at the written word, and for the same reason. They see in it the human, and the human only. "*They err not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.*"

"*The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former.*" The rendering thus given in the R.V. of Hag. 2:9, is a marked improvement upon the authorized translation. In the one, a particular building appears to be implied, whilst in the other, the term "house" is employed in a general sense. The Scriptures deal with four temples—Solomon's, Zerubbabel's, Herod's, and Ezekiel's. The glory of Solomon's was truly great, but that of Ezekiel's will be greater. In the past, the Deity manifested His glory in an unapproachable cloud (1Kings 8: 2Chron.7). In the future the glory will irradiate from Christ and the Saints. Ezekiel informs us—"His voice (the God of Israel in multitudinous manifestation) was like a noise of many waters." The prophet further says—"I looked, and, behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord: and I fell upon my face" (43:2, 44:4). What praise and thanksgiving the knowledge of these things should evoke! "*Rejoice in the hope of the glory of God!*" "*The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*"

Christ did not preface every truth, precept, and doctrine, which he enunciated with a "*thus saith the Lord.*" The Divine authorship of his words he affirmed in a general way (John 3:34). The Bible is similar. Its divinity is not attested at the end of each particular sentence, but is revealed in statements which cover the whole. The style of both Christ and the Bible is natural and familiar. Although both speak with conspicuous authority yet their manner is human. So homely are they that man is slow to believe that God is connected with them. Christ was sometimes misunderstood (John 11:13; 21:23). So is the Bible. Many looking from their own mistaken standpoint, and not the speaker's, have rashly condemned both as erring. Christ occasionally spoke in a way to prevent the perverse from understanding, and also to induce

investigation on the part of his true disciples. These traits likewise belong to the Bible. The language employed by God in both Christ and the Bible, though selected or approved by Him, is ordinary language—they “*speak not in words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the holy spirit teacheth.*”

The Resurrection near! Solemn thought! A vast, untold number to be gathered from the silence of the tomb to receive eternal life or condemnation! What unlimited scope for serious reflection does the contemplation of this event afford. It is no imaginary event—more certain is it than that we shall die. Our eyes cannot rest too frequently upon the dark as well as the bright side of this subject. The outpouring of divine anger upon the unworthy is as much a matter of revelation as the bestowal of everlasting joy upon the opposite class. Both points have been made known for the benefit of the wise, and should be duly heeded. Paul lays equal stress upon the terror and the love of God, and so should we. A consideration of the Resurrection in all its bearings can scarcely fail to strengthen the spiritual man. It inspires both joy and awe. The question that should strike home to each one of us is: Where shall I stand in that day? Shall I be permitted to share in the companionship of Christ to sit down in the kingdom with all those brethren and sisters whom I have laboured with and loved, or, shall I be banished with disgrace to endure the second death? Brethren and sisters, let us give *diligence* to make our calling and election *sure*.

With God nothing happens by chance. His ways are deliberate, sure, and effectual. He can foresee and pre-arrange events a thousand years ahead as easily as twenty-four hours. Amazing thought! Blessed truth! Human affairs steal not a march upon God—the situation of to-day, in all its bearings, was known to him centuries ago. The power of God in this matter baffles the finite intellect of man. Man tries hard to fathom the wisdom and ability of God. Some are vain and presumptuous enough to imagine that they have succeeded. How common is it for men to assert that the doctrine of the fore-knowledge of God is untenable. And upon this assumption to argue the untrustworthiness of the Bible. Fore-knowledge and Free-will, say they, are incompatible—a reception of the one involves a rejection of the other. Let us not be led astray by such finite reasoning. God is inscrutable, and so are many of His ways. He “*doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number.*” The Word of God has been attested by astounding, terrifying, dumb-founding, signs and wonders, in the presence of which men have been compelled to admit its truth. The verity of Bible teaching is demonstrable upon other ground than that of being able to comprehend the “whys and wherefores” of the Deity’s operations. If a man refuse to receive the Bible till he can see how God could foretell the fidelity of Paul or Christ, without depriving them of free-will, he will certainly have to die an unbeliever.
Bro. A. T. Jannaway—1887

Love Your Enemies

Luke 6:35 - “LOVE YE YOUR ENEMIES AND DO GOOD”

Lay your foundation in love and service and kindness. We are never going to help anyone to make a hard decision against the pull of their own animal desires, if we have already embittered them against us by criticism and unconcern: rather in such a case we re-enforce their resistance. We may have gratified our ego by condemning them, and achieved cheap self-satisfaction, but we have done no service for God.
—*Bro. G.V. Growcott*

Analecta Apocalypticae (43)

The First Trumpet

“The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.” Just realize the scene. After a getting-ready pause, a clarion blast breaks upon the stillness of the air: when the notes die away, there is a descent of hail, and you observe the forked lightning gleam and hiss here and there in its midst, and on the ground you see streamlets of blood, and scorched vegetation. This is a striking piece of symbolism. Let us glance at the events symbolized.

You will observe that the hail and fire were said to be “cast upon the earth”. That this was the Roman jurisdiction, we have already seen under the seals. There is nothing strange in limiting the earth to the Roman Empire. It was the seat of civilization, outside of which, all was social waste and desert. It was the arena upon which the Spirit of God was developing its work by the gospel. Therefore, it was natural to speak of it as the earth or habitable in contrast with the regions and countries outside of it, from which came the elements of the judgments brought on Rome by the trumpets.

You will observe, however, that only “a third part of the earth” was affected by the trumpet. This ought to read “the third”, which gives the key to what is puzzling at first. In the period to which it refers, the three sons of Constantine divided the Roman world among them — the eastern, the western, and the central. Thus the Roman Empire was in three parts. The central third was THE third — the Roman third peculiarly, because comprising the seat of government. Upon this, then, our attention is fixed as the part of the empire to be affected by the hail and the fire. What came as a matter of fact? In answer to this, we look at the barbarians admitted to the south of the Danube. There were the Goths, escaping from the Huns. But the Huns and the Goths became friendly, and the Huns wanted to emigrate southwards as well. They applied for the permission of the Romans. The Romans refused, but the Huns came without their consent, and added a new swarm of very dangerous neighbours to those already too near them. The Goths, nurtured by the Romans, and perceiving the growing weakness of their masters, became exacting in their demands. They wanted more pay and privileges than the Emperor could consent to, and his refusal was the letting loose of the judgment-events of the first trumpet. War broke out between the Romans and the Goths. A series of battles were fought, in which the Romans were worsted, and the Emperor himself finally slain. The result was the establishment of Gothic independence under a chief, who became their king — Alaric — a barbarian of fierce nature and considerable military talents. By and by, this Alaric felt his strength, and resolved, without the delays and circumlocutions of diplomacy, to lay the greatness of Rome in the dust. He assembled a large army of disciplined barbarians, and marched for the northern entrance of Italy. Prior to passing into Italy itself, he went westward and ravaged the beautiful provinces owing allegiance to Rome in that direction. The hail and the fire did their work effectually. The banks of the Rhine, which were crowned with elegant houses and well-cultivated farms, were laid waste. Suddenly, without warning to the unsuspecting inhabitants, the scene of peace and plenty was changed into a desert, and wide prosperous districts in an instant became smoking solitudes. Seventeen provinces of Gaul were subjected to this devastation. In two years, the horde of barbarians, increasing in violence by new accessions, swept over and desolated the whole of the country lying between the Alps, the ocean, and the Pyrenees. They drove the inhabitants before them in frightened crowds everywhere—that is, such as could escape their ruthless swords, carrying with them as much as they could rescue from the wreck of their houses and churches.

In A.D. 408, Alaric turned his march towards Rome itself. He passed the Alps and the Po, and proceeding along the eastern seacoast of Italy, made an easy prey of many cities, which he gave over to the pillage of his soldiers. Arrived before Rome, he commenced siege operations against a city which had

been the unquestionable mistress of the world for ages, and had never been dishonoured by the presence of a foreign enemy. The experience of Jerusalem at the hands of Rome four centuries previous was now returned upon Rome's own head. Famine prevailed in the city: hunger dissolved the restraints of law and order. They murdered one another and devoured the bodies of their victims. Even mothers ate their slaughtered infants. Many thousands of the inhabitants expired in the streets and in their own houses for want of food, and the stench arising from their unburied bodies revived the scenes of Jerusalem. At length, Alaric accepted an enormous sum of money to retire; but it was only for a short time. The negotiations for peace fell through, and Alaric returned, and another siege followed with increasing horrors, and a third, in the next year. In the third siege the Goths obtained admission, and the city was given up to pillage. In six days, the Goths marched southward and carried fire and sword into the southern provinces of Italy. While so engaged, Alaric died, and the "fire and hail, mingled with blood" had expended themselves, to the destruction of the green grass and trees — the respectable population — of the central third of the Roman earth.

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

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Hints For Bible Markers

God told the children of Israel to have his commandments in their hearts. (Deuteronomy 6:6) "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart." It is no different for us in our day. We are to be ready for the return of Jesus. Our hearts need to be prepared. What will help us to be ready for this long awaited arrival. Movies, video games, sports, involvement in business, cares of life, or the attraction of pleasure. Will these life wasters help us be in a state of continual readiness for his coming? Or is the best way for us to spend our limited time with the Bible in hand and mind? "*Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. (35) For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favor of the LORD.*" (Proverbs 8:34-35) It is difficult to give up those flesh pleasing pursuits. We are commanded to endure until the end submitting to hardship. Every man's mind is naturally empty. We must work against the flesh to fill it with the knowledge that will guide us on the road back to the friendship and communion Adam had before his expulsion. One of the best ways to hold fast is to have a deep-rooted knowledge of the things pertaining to "*the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.*" "*For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end.*"

The Commandments of Christ

As collected and organized by Bro. Roberts

Aim to be in a state of continual readiness for his coming. With this in view, be on your guard against the engrossments of business, the cares of life, and the allurements of pleasure.

Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. (Matthew 24:44)

(35) Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; (36) And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.

(37) Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. (Luke 12: 35 – 37)

If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:26)

Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. (2 Peter 3:14)

Endure to the end submitting to hardship if the necessary consequence.

But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. (Matthew 24:13)

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. (2 Timothy 2:3)

Hold fast your confidence and rejoicing in him till you die or he come.

In an effort to save space and cover more commands these verses, as proofs, will not be printed in their entirety Revelation 2:10-25 They may be readily looked up and read and are part of the readings for this month. Therefore, we have printed the last verse only.

(25) But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. (Revelation 2:10-25)

For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; (Hebrews 3:14)

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