

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

Kimukung'i, Kenya

Dear Brethren and Sisters,

We are one member less through the sleep of death – Bro. Gabriel Wasike, who was over 70 years old.

Members of his family have requested Kimukung'i brethren to take care of all burial plans.

Your Brother in Christ, Epa Wekati

Holy Land Trip

Our plans are continuing for another trip to the Holy Land in May, 2011, God willing. We expect more people than we had on our first trip and should have prices firmed up in a couple of months. Instead of going down into Egypt we hope to visit a few places that Paul travelled to: Athens, Corinth and Cenchrea before departing for home.

You may see the complete itinerary at the Richard web site (richardbereans.com). We look forward to the day when we will all assemble at Jerusalem to enjoy that marriage feast prepared for those that are accounted worthy. What a glorious hope we can look forward to. Please contact Bro. Jim Sommerville for further information.

FRATERNAL GATHERINGS & ACTIVITIES

(To be held Yahweh Willing)

NE FRATERNAL GATHERING – BOSTON.....Oct 9-10, 2010
Bro. Steve Osborne, 35 Shady Lane, Northboro, MA 01532 503-393-5721
steve.sharon@verizon.net The theme will be on "God Manifestation".

The BCAA

The Berean Christadelphian Audio Archives, or BCAA for short, has made available a large selection of talks on MP3 online. The address is www.bcaudioarchives.blogspot.com. Please check this link as we will be updating with new material as much as possible.

The 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.

We are always looking for tapes, and if you have some talks that you would like to share, please email either Bro. Craig Kiley (craigkiley@yahoo.com) or Bro. Noah Brown (sbsugar@gmail.com) and we will be happy to transfer the talks to mp3 format and post them.

The Treasures of Egypt

“With many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.” (1 Cor. 10:5).

They never reached the promised rest, and never will. The Revised Version says, *“With MOST of them God was not pleased.”* They were a nation under divine sentence of death. For forty years they wandered with the sentence hanging over them, each waiting his turn to die. On the average, one hundred bodies were left behind every day for forty years. *“With most of them God was not well pleased,”* though they had done just what was natural and human in the circumstances. “Natural” and “human” are not qualities that please God. In the next verse the Spirit through Paul gives the reason for dwelling on these matters—

“Now these things were our examples.”

And, like as he had mentioned five ways in which they had been divinely blessed, he now lists five ways in which they betrayed the blessing and brought destruction upon themselves. The five were: lust, idolatry, fornication, tempting and murmuring.

Lust

The *lust* was for the good things of Egypt. It was quite natural for them to desire the pleasing things of the world they had come out from. Truly there were many pleasant and desirable things about Egypt, which at that time led the world in all the arts and sciences and flesh-pleasing contrivances of man. Forty years is a long time to wander in a hot, dry, barren wilderness, partaking of the same monotonous, unchanging food day after day.

But if they had been able to rise to the broader, *spiritual* view of the matter, they would have seen things differently. Egypt, with all its pleasures, was a land of futureless death. *They* were on the Divine road of life and promise. If they only had had eyes to see the manna, the smitten rock, the tabernacle, the pillar of fire, the plagues of Egypt, the Passover, the crossing of the Red Sea, the miracles of Moses—all these things were concrete evidences that they were part of a marvellous, history—making Divine operation that linked them to eternity.

Viewed in the proper perspective, what were the poor, passing pleasures of benighted Egypt? But they forgot the glory of God that had lifted them up, and could think only of the garlic and onions of Egypt. It is very easy to let food and animal pleasures monopolize much of our thoughts and conversation—to forsake spiritual food in the interest of natural food. Of such Paul sadly says, *“Whose god is their belly, who mind earthly things”* (Phil. 3:19). Moses had the proper outlook. The Apostle records of him (Heb. 11:26) that he—

“Esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.”

He weighed up all that Egypt had to offer and he could see through its empty deceptiveness and its inevitable end. Doubtless, he too, naturally speaking, would have enjoyed some of the pleasures and comforts of Egypt, but he realized that there were more important things in life than babyishly catering to the flesh. *He* had a work to do and a goal to reach.

Idolatry

And what of idolatry and fornication and tempting and murmuring—the other examples of failure that Paul calls to our attention? As to the first, it is hard to draw a clear dividing line between lust and idolatry. All lust is a form of idol worship and voluntary slavery, but the Apostle’s distinction seems to be that by idolatry he refers to the placing of *faith, trust or dependence* upon something, as upon money or insurance. The commonest form of this idolatry is *self-confidence* or *self-reliance*—depending upon the arm of the flesh. Perhaps, too, he has in mind the angle of *service, devotion or worship*, as when he says—as previously quoted—

“Whose god (or idol) is their belly.”

Fornication

Fornication is a general term for a wide range of activities of which divorce is at present the most pressing and dangerous problem in the ecclesial world. Only a high, scriptural standard, firmly and faithfully applied, will save the brotherhood from the undermining infection of the modern Midianites and Balaamites. The slightest relaxing of Scriptural restraint is fatal when such forces are involved. This plague is raging with unrestrained and mounting fury in the godless world of today. Uncompromising vigilance is essential to keep it from invading and destroying the Temple of God. “Marriage” into the world is another very serious aspect of this general evil of which Paul speaks. In fact, *the specific instance he gives is of this particular sin.*

Tempting

And the sin of “tempting”—what is that? The example Paul gives is when it is recorded (Num. 21:5)—

“The people spoke against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?”

They “*spoke against God!*” What unutterable folly! But is it not an easy thing to fall into, when the presentation to us of God’s commandments is irksome and restrictive? Of course we would not admit we were speaking against *God*. It is safer to appear to be directing our annoyance against man, as they did against Moses. But when the people in the days of Samuel

clamored for a king, God put His finger on the heart of the matter. “*They have not rejected YOU,*” He told Samuel, “*they have rejected ME*” (1 Sam. 8:7). God told Samuel they were running true to the rebellious pattern they had always followed from the time He brought them out of Egypt. They had said then, “*Let us make a captain, and let us return unto Egypt*” (Num. 14:4).

They pretended it was on account of Samuel’s sons. This gave them a handle. But really they lusted after a worldly setup of splendor and magnificence. They wanted to be like the world—to have all its flashy tinsel, in all the latest models. God warned them, but still they blindly persisted in their headlong way.

We tempt God when we set our judgment and opinion against His. When, instead of casting aside the deceptive reasoning of the flesh and seeking to learn from Him, we rather attempt to find something in His Word that we can interpret to justify our own views and desires. If our scriptural judgment in any matter corresponds with our *natural* feelings, then we should examine both very carefully, for they are probably wrong. The commands of God are usually plain if we are anxiously seeking to understand and to always be on the safe side in any matter of doubt. Jesus said—

“*The Word that I have spoken, the same shall judge you in the last day*” (Jn. 12:48).

He will have a Bible there, and it will only be necessary for him to open it and point silently to some passage to put many to confusion and shame. Let us try to take every precaution not to be among them.

Murmuring

And finally, says Paul, “*Let us not MURMUR, as some of them murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer*” (v. 10). The basic frame of mind of the godly man should be *calm, contented gratitude and praise*. Anything else is a reproach against God. Restlessness and dissatisfaction are basic evils of the flesh. “*Keep your life free from covetousness, and be CONTENT with such things as ye have*” (Heb. 13:5) is a *command* of God for the free development of the spiritual mind—a clear, plain *command*—that will loom to far greater importance at the judgment-seat than it does today. And the Apostle concludes this portion of his exhortation—

“*Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall*” (1 Cor. 10:12).

As he says in the next chapter in relation to the partaking of the memorial supper—“*Let a man examine himself.*” Let him take the searching spotlight of the Spirit-Word and turn its full glare upon the inner workings of his fleshly mind. What he sees if he looks carefully will move him to exclaim

with Paul, “*Who shall deliver me from this body of death?*” But if the whole counsel of Scripture is eagerly and unreservedly accepted and applied, he will be able to also say with the Apostle—

“I strain forward toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus . . . I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phil. 3:14; 4:13).

—*Bro. G.V. Growcott*

I Will Plant in the Wilderness

Our Creator, our Heavenly Father, knows us so well and He knows our needs and what is pleasing to us. He put the first man and woman in a well prepared garden—a paradise. The dictionary says a paradise is a heavenly place.

It was lush and beautiful, full of trees and animals, flowing water, pools of water, probably with reeds and lily pads. It was a place prepared of God for man to serve Him with love—a place to meditate, to pray, to enjoy, to visit with the Elohim.

Look at us today, here under these beautiful trees, a running river with pools of water with reeds—a quiet place that we can study and hear God’s Word, a place to pray and visit with those of like faith, a place that we can express our love and our hope with each other.

We have been coming to these Hye, Texas grounds for over 100 years. It’s not a paradise, for that is our hope, that we will be part of that true Paradise of God. Even for those who love the desert, they must have an oasis, where there is water and trees and plants—a place to refresh.

Our Heavenly Father has drawn illustration from the natural world to explain spiritual principles and through the same context prophecies of future things to come. Our subject this morning, Isa. 41:19—

“I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together.”

Let us review how trees have played a part in God’s plans with mankind. Six thousand years ago God established an area of land known as Eden. It was a large area that covered much of the Middle East. Dr Thomas in Eureka, volume 1, says concerning Eden—

“The Holy Land, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Assyria Proper, are manifestly countries of Eden. But in the beginning, Eden contained a

Garden, *pardais* or Paradise; so also in the beginning of the Millennial Aion, the same Eden will rejoice in a paradise adapted to the necessities and enjoyment, not of two persons only, but of ‘*a great multitude which no man can number*’—Rev. 7:9. Adam and Eve’s paradise was upon a small scale, yet ample enough for them.”

In the east of Eden was the Garden of Eden, where two explicitly named trees are mentioned. They are well known by most Sunday school scholars—the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and the Tree of Life.

God told the man and the woman not to eat of that tree, and we know the story: they ate and the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew they were naked. They sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons. The third tree mentioned in God’s Word was the fig tree.

1600 years later, we find the earth full of wickedness of every kind. But Noah finds grace in the eyes of God. God commissions Noah to build an ark of gopher wood. Gopher wood is mentioned only once in Scriptures. But it was used to build that great floating barge with its cargo of life of every kind. The ark came to rest on Mt. Ararat, and Noah releases the raven and the dove. On the dove’s second release, she brings forth an olive leaf plucked off. With the dove’s return with that leaf, Noah knew time was close for the release of both man and beast.

We have all visited with friends and family under the shade of a tree, but Abraham entertained angels under a tree. In the heat of the day Abraham is sitting in the door of his tent, and he sees three men approaching. He asks them to stay for awhile and says, “*Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet and rest yourselves under the tree.*” Sarah prepares a meal and Abraham takes butter and milk and the calf and sets it before them under the tree and they did eat (Gen. 18).

In Genesis 30, we find an interesting story based around the green poplar tree, the hazel tree, and the chestnut tree. Jacob has been deceived by his father-in-law for his two wives. It is nearing the time for Jacob to pack up and begin his journey home. Jacob and Laban make a deal for what livestock would be Jacob’s. The agreement was that the increase of all sheep, goats, and cattle that were ringstraked, speckled and spotted and brown would be Jacob’s for all the work he had done. Jacob was in charge of all of Laban’s livestock. Verses 37-43 of Gen. 30 says—

“And Jacob took him rods of green poplar, and of the hazel and chestnut tree; and pilled white stakes in them, and made the white appear which was in the rods. And he set the rods which he had pilled before the flocks in the gutters in the watering troughs when the flocks came to drink, that they should conceive when they came to drink. And the flocks conceived before

the rods, and brought forth cattle ringstraked, speckled, and spotted. And Jacob did separate the lambs, and set the faces of the flocks toward the ringstraked, and all the brown in the flock of Laban; and he put his own flocks by themselves, and put them not unto Laban's cattle. And it came to pass, whensoever the stronger cattle did conceive, that Jacob laid the rods before the eyes of the cattle in the gutters, that they might conceive among the rods. But when the cattle were feeble, he put them not in: so the feebler were Laban's, and the stronger Jacob's. And the man increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maidservants, and menservants, and camels, and asses."

Armies had to be fed; there was no refrigeration or canning of food—

"When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by forcing an axe against them: for thou mayest eat of them, and thou shalt not cut them down (for the tree of the field is man's life) to employ them in the siege: Only the trees which thou knowest that they be not trees for meat, thou shalt destroy and cut them down; and thou shalt build bulwarks against the city that maketh war with thee, until it be subdued."

When thinking of war and trees, we can't help but recall the grief and sadness and guilt of David during the rebellion of David's son Absalom. In II Samuel 12, Nathan the prophet reprimands David. Verse 9-11—

"Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house."

In II Samuel 18, we read of the rebellion and the death of Absalom. The battle took place in the Forest of Ephraim. The Scriptures say 20,000 soldiers were slaughtered. The woods or the forest killed more men than did the actual sword. Absalom was riding his mule and he rode under the boughs of a great oak tree and caught his hair in the branches. He had beautiful thick hair, and he cut it and weighed it at the end of each year. But he caught that hair in the branches of the tree and the mule continued on, leaving Absalom dangling from that great oak with his feet not touching the ground. It was reported to general Joab, and he shot three darts through his heart.

Just to mention a few other trees—

Psa. 37:35 – The wicked are likened to a green bay tree: *“I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree.”*

II Chronicles 2: 8 – Solomon sending a message to Hiram the King of Tyre to send him cedar trees, fir trees, and algum trees—all for the building of the temple.

I Kings 10:11-12 – The almug tree is mentioned, and King Hiram was also the deliverer of this wood: *“And the navy also of Hiram, that brought gold from Ophir, brought in from Ophir great plenty of almug trees, and precious stones. And the king made of the almug trees pillars for the house of the Lord, and for the king’s house, harps also and psalteries for singers: there came no such almug trees, nor were seen unto this day.”*

God gave further instructions concerning the customs of the heathen and trees in Jeremiah 10;1-4: *“Hear ye the word which the Lord speaketh unto you, O house of Israel: Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not.”*

Turning to the New Testament we wouldn’t want to forget the story of the man of short stature, rich in wealth and chief among publicans. He lived in Jericho, and he like all the rest in town wanted to see Jesus. He knew his route. He was coming down a certain street, and this man knew that because of all the people he would not be able to see the Lord. He solved the problem by climbing up into a sycamore tree. As Jesus passed by, the little man heard the word of the Lord, *“Zachaeus, make hast, and come down, for today I must abide at thy house.”*

Our Scriptural verse this morning is Isa. 41:19, and it mentions seven trees. It is very possible that these trees represent the Trees of Righteousness—the planting of the Lord. They are typical of the saints in their completeness and perfection, when Jesus sets up his Kingdom, when he establishes the Paradise of God.

The verse states the seven trees are planted together. This planting is the multitudinous Christ, and it will be in the wilderness and the desert. There will be that great transition—that great change that will take place in the earth. Isa. 51:3 states—

“For the Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places: and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord: joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.”

There is both wilderness and desert in that land that was promised to Abraham. It is that land that was promised to Christ and all those that are his. However, it has not always been desert. 16 years after Israel became a nation in 1948, 83 million trees had been planted, but a mere fraction of what is to come.

It is in that wilderness and that desert where God will plant the Trees of Righteousness—the Garden of Eden.

These seven trees are representative of the faithful. It would be to our advantage to learn from the nature and use of those trees to teach us what kind of people we should be, so we can be found among the Trees of Righteousness in the Garden of Eden—in Paradise.

The first tree in the verse is the cedar. Psa. 92:12 tells us, *“The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.”*

Much of the temple was constructed of cedar. Cedar has two qualities: first, it had deep roots. Those roots anchor them to the ground so that during storms or high wind, they are not uprooted. Secondly, they are tough trees; they preserve themselves as well as what they surround. An example is a cedar chest. Parents for many years gave their daughters a cedar chest to put precious things in to keep bugs or moths from eating up cloth or paper.

We too are to be rooted and grounded in love (Eph. 3), and Paul says in I Cor. 15:58—

“Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.”

We, as brothers and sisters of Christ, must have endurance. We must be upright and acceptable to God. We must be strong in faith and patience. We must be majestic like the cedar. The cedar is rugged and strong, yet it is pleasant and fragrant. There is the combination of strength and beauty. Cedar with hyssop was used in the cleansing of the leper and in the preparation of the red heifer water of purification.

The second tree is the shittah tree, or the acacia. There are about 300 varieties. It was used for building furniture and was used in the Mosaic Tabernacle. The wood is light, very strong and durable, and is very resistant to insects. It can have a high beautiful polish. The shittah tree is hardy and does well in the barren desert where other trees cannot exist.

Very small insects can destroy large trees, just as the little things in life can destroy our spiritual life. Let us be strong in God’s work through prayer, meditation, faith, study, and obedience. Let us become furniture in the spiritual house of the habitation of God through the spirit.

Third is the myrtle tree. Its leaves contain an oil that is used as a stimulant and its berries as a medicine. It has a star-like flower. We are reminded of those trees whose leaves shall be for the healing of the nations. In applying the type to individuals in the Truth, their doctrine is a stimulant and a medicine for sinful, perishing man; and the star-like flowers are symbolic of those who shall shine as the brightness of the firmament or as the stars in heaven. Jesus said, *“I am the bright and morning star.”*

Crushed myrtle leaves produce a highly prized fragrance. The beautiful, star-blossomed fragrant myrtle is, in the Kingdom age, to replace the ugly, destructive briars of the present sin-cursed order. Zechariah tells of the spirit man, who stands in the shade of the myrtles, and proclaims, *“All the earth sitteth still, and is at rest”* (1:11).

Esther’s original Hebrew name, Hadassah, means myrtle, and she truly was a fragrant Tree of Righteousness in the salvation of her people—a redemption typical of the myrtle in the millennial age.

Fourth is the olive tree, or oil tree. It has much vitality. Some live as long as 1000 years. It produces olive berries, which are nutritious and are for food and medicine, as well as for light.

Paul speaks of Israel as the olive tree, and the adoption of the Gentiles as the grafting in of the wild olive. If we expect to be the planting of the Lord, we must become like the true olive tree. The oil is obtained by beating—a symbol of richness and usefulness through trial. Israel was commanded to bring pure olive oil, beaten for the light of the tabernacle and temple. This light of God’s Truth helps us to see both good and evil in our life and work.

The olive tree is said to be the most beautiful of all trees. The branches are twisted and oddly shaped, as if it had gone through great trials as it grew upwards. Its leaves are deep green on top and silver underneath. In the sunlight and as the wind blows, there is a rippling sea of brilliant silver and green. Silver and green are colors of redemption and life.

The olive tree was the most fruitful in the Bible world. It furnished much of the necessities of ancient times. To grow to the time of giving fruit, it must be taken care of with much patience, but it then produces for a long time. It is a native to the Bible lands, but has been carried throughout the world.

David said, *“I am like a green olive tree in the House of God.”* That also refers to Christ. We too will go through trials and tribulations, yet we must be a light to the world and produce fruit.

The fifth tree is the fir tree. There are many varieties. From some species comes balsam, whose soothing, healing characteristics may be compared to

the Truth's comforting influence—its hope and consolation during bitter trials and afflictions.

The fir tree was also used in making small decorative items. In the Kingdom Age it will reflect the Glory of God. The fir with the cedar was used to construct the Temple. It was also used to make musical instruments. II Samuel 6:5—

“And David and all the house of Israel played before the Lord on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals.”

The redeemed are the musical instruments of God, sounding the rich melodies of His praise and service. In this, they are fir trees. In the wisdom of God, each tree has its special characteristics and usefulness, so that all combined make a very special sound to His glory in perfect harmony.

The fir tree maintains its true straightness without twisting or warping. This makes it an excellent building material. What kind of building material are we? Have we been useful to our Heavenly Father?

The sixth is the pine tree. It has two major features. Like the shittah tree, it is useful for furniture and cabinets. It works easily and can have a fine finish. The most remarkable feature is that it does well in any soil and situation or condition. Its analogy is shown in an individual as Paul, who said, Phil. 4:12-13—

“I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

We are to always be adaptable, true and faithful Trees of Righteousness. Jesus said, *“Be ye followers of me.”* We need to ponder this in our hearts and make every effort possible to conform.

The seventh is the box tree. There are two forms—the dwarf and the giant. As for us, we too are great and small in the purpose of God, but all are brethren. The dwarf is used to hedge or fence around a house. For this purpose, small is an advantage. Those who defend the Truth, even in an humble way are in God's sight a hedge around the Truth.

The wood of the giant box tree is similar to the fir, but for different qualities. It is used for parts of musical instruments, and the analogy is those who with joyful hearts praise the Lord with both inward and outward melody, as it will be in the Kingdom of God. I Chron. 16:33—

“Then shall the Trees of the Wood sing out at the presence of the Lord, because He cometh to judge the earth.”

The box is a yellow wood, remarkably hard and compact. It is perfect for fine engraving. It has been used for precision instruments where dimensional accuracy and fineness are essential. It is ideal for intricate inlaying and mosaics. We must be of the nature that the Great Master Craftsman can shape and engrave us for use and beauty in His eternal purpose.

All of these seven trees are evergreens—truly representative of those who will be made immortal—equal to the angels and will die no more.

They all have medicinal or healing properties, either in their blossoms, fruit, or leaves. Some trees have more strength; some have beauty; some richness in their fruit; some in fragrance; some in healing; some in firmness of texture; some in depth of root; some can be delicately crafted. But we, Brothers and Sisters, must strive to develop all these qualities, for they make the full and perfect man in Christ Jesus.

Yet still in the deep wisdom of God, there is richness in having one gift for the service of the body—another member, another gift. Each fulfill his proper part to create the perfect whole.

Jesus was a carpenter and he would be lovingly familiar with the many characteristics and virtues of all trees. He would skillfully use each piece of wood to its fullest value and usefulness in building a House for the Father’s glory.

Psalm 1 – *“He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”*

Rev. 2:7 – *“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias; to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”*

May we be found worthy to be part of that glorious, eternal divine forest—the Paradise of God.

Bro. Gary Smith

A Peculiar People

In the eyes of the world we are a peculiar people. We are always talking religion. We are always talking about God and the Bible. To those outside the Faith this all seems very strange. For God is not first in their thoughts.

They prefer rather to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season than to suffer affliction with the people of God. But we read the Bible and we read it daily. And moreover, WE BELIEVE IT.

We believe it to be the Word of God. We believe it to be wholly inspired. We believe it to be infallible and we believe that it is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness. Through the meditation of its pages and the preaching of others, we have come to a knowledge of the Truth. And this Truth has made us free.

Yes, Brothers and Sisters, we have been made free from the darkness and superstition of an unbelieving generation. It is true they worship God, but I say they worship in vain, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

We have believed in the main theme of the Bible, which is the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ. We have been baptized into Christ and we have put on Christ. Therefore, we are Abraham's children and heirs according to the promise.

Is that all? Does our work cease here? No, Brothers and Sisters. It is only the beginning: JUST THE BEGINNING.

Romans 6:3-4 – *“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”*

What does Paul mean by a newness of life? See verses 5-6—*“For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”*

Eph 4:17-24—*“This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts: And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”*

Col. 3:1-3 and 16—*“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.*

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

Is this not a newness of life?

In our endeavors to walk in this new life, we found it necessary to COME OUT of the unbelieving world, to separate ourselves from the ungodliness of the world. We, therefore, have no continuing city, but like the fathers of old, have become strangers and sojourners in the earth. Our conversation is no longer on things of the world but is in Heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The symbols on the table tell us of our waiting for him, and when we partake of them, we do show the Lord’s death till he come. These first day assemblies are to us, what the oasis is to the travelers through the desert. We become refreshed as we drink from God’s living water. Our hope, courage, and faith are strengthened and we are enabled to continue on our way, rejoicing for the hope which is set before us.

But we must not depend alone upon these assemblies for our spiritual sustenance. We must apply our hearts with wisdom daily. Prov. 8:32-36 – *“Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.”*

The saints of God require spiritual food daily, just as much as they require natural food daily. We would not think of eating once a week, would we Brothers and Sisters? Bro. Roberts once said, “Then let us read the Bible daily. If we read it, we will appreciate it, and if we appreciate it, we will desire it. If we desire it, then will we find great comfort in reading it.

If we make it a practice to turn aside daily to reading, meditation and prayer, we will be strengthened and enabled to walk in a newness of life, which will be well pleasing to the God of Israel.

Paul’s exhortation is to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom. This word does not dwell in us naturally, therefore we must read it and meditate upon it.

If a man of the world aspires to be successful, he will read and meditate upon the course he has chosen. His success depends upon the amount of reading and study that he does in connection with his work. And so it is with us. We are saints of the Most High God, and if it is our ambition to be in His Kingdom, we must apply our hearts unto wisdom and our ears to the words of knowledge.

Solomon says, in Prov. 3:13-18—*“Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her.”*

And in Prov. 4:5-7—*“Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.”*

If we do our duty in this matter, we will be strengthened, for James says—

“Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you.”

But Brothers and Sisters, if we neglect God, His care will depart from us, and we will fall. There are many illustrations of this in the Bible, and Paul mentions one in Romans 1:28—*“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.”* And this was Israel’s punishment for neglecting God.

When Christ came he withheld his wisdom from them by speaking in parables. He told the apostles that he did this so that they might remain in their ignorance and become subject to the judgment of God.

Yet, to those who give close attention to the Word of God, his teachings in the parables become quite plain and are a source of great comfort and strength.

Owing to the brightness of the signs of the times, there is one of his parables that has made such an impression on my mind that I cannot refrain from speaking to you about it.

A few months ago, in the company of another brother, it was my privilege to attend the Zionist convention in Toronto. There we listened together as Dr. Weizman, President of the World Zionist Movement, told of

the wonderful things that were being accomplished in Palestine, and did not our hearts burn within us, for we know that it is God's work and the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

But what of the parable?

It is the Marriage of the King's Son, Matt. 22:2-14—*"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.*

"But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies; and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.

"And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen."

It is not difficult to discern the meaning of this parable. In the King, we recognize God. In the Son, we recognize Christ. A marriage feast in human affairs is a most joyous occasion. So the culmination of God's purpose in the earth is represented by a marriage feast for His Son. In order to furnish a bride and guests for the son, an invitation was sent to Israel after the flesh, whom God had chosen to carry out His purpose.

The first invitation came through the prophets. See Jer.7:13—*"...and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not."*

The second invitation came through the apostles, as seen in Matt. 10:5-6—*"These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."*

We all know the result of the first invitation. The great bulk paid no attention to it. They were glad to be God's chosen people and boasted in it, but failed to glorify God through a lack of understanding. We also know the result of the second invitation. This is described in verses 6-7 of the parable—*"And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city."*

After continued patience and longsuffering on the part of God, the invitation was finally extended to another class. Here is where our personal relation to the parable comes into view. Through the labors of Paul and his co-workers, the invitation rejected by Israel was extended to the Gentiles and therefore to us. We are those of the highways. Acts 13:46—*"Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."*

Previous to Israel's rejection of the invitation, the Gentiles were outside the pale of salvation, as Eph.2:12-13 states, *"At that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."*

An important question now arises in our minds—Shall we be accepted as the King's guests merely because we have received the invitation and accepted it? Shall we enter the Kingdom of God merely because we have believed the Gospel and have been baptized into Christ?

Peter exhorts us to make our calling and election sure, therefore we must look to the parable for an answer in harmony with his exhortation. Read verses 11-12—*"And when the king come in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless."*

The question the King asks in verse 12 shows us plainly that although we are invited guests, we must appear at the feast properly clothed. If properly clothed, what then is the wedding garment? See Rev. 19:7-8—*"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."*

It is quite plain from this that each guest must appear clothed in his own righteousness. We cannot be but convinced of this if we read the apostles

letters. See Heb. 3:12-14—*“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end.”*

And 2 Peter 1:10-11—*“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”*

Some think Christ’s righteousness will cover them when they appear at the feast, but this belief has NO scriptural foundation.

Be not deceived brethren, for if we have no righteous fruits of the Spirit to present to Christ, when he judges the living and the dead at his appearing, we will be like the guest without the wedding garment and will be cast out.

What are the fruits of the Spirit? Galatians 5 tells us in verses 22-23—*“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”*

These nine fruits combine all things necessary for the brothers and sisters of Christ. It is evident that the guest at the wedding, who was cast out, had failed to cloth himself with the fruits of the Spirit.

The apostles dwell very emphatically on the necessity for brethren to walk as becometh saints and to be on their guard against the evils of the present world lest we be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Christ’s word to us is *“that unless our righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, we shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of God.”* Their righteousness consisted in the keeping of certain ceremonial acts and did not show the answer of a good conscience towards God.

Under no circumstances whatever should we allow the breaking of bread to become a ceremonial act.

The parable lesson is wholesome and has a sobering effect upon us if we give heed to its teaching. It shows us that a mere acceptance of the Gospel is not enough. Rather that the inner man must be clothed with the precepts and principles of Christ, which we can only obtain by diligent daily reading and meditation.

It also shows up that unless we have this clothing we will be like those at Laodicea who were wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked (Rev. 3:17). To such, Christ says in verse 18—*“I counsel thee to buy of me*

gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.”

When we appear at the marriage, the supreme question will be—”Have we kept the covenant?” Realizing this, let us ask ourselves a few questions this morning—

1st Are we sustaining the part of the chaste virgin, getting ready for the Marriage of the Lamb?

2nd Are our affections fastened upon Christ our coming husband?

3rd Are we as devoted to his affairs as he wishes and as loving towards him as he expects?

Brothers and Sisters, our conduct in the Truth will be the answer to these questions. Scriptural love is obedience. Jesus says, *“Ye are my friends if ye do what I command you.”*

It is therefore plain that we cannot hope for nor expect any part in the Marriage of the Lamb, unless we keep his commandments, remain separate from the world, and touch not those things that are of Babylon, for she has spread her abominations throughout the whole world.

Brothers and Sisters, the signs of the times speak to us with no uncertain sound. Therefore let us strive to keep our garments clean and white, and let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of Sincerity and Truth. Then when the warfare is accomplished and the fight is over, we will receive the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness and will enter with joy into the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

—*Bro. George A. Gibson*

Encouraging Words No. 11

THE Jews sought to kill Christ because he said that God was his Father. Was the charge thus made a true one? Unquestionably. To the man that was born blind, for instance, Christ said: “Dost thou believe on the Son of God?” The man replied: “Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?” Jesus said, “Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee” (John 9:35–37). Christ further enforced the truth of his divine paternity when on his death trial. “I adjure thee, by the living God,” said the high priest, “that thou tell us whether thou be the Son of God?” “Thou hast said,” was the unmistakable rejoinder. But what was all the trouble about? Were not all Israelites, nominally at least, sons of God (Ex. 4:22; Jno. 8:41)? Yes, and

had Christ simply laid claim to a relationship to God such as any other Israelite advanced, no exception would have been taken by the Jews. Christ, however, said he was a Son in a sense different from any other man. He claimed to be “the only begotten Son of God”—to be the true manna which “cometh down from heaven”—to “live by the Father”—to have “proceeded forth and come from God”—that he “came out from God,” and “forth from the Father” (Jno. 3:16–18: 6:32–35, 57: 16:27–28).

All who heard him understood him to declare that, apart from the direct interposition of God, there would have been no Jesus. Hence Peter’s ardent protestation, when others went away offended at Christ’s teaching upon the subject: “Lord, we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Hence also the Jews’ accusation of blasphemy—a justifiable one if his life had been derived from Joseph, and not, as he stated, from God (John 6:57). How did Christ meet the charge of blasphemy? It would have been easily disposed of by a son of Joseph. He could, for instance, have pointed out that all Israelites were constituted sons of God in virtue of the Word of God having come to them, and that the difference between their sonship and his only lay in the measure and method of God’s revelations to him. Christ, however, instead of demolishing the ground upon which the charge was laid, sought rather to establish it. He first pointed to John’s testimony concerning himself. This divinely commissioned instructor had said much about Christ’s origin. John was in a position to do this, for God had made special communications to him concerning Jesus. He had given John an appointed sign: “He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Spirit. And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God.” John had received the additional confirmation of hearing a voice from heaven proclaiming, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” Therefore John knew well what he was saying when he referred to Christ as “he that cometh from above”—as “he that cometh from heaven”—as “he whom God hath sent” (John 1:18, 34: 3:31, 34).

Christ then proceeded to bring forth stronger witness even than John’s—credentials which he ever carried with him. These were the mighty works which God did by him (John 5:32–37). But the elements were more docile to his word, than were the hearts of those wicked men. Their reply to his reasoning was—stones! “Many good works have I showed you from my Father: for which of these works do ye stone me?” said Christ. They stoned him not for a good work, was the reply, but “for blasphemy, and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.” Once more, in his retort, did Christ emphasise the distinction between himself and other sons of God. If men to whom the word of God came could be called gods—and they were

so called in the Scriptures—could not he with claims so much higher—”he whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world” be called, without blasphemy, the Son of God? His claim to a divine paternity he never abated one whit, and so far as the Jews were concerned, it was for upholding the truth upon this subject that he was condemned to death (Matt. 26:63–66; Mark 14:61–64; Luke 22:70, 71; John 19:7).

Sis. C.H. Jannaway—1907

Thought Gleaned By The Way

“But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many hurtful lusts which drown men into destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil.” 1 Tim.6: 9, 10

Let us note here that the apostle is not speaking of the effect of the possession of riches, but the effect of the pursuit of riches. The possession of great riches, as Jesus taught, is an almost certain bar to faithful service to God.

But Paul is speaking of that desire for wealth and the love of money which may dominate the life of a person whether they actually possess it or not. It is a craving for money and the things money can buy, the pursuit of which may occupy the time, energy and affections of the disciple as to dwarf, and even destroy his interest in divine things, causing him to “err from the faith.”

“Ye cannot serve God and mammon,” is just as true today as when spoken by the Lord. How much idleness in the Lord's vineyard; how much lack of interest in the study of the Truth; how much carelessness and unconcern about preserving the Truth in its purity; how much spiritual weakness in general is attributable to a greater desire for material wealth than for the true riches!

* * *

“For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the word of the LORD was made a reproach unto me, and a derision, daily. Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.” Jeremiah 20:8, 9 —

To all who sought to preach and teach the word of God, there came times when the words of Jeremiah came home with telling force. We, too, feel like quitting; feel that our labors are in vain, when the world turns away from hearing the word of God, often with derision and contempt. Sometimes even

the brethren do not seem to give heed to what we have to say in such proportion as we feel our efforts deserve.

Even the apostle Paul had moments of weakness when he felt that much of his labor was in vain, but he could not hesitate nor slacken his efforts, as he said,

“For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel.” 1 Cor. 9:16

The test of a faithful preacher of the gospel comes not when success appears to crown his every effort, but the test of a true soldier of Christ is when apparent failure marks all his efforts. It is then that it becomes clear whether the Truth is “like a burning fire in his bones,” or whether it is half-hearted interest which can only be kept alive under considerable encouragement; whether he feels that it is a choice to work or desist, or whether he feels the necessity” of working all the harder.

A valiant soldier of Christ, will, as any other good soldier, fight all the harder in defeat, and seek to train himself so that he can perform his work better and with more success.

* * *

“From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the Lord's name is to be praised.” Psalm 113:3—

Praise to the Lord is not to be spasmodic, neither reserved for special occasions.

But the children of God, surrounded as they are with manifold blessings, spontaneously give forth praise to the Giver of every good and perfect gift.

* * *

“By his light I walked through darkness.” Job 29:3—

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

He who seeks true wisdom and spiritual understanding by searching through the tomes of worldly “thinkers” is only plunged deeper into the morass of jumbled, contradictory thought and philosophy which is the product of, the natural mind of sinful man. Paul said:

“The world by (its) wisdom knew not God.” 1Cor. 1:21—

Such thinkers can neither understand the past nor know the future of God's purpose with the earth and man upon it. It is only when we turn the

searchlight of divine truth upon a matter that we can walk through thick darkness, confidently and securely, as a path of light is opened up for us all the way.

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

* * *

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

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

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

—*Bro. Oscar Beauchamp*

He Spake As Never Man Spake

Look through the ages, search every history, ransack every literature, and you will find' no figure that can stand by the side of the Lord Jesus -- a man of whom his enemies bore witness that “he spake as never man spake - a man who combined such humility of deportment with such sublime self-assertion, such compassion for the erring with such intolerance of the wicked, such zeal for God with such kindness for man.

There was never his like before him, and there has never been his like since. He stands apart from all men: great, holy, harmless, undefiled. How is this? If he be but the mere son of man as all men are, why was he such a man? Why have we not such a man now?

There must be an explanation of the appearance such a man which is not found in the case of any other; and. there is. HE IS THE SON OF GOD. The Holy Spirit overshadowing a virgin of the house of David has produced for us this likeness of God — this manifestation of the Father, the Creator of heaven and earth. This explains all, and satisfies all our needs in the case.

—*Bro. Robert Roberts*

Analecta Apocalypticae (51)

The Lamb Upon Mount Zion

There is a very great contrast between the scenes exhibited in this 14th chapter of Revelation, and those we had to look at in the 13th. It is the contrast expressed in the statement: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning". The chapters in question exhibit this fact in symbol, so far as concerns the class of whom Jesus said, "Blessed are ye that weep now". We have the long, dark, distressful history of Europe under the militant Papacy in chapter 13, and the inauguration of the joyous morning in chapter 14. For this reason chapter 14 is more interesting. It brings light, and life, and cheer, after the gloom resulting from the ascendancy of the Man of Sin. The history of the Man-of-sin power is in reality an unbroken history, from the apostolic age to the Lord's coming in power and great glory. The chapters in question show it. Paul shows it in saying of his own day, "The mystery of iniquity doth already work; only that which hindereth must be taken out of the way. Then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy with the brightness of his coming". From the "already-working" point in Paul's day, to "the brightness of the Lord's coming", is an unbroken line. It shows us the Papal system lasting till the Lord's coming. Revelation 13 shows us the shape and attitude of the power during the longest part of the unbroken line. Chapter 14 shows us the glorious event at the end of the line.

"I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred and forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads." We know who the Lamb is: "The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" — Jesus, the Son of God. Why did John see him stand at his coming "on mount Zion"? The gospel of the kingdom gives us the answer, which cannot be obtained from the teaching of the day: Zion was the seat of David's government in the land of promise. To Jesus belongs the throne of David (Luke 1:32). On that throne he will sit in the age to come (Isaiah 9:6). Occupying this, he must needs reign on Mount Zion (Micah 4:7; Isa. 24:23), in harmony with what is written in the 132nd Psalm, verses 13-14: "The Lord hath chosen Zion: He hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell." It may be said, this is treating Zion literally when, by the character of the Apocalypse, it ought to be construed symbolically. The answer has already been before us in connection with the symbol of the Euphrates. Literal objects are introduced as the basis of the symbolical representation of events having to do with those literal objects. As the Euphrates, a literal part of the Turkish Empire, is used to represent symbolically that empire, so Zion, a literal element in the kingdom of David, is introduced symbolically to represent that kingdom.

With the Lamb is a great company. They are stated to be "an hundred and forty and four thousand." This, of course, is their symbolic, not their literal number, for they are literally defined as a "great multitude, which no man could number" (Rev. 7:9). Twelve is the numerical root of the divine economy upon earth — 12 sons of Jacob — 12 tribes of Israel — 12

apostles of the Lamb. Twelve multiplied by 12, constituting what is mathematically termed a “square” of the number, yields 144, and thousands are added to show that multitudes are embraced. An Israelitish multitude is the idea conveyed by the number 144,000.

Some have distressed themselves with the idea that 144,000 is the exact number of the company of the chosen. They think of that as a small number, and the opportunity of salvation slight in consequence. They think if that number is made up, there is no use trying. There is no need for this distress. Even if 144,000 were the exact number (and no man knows the exact number: doubtless, it is fixed), so long as the door is unshut, no one walking in will be turned back: the open door, and his walking in, would be proof of inclusion among the number; for Jesus has said, “All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me: and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37).

The 144,000 had “the Father's name written on their foreheads” -- “his Father's” name -- the Lamb's Father's name -- the name of God. This shows that the 144,000 consist of enlightened persons. The forehead is the symbol of the understanding, and the name of the Father, the knowledge of God. The ignorant of the things of God have no place among the 144,000, whose chief characteristic is the knowledge of God. This is in harmony with what Jesus said: “This is eternal life, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). As it is written, “The foolish shall not stand in thy sight” (Psalm 5:5); “They are alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them (Eph. 4:18). Some despair at these facts, as though they involved exclusion from the kingdom of God. The right use to make of them is to make them a reason for the diligent obedience of the precept which says: “If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord; and find the knowledge of God.” “Be diligent to make your calling and election sure.”

The common habit is to treat these things with indifference. Let the anxious avoid the common habit, and obey the commandments, and they will experience the truth of those words of wisdom: “All the words of my mouth are ... plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge. Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold. For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it.”

How did John see the 144,000 occupied? “They sung as it were a new song.” This is the scriptural way of expressing a new deliverance. When David had just been delivered from distress, he said that God “had put a new song in his mouth”. The new song of the 144,000 points to the fact that they have just attained that mighty deliverance which awaits all the sons of God at the Lord's coming — deliverance from the feebleness of mortal nature, and from all the cares and evils that afflict present life, and from the

constitution of the evil world. It is a song of great and joyous exultation. Their voice, John says, was “as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder ... as the voice of harpers harping with their harps This is a great change from the aspect in which he saw the same company in chapters 12 and 13. There they were a feeble community, a remnant of the woman's seed — cast out and prevailed against by the nightmare monsters of the vision. Here they are enthroned on Mount Zion, in power and exultant joy. Who would not endure “the light affliction” of the present down-trodden state to obtain a place in that shining and exultant throng? — a vast and impressive multitude, even if only 144,000 mortals; but what shall we say of the countless multitude of powerful and glorious immortals?

John heard the voice “from heaven”, although the performers were on Mount Zion. This is due to the sense in which heaven is apocalyptically employed. When the Lamb and the 144,000 are enthroned in Mount Zion, preparatory to the earth's subjugation, they are in heaven in the sense in which the great red dragon of chapter 13 was in heaven. They are in the arena of political power, from which they will expel all rivals in “the war of the great day of God Almighty.” Their vocation is to reign together over all the earth, as “kings and priests unto God” (Rev. 5:10). Before they can do this, they must execute the judgment decreed against the present powers or governments of the earth. It is recorded of them that this they will do (Dan. 7:22; Psa. 149:5-9; Rev. 2:26-7). But before they proceed upon this work, they have a time of rejoicing together at their first meeting, after the judgment of the household has eliminated all the worthless elements from the assembly. It is in the act of celebrating this preliminary festival of love and joy, that John sees them engaged in the opening verses of the chapter we are considering. “No man can learn that song, but the 144,000.” That is, no one can take part in the song who does not constitute part of the assembly; for the song is declaratory of facts which can only be affirmed of themselves, viz., that they are redeemed (immortalized), and appointed kings and priests unto God.

“These are they that were not defiled with women, for they are virgins.” This is not to be taken literally, of course: for, literally, a great proportion of them will be women, such as Mary, of whom Jesus said she had chosen the good part, that should not be taken away (Luke 10:42); and the women who, along with the men, were baptized on believing the gospel preached by Philip (Acts 8:12); and the wives, who are “heirs together” with their husbands of the grace of life (1 Pet. 3:7). If it were taken literally, it would exclude the bulk of the apostles, who were married men. If not literally, it must be taken figuratively. The question is, what sense attaches to it understood in the figurative sense? We find the answer in the name given to THE WOMAN, exhibited to John as the symbol of Rome — the mother of harlots. These harlots are the women with whom the 144,000 are not defiled. What are they? If Rome be the mother (and she is called so in universal ecclesiastical usage — “the mother Church”), the daughters must be recognized in her offshoots. These are numerous throughout the world.

All national Churches, and all sects and denominations that own a Roman parentage and acknowledge Roman Catholics as “fellow-Christians”, are included with Rome in the Apocalyptic phrase: “the Mother of Harlots, and the abominations of the earth.” To have fellowship with them is to be defiled with the “women” of the Apocalypse. The constituents of the 144,000 are all of them clean from this defilement. They have all in their day and generation been outside the national and popular communions. These communions are incorporations of superstition. They use the names connected with divine knowledge, but of the knowledge itself they are in large measure — (so large as to be almost totally) — ignorant. Their theology is the crystallized ecclesiastical traditions of the Papal ages, instead of the embodiment of scriptural knowledge. The consequence is, that “the Churches” are “refuges of lies” instead of strongholds of truth. They are institutions, with which no one can be in harmony Without being guilty of unbelief and disobedience; for they rest on dogmas inconsistent with the faith once for all delivered to the saints — the gospel of the kingdom and the name of Jesus; and inculcate and observe precepts which cause the doers of them to “do those things which they ought not to do, and to leave undone those things which they ought to do”. Our position as Christadelphians is a disagreeable one, in standing aloof from the professions of Christianity; but we must remember that our hope of inclusion in the joyous ranks of the 144,000 rests, among other things, on that very isolation which is so inconvenient at the present time: for “these are they which have not been defiled with women: for they are virgins.”

“These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.” They do so in the most comprehensive sense — now and hereafter. Their mind in the case is expressed in the words, “Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest”. Peter meant this in a personal sense: but it has a spiritual sense which everyone readily understands. To follow Christ is to do as he commands. This is the policy that causes exclusion from the Churches; for the Churches do not obey his commandments or believe in his glorious gospel. The following of the Lamb must be a present following in order to be a future following. Those who do not follow now will not follow then. Those who do not suffer with him will not reign with him. Those who do not “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth” are not of the 144,000. Those who follow him in his humiliation will follow him in all his glory when the day for his enthronement on Mount Zion arrives. There will be a wonderful reversal of the rule of honour then. It is certain disgrace to be identified with the testimony of God in the present age; how greedily will men covet Christ’s recognition in the day of his coming — in vain! “Him that honoureth me, I will honour”; this is the rule, and this is the day for the first part of it. We honour God by believing and obeying Him in the day when all rests as yet on His promise. “He that denieth me before men, him will I deny”: this is what Jesus says concerning the coming day. Let us not be sorry, then, at having the opportunity of suffering shame for his name.

They are “the first fruits unto God and unto the Lamb.” This shows they are not the finish, but only the beginning of the glorious triumph of God’s work on earth. After “the firstfruits” comes, by and by, the harvest. There will be a great harvest at the end of the millennial age as the result of the work of Christ and the saints in ruling the world a thousand years. Multitudes will ripen for immortality under their reign, to be glorified at the end, when “the last enemy, death, shall be destroyed.” Then will be realized the consummation proclaimed at the close of the Apocalypse: “There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be anymore pain: for the former things are passed away”.

“In their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.” We are to understand this in the light of David’s statement: “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. The statement that they are without fault does not mean that they never had any fault: for they are made to declare to the Lamb that they have been “washed from their sins in his blood.” It means that they are justified men — men forgiven — to whom their faith and obedience of Christ have been counted for righteousness. But, of course, this involves the idea of personal righteousness. It would be a mistake to conclude that because they are men that have been forgiven, therefore they are destitute of personal righteousness as their leading moral characteristic. This is the mistake practically made by most systems of popular religion — perhaps by Revivalism most glaringly of all. No one can be an obedient servant of Christ without possessing in the very act the quality of righteousness; for righteousness is obedience. “The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9). “The righteous shall scarcely be saved” (1 Pet. 4:18). These are apostolic declarations, uttered for the warning of believers. The fact that the righteous are men whose “transgressions are forgiven, and whose sins are covered”, does not interfere with the fact that they are men who acquire that forgiveness in the attitude of faith and obedience towards Christ. There is no reason for the theological tradition that the saints are the blackest sinners — Without one plea, except that “Jesus died for me”. Jesus says, “I will give to every one of you according to your works ... He that keepeth my works unto the end, will I give power over the nations ... To him will I grant to sit with me in my throne”. Such are at last forgiven men — men having to confess failings, which are passed by in the mercy of God, through Christ; but their case is very different from that of men who live in indifference, unfaith, and disobedience.

“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” This follows the enthronement of the 144,000 on Mount Zion. It is,

therefore, after Christ has come and raised, and judged, and immortalized his brethren; and after he has, with them, made his appearance in the affairs of the world as a new political power. It is, in fact, after the overthrow of Gog; for Jesus and his brethren are not enthroned on Mount Zion till Gog has been driven out of the land. This overthrow having been effected, we have here the government of Christ established in the Holy Land, entering into diplomatic relations, so to speak, with the rest of the world which is still unsubdued. The angel flying in the midst of heaven is the symbol of the divine ambassadorship, through which they will be addressed. The message he delivers is styled the everlasting (the aionian) gospel, or gospel of the age, because it is the proclamation of the glad tidings peculiar to the age. The gospel of our day is the glad tidings of what God proposes to do: the gospel of the age is the glad tidings of the hour having come for the accomplishment of that purpose. It is a proclamation addressed to the political world in general. The mode of address is something new in the history of politics — something at strange variance with the attenuated and insincere refinements of modern diplomatic speech. It is a blunt summons to do something of which governments know nothing, except as “cant”: “Fear God, and give glory to him.” This strikes the key-note of the coming dispensation. It is the great difference between the present and the future age. Human convenience is the rule of the present age: “Glory to God in the highest” is the motto of the future. The human race will be much more interesting, and much more loving one to another, when the supremacy and proprietary rights and ineffable excellence of God are practically and heartily recognized among them. The summons to yield this recognition is the first demand of the coming age upon the present age. The form in which it is required in the first instance is obeisance to the Lamb: “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little”. This is the practical form of the message to “the kings of the earth”, when Jehovah [Yahewh] has set His king on the holy hill of Zion (see Psa. 2). Asking them to do homage to Jesus enthroned on Mount Zion, will be to ask them to “Fear God, and give glory to Him”; for the bowing of the knee to the name of Jesus is “to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:11).

“The hour of his judgment is come.” This shows the time to which the scene refers. There is an hour appointed for judgment. Until its arrival, it seems as if God were taking no notice. He keeps silence and men suppose Him ungrateful, though a moment’s consideration of the history of the past would dispel the delusion. The fact is He proceeds methodically. “He hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead” (Acts 17:31). When the day arrives, the world will be apprised of the fact and summoned to give attendance, as the symbol before us informs us. As we learn from a subsequent portion of the Apocalypse, the response at first is a rebellious one. They gather their forces to make war upon Jehovah’s [Yahweh’s] King: not understanding who he is. Their presumption appears to receive a severe blow at the outset; for after the angel had delivered the message of

summons, John says “There followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.” This appears to intimate a catastrophe at this stage to Rome itself as the historical and geographical centre of the Papal corruption. In another chapter further on, her engulfment after the manner of Sodom and Gomorrah is plainly foreshown: and here we appear to have the time of its occurrence indicated — viz., just after the rejection of the first summons from Christ enthroned on Zion.

The destruction of Rome does not open the eyes of the nations subject to her direction; for there follows a warning which would be unnecessary in that case. “The third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day nor night who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.”

This shows the survival of the system symbolized by “the beast and his image”, after Rome itself has gone crashing into the abyss. The constitution of European society in Church and State continues after the disappearance of Rome. That disappearance is the knell of the whole system and the opening stroke of the impending vengeance as it were, but it fails to be read aright by the deluded peoples. It will doubtless be explained away as a natural calamity to which no significance is to be attached; and with a sense of ease and confidence, they proceed to organize themselves in middle Europe for a strenuous resistance to the power that has already summoned them and backed its summons with power, but whose nature they misapprehend as totally as Pharaoh misapprehended the power he was opposing in Egypt. It is while this resistance is organizing that a second message is addressed to the European populations, warning them against identification with the opposing camp, assuring them of the judicial penalties impending upon the Papal system in all its ramifications, and upon all who sympathized with it. They are told of the full cup of unmixed wrath about to be poured out, and of the torment resulting to those who may have to drink it. This indicates that those who at the last moment dis sever themselves from the enemies of the Lord will find sparing mercy at His hand to the lengthening of their lives and their admission to the kingdom of God as mortal subjects. There may be a remnant who will favourably respond: the publication of the warning implies as much: but as regards the bulk, the message falls on heedless ears, and the worshippers of the beast rush on to the torment awaiting them in the presence of the Lamb against whom they advance, and whose power comes terribly forth to their destruction, causing the smoke of their torment to ascend up to the ages of the ages.

We know the use that is made by the believers in popular theology of this verse, to uphold the orthodox idea of hell fire. They quote this high figure of

the Apocalypse as the description of a literal fact. It is the characteristic in general of the orthodox treatment of the Scriptures, to “spiritualize” literal truth, and to literalize that which is figurative and symbolic. The inapplicability of the symbol in question to the popular hell must be evident, from the place it occupies in the representation of events transpiring subsequent to the Lamb's enthronement in Mount Zion with the 144,000. Their hell is always at work: this is a torment to be inflicted at the coming of Christ. The torments of their hell are presided over by the devil: this is inflicted “in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb”. Their torments are for the vile of mankind in general: this is for a special class, defined as “the worshippers of the beast and his image.”

It is not necessary to argue this question with you; but it is as well, perhaps, in passing, to refer to this bearing of a strongly coloured symbolism which, on the face of it, gives countenance to popular ideas of hell torment. It is, in fact, the description of the vengeance which awaits the great European Apostasy at the coming of Jesus, when “revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction” (2 Thess. 1:7). It is what Paul describes as a “fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries” (Heb. 10:27); and Malachi, as “a day that will burn up the wicked, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch” (Mal. 4:1). To say of this tormenting outburst of judgment in a symbolic vision, that the smoke of it will ascend up for ever and ever, is to say that it will be perpetual in its triumph over those overwhelmed by it — that there will be no recovery from the catastrophe. They have no rest day nor night when the hour for the infliction of the judgment has arrived; and its effect, when consummated, is for ever — after the example of Sodom and Gomorrah, “who are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude, verse 7), though “overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her” (Lam. 4:6).

It will be a terrible epoch in the history of Europe, when the devouring judgments of God are sent forth like the lightning in all the earth, from the presence of the Lamb and the 144,000. The people will then see and feel the heinousness of the offence of which they are guilty, in submitting to the lying prescriptions of the blasphemous imposture of Rome. The faithfulness of those who have stood aloof, in all ages up to the last moment, will then be fully vindicated, and their wisdom manifest. The prospect of it inspires the saints with patience, as saith verse 12: “Here is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” When the prospect is realized, the meaning of a certain writing which John was commanded to write, will be abundantly apparent. John says (verse 13), “I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them”: that is, the blessedness of the dead dying in the Lord will be manifest from this point of time, when the dead, having arisen, behold the judgment of God executed

on the head of the wicked, and their own labours past and then present, accomplished in the benign administration of the world in the reign upon which they will enter with Christ. The usual way to understand the passage is illustrated in its frequent inscription on tombstones. It is taken to declare a blessedness in John's day for the dead in general dying in the Lord. That this is a mistake must be evident from the specification of a time for the commencement of the blessedness. Understood in the ordinary way, it would mean that the dead dying in the Lord were not blessed before Jesus' day; and what, then, about the ordinary conviction that for all ages before then, the righteous dead had entered upon blessedness and rested from their labours? This cannot be the meaning. The meaning cannot be perceived without a knowledge of the truth which teaches that the dead are dead, and that not until the coming of the Lord do they enter upon their blessedness as spectators, and executioners of the divine judgments that will precede the glorious establishment of the kingdom of God in all the earth. Then they enter upon "the rest that remaineth for the people of God" (Heb. 4:9); and then their works accompany them in the results that accrue to them from those works, concerning which Jesus says He will "give to every man according to his works". It may be, however, on this point that the new translation is right which makes the Spirit the follower with the saints in the works they accomplish in the day of power.

The scenes in chapter 14 up to this point have all to do with the opening events of the judgment to be executed at the appearing of Christ. They show us the sequence of events: 1, the enthronement of the Lamb and the 144,000 on Mount Zion; 2, the summons addressed to the nations to fear God in view of the arrival of the hour of judgment; 3, its enforcement by the overthrow of Babylon; and 4, the issue of a warning to the world at large as to their attitude towards the beast and image system of things in Europe. Verse 14 introduces us to the execution of the judgment itself: "And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud sat one like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which hath power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horses' bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs."

The whole of this symbolism is so plain as to speak for itself. First, the white cloud: we all know the sense in which a cloud is figuratively used: Paul

supplies it in the phrase “so great a cloud of witnesses” (Heb: 12:1). The cloud stands for a multitude; “white”, the colour for righteousness: a righteous multitude. The Son of Man, crowned, sitting thereon — the Lord Jesus enthroned in the midst of his brethren. A sharp sickle in his hand: a reaping act about to be put forth. The vine-clusters, upon which the reaping operation is performed, the leading sinners of the present evil world. This is shown by the fact that “the vine of the earth” being reaped, they were “cast into the winepress of the wrath of God.” It is a beautiful hieroglyph of the work of retribution to be performed upon the earth by Christ at his coming. There is great profit in the contemplation of it. There is a time for the performance of the work: “The time is come for thee to reap.” Therefore let us not be weary at the apparent indifference of God to the present situation. It is a time when godlessness has overgrown the earth, and come to fine development; for “the harvest of the earth is ripe.” Therefore let us not be unduly distressed at the utter barrenness of all spiritual things, which characterizes the present constitution of society everywhere. The actual situation, as we find it in our bitterness, is in harmony with the prophetic forecast of the Apocalypse: and our lonely strangership, in the present order of things, is a good augury of our position before God, though hard to bear. The day of rectification is at the door: “The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance; he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth” (Psa. 58:10).

The hieroglyph evidently reveals stages in the work of judgment. First, the Son of Man is implored by an angel to use his sickle. This may intimate that the actual execution of judgment in the first instance, though a matter of purpose, will be in answer to the petition of the glorified equal-to-the-angel multitude. The Son of Man complies, and the earth is reaped. The first stroke of the judgment is dealt, affecting, probably, the neighbourhood of the land of promise where he takes up his stand. Then another angel, sickle-armed, issues from the temple, and obeys the command to reap, received from another angel, coming out of the altar. This would point to a further extension of judgment, probably into remoter countries, carried out by the saints issuing for that purpose from their headquarters in the Holy Land, and carrying fire and sword into the dominion of the fourth beast, where, in former ages, they were placed under the altar in the bloody persecutions to which they were subjected. The slaughtered saints are personated by the angel coming out of the altar, now having power over fire (judgment), and crying for vengeance, like the blood of righteous Abel. In response, the winepress is trodden “without the city” — away from the Holy City, which becomes a quiet habitation; and the process is so terribly effective that the blood flows in torrents, so deep as to reach to the horses’ bridles, for a long space. This is the symbolic indication of the sanguinary nature of the outpourings of vengeance that hangs over the world, when “the slain of the Lord shall be in that day from one end of the earth even to the other end of the earth; they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the face of the ground” (Jer. 25:33). “The indignation of

the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter” (Isa. 34:2).

“For sixteen hundred furlongs”: the root of this number is 40, thus $40 \times 40 = 1,600$. For this reason, Dr. Thomas has suggested that it represents forty years of judgment on the nations, after the analogy of 40 years of judgment on Israel in punishment of their rebellion in the wilderness. It may be so. It seems strange to represent time by distance; but the strangeness diminishes when we remember that in Joseph’s interpretation of Pharaoh’s dream, seven cattle and seven ears of corn stood for seven years (Gen. 41:26-27). The spirit of God is fertile in its similitudes and analogies. Some have suggested that the 1,600 furlongs are the measure of the country (in Italy), where the hand of God will be most severely felt. There is no certain guide in the Apocalypse as to the exact meaning. But this much is clear — that it is intended to express a time of unprecedented bloodshed and destruction. Its value in this sense is without obscurity. It is a confirmation — (in a very striking form) — of all we read in the Scriptures concerning the crisis of the work of God upon earth — “a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness” — “a time of trouble, such as never was” — a day when “the haughtiness of men shall be made low and the Lord alone exalted.” Christ’s comparisons of the day of his coming to the flood, and to the destruction of Sodom, carry the same sense. The prospect is a terrible one. It will make no impression till realized. Men will laugh at it as an idle fancy, till the appalling thunders of divine wrath begin to spread terror through the world. Blessed are they who put their trust in Him. The blessedness will be manifest then.

The whole chapter, though a chapter of brightness as regards what it ultimately means, is a chapter at once dark and lurid with judgment. It tells of the dreadful scenes to be enacted upon the earth before the promised blessing can come. Shall we turn away from it, because less pleasing than some aspects of the divine purpose? This were worse than idle. It is an essential feature of the divine plan, and one to inspire gladness in view of the need for it. The world can never be brought to God without a display of judicial power: the inhabitants of the world will never learn righteousness till the judgments of God are in the earth: the kingdom of God can never be established till the kingdoms of men are destroyed. The new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, can never be developed till the old is broken up and dismissed; with great tumult. There must be a clearing of the old foundations, a pulling down of the old institutions, a wiping out of the old principles, a destruction of the thousand long-standing sentiments and views of society that are antagonistic to wisdom and righteousness, before there can be established an order of things in which glory to God will be the highest principle, and goodwill among men the prevailing habit. For this necessity God has provided, and Rev. 14 symbolically exhibits the provision He has made.

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

Hints For Bible Markers

We are continuing on with the commands concerning the stranger. But we do well to realize that these commands pertain to the treatment of brethren as well. This can be seen when we consider the full import of what Jesus said when discoursing with the Sadducees and Pharisees in the temple during his last visit to Jerusalem. After being asked and declaring the first great commandment in the law, Matthew records the second great commandment, (22:39-40) "And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. (40) On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Again placing love in the forefront of our minds. It sounds like such a simple thing to do, to treat other people in the manner in which we would like to be treated. This is more difficult to do than we realize. To love others as much as we love ourselves. By nature we want to be treated better than anyone else. We rarely empathize with the other guy. How many times while driving did we get upset because some other driver was in a hurry and cut us off. When we are in a hurry and do it, it's ok. If we take the time to think upon our actions we will become conscious of just how often we fail. Add the rest of the concept, and bless them who negatively impacted our selfish little world and we begin to see how difficult it is for us. We must work to develop the mind set God would have in us as opposed to the true state of the mind of man.

Bro. Beryl Snyder

The Commandments of Christ

As collected and organized by bro. Roberts

Render not evil for evil or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing.

Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. (1 Peter 3:9)

Bless, and curse not.

Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. (Romans 12:14)

Resist not evil; compel not the restitution of stolen goods: avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath.

But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. (Matthew 5:39)

And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. (Matthew 5:40)

And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not to take thy coat also. (Luke 6:29)

Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. (Luke 6:30)

Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. (Romans 12:19)

Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:21)

As ye would that men should do unto you, do ye also so to them.

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets. (Matthew 7:12)

And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. (Luke 6:31)

Walk not as other Gentiles walk.

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, (Ephesians 4:17)