

*Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps, set thine heart
Toward the highway, even the way which thou wentest (Jer 31:21)*

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN WAYMARK

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**Devoted to the Defence and Proclamation of the Way of Life
in Opposition to the Dogmas of Papal and Protestant Christendom**

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*“I saw, and behold, a white horse; and he that
sat upon him had a bow; and a crown was
given unto him: and he went forth conquering,
and to conquer” (Rev 6:2)*

*“The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable ...” (Jas 3:17)
“Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3)*

“Be Strong and of Good Courage”

The record of Deuteronomy recounts the words of Moses to Israel at the end of his life, encouraging them to go forth and take possession of the Land of Promise:

“Yahweh thy Elohim, he will go over before thee ... *be strong and of a good courage*, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for Yahweh thy Elohim he it is that doth go with thee; *he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee*” (Deut. 31:3, 6).

Notice the two significant phrases in this passage: there is the exhortation: “*be strong and of a good courage*” and then the reason why: for Yahweh “*will not fail thee, nor forsake thee*”. Just as Israel were on the border of the land looking forward to taking up their inheritance, even so we (albeit in a different sense), are also looking to take up our inheritance at the appointed time. And just as Israel had to war a good warfare in order to receive their inheritance, even so we must engage ourselves in the warfare against the flesh – a warfare of faith. In this battle, “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:4-5). The way may be hard at times, but we “endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Tim. 2:3), looking to share the victory of our Lord and Master. We therefore, need the exhortation and encouragement just as much as Israel of old: trusting in Yahweh’s power to save, we must ourselves “*be strong and of a good courage*”.

The record in Deuteronomy describes how this exhortation was repeated to Joshua, the captain of the host, and the One who would lead Israel in their warfare against the Canaanites:

“and Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, *be strong and of a good courage*: for thou must go with this people unto the land which Yahweh hath sworn unto their Fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it. And Yahweh, he it is that shall go before thee, *he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee*: fear not, neither be dismayed” (Deut. 31:7-8).

Again, in our reading for the day in Joshua chapter 1, the same exhortation is repeated three times: verses 6, 7 and 9. Joshua was the selected man to lead the people in their battle, as the captain their salvation. But the warfare would not depend upon his natural skill and ability: “Yahweh, he it is that shall go before thee ...”. The victory would be Yahweh’s, and not Joshua’s.

This promise echoes the promise made earlier to Moses, how that an Angel of God would go before the people, securing the victory:

“... Behold, I send *an angel before thee*, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared”

And again:

“For mine Angel shall go before thee, *and bring thee in* unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off” (Exo. 23:20,23).

Here we have a pattern being established: Joshua as a mortal man, as the captain of Yahweh’s Host upon earth was to wage a warfare against men of flesh. But the real power to save was divine: it was of the Angel of Yahweh’s Heavenly host who would secure the victory. And in each of these two personages, we have represented the Captain of our Salvation, even Jesus the anointed one, who was both human and the only begotten son of Yahweh: He warred against the greatest enemy of all; even the diabolos in our own nature – and he was victorious. But the power to save was not of his mortal frame: it was due to his being the Son of the Most High, the One “made strong” (Psa. 80:17) for the purpose.

Earlier, Israel had shown a great lack of faith and sight, being afraid of the enemy which they were up against. The spies sent to view the land “brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the Children of Israel, saying, the land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which

come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight” (Num. 13:32-33).

In these words, the ten spies made a fundamental mistake, which we can all too often repeat in our own lives. They were considering their own abilities, and how the enemy was much greater than they. However, the point of comparison was all wrong: they should have been measuring the greatness of the enemy against the greatness of their God. Yahweh had promised to send an angel: the people could not capture the land through their own might – but the power of Yahweh was there to save. That is where their faith ought to have been exercised, not in themselves, but in their God. Indeed, we can find a further parallel with our own lives: we are “without strength” (Rom. 5:6) to save ourselves, but we can obtain the victory through Christ our Redeemer. We must be strong, and have courage, trusting in Yahweh’s power to save.

SOLOMON

A similar exhortation was spoken to Solomon by his father David, at the time when he was inaugurated king over all the house of Jacob:

“... thou shalt prosper, if thou takes heed to fulfil the statutes and judgments which Yahweh charged Moses with concerning Israel: *be strong and of good courage: dread not, nor be dismayed*” (1 Chron. 22:13).

The pre-eminent work of Solomon was to build the House of God: the Temple in which Yahweh would symbolically reside. And so the exhortation was also

given specific to this work:

“And David said to Solomon his son, *Be strong and of good courage*, and do it: for Yahweh Elohim, even my Elohim will be with thee: *he will not fail thee*, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of Yahweh” (1 Chron. 28:20).

There are two aspects to the believer’s service before God: there is the warring of a spiritual warfare, and there is the building up of the spiritual house – which is the ecclesia of the living God (1 Tim. 3:15). These come together in the Master’s parable as recorded in Luke chapter 14:

“which of you, intending to **build a tower**, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him ...

Or what king, going **to make war** against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Lu. 14:28-33).

Here then, are the two aspects to life in Christ: to build, and to war. One is more pleasing than the other. It is a

delight and a privilege to be engaged in the building of the house of God, and it is most distasteful to have to war against the flesh. But both are just as important than the other: it is only by shovelling away the rubble of apostasy that the way can be cleared for the unhindered building of God’s house.

HEZEKIAH

Another instance of this exhortation being given is from Hezekiah to his people, under siege by the Assyrians:

“*Be strong and courageous, be not afraid or dismayed* for the king of Assyria, nor from all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than there be with him: with him is an arm of flesh, but with us is Yahweh our God to help us, and to fight our battles” (2 Chron. 32:7-8)

Compare this spirit with that of those who were afraid of the Children of Anak! Here we see a true spirit of faith – though humanly speaking all was lost, Hezekiah compared the might of the Assyrians with that of Yahweh – which the people ought to have done in Moses’ day. “There be more with us than there be with him” – a true character of faith.

The allusion here is to an earlier event in connection with Elisha. 2 Kings 6 records how an army was dispatched to come against Elisha and his servant: “*horses, and chariots, and a great army ...*” Notice this – a whole battalion against two individuals! Well can we understand the fear of Elisha’s servant, in saying: “Alas, my master! How shall we do?” But Elijah’s response demonstrated what great faith he had in

the Angelic Host that would deliver them:

“he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, Yahweh, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And Yahweh opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha ...” (2 Kings 6:16-17).

It is written that “the angel of Yahweh encampeth round about them that fear him, *and delivereth them*” (Psa. 34:7): but we need spiritual perception to recognise that fact. How often have we been like Elisha’s servant – unable to see the Angels working around us, in our lives? We know as a matter of fact that the Angels are “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation? (Heb. 1:14) – but do we perceive that reality in times of trouble and distress? Oh that we be like Elisha in terms of his confidence and spiritual sight!

OURSELVES

We have already intimated some of the lessons that appear in these considerations for our own lives. Our role is to wage a warfare, and to build the ecclesial house. Paul exhorted Timothy to: “*be strong* in the grace that is in Christ Jesus ... thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Tim. 2:1,3)

Again, the apostle gives the exhortation to the Ephesians:

“Finally, my brethren, *be strong* in the Lord, and in the power of

his might ... for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph. 6:12).

In this warfare we are not alone. Just as Elisha describes, there is a power with us, which is not in the world. As it is written: “greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 Jno. 4:4). The angelic host encamps round about those that are heirs of salvation, delivering them in ways that may not be immediately apparent. Through the eye of faith, we behold them – but it may be only in the kingdom that we will appreciate the full extent to which they have helped us on our journey. Christ dwells in our hearts through faith, and it is he who governs the angelic hosts who deliver us: and he has the power of omnipotence. We need not fear those mockers around us: the power of Christ is infinitely greater than them, and his approval is what we seek, not that of our contemporaries.

Just as Israel looked to a Divine messenger to prepare a place before them, even so Messiah has promised likewise:

“in my Father’s house are many dwelling places ... I go to *prepare a place for you*. And if I go and *prepare a place for you*, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also” (Jno.14:3)

Taking the role of the Angels of old, Christ leads us in both our warfare, and in preparing a place within the house of God. To be granted a dwelling place in

our Father’s House will be an immense privilege – but restricted to those who see the promises afar off, through the eye of faith.

CONCLUSION

It is written that:

“there hath no trial taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tried above that ye are able; but will with the trial also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13).

It may be that during our journey through the wilderness of life, that we may have to endure many trials, to shape our character and transform our thinking. But we have this assurance: “God is faithful”. He will never leave nor forsake us, no matter how dark things may seem. Though it may be that we must walk through the shadow of death, like the Psalmist, we will “fear no evil”, for God is with us, and surely “goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our life, and I will dwell in the house of Yahweh for ever” (Psa. 23:6)

Christopher Maddocks

The Conversion of Cornelius

The prophet Malachi foresaw how that in years to come, Gentiles would embrace Israel’s Hope, and worship Yahweh as their God:

“For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, *My Name shall be great among the Gentiles*; and in every place *incense shall be offered unto my Name*, and a pure offering: for My Name shall be great among the heathen, saith Yahweh of Armies” (Mal. 1:11).

The time of offering incense coincided with the offering of Prayer: we read in Luke chapter 1 that “the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the time of incense” (Lu. 1:10). These were Jews, but Malachi spoke of how Gentiles would commit themselves to the worship of Israel’s God. Cornelius the Centurion, is an example of this. He was “a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always” (Acts 10:2). At the 9th hour, the time of the offering up of Incense and Prayer (Acts 3:1), he was given a vision of a heavenly messenger, come to answer his petitions:

“He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy Prayers and thine Alms are come up for a memorial before God” (Acts 10:3-4).

There were two qualities of Cornelius that God noted him for: his prayers and his “alms”. These characteristics match those found in the centurion whose servant Messiah healed. He brought his petitions to the Master, and the Jews testi-

fied to the Alms that he did, saying: “that he was worthy for whom he should do this: for he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue” (Lu. 7:4-5). This Centurion is unnamed: some have concluded that he was actually Cornelius himself, but that cannot be proven. Certainly he was a man of like mind who showed his faith in Israel’s God, by doing “alms” to His Chosen Nation.

Cornelius’ prayer was answered by the preparation and sending of Peter to meet with him. As a Gentile, let alone a Roman Centurion, Cornelius was racially separated from Israel’s Hope: yet the time had come when through Israel’s fall (Rom. 11:11), the way of Salvation was come to the Gentiles. Peter had to learn that lesson first, in order that he could instruct the roman Cornelius what he must do to be saved.

At the sixth hour (or Midday), Peter prayed upon the housetop, and as he prayed, he was shown a vision. His differed from Cornelius: he was shown a great sheet tied by it’s four corners, and containing a mixture of living animals: “all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air” (Acts 10:12). He was then invited to “kill and eat” the animals – which under the Mosaic commandment was prohibited. “but Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean” (Acts 10:14).

CLEAN AND UNCLEAN BEASTS

Peter’s reference to having never eaten unclean animals is to the requirements of Mosaic Law which restricted which animals could be eaten. We shall consider that aspect shortly, but we need to appreciate that this principle existed long before the Mosaic Law, to the time of Noah and the Flood. Genesis chapter 7 recounts the commandment to Noah in this regard: “of every *clean* beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and the female: and of beast that are *not clean* by two, the male and his female” (Gen. 7:2). Here, the distinction of Clean and Unclean animals is apparent, but since man did not have permission to eat flesh until chapter 9 and verse 3, it cannot be a reference to a dietary discrimination. Verse 20 of Genesis chapter 8 provides the answer:

“Noah builded an altar unto Yahweh; and took of every *clean beast*, and of every *clean fowl*, and offered burnt offerings upon the altar”

Here it is clear that the clean beasts were those which could be offered in Sacrifice, whereas the unclean animals were those that would not be accepted. There was a point to be made: in terms of Worship, there is a discrimination to be made between that which Yahweh would accept, and that which he will not. The point is brought home when we read the exhortation of Romans 12 that believers should present themselves as “a living sacrifice”. Only those who show the required characteristics will be accepted as “clean” sacrifices: all else will be rejected.

At a national level, Israel were to show this principle in their diet. Unclean animals represented the Gentiles around them – unclean persons (Eph. 5:5), who were dead in their sins and trespasses. These are the “unbelieving” who Paul

spoke of to Titus, that “even their mind and conscience *is defiled*” (Tit. 1:15). These are not accepted by He who art of purer eyes than to behold evil (Hab. 1:13), and this principle was to be displayed in the lessons of clean, and unclean beasts. So in Deuteronomy chapter 14, immediately before speaking of this, the people were exhorted to separation and holiness:

“Thou art *a holy people* unto Yahweh thy God, and Yahweh hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth. *Thou shalt not eat any abominable thing ...*” (Deut. 14:2-3).

Indeed, later, when Israel adopted the ways of the heathen they were reproved for not making this distinction (Ezek. 22:26).

CLEANSING THE UNCLEAN

Peter recognised the import of what we have just considered; he was told in his vision:

“What God *hath cleansed*, that call not thou common” (Acts 10:15)

And he understood that to mean:

“God hath showed me *that I should not call any man common or unclean*” (Acts 10:28)

This confirms what we have just shown: the clean and unclean animals represent men, clean and unclean. But Peter was told that the “unclean” had been “cleansed” by God. How is this so? The application is plainly made to Cornelius who though he offered prayers and alms oft, was not baptised yet. Ephesians chapter 5 describes the cleansing of Christ’s Ecclesia, in terms of the living parable of marriage:

“Husbands love your wives, even as Chris also loved the ecclesia, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify *and cleanse it* with the washing of water by the Word: That he might present it to himself a glorious ecclesia, not having spot, nor wrinkle, or any such thing; so that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:25-27).

The Gentile Ecclesia at Ephesus was thus exhorted to be cleansed by a continual application of the Word, and it’s sanctifying effect. In like manner, Cornelius was cleansed in his heart, and expressed his purity of heart by prayer and blessing God’s people. Psalm 24 speaks of those who do this:

“Who shall ascend into the hill of Yahweh? Or who shall stand in His Holy Place? He that hath *clean* hands and a *pure* heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from Yahweh, and righteousness from the God of his salvation” (Psa. 24:3-5).

The exhortation is plain: by cleansing our hearts and hands by the application of The Word, we, formerly the Unclean, can be cleansed by God, and be accepted blameless before him.

Being in a different dispensation, the food laws applicable to Israel are not to be observed by Gentiles. As Peter saw the unclean being cleansed, so it is written of the formerly unclean foods:

“every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the Word of God and Prayer” (1 Tim. 4:5).

And again, it is written:

“I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself ...” (Rom. 14:14).

THE LINEN SHEET

In beholding the variety of animals, Peter saw them descending in “a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth”. According to Strong, the word “sheet” speaks of linen, and in this regard can be seen to represent the righteousness of Saints – those who have been made clean. So we read of the Lamb’s Wife:

“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*” (Rev. 19:8).

It would appear therefore, that the linen sheet in which the animals were contained, speaks of that system of righteousness provided from Yahweh (i.e. from heaven), in which Jew and Gentile meet together. This application is further strengthened by the reference to the “four corners” which were “knit,” or “tied” up so that the sheet could be so used. In Scripture, “four corners” speaks of the extremities of a thing: compare the following testimonies:

“And after these things I saw four angels standing on *the four corners* of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree” (Rev. 7:1).

“And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from *the four corners* of the earth” (Isa. 11:12).

“also, thou son of man, thus saith Adonai Yahweh unto the land of Israel; An end, the end is come upon *the four corners* of the land” (Eze. 7:2).

The “four corners” of the linen sheet therefore, speaks of the all-embracing nature of the Truth, how that anyone – Jew or Gentile - who desires to cleanse themselves for suitable inclusion in Messiahs’ collective bride, whichever of the four corners of the earth they may be from can be included, and brought together, enfolded in a sheet of righteousness.

THE ECCLESIA AT ROME?

We read of Cornelius, that he was “a centurion of the band called the Italian band” (Acts 10:1). It logically follows that in deciding to be a disciple of Christ, he would have to leave his occupation as soon as the opportunity permitted. One suggestion that has been made, is that being from Italy, if and when he left his station, he may have been the instigator for the formation of the ecclesia at Rome. It is impossible to prove conclusively that this was the case, but when we consider the themes of Paul’s later inspired letter to the Romans, there are a number of aspects that would be particularly fitting if Cornelius was the founding member.

“.. Nay, in all these things, ***we are more than conquerors*** through him that loved us” (Rom. 8:37)

We can see a comparison here: Cornelius, leaving his worldly station became a soldier for Christ, and became more than being a conqueror for the Roman army.

“... that ***if thou shalt confess with thy mouth*** the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Rom. 10:9).

Acts 10:46 speaks of Cornelius and the men who went with him were heard to “speak with tongues, and magnify God” just before they were baptised, and so made a confession before Yahweh.

“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? ***And how shall they preach, except they be sent?***” (Rom. 10:14-15).

We can see a very clear application to Cornelius’ circumstances here: a “preacher” was especially “sent” to him, that he might hear the Gospel preached.

And finally, in speaking of dietary matters:

“I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, ***that there is nothing unclean of itself ...***” (Rom. 14:14).

We have already shown the application of this passage to the case in hand.

THE BRINGING IN OF THE GENTILES

The bringing in of the Gentiles on equal footing to Jews is an aspect of the Gospel which was not known until it was revealed to and subsequently by, the apostles and first century prophets. So the Apostle Paul spake concerning the “mystery” “which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel ..” (Eph. 3:4-6). Peter provides an example of the “mystery” being revealed to an apostle, who became the means whereby the calling was extended to Gentiles. There is an important point that comes from this: the Angel came to Cornelius as a heavenly messenger, to tell him to go to Peter. The question arises however, Why could not the Angel give the instruction that Peter gave, viz. baptism etc, without having to use Peter? One reason is that Peter also was being prepared in these events. He was to become a preacher to the Gentiles more generally, and needed to be prepared for this. The conversion of Cornelius was used by him as recorded in Acts chapter 11 as evidence of the inclusion of Gentiles into Israel’s Hope, as it is written of those who heard him recount his experience: “when they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18).

In considering these things, we have many examples and exhortations laid open before us. But as being Gentiles who come to join ourselves to the covenants of promise, the example of Cornelius is of particular importance and interest to us, for he was the first Gentile to be brought in by the Apostle’s preaching, and we come to share in his heritage. From being a warrior for the Roman Army, Cornelius became a soldier for Christ – and the example for us in this regard is plain; the means of his being brought in is most instructive for us, as we have shown. Bro John Thomas wrote of this in *Elpis Israel*, and we conclude by citing his words:

“It would be well for the reader to reflect on the character of Cornelius before the angel visited him. He was not a pagan Gentile, or a wicked sinner in danger of hell-fire; but a proselyte of righteousness, or an outer-court worshipper.

“He was a just and devout man, and one that feared God with all his house; gave much alms to the Jews, among whom he was of good report; and he prayed to God alway.”

No better man, lay or clerical, can be produced from any modern sect than Cornelius. He was a God-fearing, “pious,” and generous-hearted man. He was not a perverse, hot-headed, ignorant disciple of some sect; but a man approved of heaven, whose prayers and alms ascended before God as a memorial of him. But why dwell so on the character of this excellent man? Because, a special messenger was sent from heaven

to tell even this good man, this just and devout Gentile, to send for the apostle Peter, that he might come from Joppa, and tell him what he ought to do. But, as though this were not explicit enough, the angel stated that “Peter should come and tell him words, whereby he and his house might be saved.” Now it is worthy of especial note by the religionists of this self-complacent generation, that this just person was not in a saved state under the new order of things: that he had both to hear words, and to do something for his salvation which he had then as yet neither heard nor done.

And let it be observed, furthermore, that the angel of God was not permitted to preach the gospel to Cornelius; or, in other words, to tell him what he ought to do; or, “the words by which he and his house might be saved.” He was only allowed to tell him to send for Peter. According to modern notions this was quite unnecessary; for, cries popular ignorance, it would have saved both time and trouble, if the angel had told Cornelius at once what it was necessary for so excellent a man to believe and do, instead of sending three men through the broiling sunshine to fetch Peter to Caesarea. O what a lesson is contained this interesting narrative for the “clergy,” “ministers,” and people of these times. How it convicts them of infidelity of the gospel, and sinfulness before God; or, if sincerity be granted to them, and, doubtless, there are among them many honest and well-intentioned persons, who “err, not knowing the scriptures;” — grant, then, that they sincerely love truth in the abstract, yet comparing their creeds and preaching, and practices, with the testimonies contained in the second, tenth, and eleventh of the Acts, to say nothing of others — how condemned are they as vain talkers, and deceived leaders of the blind.

It is really painful to listen to the superficial dissertations of the textuaries, retailed to the people from the pulpits of the day. Theological speculations on isolated scraps of scripture are substituted for the words of Peter and the other apostles, by which alone even the “pious” can be saved. They talk of true religion, of primitive Christianity, of the gospel, of churches of Christ, and of an evangelical ministry; but where, among papist or protestant, church or dissent, are these things to be found, reflecting the precepts, precedents, and morality, of the “pure and undefiled religion” of the New Testament? This New Testament Christianity is the grand desideratum of the protestant world; which, however, we despair of beholding even in theory until Messiah shall appear in his kingdom, and abolish all existing names, and denominations, which serve, indeed, as a kind of ecclesiastical police, but are perfectly useless as institutions capable of indoctrinating mankind with the things which they ought to believe and do, if they would become joint-heirs with Jesus of the kingdom, glory, and empire, of the Ancient of Days.” (*Elpis Israel*, John Thomas).

Christopher Maddocks

Correspondence:

The Parable of The Good Samaritan:

Dear brother Chris

Greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank you for the Waymark booklet, *The Parable of the Good Samaritan – It's Divine Meaning*. Brother Phipps makes some helpful points with regard to some spiritual lessons in his explanation of the parable. However, in seeking to establish the background to the parable he does not include the vital Old Testament background of the Samaritans.

a) 2Chronicles 28:6-15 records the mercy of the Samaritans to their brethren (Judah) was due to intervention of Oded, a prophet of the Lord.

b) 2 Kings 6:13-23 records the mercy of the Samaritans to the Syrian captives, again by the direction of the a prophet of the Lord, Elisha.

Both these incidents predate the Assyrian invasion and the subsequent mixed race population of the Northern Kingdom.

At the time of the prophets Elisha and Oded the Samaritans were “brethren” to Judah and therefore of the seed of Abraham. They were directed by the Lord to show mercy to the captives, both to their brethren (Judah) and to those outside the Covenants of promise (Syrians).

The teaching of the parable was therefore particularly pointed for the Jews of Jesus time, because prior to the Assyrian invasion, which took away the Northern Kingdom, the Samaritans were taught by the Lord to show mercy to their neighbours. The self righteous Jews of Jesus day were exhorted to show mercy to their neighbour, whoever that may be.

The parable, I suggest, shows that Jesus is represented by the “Samaritan”. The “host” is the ecclesia and the “man who “fell among thieves, was stripped of his raiment and wounded” represents, those who are turning their back on the ecclesia also man without hope in the world, as was our former condition.

Therefore, we should seek to show a Christ-like spirit to those we meet in the world who are lost, wounded, naked and among thieves. To do this we should preach the Gospel and work while it is called today.

Your brother in the Hope of Israel

Peter Moore

The Most Reliable English Bible:

Dear Bro Chris,

This month's *Christadelphian Waymark* 'special issue' on *The Most Reliable English Bible* is not only most interesting but also very relevant in the circumstances of a trend in the brotherhood to use some modern translations. However, those who love the Word of God clearly wish to have a translation which is as close as possible to that which the Holy Spirit has spoken (cf Hebrews 3:7). This is surely an imperative.

The King James translation is the medium through which a deep Bible knowledge spread throughout the English speaking world in previous centuries and enabled the Protestant churches to more than withstand Catholicism. It is not surprising that Roman Catholicism has sought to replace that translation with its own version and with its influences upon the translation committees of many modern translations.

I believe there is another benefit of the KJV—namely, its archaic language has a notable cadence which enables it to be more readily committed to memory. This is not an issue of making the Bible a literary work to be admired like the works of Shakespeare, but a facility which better enables us to keep the Word in our minds and hearts (Psa. 119:11).

My opinion is that the KJV is a providentially provided work which has served the brotherhood so well in the past. With brethren and sisters overall benefiting from more education in the past generation or two, it seems strange that we find its archaic language more of a problem than to previous generations.

May I take the opportunity of recommending to your readers the 124 page book *Which Translation* published by *The Testimony* magazine (£3.50 post free, available from Sis. Thelma Marshall, The Pines, Ling Common, Castle Rising, King's Lynn, PE31 6AE.) Whilst this book does contain some overlap with your special issue (which is no bad thing as those matters are important), there is a valuable amount of additional information. Indeed, on the subject of the NIV, may I conclude with a quotation from a chapter (page 76):

“If the Lord remains away and our children rely on the NIV, the Truth will be eroded to the point where the next generation will have Bibles which no longer support the first principles of the Truth regarding the nature of Jesus. This could, in time, lead to our understanding of the efficacy of Jesus's sacrifice being obscured from view. All versions of the Bible have a place as aids to Bible Study, but we should not forget that the NIV is one of the products of declared papal ecumenical policy, and

should therefore be used with caution. If we ignore this, we do so at our peril”.

Sincerely your Brother,

Russell Ebbs

Reply:

It is commonly thought that the “best” translation is one which is easiest to understand. However, that is not so—the “best” translation is the one which is the closest to the original tongues. This does therefore contain some things “hard to be understood” (2 Peter 3:16), but the diligent Bible Student will not be discouraged. We join with Bro Ebbs in his recommendation of the *Testimony* book: “Which Translation”, and hope to include a review of this book in a future issue.

CAM

Comfort from The Word

The Psalm we have just been singing (Hymn 19) touches a point of common experience which is very present to us when we come together after a week of toil to have our memory of divine things refreshed. It speaks of thirst and weariness in a dry parched land. This is the reverse of a pleasant experience, and unless we treat it in an enlightened manner, it is liable to be hurtful to us. It is somewhat of an incessant experience, and we are liable, almost unconsciously sometimes, to wonder at the fact, and to think that all is not right with us. The fact is that this experience of vanity belongs inherently to the present state of things. It is here, that the apostolic message comes in with such reason, and such power, and such comfort. This is a message founded upon a dispensation of power, that, namely, which Paul refers to in speaking of the first-fruits of the Spirit. He said they had these first-fruits, and yet groaned within themselves, waiting for the adoption. What these first-fruits were is disclosed to us in a way that enables us to see that the apostolic hope is not an affair of philosophy or opinion, but as much an affair of fact as our present perception of evil. On the Day of Pentecost the Spirit came with power, causing illiterate men to speak with tongues, and feeble men to heal multitudes of the sick. It enabled Paul “through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, to fully preach the Gospel of Christ from Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum (Rom. 15:19). It dwelt with the communities developed by his labours, in harmony with the promise of Christ, that he would send the Spirit to be with them as a comforter and a guide. There were diversities

of gifts, he informs us in 1 Cor. 12, but the same Spirit, and these gifts were one and all of that real and substantial character that left no room for mistake as to the real and actual character of the phenomena.

Take, for example, verse 10:

“To another by the same Spirit the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discerning of spirits, to another divers kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.”

What human power can work miracles, or prophesy, or speak languages without learning them, or interpret tongues with which one is not acquainted? This indicates the kind of basis upon which the apostolic hope stands, a basis as real as the experiences we have of present actual existence. We can therefore listen with open hearts, free from all reserve or doubt, to the words of comfort that came both by prophet and apostle. The apostles speak to us most directly, bringing the prophets with them. The apostles say that we are saved by hope, and that all things meanwhile work together for good to those who are the holders of this hope. Connected with it is every good thing. Paul breaks out into a kind of ecstasy on the subject:

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

It is impossible to emphasise too strongly the contrast between this way of looking at life, and the way common to the wise of this world. There is none of the warmth of love in their system. They of course recognise love between human beings, but even this not very strongly, and at its strongest, what is it compared with the love of God to human beings? Their philosophy is like the coldness of empty space, in which we are told the temperature is at about 200 degrees below zero, whereas the gospel of Christ glows with the warmth of divine sunshine. For the lack of this the world is perishing, and we ourselves are liable to faint and fail for lack of its full realisation.

This lack is part of the weakness of present faculty; our strength is soon spent, and our feeble minds are easily overpowered by the conditions of the moment, which conditions are the reverse of all the aspects in which God is exhibited to us. We live in a world lying in wickedness. We live in a world sitting in darkness. We live in a world in which God is silent, except in so far as He speaks with the quiet voice of His manifest wisdom in creation. The Bible is the only institution at present in which we come into touch with Him. It may be regarded as a temple in the wilderness, in which we hear His voice and feel His hand.

“Comfort ye, comfort ye my people,” saith He, in our reading from the prophets. Let us dwell for a moment in the presence of this comforting voice, and endeavour to take out of it all that there is in it. It is addressed to “My people.” By whatever method of interpretation we understand these words, we may find ourselves included. They are addressed primarily to Jerusalem, “Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem.” Proximately, this is the Jewish capital and the Jewish race, but are we not included in either? The Jewish race has numbered countless millions, only a very small proportion of which is of interest to God. A whole generation fell in the wilderness, because of their unbelief and disobedience. Who, in all their generations, are interesting to Him? This is plainly revealed:

The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him.”

They are not all Israel that are of Israel, neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children. They must have Abraham’s faith as well as Abraham’s blood. It may be said that we have not Abraham’s blood; this is true, but we know that by the hand of the apostles God visited the Gentiles to take out from amongst them a class who should be adopted into Abraham’s family, on the principle of faith. We have been included in the operation of this principle through the knowledge and belief and obedience of the gospel, so that, as Paul says,

“Ye are grafted upon the good olive tree, and are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the household of God.”

If, then, we are objects of God’s favour, we are included in His eyes in the phrase, “My people,” and “Jerusalem.” As the brethren of Christ, we stand directly related to Jerusalem, for he is its king, and we are its children. We are comprehended in the words of Isaiah 66:

“Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her; rejoice ye for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her.”

To call upon people that mourn to rejoice may seem strange, but the strangeness vanishes before the reason.

“Ye shall be delighted with the abundance of her glory, for thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you, and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.”

Let us open our minds, then, to the sweet adjuration of Isaiah 40:

“Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.”

The present time is evil and troublous, but the future is bright with glory:

“The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”

Or as it is more definitely said,

“Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but Yahweh shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.”

In the presence of these glorious outlinings of the future, we are apt to feel the present to be a languishing and dispiriting affair. No wonder, for it is so in itself, and nothing else; but in this it is not strange; it is in the programme. It is the very background of the picture of glory shown to us in Isaiah 40, for what is the proclamation there made as the adjunct of its exhibition?

“All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth.”

While groaning under the vanity, let us not despair, nor give in to its oppressiveness. The word of our God shall stand for ever. This confidence is rooted in our confidence in God Himself. God Himself is exhibited before us in this chapter as the ground and rock of our hope. “To whom will ye liken me?” He asks. He asks this after appealing to the underived wisdom and power that have organised heaven and earth.

“Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being His counsellor hath taught Him? With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of judgment, or showed unto Him the way of understanding?”

He carries the appeal to a still higher altitude:

“Lift up your eyes on high and behold; who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number, not one of which faileth, because He is strong in power.”

He then declares Himself, “The everlasting God who fainteth not, neither is weary, and there is no searching of His understanding;” and upon this ground the inspiring declaration that they who wait upon Him will renew their strength when all human power fails:

“They shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and walk and not faint.”

What hinders our perfect rest on those great and precious promises? Is it not an evil heart of unbelief, against which Paul puts on our guard? This evil heart of unbelief is a piece of native barbarism. Ignorance belongs to uninstructed brains.

A baby is born without knowledge, and will continue without knowledge up to manhood and hoar hairs if it come not within range of its enlightening touch. This is true of natural things; how much more of spiritual? Spiritual things are based on knowledge as much as natural; hence it is that we find John in our New Testament reading introducing the gospel which he and his fellow apostles had to preach as “that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life.”

Again he says, “which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.” This you see, is a matter of actual knowledge, the truth of which is beyond all question when the facts are considered. First of all are the words of John, as proved by the fact that they have been in the hands of Christians from the very day they were written. There has always been a numerous community, true or false, since the day the apostles went out as Christ’s witnesses, in obedience to Christ’s command. This community has always from that time been a numerous body. There has therefore been from the very beginning a multitude of witnesses to the fact of these words being John’s words. It might seem as if the mention of a false church weakened the argument, but in truth it makes it stronger, for these false churches in various parts of the world have been jealous of each other, and have watched each other in the quotation of apostolic words, in defence of their several crotchets, and have therefore been a check upon each other, as regards the preservation of the actual words written by John and the other apostles, from which it has come to pass that whether you look at the New Testament in the Nestorian Church, or the Greek Church, or the Armenian Church, or the Roman Catholic Church, it is the same.

Being John’s words, the next question is, “Are they true?” “Did he see and hear and handle Christ?” If he had been alone in the matter, there might have been some room to doubt, but he was only one of many who said and wrote the same thing, most of whom gave to subsequent generations the indubitable pledge of their sincerity in the matter by submitting to death. It did not require this to prove the sincerity of their words, for the enterprise to which they devoted their lives was pledge enough in itself. This enterprise was to turn men from darkness to light, from sin to righteousness, in hope of the manifestation of the glory of God, at the coming of Christ. None but sincere men could take part in such an enterprise, and therefore there is every pledge of which the case is susceptible, that we are in the presence of the simple truth, when we read that “God was manifest in Christ,” by whom God performed many signs and wonders, concluding with the crowning one of raising him from the dead after his crucifixion.

Thus we go back to Isaiah 40, and open our eager mouths to drink the refreshing water of life in the thirsty desert, waters of comfort and strength:

“Comfort ye my people.”

There is nothing that comforts so much as good tidings, and here it is nothing but good tidings poured into our ears.

“O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, get thee up into the high mountain. O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, and be not afraid. Behold the Lord God will come with a strong hand. His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. He shall feed His flock like a shepherd. He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and gather them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.”

Are we faint and weary and desolate? Often, no doubt most of us are, but let us never give in to the feeling that this experience is strange or unnatural or out of place. We may sometimes chide ourselves by reason of our misery, as it were; this is only needlessly adding to our affliction. All the children of God have been oppressed by the insufficiency of fainting, failing human nature. Even David, whose voice we know embodies the voice of Christ, had to rally himself in God in the midst of his distress.

“Whom have I in Heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.”

We are not the first whose feelings could only be expressed by the powerful expletive: “*O wretched man that I am.*” The very prince of the apostles had to confess that he groaned within himself under the weary burden of imperfect human nature. But in the midst of his misery he rejoiced because of its spiritual pressure forcing him to rest on the only consolation associated with the prospect so beautifully painted in these words:

“These are they that have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple, and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more; neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them unto living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (Rev. 7: 14-17).

Robert Roberts, Seasons of Comfort Vol. 2

The man anxious to be “wise unto salvation” will strive to master the historical part of the Word of God ... not only the nominally historical books, but the prophetic records in which is found the inner history of Israel, the unveiling of God's mind in reference to the transactions of the nation of Israel. Here to read what God thought of them, and intends with them, is to ascend as it were from the arena of human strife to the cool elevated pinnacle of God's Almighty scan. This altitude is so much above the natural grasp of the human mind that we have to go there often to become accustomed to it. An occasional visit to the exalted summit of which we speak is not adequate to our spiritual wants. The knowledge of God must be constantly streaming through the mind. The study of the word of God must be incessant...

Brother Robert Roberts

The Parable of the Great Supper

Our New Testament reading from Luke chapter 14 illustrates the saying that “many are called, but few are chosen” (Mat. 22:14). Focussing our attention upon the Calling of the gospel, this parable reveals the state of men’s hearts in relation to the things of the Spirit, and demonstrates their antipathy to the things of the Spirit.

The parable is given as a direct response to the exclamation of one who sat at meat with Messiah: “Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God” (Lu. 14:15). The Master then demonstrates that many have been called to such a position whereby they might partake of a “great supper” – a spiritual feast of delectable things – yet who spurned the invitation. We take it therefore, that the invitation of the Supper represents an invitation to life in the Kingdom.

Concerning his last Passover, Messiah promised his disciples: “I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God”. And again: “I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come” (Lu. 22:16,18). Christ will not do these things “until” the Kingdom has come, which implies that at this time, he will eat and drink again with his disciples – and the parable of the Great Supper describes the calling to that feast.

The Master began his parable by speaking of the calling which went out to those who had already been invited: “Come, for all things are now ready”. But they “with one accord began to make excuse” to avoid having to attend. We shall consider the excuses as given:

“I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it”

This excuse illustrates a spirit of slothfulness, for he would surely have been better to see the land before buying it. There is a contrast between this case, and that of Abraham, the father of the faithful. He sojourned in the land as a stranger and sojourner, looking for the day when he would take up his inheritance with his Greater Seed, even the Master himself. He also purchased a piece of ground – but not for personal gain or to build a house upon, but to bury his dead. Thus he spoke to the land owner, Ephron before all the people “... I will give thee money for the field; take it of me, and I will bury my dead there” (Gen. 23:13). So it was that the cave of Machpelah in the field of Ephron became a purchased possession, that Abraham’s dead family members might lie there in piece, and in hope. This purchase then, became a token of Abraham’s faith, that the time would come when his dead would be raised up together, being invited to the Great Supper.

In contrast to Abraham, the Scriptures record the treachery of Judas in betraying Messiah for pieces of silver. Again, the money was used to purchase a portion of land in which the dead might be buried: “they took counsel, and bought with them the potter’s field to bury strangers in” (Mat. 27:7). There is a striking difference between the two cases: whilst in each case a field was purchased to bury the dead, one was to be a place of resting for the family of the faithful, whilst the other was to be used to bury those who were “strangers,” i.e. not Jews or descended

from Abraham, and therefore not heirs of the promise of the kingdom. In the case in point the purchasing of land was used as an excuse not to attend the Great Supper, and being as the invitation was to partake of the Supper in the Kingdom, the refusal to attend would only result in death to those who refused.

“I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee, have me excused”

Again, there is a serious error of priorities: rather than attend, the guest wanted to go and see some animals that he had bought.

We have another occasion of the buying of Oxen in the example of king David – who at the same time, interestingly, bought a portion of land. 2 Samuel 24 records how David was “to buy the threshing floor” of Araunah to be used as a place to offer sacrifice, and verse 22 recounts how the Oxen were to be purchased with the field that the sacrifice could be offered. But verse 22 recounts the words of Araunah:

“Behold, here be oxen for burnt sacrifice, and threshing instruments, and other instruments of the Oxen for wood”

This shows that there is a lot more to the incident than might be thought at first sight. Not only were the oxen used as a sacrifice, but the wooden instruments commonly used with the Oxen were burned as well – which meant that the work hitherto done by the Oxen was to cease. This brings to mind the cessation of mortal labours in the Age to Come, as a consequence of the sacrifice of Christ. Certainly it speaks of the cessation of the works of

the flesh, and a re-focus upon the need for sacrifice, with everything, Oxen, instruments and all given for that sacrifice.

1 Kings 19 describes the calling of Elisha to be a servant to Elijah the prophet. After being called to follow Elijah, the record tells us that:

“he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee” (1 Kings 19:20).

Then verse 31 records his actions:

“and he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat” (1 Kings 19:20-21)

Contrasts abound in this record: firstly, it is evident that Elisha was making a “great supper.” The total number of animals offered were “twelve yoke of oxen,” which makes up 24 individual animals – certainly enough for a very great feast indeed. But this feast was a token of the fact that he was going to rededicate his life to the service of Elijah, and in consuming all of his oxen and instruments, he demonstrated that he was not going to turn back to his previous way of life.

This latter aspect is brought out by Messiah in his teaching, alluding to this event:

“No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Lu. 9:62).

The “plough” here is referring to the work of a disciple – Elisha redirected his energies from plowing after the flesh, to plowing in spiritual things. A man who is always looking behind will find that he cannot plough a straight course: there is a need therefore to be constantly looking ahead, leaving behind worldly things, and labouring rather in the servitude of Christ.

“I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come”

Under the Old Covenant, there was provision made for the newly married to be excused from war. The third provision states:

“what man is there that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her? Let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man take her” (Deut. 20:7)

This then, is also the third reason why men would refuse to attend the marriage supper: by misusing provision made under the Law for a man going out to battle.

Luke chapter 17 speaks of this aspect:

“they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded ...”

Notice, they spurned the Master’s calling, yet still have time to “eat” and “drink” of their own feasts! Again, verse 27 reads:

“they did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage ...”

There is nothing at all wrong with eat-

ing, drinking, or marrying in themselves. But the problem was that in tending to the cares of this life, these everyday activities were taking place to the exclusion of the things of the Spirit. Indeed, when we look at all of the excuses given in the case at hand, there is nothing wrong with any of the activities per se. Buying and selling fields and oxen, and marrying wives are all part of daily living. But the point is, they were engaging in these activities at the expense of the demands of the Truth. They were “lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God” (2 Tim. 3:4). They had received a holy calling, but preferred the things of this life to the things of the Spirit. So we have the sobering exhortation: “love not the world, nether the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 Jno. 2:15).

THE STREETS AND LANES OF THE CITY

The calling of the original guests being spurned, the command was to gather together those who were afflicted in various ways after the flesh, that they might take their place:

“Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt and the blind”

We have no difficulty in identifying these first two groups to be invited. The apostolic pattern was that the Gospel Calling went out to the Jew first, then the Gentile (cp. Rom. 1:16). So it was that when the Jew rejected this calling: “Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the

HIGHWAYS AND HEDGES

Word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles” (Acts 13:46). Upon the basis that “they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick” (Lu. 5:31), the calling went out to Gentiles who recognised their mortal weakness, that they might find healing in the Name of the Son of God.

The calling, we are informed, went out into “the streets and lanes” of the city. This same pattern is seen in the spirit of Wisdom, as described in the book of Proverbs. Proverbs 1:20 reads:

“Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets. She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words ...” (see also Prov. 8:2)

And the chapter continues in the spirit of the Jews’ rejection of Messiah’s calling:

“... I have called, and ye refused ...” (verse 24)

And rather than to attend the great supper to which they were invited, it is written in the same chapter that like Cain of old:

“... therefore they shall eat of the fruit of their own way ...” (verse 31)

There is, therefore, a powerful exhortation in these things: that we must not neglect the call of Wisdom, but rather seek her early (Prov. 8:17) whilst the time remains.

There is an apparent difficulty in identifying who this third class represents. We can readily see how that the gospel was sent out to the Jews first, then the Gentiles – but what after that? Bro Robert Roberts gives the following explanation of this:

“It was necessary that the word of God should first have been sent to you (Jews)” (Acts 13:46).

“The Salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles and they will hear it (Acts 28:28). Nearly AD 100, when the Apostles were all in their graves, except John: “the spirit and the bride say come ... whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely (Rev. 22:17). The highways and hedges operation continues to the very coming of the Lord, and embraces those who “are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord”.

If this is so, the “city” into which the Calling went for the Gentiles is not Jerusalem: we would suggest that it is “... the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified” (Rev. 11:8). Some say that this “great city” is Jerusalem herself, but there are several reasons why that cannot be so we will refer to only two:

The “great city” is both a city (Sodom) and a country (Egypt) – life Rome famously was, but Jerusalem was not.

The Master was *not* crucified in Jerusalem. We know this from John chapter 19:

“the place where Jesus was crucified was *nigh to the city* ...” (Jno. 19:20).

It could not be *inside* the city as well as *near* the city. But he was crucified within the Roman kosmos and it was to this arena (the Roman Habitable) that the Gospel was preached.

Following the preaching of the Apostles begins a period of time during which the Gospel Message was sent forth to any who would listen. As bro Roberts observes, this period extends to the time when the supper is eaten, and therefore covers our own dispensation, when the Gospel is preached by the "Bride," to invite and prepare a people to partake of the Great Supper.

In each of these things, we cannot fail to be impressed with the central theme of the parable, namely the Calling. We must individually look within ourselves to ensure that we are answering the call, like Samuel, whilst others sleep on, unaware of what it is they are rejecting. The proverbs describe the end for those who refuse her calling:

"when your fear cometh as desolation and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me ..."
"(Prov.1:27-28).

To the Jews who rejected the Wisdom of Messiah, came the terrible destruction of AD 70. The practical lessons that emerge from these things abound: it is not the high and lofty individuals who come to the feast, but those who know the afflictions of mortality: "the foolish things of the world". The calling of the Gospel extends to our own day – a dispensation when it has never been easier to access a copy of the Word of God. The cry of wisdom calls out to us from its pages: but it is for us alone to decide if, or how we respond.

Christopher Maddocks

A FEARFUL CRIME

"What a fearful crime for men to despise God. Those despise God who despise His Word; and those practically despise His Word (in God's estimation) who neglect or disobey it. They do so with impunity now. No harm seems to come to their negligence. It would be foolish to be misled by appearances. It was so with Israel for a time. It did not seem to matter whether they observed the law of Moses or not. The sun rose, the rain came, the harvest matured, prosperity reigned as much as when the first generation of their fathers feared the commandments. Yes, for a while; but mark the expression of this chapter (Jer. 14): "He will now remember their sin."there are things long past - deeds and transactions which are ancient and forgotten history with the world - to come up again in divine reckoning and be made the basis of terrible acts of retribution. And yet men may individually insulate themselves from the guilt of a generation in which they live. Hence Peter exhorted those who were reasonable to "save themselves from that generation." But men who drift with the stream partake of the guilt of their generation and may find themselves involved in the whirlpool of judgment that will destroy the present wicked world when the time of "remembrance" arrives. This remembrance, however, acts both ways. God will remember also forgotten deeds of obedience, for "a book of remembrance" was written before Him for them that feared Yahweh and that thought upon His name. The day of the issue of things will shew the supreme wisdom of such, and the supreme folly of those who allow themselves to be cheated into forgetfulness of God and disobedience of his commandments"

Brother Robert Roberts

Longing for the Kingdom

Reading: Psalm 105

Now as we come once more around these emblems' brethren and sisters, we are confronted with the stark reality of the imminent return of our Lord Jesus Christ. For as we read in 1st Corinthians eleven "for as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come". Thus our Master will soon return and life, as we know it is only temporary. Something we all intellectually give assent to, but do we really live in the light of this reality?

Therefore we are to be a people watching and waiting for our Master's return. More than this brethren and sisters we are to be a people earnestly desiring or longing for that day. In Psalm 110 it speaks of "thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power" and for this to be true, we need to be willing now, prepared at any moment to welcome our Lord with gladness and joy.

Do we each yearn for the millennium for the fulfilment of the next stage in our Heavenly Fathers purpose? Are our minds focused as often as possible on the return of the bridegroom or do our minds fall into thinking only of the approaching judge and the spectre of the judgement to come?

Is our desire for the glorious age to come growing brethren and sisters, as we see the day approaching? Or is our desire being clouded over by the rising spirit of fear in our day? Indeed is this desire for the millennium only the privilege of the elderly members of the ecclesia, who have lived long enough to have fully experienced the harshness of life? As Jacob remarked to Pharaoh "the days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been".

Indeed such a longing should not brethren and sisters be just the feelings and emotions of those that have been in the truth a long time. Now it must be noted that it is true that such experience of life ought to develop such a longing and that desire ought to grow in intensity with age and experience of life. But it must not be solely the experience of who have walked for a number of years in the way of life.

We have then an exhortation for those who are elderly and who feel the intensity of such a longing due to their experience of life with all its evils and trials. To convey this yearning for the Master's return to those that are younger. Who have not yet had the breadth of life's experiences and who may be still filled with all of life's hopes, joys and dreams?

For the great danger here is for us to be overtaken brethren and sisters with the cares of this life. Those cares, which may increasingly become much

more pressing, as we approach the time of the end and the increasing instability of these last days. Such instability, as we are now currently beginning to experience with the credit crunch and the global economic downturn ought the rather to invigorate our faith.

We should be sitting on the edge of our seats elated that the day is approaching. Accepting with gladness and joy the possible short term hardships, which we may experience, both individually and ecclesially, before we are delivered from this evil and dark-age.

Luke Chapter 21 and verses 24 – 28

“Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh”.

For our redemption draweth nigh we read, as our lives are not based in the here and now. But rather are “hid with Christ in God and when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory”. Now in that quotation from Luke twenty-one, we have a powerful contrast, between those not in Christ. Whose hearts are failing them for fear, because of the distress and the perplexity affecting all nations, whose hope is lost such as, we see increasingly today. Interestingly as is indicated in the Greek this fainting in fear is a daily occurrence of those without hope.

Then we have our selves brethren and sisters those who have not been given “the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind”. Who in contrast are called upon to “look up and lift up their heads”?

Now interestingly in the Greek “look up & lift up” are both ongoing daily imperative commands that the Eternal Spirit urgently exhorts us to perform in order that we too might not become paralysed by the spirit of fear in our age. One only has to think of the Apostle Peter who when he walked upon the water. He took his eyes off the author and finisher of our faith and began to sink, being overcome with his temporal circumstances.

Thus in the first picture we see those overcome by the troubles of our times, their heads hanging down undoubtedly unable to see a way out of what is before them either individually or collectively. Yet in the second picture we have our selves, who are living through and experiencing the very same set of circumstances, but they are not bowed down by those events. Rather as verse

twenty-eight indicates, this second group are on they're feet with expectation, elated that the fulfilment of all their hope is at hand.

2nd Corinthians Chapter 4 and verses 17 & 18

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal”.

There is a great need amongst us brethren and sisters to keep an eternal or a vertical focus, especially if we are to go through a harsh time of economic testing, as a number of our brethren and sisters endured in the 1930s. Our society is now very different to the 1930s, for there is not the sense of community there once was and sadly this is also true of the brotherhood at large. Yet we need to keep our focus upon our hope brethren and sisters and we need to do everything in our power to strengthen not only that, but also the bonds of fellowship between us practically, as we are able.

That we might support one another through possible difficult times ahead. One brother I was listening too recently suggested that things may get so bad, that we will have to pool our monetary resources in a similar fashion to the first century to care for those in need.

Such times of distress brethren and sisters are also a means that our Heavenly Father uses positively to develop our love and our hope, even our yearning for the age to come. In our middle reading for the day this is one of the lessons of the Psalm.

Psalm 105 and verses 17 – 19 & 23 – 25

“He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant: Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron: Until the time that his word came: the word of Yahweh tried him. Israel also came into Egypt; and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham. And he increased his people greatly; and made them stronger than their enemies. He turned their heart to hate his people, to deal subtilly with his servants”.

Firstly we have an individual; Joseph who was sold into Egypt by his brothers and so experienced the harshness of life. That our Heavenly Father might both prepare him and also try or smelted him (as the Hebrew is here), as silver is refined, so that the dross might be removed in order to make Joseph pure. That took some thirteen years brethren and sisters and it has been suggested that the phrase “he was laid in iron” in verse eighteen, may alterna-

tively read “into iron entered his soul”. Speaking of the development of his character through severe trial to fulfil the role Yahweh had for him.

So the trials of his life made Joseph fit for the Father’s purpose and more than this it purified him. Do we not read elsewhere “every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure”? Thus Joseph’s faith did not collapse through this trial his hope increased and he would undoubtedly be sustained by focusing upon the eternal. Even those visions, which the Father had earlier given to him, just as the completed word has been given to us brethren.

Thus the very trials, which destroy those not in the truth are actually a means of generating our hope for the age to come, for that new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Let us think for a moment of the trial of Lot. That dwelt in Sodom, our Heavenly Father used the mistakes of this righteous man to fulfil this same purification process in his life:

For we read in:

2nd Peter Chapter 2 and verses 7 - 9

“And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;) The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished”.

Interestingly those two occasions of the word “vexed” here are different words. The first means to be bowed down with the toil or the effect of the culture he lived in. Thus the wickedness of Sodom wore him down and afflicted him daily, as the Greek implies, because of the blatant wickedness of Sodom. Now this ought and needs to be true today of us brethren and sisters. Here again I think the older generation can help the young to appreciate this exhortation.

In that the younger members of the ecclesia have grown up at this time and not really known society that different, whereas those who have been in the truth many years can more readily appreciated the decline of our society.

When we consider the second word “vexed” in verse eight it is speaking of the testing of metals, especially of silver and gold to ascertain its purity. We see then how even our bad choices in life the Father can turn around and teach us lessons through those experiences to develop our faith, our love and hope for the age to come.

Again we read back in:

Psalm 105 and in verses 14 & 15

“He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reproveth kings for their sakes; Saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm”.

Both in the lives of Abraham and Isaac we find this situation taking place. Where again the weakness of the individual servants of God, through their lack of belief, in their inability not to connect all the dots with regards to the one who had promised to them. Led them to make foolish mistakes borne out of only focusing upon the temporal situation at the time. Yet our Heavenly Father in his providential care not only protected them, but also blessed them through those experiences, even though Abraham and Isaac, were themselves both reproved by kings for their folly.

In this we ought to take great comfort brethren and sisters from the examples of these faithful men of old that even in their failures and apparent weaknesses of the flesh our Heavenly Father turned those events to work together for their eternal good.

Now within Psalm 105 we see this same principle within the life of Joseph worked out collectively in the life of the whole nation of Israel in the persecution of the people after Joseph.

Note carefully brethren and sisters the record states that, He (Yahweh) turned the hearts of the Egyptians to hate his people, to deal subtly with his servants.

So in this Psalm then we have our Heavenly Father trying to develop faith, hope and love in his promises in both the individual Israelite and collectively in the nation. Now since our God does not change brethren and sisters, is it any different today?

This is a Psalm recognising the initial and partial fulfilment of the promise of the land to Abraham’s seed – the nation of Israel. Thus it shows to us the very faithfulness of our Heavenly Father that what He has promised He is able to deliver. We brethren and sisters, likewise see in the emblems upon the table the faithfulness of the Father in providing the necessary sacrifice for sin and the kingdom to follow.

Now this Psalm powerfully highlights for us the providential care of our Heavenly Father in the life and development of the nation; take note of the number of times it states “He” did something to move forward his purpose. Thus our Heavenly Father initiated with Abraham and brought to fruition the redemption of the nation of Israel at the time of the exodus. Caring for them through their wanderings until, He brought them into the land of promise.

The same is equally true concerning our redemption in the Lord Jesus Christ, as is witnessed too with the bread and wine upon the table. That all of the purpose and its process is of him and to the Father must the glory be given. Thus when we read a Psalm, such as this, which takes us too and through the redemption of the nation. We are being told brethren and sisters that the same God who performed the exodus. Is equally at work in each of our lives and collectively in the life of our ecclesia's through his Son to bring us unto his rest.

Philippians Chapter 1 and verse 6

“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ”.

This is exactly why Psalm 105 stops at the point that the fledging nation enters the land of promise and inherits. We are to see in it a type and the surety of our redemption in the Lord Jesus Christ and that it is our Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom.

Our Heavenly is not just concerned with his people at the national or ecclesial level, as we have already seen within this Psalm. There are six individual brethren mentioned within this Psalm Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses and Aaron and when we consider their lives we see them, as types of ourselves men of like passions, as we are. They are within the record to manifest to us that our God is intimately involved in the personal lives of his people.

Yet more than this these six brethren also show that our Heavenly Father in furthering his plan of redemption in relation to the fulfilment of his promises works through individuals. Indeed he raises them up at key points. Now since this is true in the case of the nation. It is also equally true in relation to both the ecclesia and in our own individual lives' brethren and sisters. All of us can think of key individuals who have had a marked impact for good on our lives in the truth, whether that has been at a personal or ecclesial level.

What I am trying to emphasize as we briefly consider some of the lessons from this Psalm is this, that Yahweh our God is not remote in our lives and experience. He is intimately involved in our lives, but as this Psalm clearly intimates not to our time scale, but to his. This final point is an important, but hard lesson we all must learn.

Again all this is brought home to us brethren and sisters by the repeated use of the personal pronoun “he” and the possessive pronoun “his” throughout the Psalm.

So just as our Heavenly Father orchestrated events in the patriarchs lives to develop the nation and lead to the exodus and their inheritance in the land of promise. So too is the Father working through his Son in our daily and eccle-

sial lives in the Master's ongoing work "in bringing many sons unto glory".

Hebrews Chapter 10, verse 23 & 1st Corinthians Chapter 1, verses 8 - 9

"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised). Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ? God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord".

Now just as the darkness of our age and the increasing instability of our times with its attendant wickedness are all tools our Heavenly Father uses to develop our yearning for Him, his Son and the age to come.

Then so too must our own weaknesses and failures due to sin and even the frailty of our nature increase our longing for that time when we shall in his mercy be no more encumbered by these bodies of death.

In Philippians Chapter 3 and verses 20 – 21

"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself".

This passage points us into the immediate future of our Lord's return. It provides us with a point of focus for what we shall shortly partake in that we do show the Lord's death until he come. The blessing of having our bodies of humiliation transformed, to be conformed like unto his majestic body. Is the final act in the process of saving each one of us to the uttermost, as Hebrews declares?

We find here that although this change of nature is expressed as a future event in the Greek, yet the final section of verse 21, "according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself". Is actually expressed in the present, indicating that our Master already has the ability, the power, the authority and the desire to perform this final blessing. Our Lord upon whom we wait brethren and sisters is himself merely awaiting the command of our Heavenly Father to make this promise a reality in our lives.

Now since the subjection of all things is mainly the work of the Millennium. Nevertheless the Father through our Master is presently engaged now in to subduing ourselves (his bride) unto him? For that word "subdue" is a military term meaning to arrange men into troops under their commander, to bring them into rank and line. We have once again

the current work of the Master as our High Priest making compassionate intercession in our lives that we might be subdued unto him. Thus we see the truth in:

Romans Chapter 8 and verses 22 – 23

“For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body”.

Are we even sighing, as this word groan indicates, are we like vexed Lot who we considered earlier brethren and sisters?

So as we now consider these emblems of bread and wine before us. Let each one of us clearly see the bread, which speaks here of the love of our Heavenly Father in Christ, expressed in his word. That word, which is able to transform and renew our minds and characters to be, like his.

That word, which is able to give us a yearning for the glories of the age to come brethren and sister that we might have a holy dissatisfaction with the here and now.

Likewise with the cup, for the wine speaks to each one of us, of the outworking of that word in a life poured out. Firstly in the Master’s sacrifice and secondly in his ongoing High Priestly intercession on our behalf to our eternal wellbeing in the Father’s mercy and ultimately to our Heavenly Father’s glory.

In the wine then we see the example of how we are to live out our faith our hope and our love. In sacrificial service in stirring up one another unto love and good works, exhorting one another concerning the kingdom and so much the more as we see the day approaching.

Brethren and sisters knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent; the day is at hand. Let us eat this feast with our loins girded, our shoes on our feet, and our lamp in your hand. Ready, willing and longing to go out and meet him, when the cry comes.

As verses 4 & 3 of Psalm 105 declare:

“Seek Yahweh, and his strength: seek his face evermore. Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek Yahweh”.

Wayne Marshall