

*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

Volume 6

Issue 9

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

<i>Judgment and Salvation</i>	2
<i>Christendom's False Doctrines Identified in Scripture</i>	9
<i>Song of Solomon (Chapter One)</i>	12
<i>Correspondence</i>	20
<i>Secretary's Notes</i>	21
<i>The Healing of the Lame</i>	22
<i>"Holy Water"</i>	26
<i>The Spirit, the Word and the Angels</i>	27



"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)*

Judgment and Salvation

We do well to have fixed and stated readings of the Scripture at this breaking of bread. It is the best foundation for every assembly of the saints. The best thing we can do at all our meetings is to let our minds rest on the portions that may be read. The best thing any one can do who desires to speak to the edification of the hearers is to employ what has been read as the basis of what he has to say. Let him endeavour to develop, amplify and illustrate this, and he will speak to profit; whereas, if he seek to “make a speech,” in the usual sense of the phrase, he will be in danger of pouring out a weak watery mixture of his own compounding that will give no nutriment. Sermonising is of course quite out of the question. This is only speech-making in the clerical shape—a worse shape than the ordinary shape. Speech-making of all ordinary sorts is a mere process of self-evolution—a spinning of one’s own thoughts, which are weak and colourless and powerless to build the mind in the things of God. We may as well try to make bread without flour as try to speak to edification without the ideas of God so abundantly supplied to us in the word of truth.

We have them in various shapes in the readings this morning. We have a chapter on Moab written in blood—“the burden of Moab”—all calamity and broken hearts:

“In their streets they shall gird themselves with sackcloth: on the tops of their houses, and in their streets, everyone shall howl, weeping abundantly . . . The waters of Dimon shall be full of blood” (Isa. 15:3,9).

For what reason was this visitation of judgment to come? Why is it written:

“Moab is spoiled, and gone up out of her cities, and his chosen young men are gone down to the slaughter”?

Why is it written:

“Judgment is come . . . upon all the cities of the land of Moab, far or near”? The answer is as clear as the description of her calamities:

“This shall they have for their pride” (Zeph. 2:10).

“We have heard of the pride of Moab; he is very proud: even of his naughtiness, and his pride, and his wrath” (Isa. 16:6).

“Make ye him drunken, for he magnified himself against the Lord: Moab also shall wallow in his vomit, and he shall also be in derision. For was not Israel a derision unto thee?” (Jer. 48:26).

The judgment foretold became in due time the judgment accomplished; and you may now read, in the silent wastes of Moab's once populous valleys, the truth of Yahweh's word.

What have we to do with this subject? Just this: the causes that led to judgment on Moab are operative around us in all the world today. Pride and haughtiness and arrogance, and contempt of Israel and all things divine; covetousness, avarice, indifference to right, the treading down of the weak, the disregard of the poor, and the ignoring of the commandments of God prevail in the Christendom of our times as much as ever they did in Moab, and it is an eternal truth that like causes produce like effects. That which brought judgment on Moab will bring judgment on the world at large. It is revealed that it is to be so. The work of Christ at his coming is a work of judgment. So we are informed in the apocalyptic words that speak of him as "treading the winepress of the wrath of God"; in the apostolic intimation, that when revealed from heaven it will be "in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God"; and in the oft-made prophetic announcement of his arrival as the name of the lord from far, "burning with his anger . . . his lips full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire."

WHAT IS OUR POSITION?

Seeing that this is the uncontradictable truth, what ought our position in the world to be? Ought we to be friends and partakers with a generation ripening for the judgment sickle of the Divine reaper? Ought we to be one and the same with the modern Moabites who despise God, have Israel in derision, and surfeit arrogantly in earth's plenty, as if it were their's? Ought we not to "keep ourselves unspotted from the world"? to "walk in wisdom towards them that are without"? as "strangers and pilgrims, to pass the time of our sojourning here in fear"? Knowing that the friendship of the world now will mean the enmity of God in the day when the thunders of the judgment-storm begin to peal throughout the world, when "the lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day"?

The reading from the apostolic writings reminds us of the other side of the question. It reminds us that our relation to the day of the Lord, as the brethren of Christ, is not one of fear, but of joy and love and expectation. The idea is expressed in the hymn we sometimes sing, which is itself but the versification of a statement in the prophet Isaiah:

*O, say to the fearful, Be strong of heart;
He comes in vengeance, but not for thee;
For thee he comes, his might to impart
To the trembling heart and the feeble knee.*

This comfort is ours if we have made it such. The friendship of Christ is without respect of persons, though with great respect of character. It is remarkable how emphatically and frequently he uses the pronoun "whosoever"—absolutely whosoever.

“Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.”

“Whosoever shall do the will of my Father, the same is my brother and sister and mother.”

“Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

The coming vengeance is not for us if we are among the “whosoever.” This is the point on which we must continually judge ourselves. Do we comply with the qualifications required of the “whosoever” class? Obviously we cannot answer this question without acquaintance with the qualifications, and this acquaintance we can only acquire in habitual intimacy with the word. The qualifications are briefly condensed by Jesus into the words:

“Whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven.”

It is a question of doing what God desires us to do. It is a question of:

“Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”

We cannot learn this by studying science; we cannot learn it by our own reasoning and speculation; we cannot learn it in the works of men. It is to be learnt in the revealed word, and there alone; and when learnt, has to be put into practice with all docility and simplicity and diligence. “Whosoever” does this may look with comfort to the day of vengeance. Doubtless the Lord knows who these are, as it is written: “The Lord knoweth them that are his.” and: I know my sheep, and am known of mine:”

But we do not know—that is, we do not know in the personal sense. We know that none are His that do not do His will, and that all are His that do; but in discriminating between the one and the other, we may make mistakes. We need not seek particularly to perform this discrimination, except as regards ourselves. As regards others, it is our duty to “judge not”; as regards ourselves, it is a matter of command and a matter of common wisdom to “prove our own selves.” In a sense, like Paul, we cannot judge ourselves:

“He that judgeth us is the Lord:”

But we can stand guard over ourselves; we can subject ourselves to a continual self-scrutiny on the question whether we walk in accordance with the revealed will of the Father. In this sense:

“If we judge ourselves we shall not be judged:”

The Lord will have no censure for those who correct themselves continually by the word. If by this process we bring ourselves into harmony with the Father’s mind, having the answer of a good conscience, we need not distress ourselves on

the question that has plagued some—whether we are among the Father’s chosen. This destination is not decided arbitrarily. It is true the Father’s purpose is the foundation of it, and that those are all foreknown to Him who are to be the subjects of it. It is nevertheless equally true that the mode of realising that purpose is by the gospel preached and proposed for the willing faith and obedience of all who hear it. There can be no clash between the one thing and the other. The Father’s counsels are inscrutable to us, but what He has revealed with regard to them is our property. His revelation in this matter is that He willeth not the death of a sinner, but would rather that he should turn and live; that “every one that thirsteth” is invited, and will be made welcome to the living waters; that “whatsoever will” may come. If, then, we thirst and drink, if we hear and come, we may dismiss the question of whether we are included among those who are foreknown, for the one fact is the form and guarantee of the other. The two things cannot be separated. Our whole anxiety should be directed to our side of the question. Listen to the divine invitation and all is well. Jesus truly says:

“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me,” but he adds, “and him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37).

THE FACT OF COMING TO CHRIST

Consequently, the fact of coming to Christ is proof of our inclusion among those given to him. There can be no such thing as a man coming to Christ and being excluded from those given to him in the Father’s plan. The one is an evidence and a means of the other. The whole question of importance for us is in the “coming.” Do we “come”? If so, all is well, and cannot but be well. We need not trouble about anything else. Nothing, in that case, can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. Only let us be sure about the “coming.” It means much. It means the knowledge of Christ, of course, for this is the first step; but it means much more. A man who knows, but does not love, has not come. A man who knows and loves, but does not obey, deceives himself in thinking he loves. A man who knows, loves, and obeys; that is, who continues in “all things” prescribed for disciples to do and continue doing, has come, and will in no wise be cast out. There may be mistakes, shortcomings and offences on the part of such, but these are foreign to the main current of their lives, and there is forgiveness for them. Christ’s priesthood has no other meaning. He is High Priest over his own house. He ever liveth to make intercession for them. He makes requests for brethren whom he loves, and the Father hears him, and is faithful and just to forgive all of whom the appointed High Priest thus makes mention:

“If we walk in the light, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.”

Those who walk in sin have no representative in Christ. Those who are born of God sin not; that is, they are not unrighteous in their habit of mind and action: their failures are exceptions to the habitual run of their lives, and, confessed and repented of, they are forgiven, and they stand at the last before the judgment seat to be proclaimed as constituents of the one body, “having neither spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing,” of whom it is testified in the language of figure, that

they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; that is, they are forgiven for Christ's sake, who shed his blood.

It is our privilege to stand related to this glorious position, if, having obeyed the truth, we walk in it. This is the meaning of our meeting round this table. Even now are we the sons of God—even now are we forgiven—even now do we stand in the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. Let us open our minds to this great fact. Christ's interest is great in all who stand accepted in him. It is no ordinary interest. There is no parallel to it in human experience. We know something of friendship between man and man—in some cases attaining a very ardent development—but here is a friendship of one for many, and that of a strength that never burnt in human bosom before. Paul speaks of it as “the love of Christ that passeth knowledge.” For one to love a multitude with a love that shall be personal to each individual in the multitude, and that shall glow with equal ardour for all, is certainly a love passing human knowledge. Such a love is an impossibility in fragile human nature. It requires the strength of the spirit, compassing all and sustaining its own fire with the inexhaustible fuel of the divine energy. It is the love that exists in Christ and glows for ever towards his brethren. It is the love of God: God is love, and Christ is His glory in manifestation.

THE EXQUISITENESS OF DIVINE WISDOM

We see the exquisiteness of the divine wisdom in the finished workmanship of creation around us; we see something of His exhaustless beneficence in the manifest design of all things to confer goodness; but we see these in Christ as they are nowhere else to be seen. They are here brought to a personal focus, and directed towards us in the pledge of unutterable well-being in due time. It is something for us to ponder, to rest on, to be comforted by, to admire. It is a glorious reality—the most glorious reality in creation—made ours in the gospel. It is a great possession now, though by faith only; but what shall it be when we stand before the presence of his glory, to receive its healing effulgence in the company of the mustered friends of God of every age, and in the presence of a countless host of angelic spectators? These things are not “cunningly-devised fables,” though so gorgeous. They are the realities of sober truth, though hidden from the eyes of man for a necessary reason. They will burst upon our delighted vision by-and-by. It is only a question of time—and of a short time at the longest. The announcement of the Lord's arrival may any day hurry us into their presence, or the fall of death's curtain on our path may at any time, as with the wave of a magician's wand, conjure us away in a moment from the horrors of this evil state, and show us the manifold glories of the divine purpose in the presence of Christ returned.

In this sense, living or dying, our position is a position of constantly imminent hope. Living or dying, we are the Lord's; and to be His, we are related to the glories of the great salvation which transcend the wildest dreams of the most imaginative of poets, and beggar all human speech to convey an adequate idea of them. They are well named by Paul “the unsearchable riches of Christ.” It is only a sober fact that it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive of them.

God hath revealed them by His spirit; but, for all that, the vision of them in great measure lies latent in the words that convey them, and remains invisible to millions who have the words but discern them not.

To the common run, "*the love of Christ*" is but a phrase—a theological phrase—a collocation of words that jingles dryly in the ear, and suggests nothing more interesting than pews and pulpits and weary hours. To the ear of enlightened intelligence, it is a joyful sound, to know which makes a people palpably blessed. It represents the most precious fact in the universe. What is a man without the love of Christ—if Christ regard him not? Only a superior animal dragging out a sluggish existence which, by and by, must end in darkness under the grave-digger's spade. The love of Christ is a necessity even now, as that "uplifting ideal" which Professor Tyndall acknowledges man requires, but which he cannot find in nature. A man may think he can do without it: so he can, as the famine-stricken peasantry of Egypt can do without food. He can do without it and famish; he can do without it and die. He can get through life as it now is, consumed and deteriorated by the reigning vanity, and eligible for a properly certificated burial in some picturesque cemetery, in which the birds will twitter and the flowers will bow, in total indifference to his finished life and to his sepulchred remains. A man of true reason cannot thus be content with "vanity and vexation of spirit." If there were nothing else, he would try to reconcile himself to his wretchedness. But with God's written invitation on the glowing page of Scripture he cannot, he will not, he dare not, hold the love of Christ cheaply. Despised love will turn to appalling hatred in the day of "the wrath of God revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men."

The love of Christ is even now an ennobling blessing; but how shall it be estimated when it becomes visible to all men as the effectual means of physical renovation, the gateway to riches, honour, power, gladness, strength, and immortality? Every one will place the right value on it then, if they never did before. But many will awake to a realisation of it when it is too late.

"Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation."

It is while these things are yet all a matter of faith that God is pleased to enable us to acquire a right to their possession in the day of the manifested tree of life. This is why we are assembled this morning. God has asked at our hand "a patient continuance in well-doing." He has enlightened us as to the nature of what He considers well-doing. He commands us to "be not weary in well-doing;" and we advantage ourselves and do honour to Him in this weekly assembly to listen to His voice. We require to be continually strengthened in our endeavours. The way is hard, and, as in the journeyings of Israel in the wilderness, "the soul of the people" is liable to be "discouraged because of the way." How can we hold up against it but by recollection of the promises and by prayer to the God of Israel—the God who covenanted the promises—the God who made us and who knows all our difficulties and infirmities; that He would strengthen our heart in the endurance

of the darkness that covers all the earth, and in the performance of the difficult part which He has asked at our hands!

It is helpful to recollect the fact referred to by Paul, when he says,

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man”

(1 Cor. 10:13).

At the worst, we are only fellow-sufferers with the common stock of which we form a part. As the brethren of Christ looking for his appearing, and striving to qualify ourselves for that event by the self-denial of all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we are not worse off than those whose portion is in this life, and to whom the great and precious promises of God are as the mere froth of fanaticism. Nay, we are much better off than they even now. It is in many senses true that:

“Godliness hath profit both for the life that now is and for that which is to come.”

There is no true happiness in the world. With all the fuss and the show of importance, with all the colour and apparent zest of pleasure-following, with all the display and the honouring of one another, there is a gnawing worm at the heart. Only the young are delighted, and they but for a short time. A cloud settles on all mortal things for the blithest and the most spirited. It must be so. Though disfigured, we are in the image of the elohim as a race. We are mentally constituted for friendship with God. It is impossible we can have peace and joy in alienation from Him. “Vanity and vexation of spirit” must come of all attempts to employ existence without Him. The world is not happy: it cannot be. It is of the Lord that the people weary themselves in the fires of vanity. But in the truth, we are reconciled to God, and if we are living in a state of reconciliation (that is, doing those things in which He has declared His pleasure), then we are living in a state of peace. There may be—there is—much deprivation to be endured—many crosses to be carried—many present advantages to be sacrificed as the result of trying to live the lives of saints in the present evil world; but, with all the drawbacks, we are happier in our activity, have more interest in existence, and can indulge in a more effective manner in the pleasure of anticipation, than those who know not God and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The world has all the chafe and fretfulness of an evil state without any of the alleviations that come with the gospel. Therefore, let us rightly estimate our position. Let us realise that even now we are greatly favoured in knowing God, or rather in being known of Him, while as regards the measureless futurity of the ages that are to come, it is difficult to express, and impossible to exaggerate, the glory of our standing as “fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God.”

*Taken from: -
“Seasons of Comfort” Vol. 1 Pages 393-399
by Bro Robert Roberts*

Christendom's False Doctrines Identified in Scripture

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”.

We regularly quote these words from Paul's second epistle to Timothy in public lectures, and these words being true, have much to tell us about the introduction of heretical doctrine into the world. Whilst it is right to go outside the Scriptures to show from history books how the prophetic word has been fulfilled, yet there is a danger in studying treatises published by Christendom about their beliefs that we ourselves, being mortal flesh, become deluded thereby¹. As Paul wrote, *O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science (or 'knowledge') falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith...* (1Tim.6:20 –21). It is safer and wiser to view false doctrine from the Divine standpoint, rather than from listening to the carnal mind justifying itself.

However, we regularly have to discuss the Truth with strangers, and of course false teachers (2Pet.2:1) have ever sought to introduce into the ecclesia 'new' doctrines, which are not new, but are recycled pagan teaching, clothed in a modern and purportedly enlightened vocabulary. The Scriptures of Truth however reveal to us the origin of this teaching, in order that we can identify that its source is the carnal mind and not the Holy Spirit.

The prime example of this is of course the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, the source of which we regularly in lectures identify as the product of the serpent lie, when he said *Ye shall not surely die* (Gen.3:4). The carnal mind has always sought to reject the righteous judgment of God that death is the consequence of sin and is a cessation of existence. This pernicious doctrine of the immortal soul has through the millennia of pagan, Jewish and Christian philosophy acted like a drug to dull adherent's minds against the 'hard' saying that death is a cessation of existence. Revelation 9:21 reads, *“Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts”*. Here the word *sorceries* is from the Greek *pharmakeia*, (the English word 'pharmacy' is a related word), and involves the dispensing of drugs – and this false doctrine is like a drug enabling millions to comfort themselves that death is not actually death, but a transfer of the immortal soul, even as a person might walk from one room to another. It is pertinent that despite the trumpet judgments described in Revelation 9, the Roman religion would not give up such doctrine, and it is not surprising that sometimes those who are learning the Truth find it difficult to accept the mortality of man.

It is noteworthy that when a feature of the Truth is denied, then there is automatically a subsequent denial of other doctrines. It resembles a domino effect. When it is asserted that man has an immortal soul, then it follows that the soul has to migrate somewhere at death – either to heaven or to hell. So 'heaven-going' is a

consequence. A place of hell-torment requires a personal fallen angel devil, and man's salvation becomes a warfare between the gods of good and the gods of evil. Further, even if some fundamental principle of the Truth such the doctrine of the atonement, is denied in whole or part, and then covered with ambiguous statements which 'all' might be able to accept, the above-mentioned 'domino effect' still takes place over time. Ecclesias in their deliberations must always consider the histories of Israel and the early ecclesia, and must, as surprising as it sounds, look ahead three or four generations as to what impact such deliberations will have in the long-term. It is true that we are very sure that the coming of the Lord is at hand, but the ecclesia has a great responsibility concerning faithfulness as the repository of the Truth.

Here are some examples of Christendom's doctrines which feature in Scripture and are shown thereby to originate from pagan theology:

The Immortal Soul

It is not surprising that the doctrine of the immortal soul appears in several places in Scripture, one of which is in Deuteronomy 18:9 – 20, which covers both false doctrine practised by the nations, who were to be displaced by Israel, and also false prophets arising from within Israel. In verse 11, there is a prohibition against *a consuler with familiar spirits* and likewise *a necromancer* (one who enquires of the dead). The term 'familiar' here has a meaning in old English of 'family' rather than 'well-known', and reflects the Hebrew word used. Clearly, such abominable practices involve a belief that the 'dead' are contactable rather than having no existence.

The Trinity

2 Kings 4:42 "*And there came a man of Baal-shalisha,...*"
The latter term means 'Lord of the trinity'²

The Incarnation³

Acts 14:11-12 "*And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker*".

These verses show that pagan theology contained a belief that gods came down from heaven in the form of men. This same citation also reveals that Mercurius (Hermes in Greek, and Nebo in Akkadian) '*was the chief speaker*', and this idea seems to have been transferred to Christendom's teaching that the 'logos' of John 1 was the spokesman of the Trinitarian god(s).

The Worship of Mary

I Kgs 11:33 "*Because that they have forsaken me, and have worshipped Ash-toreth the goddess of the Zidonians,.....*".

This female deity was manifest as the Babylonian ‘Ishtar’, the Egyptian Isis, the Grecian Artemis⁴, and described by her Roman name, Diana of the Ephesians in Acts 19:24. In Jer.7:16 – 20, in a religious family festival which has resemblance to Christendom’s Easter, Ashtoreth is described as ‘the queen of heaven’ a title attributed today to ‘Mary’.

It is noteworthy and ironical that the worship of ‘Mary’ became an official doctrine of the Catholic Church in 430AD at Ephesus. Once again with such teaching, an acceptance of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is essential, but when the mortality of man is understood from the Scriptures of Truth, then obviously, the true Mary of the Bible, who is blessed among women, the mother of the Lord Jesus Christ is dead, asleep in the dust of the earth, awaiting the day of resurrection, and therefore prayers to her are of no avail (Psa.6:5, John 3:13; Ezek.18:20; 1 Cor. 15:22 – 23).

So again, the Scripture identifies the source of Christendom’s veneration.

The afore-mentioned information confirms that the Babylonish Egyptian, and Canaanite theologies which seduced Israel, were basically the same religions which under different names challenged the ecclesia in the first century and corrupted the church between the third and fifth centuries A.D.

Rather than giving a Scriptural exposition of why and how Christendom is astray, the purpose of this article is to emphasize that the Scripture identifies for us the sources of those false doctrines. Perhaps readers might wish to search the Scriptures when reading the daily chapters for other examples, and it is likely that the editor would welcome other illustrations.

Russell Ebbs

1—Further, our time is better spent studying the Scriptures and reading pioneer writings and other valuable books emanating from the brotherhood. Indeed, the writer’s experience is that there are not enough hours in the day sufficient for such.

2—Lecturing brethren may wish to take note that it is therefore inaccurate to say the word ‘Trinity’ cannot be found in the Bible – the word does occur in Scripture, but shown to be associated with Baal worship. Gesenius confirms that ‘Shalishah’ (Strong’s nos. 8028 and 8030) means ‘triad’.

3—The ‘Incarnation’ asserts that ‘Jesus’ existed before his birth, and divested himself of his God-nature’ and took upon him a human form

4—Artemis’s chastity was emphasized by Greek poets, and Isis holding her son Horus, were revered as the perfect mother and child.

Song of Solomon Chapter One*

Today's middle reading brethren and sisters is one of those sections of scripture that is difficult for us to understand. In many ways it is probably more enigmatic than the book of Revelation for us these days.

It is difficult to understand for a number of reasons:

Firstly—the way the text is laid out in our Bibles

Secondly—the language of the text in this piece of wisdom literature

Thirdly—the difficulty we have in ascertaining exactly who is speaking

Fourthly—our distance and removal from the historical and cultural references

Fifthly—our own cultural sensibilities regarding the subject matter within the book

Now even with these five barriers it is more than possible for us to understand the book brethren and sisters on a number of different and relevant levels.

Firstly—the historical & cultural basis of Solomon's courtship & marriage.

Secondly—as an allegory of Israel's relationship with Yahweh their God.

Thirdly—as an allegory of the saints relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Fourthly—as an allegory of our individual relationship to our Beloved Master

Fifthly since this is a piece of wisdom literature then it must have a practical application and blessing for us, as a manual for our relationships, both before and during marriage, which after all is a type of the allegories just mentioned

On that final point brethren and sisters I think as a community we have failed in using this piece of wisdom literature to enlighten our every day lives. We have no problem picking up practical teaching from the other four wisdom books, Job, Psalms, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. This is where our cultural sensibilities have greatly hindered us in only spiritualising the book and not seeking out its practical wisdom for our daily lives.

Now don't worry brethren and sisters this is not the place for us to go practically through the song taking relationship guidance and advice. I certainly would not be the best-placed person to perform that, as my wife will readily confirm. Rather I just wanted to bring this very real failing on our part before your minds, by way of practical exhortation.

So then due to the enigmatic nature of the book and our cultural sensibilities we rarely delve into this fascinating portion of scripture in order to gain comfort, encouragement and exhortation.

Yet if we look there is a great deal of comfort and encouragement to be found. Now the perspective of the song is primarily from the angle of the prospective bride. She speaks the most within the various sections of the book.

* Taken from an Exhortation given at Cannock ecclesia on 04.05.2008

Most of the time she is speaking about her beloved to her companions and not directly to him.

The bridegroom only has two major speeches within the book. We find brethren and sisters the brides longing, her self-consciousness and her fears and in this she is typical of all of us today sat here.

We have that longing for our Master to return and bringing about of the kingdom for which we hope. Yet as we have come here to remember that which has been done on our behalf in our beloved Masters sacrifice and his ongoing high priestly intercession for us. We are each uncomfortably only too aware of our shortcomings, our weaknesses and our sinfulness that stops us from manifestation our love for our Heavenly Father properly in our daily lives. As a result we also fear his return in part, because of the judgement that we shall all have to endure concerning our individual walk. Thus we have nagging doubts, which plague and paralyse our faith and service.

Thus like the bride portrayed in this wonderful book, we likewise go through these same great highs and lows that the truth brings into our lives. Now this book then ought to greatly comfort and encourage us brethren and sisters. In that our individual similarity to the bride with regards to the expression of feelings, fears and hopes, clearly teaches us that none of us are on our own; we all undergo this same emotional roller coaster in the truth.

That is why one of the speakers in this book is the brides attendants, her friends, the daughters of Jerusalem & Zion. Thus each one of us, then brethren and sisters is one of these daugh-

ters, an individual virgin within the corporate body of the bride of Christ, the ecclesia.

Yet when we consider the bridegroom repeatedly throughout the song, He is constantly reassuring the bride not only of his love for her, but also of her beauty. Thus in the emblems upon the table, in the bread and in the wine we see the manifestation of our beloved Masters love towards his bride, in that he gave himself for her.

This little book contains part of the joy that was set before the Master that enabled him to go through the crucifixion brethren and sisters, even the impending marriage of the lamb.

Revelation Chapter 19, verses 6 – 9:

“And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. 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. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.”

Now back in Hebrews where we have that phrase “the joy set before him”. The word “before” in the Greek means that the Lord Jesus Christ chose daily to have those things of the kingdom in the forefront of his mind. So our Master

then made it a daily principle of his life to have these things set before him. Thus the joy, became a chief motivational factor in the outworking of his faith and his resultant faithfulness.

Now if the Lord Jesus Christ could undoubtedly use this book to enhance that vision of joy before him, then brethren and sister ought not we to do likewise?

Should not we similarly have “a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us”?

Now that quotation from earlier in Hebrews brethren and sisters contains the same Greek word in the same form indicating to us that we each individually need to daily chose to keep the joy of the kingdom before us, so that we might endure unto the end. Indeed there is an exhortation upon each of us to encourage each other to keep that joy alive in one another, despite our recurring anxiety and fears.

So then as we read over this song during the next few days brethren and sisters try and enter into the feelings of the bride, as they are expressed. Is this how each of us feel with regards to the one we have come to remember? Do you have the longing of a young woman anticipating her wedding?

This may well be more difficult for the brethren to enter into, being male, but try thinking about the fact if your married brethren that your wife desires to be with you. Whereas most young man not too long married still try to retain their independence and their own space. In this we have a living exhortation through the sisters of how we as brethren should feel with regards to our Lord.

And at the same time we have an insight through this independent spirit in the brethren of how the flesh reacts against the things of the spirit. In that the man desires to retain in some small way his independence. This then becomes an exhortation to us all brethren and sisters of how the flesh resists the work of our Heavenly Father in our daily lives.

Notice carefully, as you read the exhortation of the daughters of Jerusalem, each time they address the bride, they question her and seek to aid her in the development of her love. This then is the role of the ecclesia in relation to each one of us brethren and sisters. Consequently our role in relation to one another, since each one of us are one of these virgins is to support and develop one another’s love.

Correspondingly let us each see the reassuring statements of the bridegroom, as personal exhortation and encouragement to us to work with him in making ourselves ready.

Ephesians Chapter 5, verses 25 – 27

“Christ 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, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”

Now this passage in Ephesians five brethren and sisters clearly instructs us that not only does our bridegroom desire his bride, but that He is constantly working on her behalf. Daily ministering to create in her the moral purity and

character required that, is in the sight of our Heavenly Father of great price.

Remember though brethren and sisters the bride we were earlier informed from Revelation chapter nineteen “hath made herself ready”. Notice it is in the past tense, so there will be a bride willing and ready in the day of our Lord’s return and each of us have the opportunity to be a part of it. For we know it is our Father’s good pleasure to give us the kingdom.

So then we are not left on our own without aid & support; nor is it the sole responsibility of our Master to make us ready. There are tasks fitted to both parties working together towards the consummation of the purpose of our Father.

Our Master is still giving himself 24 hours per day, seven days per week, week in week out, month by month and year by year. To bring each of us to a position of being not only cleansed, but holy and glorious, without spot, wrinkle or any blemish. Through his intercessory prayers and his providential care.

Psalm 45 and verses 13 – 15

“The king’s daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king’s palace.”

The end of this psalm depicts the marriage of the lamb with the bride in all her beauty. The Master achieves this

glorification of the bride through two agencies firstly the ministration of the angels, those who are sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation. Secondly as head of the ecclesia, through directing one another’s service within the ecclesia through the word.

These are the means at his disposal to accomplish his purpose with the saints. Brethren and sisters all power has been given unto him in heaven and in earth. He laid down his very life to make this all possible in us. Let us take encouragement from these facts brethren and sisters, for there is no lack of desire and action on his part. That desire of our beloved Master is recorded for us in Luke Chapter 22 and at verses 14 – 18

“And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.”

Yet sometimes the circumstances of life would seem to indicate our Heavenly Father is not at work in our lives, yet that can only be temporary in order to perfect our characters. Nevertheless all this direction towards the preparation of the wedding feast goes on in the background, unseen and indeed almost completely unknown by us my dear brethren. Only occasionally do we gain a glimpse behind the curtain and then it

is only in hindsight brethren and sisters.

Surely part of the purpose of the way all these things have been arranged in the wisdom of the Father is that our individual and collective faith might be developed further. In order that we learn to walk by faith and not by sight, rejoicing in hope of the glory of God.

For one of the key themes in the song that constantly jumps off the page at you is the waiting of the bride to be. She appears to know only the season of the bridegroom's coming, but not the day or the hour. Is not this true of our selves?

1st Thessalonians Chapter 5, verses 1 – 2:

“But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.”

Yet in the mercy of our Heavenly Father the ecclesial bride has not left without concrete visual support in that firstly we have the word of life, it's self. Which is our guide to wedding preparation and our how too manual of preparation in order that our lamps may be fully trimmed and shining brightly with ample supplies of oil.

Also secondly we have the company of one another our fellow daughters of Jerusalem in the way. Now it is readily apparent from the reading of the song brethren and sisters that the bride to be would not endure without the aid of her companions.

Hebrews Chapter 10 and verses 22 – 25

“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”

Now the individual virgins, who make up the bride of our beloved Master, you and I brethren and sisters will only make our selves ready if the desire is truly there?

Do we each have the desire? Surely this is one of the purposes of this lovely, yet enigmatic book brethren and sisters to develop in us this desire. The desire to please our lord in the same way He always and only did those, which pleased his Father.

1st John Chapter 3, verses 1 – 3

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”

Notice what should be our response in that third verse brethren and sisters, we are to purify ourselves. We must each develop an intense, burning desire to so purify ourselves, if we really want to be like the Lord Jesus Christ, a reflection of his character that we might be a helpmeet to him in the age to come. For it is only when our personal desire (our passion) becomes intense enough that we will have the energy and the internal drive to overcome all the obstacles that will arise in our pathway to the kingdom.

Yet this desire can only be based upon love for love is the strongest motivational force in the universe. Remember our Heavenly Father the great creator & sustainer of all things is the very embodiment of love.

Fear although a powerful motivator will not take you far enough to endure brethren and sisters, because in the end the torment that fear produces will paralyse you. Whereas as, love casts out fear and perfects that which is lacking in our faith, indeed Galatians records how that our faith is energised by our love.

In Song of Solomon Chapter 1 and at verse 4 we read

“Draw me, we will run after thee: the king hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee.”

Here we find the young woman, the prospective bride describing her desire for the bridegroom to her companions. We see the companions of the bride rejoicing in her love and encouraging her in her desire to be with the bride-

groom. In this brethren and sisters we see an example of what has happened to each one of us, as individual virgins who constitute this bride. More than this we see what the correct ecclesial response is when one of the virgins express their love for the bridegroom.

The bride desires to be drawn to the bridegroom, she exclaims “draw me”. Now in the Hebrew this word is an imperative command. Brethren and sisters when the imperative form is used by someone who is lesser addressing one who is greater, it becomes the strongest form of wish possible. With the use of the imperative here we see both the urgency of the brides desire, but also we see her single-minded determination.

Apparently this expression “draw me” is a figurative expression implying that the bride is a willing captive, a willing prisoner of the love of her beloved. She wants to be led by him and drawn to his embrace. Here then we see the bride being constrained / thronged by the love of the bridegroom and in our case the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul models this desire for us brethren, when He speaks through the spirit the following: “For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

Philippians Chapter 3, verses 10 – 14

“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either

were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

Our desire should be as the Apostle’s, my dear brethren and sisters, which is a direct result and reciprocation of the love shown to him and us.

Specifically with regards to our Master, the bridegroom’s sacrifice, as laid out before us in the emblems upon the table. Now in Galatians we read “Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

It was the love of the Lord Jesus Christ for Paul that motivated and energised his life in the truth. Can this be said of each one of us brethren and sisters?

You see the young woman in the song, this prospective bride brethren and sisters is completely animated by the love of the bridegroom. Her whole life is now bound up in receiving and returning that affection which He has expressed to her. The Master said “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”

John Chapter 14 and at verse 23:

“Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father

will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”

The Father has drawn each of us to the bridegroom, just like the young bride to be in this wonderful book. Thus we like her desire to be drawn into his presence into his innermost chambers, his personal living quarters, including the bed-chamber.

Again, John Chapter 14 and verses 1

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. 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.”

The Hebrew in verse four of this first chapter of the song can be rendered “May the king bring me into his chambers.” Apparently the language here expresses her desire and the expectation that her desire will be realised one day, soon. For us we desire, pray for and look for the kingdom and to have access to our Lord’s personal chambers in that temple of the future age prophesied in Ezekiel chapters forty to forty-eight.

Having expressed her desire for him to “draw me”, her companions reply “we will run after thee”.

They desire to accompany the bride and likewise be in the presence of this royal bridegroom. The word “run” implies action “without any hesitation, a swift

compliance with all eagerness". In the Psalms we read "I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart."

will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

Zephaniah Chapter 3, vs 14 & 17:

This is exactly the same word and form of this Hebrew word "run". We learn here brethren and sisters that nothing enlarges the heart more than love genuinely expressed and reciprocated. Typical of the bride to be and her attendants in this song we ought likewise brethren and sisters to run after the king in the way of his commandments. "Without any hesitation, and a swift compliance with all eagerness" in love.

"Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. Yahweh thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing."

Again in Revelation Chapter 19 and at verse 7:

Now notice carefully brethren and sisters the response of the bride and each of the faithful individual virgins within it, in the three "we will's" statements in this verse. Now the number three in scripture is the number of fruit, as is witnessed by the third day of creation, when all the fruit bearing plants brought forth.

"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."

There are in this verse four step's (God manifestation) brethren and sisters to us remaining or as the Eternal Spirit through Jude puts it "keeping ourselves in the love of God". Three of them are related to those "we will's". We are firstly, as we have already seen to follow in the footsteps of our lord. Then secondly we are to "be glad and rejoice" in the bridegroom. Now this phrase "to be glad and rejoice" again speaks to us of the expectant desire of the fulfilment of all the bride's hope. Listen to these three verses:

Here we see then not only the heartfelt response and reciprocation of the love shown unto the bride, but also the determination of the bride not only to continue in that love, but also to revel and rejoice in it. Now if we are honest brethren and sisters we do not find it easy to revel and rejoice in this love, we are shortly to remember.

Like the young woman here in the song, we feel self-conscious and unworthy of it. As verse five and six continues:

Isaiah Chapter 25 and verse 9

"And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is Yahweh; we have waited for him, we

"I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me."

Surely the antidote to these feelings of unworthiness and self-consciousness is in the third response and determination of

the bride and her attending virgins in that fourth verse. Where we read “we will remember thy love more than wine”.

As we saw earlier in the life of the Apostle Paul this love was the motivational force in his life that enabled him to face life with eagerness each and every new day. We do not need to try and escape the daily pressures of life through the use of alcohol, like so many of our contemporaries in the world outside. Rather we have a comparison here for although elsewhere we read that wine “maketh glad the heart of man”.

This remembrance of the love of the bridegroom and his Father has for us a greater impact and effect in lifting our spirits (pardon the pun) day by day than does the choicest of wines. Now this word “remember” not only means to “recall to mind”, but it also carries with it the idea of doing so to others in speech. In other words causing others to likewise remember the love of the

bridegroom. Is this not one of the purposes of an exhortation brethren and sisters?

In a few moments we each shall remember “thy love”, in the emblems and particularly wine, which speaks of that new covenant in his blood, which was shed for us. “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

As we now remember this love brethren and sisters; let our response be that of this young bride to be and of her companions, which is the fourth step in keeping our selves in the love of God. As we read in the final part of this fourth verse “the upright love thee”, Or as the margin of my Bible has it “they love thee uprightly”.

A love which is pure, not insincere and not unfeigned, a love brethren and sisters that fully reflects his faithful love to the ecclesia, his bride.

Wayne Marshall

Correspondence

A thread on an online discussion group questioned the literality of the Ascension of Messiah as recorded in Acts 1. From this point, the question was subsequently raised regarding whether or not God sits upon a literal throne, and whether or not He has a literal Right Hand where Christ sits. The “evidence” for questioning the substantial nature of the Deity, and the literalness or otherwise of those things testified concerning him was given thus:

There is “a flaw in the idea of “the substantial nature of the Deity”. A reader who wants to interpret it as a physical throne, with spacial and temporal dimensions, mass and chemical properties, is open to probing questions: does gravity hold God on it when he is sitting down? is it composed of materials that were once alive? is this "substantial nature" idea a serious reading or just hot air? Not to mention perfectly valid questions about the organs and metabolism of the postulated body of God, which appear to be irreverent but in fact establish whether the

"substantial nature" idea is itself irreverent. Does God have nostrils? a tongue? tonsils? how far do we go? It's not up to the literal reader to decide when to stop: if a thing is literally true there are *no* limits to the questions, and cries of "you're not serious" and "now you're going too far" are barred. Otherwise we're left with "it's true, but not THAT true".

Reply:-

Your approach is a method which could be termed an “argument of ignorance”. To explain: because you do not know (are ignorant of) a thing in all its details, and all its entirety, you indicate that therefore the thing cannot be true at all, and that something else must be true, even when that something else contradicts the Holy Writ. To illustrate: You assume that because you do not know what material Yahweh's throne is made of, then this throws doubt upon whether or not the throne exists. Or again, because you do not know what organs the Deity possesses or otherwise, that therefore he can have no substantial existence.

You speak of a “flaw,” in the reasoning of those who accept the Bible’s plainly stated position, but as evidence for such a “flaw” all you can offer is your own confessed ignorance of particular aspects of the matter (i.e. what specific material is the throne made of etc). Because you are ignorant of certain parts, you question the whole – and illogically proceed to assume that the “flaw” is in those who believe the Bible’s position, whereas in actual fact, it lies in your own confessed lack of knowledge.

I do not criticise you for being ignorant of things that the Bible is silent on, only that you appear to use that ignorance as a reason to question plain Bible teaching. As indicated previously, our part is to believe without question what the Bible teaches, and not to frame an argument based upon those things that Scripture does not teach. It is wrong to derive a premise from matters concerning which Scripture is silent, and upon that premise build an argument that flatly contradicts those things the Scriptures **do** teach, and very plainly too.

CAM

Secretary's Notes

- Readers will note that due to pressure of circumstances, there was no May issue of this magazine; we very much regret this, and are pleased to have resumed with this issue.
- We have to hand an excellent paper by Bro Eric Phipps entitled: “*A Review of the Nature and Sacrifice of Christ*”, which we hope to enclose as a supplement with a future issue.
- Now that our series of “*The BASF—it’s Importance and Teaching*” has concluded all of the positive “clauses to be received”, work is un-

derway to put the series into book format for a wider circulation. Readers will be notified in due course. If the Lord permit, we shall commence the “Doctrines to be Rejected” section with the next issue.

- We wish to extend our thanks to a number of contributors providing funds to support the work of this magazine. This enables us to and to periodically include a special supplement to the magazine as appropriate, and also to provide the magazine to those who cannot remit the requested amount.

The Healing Of The Lame

The inspired writer of the letter to the Hebrews spoke of how the preaching of the Apostles was supported by miraculous use of the Holy Spirit gift:

“God also bearing them witness, *both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles*, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will” (Heb. 2:4).

When we come to consider the Acts of the Apostles therefore, we can expect to see “divers miracles” used as witnesses to the Truth of what was being taught. In our present considerations, we intend to look at the healing of two lame men, as recounted in the book of Acts, significantly one a Jew, the other a Gentile.

Acts chapter 3 describes a lame man encountered by the Apostles at the gate of the Temple:

“a certain man lame from his mother’s womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple” (Acts 3:2).

This was a man who had never walked from the moment he was born. Being unable to walk, he was unable to work to obtain those things necessary to sustain a daily life, and instead had to assume the position of a beggar, being wholly dependant on people’s good will towards him. It is significant that he was *outside* of the Temple, as under the Mosaic Law, lameness disqualified a man from divine service:

“whatsoever man he be that hath a blemish, he shall not approach: a blind man *or a lame* ... no man that hath a blemish of the seed of Aaron the priest shall come nigh to offer the offerings of Yahweh made by fire: he hath a blemish; he shall not come nigh to offer the bread of his God” (Lev. 21:18,21).

Here therefore, was a man who could not appear acceptably before Yahweh, because of his lameness. In this, we suggest, he represents Israel after the flesh who could not appear acceptably before their God: i.e. because of their spiritual

lameness: they were unable to walk acceptably before Him. Malachi castigated the Nation for offering the Lamé as sacrifices before Yahweh:

“if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? Saith Yahweh of armies” (Mal. 1:8).

That offering of that which was lame therefore, was “evil”, and reflects the inability of the people to walk uprightly in the sight of their God. Interestingly, Israel themselves are likened to the lame, in the prophetic description of their healing:

“I will make *her that halted (Heb. the lame)* a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and Yahweh shall reign over them in Mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever” (Mic. 4:7).

As this indicates, the Scriptures reveal a time when the lame shall draw near to their God, for they shall be healed:

“Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind *and the lame*, the woman with child, and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither” (Jer. 31:8).

“Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall *the lame man leap* as an heart, and the tongue of the dumb sing...” (Isa. 35:5-6).

In the coming Kingdom then, the healing of the Sun of Righteousness shall cure all of the ailments of Yahweh’s people, both natural and spiritual. The Lamé shall leap up for joy at their healing, and the dumb shall sing for joy.

As we have shown, the miracles, or “signs” of healing performed by the Apostles were designed to be a powerful witness to the Truth of what was being preached. They are described as being “the powers of the world to come,” for as the above testimonies show, they are powers for healing that will be present in the earth in the world to come.

We can see this point exhibited in the healing of the lame Jew:

“he *leaping up* stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking *and leaping* and praising God” (Acts 3:8).

Having been healed, he could now draw near to Yahweh, and entered into the Temple with joyfulness – and notice this description of the man “leaping” in comparison with the prophecy of Isaiah 35, cited above: truly the healing of this man was a foreshadowing of the powers of the age to come.

THE HEALING OF A GENTILE

Having seen the healing of a Jew, we now proceed to consider the impact of the healing of a Gentile upon those who witnessed the apostolic teaching. Acts chapter 14 recounts how:

“there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother’s womb, who never had walked: the same heard Paul speak: who steadfastly beholding him and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked” (Acts 14:7-8).

The effect of this miracle upon the people in the superstitious framework into which their beliefs fitted, was to cause them to worship the apostles as being deities in their own right, saying “the gods are come down to us in the likeness of men” (Acts 14:11). But the fickleness of human nature is seen in that being stirred up by “certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium”, the people were persuaded to stone Paul, and cast him out of the city so soon as they were convinced he was dead. But the Master’s work was not to be thwarted, and so: “as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derby” (v 20).

Whether or not Paul was raised from the dead is not altogether clear from the record, although it might be implied from the description that he “rose up”. But certainly there was a miracle seen, in that despite being stoned and thrown out of the city, Paul was restored to health.

Interestingly however, notwithstanding such a rejection, we read later on in Acts, Paul going back to Lystra:

“Then came he to Derby and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus” (Acts 16:1).

The record thus introduces us to Timothy, also known as Timotheus. At his return into Lystra, Paul learned of the good reputation that this disciple had developed:

“which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium” (Acts 16:2)

THE TESTIMONY CONCERNING TIMOTHY

When we piece the combined records of various parts of Scripture, we can draw certain conclusions about Timothy. For example, in Paul’s inspired letter to Timothy, it is clear that his family was well known to him:

“... when I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee,

which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also” (2 Tim. 1:5)

Paul therefore knew intimate details regarding Timothy’s family, and the faith of him, his mother, and his grandmother. Not his father though, for Acts 16 tells us twice that “his father was a Greek,” and it would seem this was a reason why despite the faith of his matriarchs, Timothy had not been circumcised. Knowing Timothy’s family circumstances, Paul made reference to this later: “and that *from a child* thou hast known the holy Scriptures ..” (2 Tim. 3:15).

Bearing these facts in mind as we approach the record in Acts, we can surmise a number of things. When Paul went to Lystra, he would clearly need somewhere to sleep, eat, and fulfil his daily needs. We suggest therefore, that it could be that Paul lodged with Timothy and his family, using their house as his ‘base’ so to speak. Either way, it is almost certain that Timothy would have witnessed the healing of the Lame Gentile, and the subsequent stoning and rising again of Paul. It would seem that this instilled in him a deep conviction of the things Paul taught concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Certainly, in 2 Timothy chapter 3, Paul speaks as though Timothy had witnessed these things:

“thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, *at Lystra*; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all, the Lord delivered me” (2 Tim. 3:10-11)

So it was, that in the example of Paul’s circumstances, Timothy was taught that “all that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”

In the healing of these two lame men therefore, we have a powerful witness to both Jew and Gentile as to the Power of the Almighty, and His ability to save from the constraints of mortality. In these things, the Apostle was prepared to lay down his life if necessary—and provides an example to us, and the fervour of our preaching.

Before we close, there is an interesting feature in the healing of the first lame man that we ought to mention. He made request for some financial assistance, or as the AV puts it, he: “asked an alms”. Peter’s answer however is most instructive: “Silver and Gold have I none; but such as I have, I give thee: in the Name of Jesus of Nazareth rise up and walk” (Acts 3:6).

In these words, the lame man was taught that there are far greater things to be obtained than silver and gold. In healing his affliction, the power of Yahweh to save was manifest to him. By heeding the teaching of the apostles, there was instilled in this man a belief that they could provide far greater things than silver and gold. As we read in verse 16 of the same chapter concerning the Name of Jesus Christ:

“His name, through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom

ye see and know: yea the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all” (Acts 3:16).

A passage that comes to mind in connection with this is Proverbs 22:1:

“A *good name* is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than *silver and gold*”

Rather than to seek to provide silver and gold, Peter taught the lame man to seek after the things pertaining to the good “name of Jesus Christ”, in whose name he could be made whole. And in this, we have a wonderful example set in Scripture for our learning: rather than to seek for silver and gold—the temporal things of this life—we ought rather seek the healing of our mortal frames in the Name of Jesus Christ, in the day when once again his Name shall be proclaimed before men, and at the mention of which men shall bow the knee in worship, and giving glory to the Father (Phil. 2:10).

Chris Maddocks

“Holy Water”

Two news reports have been drawn to our attention, with regard to so-called “holy water.” The first, from the BBC News website (12 May 2006) carries the heading: *Church offers holy water car wash* and reads:

Church members in Manchester are offering passing motorists a car wash with holy water. Levenshulme Baptist Church regulars plan to clean cars with the gallons of left-over water from this Sunday’s baptismal service.

The blessed water from the church’s baptism pool, in which people are immersed as part of the service, will be recycled for the washes.

Members say it makes the free washes environmentally friendly. Minister of Levenshulme Baptist Church, Ian Spence: “We are pleased to offer a different kind of service to the community. “However, I can’t promise that the cars will run problem-free as a result of the special water used.”

The second article, more recently describes how water from a blocked drain was regarded as Holy Water. The article again from the BBC News website on 13th May 2008 under the heading: *Church holy water ‘from drains’* records how:

Hundreds of gallons of water which rose from the cellar of a Cambridgeshire church are believed to have come from an old drain. Water was coming up from underneath the Trinity Church in March at a rate of about 10 gallons (45 litres) an hour. Reg Kemp, property steward of Trinity Church, had drunk the “holy” water and said he hoped it could be bottled and become an attraction. But Anglian Water said tests proved it was “environmentally contaminated”.

Such is the folly of human wisdom! If only the clerics would attend to the water of the Word to cleanse their way, much folly would be done away with.

CAM

THE SPIRIT, THE WORD —AND THE ANGELS

It is an often quoted, yet little understood teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, that men are drawn by the Father to him:

“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day” (Jno 6:44).

Speculations abound amongst men as to the precise mechanism by which a man becomes “drawn” to Christ; from theories of a mystical and magical invisible force turning a man’s mind towards the things of God, influencing his thoughts and directing his desires; to a conviction that such things are unknown and unknowable, and that it is best not to enquire or probe too deeply into such affairs.

But whilst it is a truth that as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are the Deity’s ways higher than man’s ways, and His thoughts higher than man’s thoughts (Is 55:9), it would be a grave error and folly in the extreme to disregard what the Father has revealed as being unknowable. Wisdom that is from above (Jas 3:17) has been revealed to man, so that he can make Yahweh’s ways his ways, and Yahweh’s thoughts his thoughts. Whilst the natural man cannot receive the things of the spirit of God which therefore remain unknown to him (1 Cor 2:14), those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern spiritual things ought to be able to see and hear the things revealed by the Father by His Spirit through the Apostles (1 Cor

2:7,10). We must not therefore dismiss a matter as being “unknowable” purely on the basis that we have not searched the Scriptures adequately enough to gain personal knowledge of it. As Bro Thomas wrote:

“no man has any right to set up his own ignorance as the limit of what God hath revealed. A thing may be unknown to such a man, but it doth not therefore follow that it is either absolutely unintelligible or a secret. He may not know of it, or, if explained to him, he may not have intellect enough to comprehend it, or his prejudices, or sectarian bias may darken his understanding - this by no means makes the thing unintelligible or mysterious to other people. All that such persons have a right to say is, “We do not know anything about it.” They may confess their own ignorance, and resolve to look into the matter, or not; but they are presumptuously overstepping the bounds of propriety to venture to do more” (Elpis Israel, Part 1 Chapter 1).

To the Word then, and to the Testimony must we go to be enlightened as to the ways and thoughts of the Father, leaving those in darkness to amuse themselves with their abstract thinking and self-confessed ignorance. And to begin with, we ought to examine more carefully the context of the Master’s words, for in the discourse which follows, the Master expounds his own saying and thereby relieves the learned theologians of their difficulty - if only they had eyes to see and ears to hear - by presenting the matter in great plainness of speech:

“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, and they shall all be taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me ...” (Jno 6:44,45).

As the prophets declared, men are “taught of God” (Is 54:13). But how? By some mystical influence filtering into their brains and directing their thoughts and inclinations Godward? Not according to the Master, for in his words, they who are taught are they who have “heard,” the implication being that those who do not hear do not learn. Passive receipt of miraculous power is not what Christ describes in this place, but rather a listening, or hearing on the part those who would learn. But what do they hear? Words from the Father, words that proceed out of His mouth, which do not return to Him void (cp Is 55:11), but rather accomplish that which He pleases, namely the drawing of men to His Son, for thus wrote the Apostle:

“Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. 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? ... So then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, have they not heard? Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world” (Rom 10:13-18).

The matter is therefore laid plainly before us; a man becomes called, and

“taught of God” by hearing the “sound” of those sent by him, namely the apostles (‘ones sent’), or of those who preach the Testimony they taught. Accordingly, it might be written to them, as it was to those believers at Thessalonica, that they were chosen unto salvation through “belief of the truth; whereunto He called you by our Gospel” (2 Thes 2:14). This is how they become “drawn” of God - by the Gospel of Christ heard, understood, and believed. So it is by this means that many become “called according to His purpose” (Rom 8:29), to be conformed to the image of His son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren, ultimately forming single family of men and women who, by carrying their cross and following him, through being partakers of the likeness of his death by obeying the Gospel through baptism, shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection. They shall “be like him” (1 Jno 3:2), both morally and physically, having their bodies changed that they become “fashioned like unto his glorious body” (Phil 3:21), immortal, free from sin and death, and fitted for the Kingdom of God.

But not all who are “drawn” by the Father to the Son will be granted the glory, honour and immortality for which the faithful seek. Though many be drawn to Christ, some cannot endure the straitness of the Way he requires them to walk along, and they allow themselves to be tempted, and drawn away of their own lusts, and enticed (Jas 1:14). So it is, that “many be called, but few chosen” (Mat 20:16). Many are called to be partakers of many things; they are called into Grace (Gal 1:6), into Liberty (Gal 5:13), unto a kingdom and great glory (1 Thes 2:2), unto Eternal Life (1 Tim 6:12), out of

darkness into light (1 Pet 2:9). But they are also “called to be saints” (1Cor 1:2), holy ones unto the Deity who gave His Son that they might have life. And that is something many cannot be. As dogs, they return unto their own vomit, and as swine to their wallowing in the mire (2 Pet 2:22). They cannot abide life in the Light, as their works become manifest by it and open to reproof (Jno 3:19). They cannot abide the constant washing of the water of the word whereby their way might be cleansed, for they take too much delight in the defiling ways of the flesh. So it happens unto them according to the true proverb; they turn back into the darkness and defilement of the world, and so judge themselves to be unworthy of eternal life.

But why is this? If it is true, as some claim, that the believer’s life becomes governed by direct Holy Spirit operation upon the brain-flesh of men, why is it even possible for some to fail? Why do some fail, whilst others do not? There are those who claim that some inscrutable influence renews men’s hearts, causing them to believe, and that unless they have had an “experience” of the sudden swooping of this power upon them, they cannot believe. But such a magical excitation finds no place within the pages of Scripture, which declares that a man becomes “renewed by knowledge” (Col 3:10). As Bro Thomas wrote:

“When a man is renewed by the truth, he is renewed by the spirit, and not before. There is no such

thing in the scriptures as a renewed ignorant man. Ignorance of the testimony of God, and regeneration, are utterly incompatible. The truth is the purifier to those only who understand and obey it (1Pet 1:22); and there is no moral purity, or sanctification of spirit before God, without it (Elpis Israel Pt 1 Ch 2).

Another idea held by some, is that at the time of baptism, men are given a dose of strength from the mystical influence they call the Spirit. For instance, in his book entitled *James and Other Studies* (1st Edition), Duncan Heaster postulates that at the time of baptism, believers are endowed with “a gift of heavenly health”, a “once off gift of the Holy Spirit”, and are later given the further opportunity of drawing upon the Spirit in order to receive Divine help in their Bible study. Thus, under the heading, *Holy Spirit at Baptism?* he writes:

“... this approach to the subject makes more sense of the passages which imply that there is a once off gift of spiritual strength in our lives. Israel’s passage through the Red Sea was a clear type of our baptism and subsequent wilderness journey (1 Cor 10:1). Miraculously, “there was not one feeble person among their tribes” (Ps 105:37) - of about four million people. This gift of physical strength after their Baptism surely prefigures our ‘gift of Heavenly health’ after our immersion ... Grammatically this must imply a once off gift of the Spirit to each believer ... Despite having had this Spirit gift at baptism, the ut-

most personal effort is still required in responding to it”

Again he writes:

“Surely there is no point in praying to understand God's word if our own unaided intellect is all that is required (Ps 119:18). Such prayers are surely for God's help to act upon us to assist us in our efforts to understand. Seeing that all God's work is accomplished through His Spirit, it follows that we are asking from the help of His Spirit to understand the word.”

Here then, is the claim presented in clear and unambiguous terms; when they are baptised, believers are given the Spirit of God as a “once off gift” of “spiritual strength”. And further, this Spirit may be also drawn upon as required, to give assistance in understanding the Father's Word. But what saith the Word?

In order to describe this idea, which is not in itself taught in Scripture, expressions not from Scripture are employed. For instance, there is no passage in Scripture that speaks of “heavenly health,” let alone a “once off gift” of it. Nor does any passage of Scripture state that a believer ought to ask the Father to use His Spirit in order to give them understanding of the Word. As the writer himself admits, at best, the ‘proof’ texts he advances can only “imply” the points he makes. And in actual fact, whilst the writer considers the physical provision made for Israelites in the desert as being a “prefigure” of each believer being given a “once off gift of the Spirit,” Scripture itself does not make that comparison. Rather, in its plain teachings, it refutes such an idea.

THE POWER OF THE WORD

Rather than speaking of some mystical endowment of “heavenly health” at baptism, the Oracles of the Most High declare that the Word itself gives strength to believers, being a power in its own right:

“the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are (being) saved, it is the power of God” (1Cor 1:18).

“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every-one that believeth” (Rom 1:16).

“wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted (implanted) word, which is able to save your souls” (Jas 1:21).

“when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe” (1 Thes 2:13).

The power, that works within the believer, most “effectually”, is therefore the influence of the Word itself. As Bro Roberts expressed it, the Word:

“lays hold of the entire mental man, creating new ideas and new affections, and, in general, evolving a “new man”. In this work, the Spirit has no participation, except in the shape of the written word”. This is the product of the Spirit—the ideas of God reduced to writing by the ancient men

who were moved by it. It is, therefore, the instrumentality of the Spirit ... by this men may be subdued to God—that is, enlightened, purified, and saved, if they receive the word into good and honest hearts, and “bring forth fruit, some thirty-fold, some sixty, and some a hundred” (Christendom Astray, Lecture 6, 1884 edition).

The Psalmist prayed, “my soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according to thy word” (Ps 119:28). That is the prayer of the faithful; to pray for strength to be given in accordance with what the Word teaches. To pray for a strength which the Word does not promise, or to look for power in a different place to where the Creator has provided it, is bound only to leave the petitioner weak and in need of true spiritual strength.

The Master, in his Parable of the Sower clearly described what source of spiritual growth and health is sown in the believer's heart. “The seed is the Word of God” (Luke 8:11). Notice, the seed is sown alone in the heart, the onus being on the individual to allow it to germinate and take root there. The Master describes no additional element being sown with the seed to help the recipient in some other way, it is down to the nature of soil, and disposition of the individual as to whether, or how that seed grows. Neither does the master describe the soil being especially prepared to receive the seed; but rather it falls on both good and bad ground, and grows where the conditions are right.

This seed so sown is that “implanted Word” which “effectually worketh” within the believer, an “incorruptible seed” (1 Pet 1:23) which, is the germ

of a new Spiritual life – a “new creature” (2 Cor 5:17), and is a virile 'power' mighty to save. Indeed, it is that seed which is able to strengthen the believer to resist sin (1 Jno 3:9), and which is “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim 3:17).

“THAT THE MAN OF GOD MAY BE PERFECT”

This latter passage is most instructive for our present considerations – the Word is a power able to reprove, correct, and instruct “that the man of God may be perfect”. Why then, do some consider there to be a need for an additional influence/strengthening power from elsewhere? Are we to suppose that the man of God may become more perfect than “perfect” by such additional “spiritual strength”? Nay, the Word itself, after the pattern of the Manna of old is sufficient for the believer to feed upon, even though it may be but “light bread”, and insufficient for the murmerers.

Contrary to the claims with which we are being presented, possession of the Holy Spirit was not in any case, a source of “heavenly health” strengthening the possessors to be obedient. This we know, for though it gave the First Century possessors miraculous powers and abilities, it was still needful for Paul to exhort and warn the spirit-endowed elders at Ephesus that:

“of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of

three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (Acts 20:30-32).

The arising of apostate leaders was certain – but what was needed to edify the body to remain faithfully resistant to these? Mystical supplies of "spiritual strength" from above? No – the Word itself. These were men who certainly did possess the Holy Spirit already, but it was not that Spirit which gave them strength to resist the apostates, but the Word, understood, believed and acted upon. It is a power of construction, able to build a firmly founded edifice which cannot be shaken in the day of evil.

The Spirit, whilst it gave miraculous powers, did not in itself impart an moral awareness, or cause a moral regeneration for the recipients thereof, as witnessed by the manner by which certain at Corinth abused their miraculous ability to speak in tongues (1 Cor 14). Judas is another case in point, he, as the other disciples were sent forth with the Holy Spirit to cast out demons and perform miracles in the name of Christ (Mat 10:1-5). And again, there will be many who were recipients of the Holy Spirit power rejected in the coming day of judgement:

“Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never

knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Mat 7:22,23).

Only a Divine power impressed upon the fleshly tables of the heart can achieve moral results, and it has so pleased the eternal Creator to have that power contained within the written Word.

Bro Thomas was quite plain in his exposition of these things:

“For myself, I believe that the Holy Spirit is the only authoritative, infallible, efficient and sufficient teacher of the Christian religion, in all its parts. If I be asked, what is the manner in which He teaches this religion? I reply, in the same way that all teachers convey instruction to their pupils: by words, either spoken or written. Hence, it is by the sacred Scriptures that He convinces men of sin, righteousness, and judgment to come in these times, and indeed, in all the times subsequent to the apostolic age. God is simple in all His plans.”

He goes on to say (quoting 2 Tim 3:15):

“What more do we want than wisdom in relation to this matter? If the sacred Scriptures are able to make us wise, we need no other instrumentality. The Holy Spirit by the word, without infusing a single idea into it, more than it actually and ordinarily contains, and without any collateral influence, teaches us all wisdom and knowledge that is necessary... Why, then, my friends,

can we not be content with the means within the grasp of everyone who owns the volume of inspiration? If the ecclesiastical world were content to learn the truth from ‘the Bible alone’, and it honestly desired to obey the Messiah, there would soon be an end to Presbyterian and every other ism, by which ‘Christendom’ as it is called, or ‘anti-Christendom’, as it should be termed, has been for ages desolated.”

(The Apostasy Unveiled)

HELP IN UNDERSTANDING

We saw earlier how it is claimed that believers ought to pray for the Father to give them Spirit help to understand: “Surely there is no point in praying to understand God’s word if our own unaided intellect is all that is required (Ps 119:18). Such prayers are surely for God’s help to act upon us to assist us in our efforts to understand ... it follows that we are asking for the help of His Spirit to understand the word”. Such are the sentiments of many.

“Surely” it must be so – but why? No verse of Scripture states that believers should pray for the Holy Spirit to aid their Bible study – those terms are not used. On the contrary, even prophets to whom the words of the Spirit came direct, had to exert much effort themselves in seeking out their meaning: “Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace which should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow” (1 Pet 1:11).

These inspired prophets received the Spirit – it operated through them to give us the words of Scripture, yet they did not understand the import of those words, and how they testified of the coming Messiah. The Spirit did not give them understanding of what they themselves wrote. They had to show themselves to be “workmen that needeth not to be ashamed” (2 Tim 2:15), seeking to rightly divide the Word of Truth – as do we. The way to understand the Word, is to “search diligently”, following the example of the prophets of old, not to pray for a source of understanding they did not have, and which the Father has not promised. And why should it be otherwise? “It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, but the honour of kings is to search out a matter” (Prov 25:2). True, it may be attractive to the flesh to suppose that though we be workmen, we do not have to work hard, that we are, in some mysterious way, “helped” to understand, so saving us hours of thoughtful meditation, but that is not the revealed way of the Most High.

AN UNVEILING

One passage of Scripture, which is often employed as a prop to sustain the argument, as in this case, is Psalm 119:18: “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy Law”. But much is assumed regarding this passage that is not stated. For instance, the Holy Spirit itself is not directly spoken of. David does not pray for the Holy Spirit to help his understanding – those are not the terms he uses, even if others may assume that to be his meaning. David simply besought Yahweh to “open his eyes”.

Interestingly, the Hebrew for “open” used here by the Spirit literally signi-

fies, to uncover; to reveal. The idea is that of the eyes being covered over, David's prayer being that this covering may be removed, so that the "wondrous things" contained within the Mosaic Law might be seen. Hence, Rotherham renders the verse thus: "unveil thou mine eyes that I may discern wondrous things out of thy law". But what are those wondrous things? David certainly knew and understood the Law very well, for later in the same Psalm he says: "O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me" (Ps 119:97,98). Already having been given understanding and wisdom (notice, from the commandments, not Holy Spirit bestowal), there was yet something contained within the Law which was veiled from his sight, and which he sought to "see".

The Apostle speaks similarly of Israel, and their inability to see the wonderful things testified of the Master: "seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which was abolished: But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament ... even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart" (2 Cor 3:15). That which is veiled from Israel even today, is an appreciation of how the Law spoke of the Lord Jesus. Their minds are blinded to this; there is a need for them to have their eyes opened, and their hearts unveiled in order for them to recognise the Messiah who came to fulfil the Law. Even so

with David; yet he sought to have that vail removed.

This is something which was indeed revealed to David by Divine Revelation, for he was a prophet: "being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ" (Acts 2:31). But D Heaster is not a prophet, and neither is anyone else today! Why then should it be supposed that we can pray for the same manner of Revelation as David? When we cite a verse, we must pay attention to its historical context, or we become no better than the Apostasy who pick out verses to wrest to their own destruction.

Here then, we see the prayer and its fulfilment. David prayed that he might see wondrous things; and being a prophet those things were shown to him, that "seeing this before", he might speak of the resurrection of Christ. The revelation which he sought came both in the "oath" sworn to him through Nathan the prophet, as recorded in 2 Sam 7, and also through prophetic vision which he received himself – which things we do not experience today. David, as other men of old had direct communication from the Most High, whereas we do not. He then, was placed in a unique position greatly different to ours, whereby he could pray to have things revealed to him. For our part, we must be content with the Divine injunction to use personal effort, to "search diligently" that we might show ourselves workmen that need not be ashamed.

**THE WORD – A SPOKEN, THEN
WRITTEN REVELATION
OF THE SPIRIT**

What we have endeavoured to show, is that the power of the word itself imparts understanding to the hearer. As the voice of Wisdom crieth: “My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee ... then shalt thou understand the fear of Yahweh, and find the knowledge of elohim. For Yahweh giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding ...” (Prov 2:1-6).

Out of the mouth of Yahweh, that is, via His spoken Word, understanding and knowledge was given to His prophets, and they wrote it down for others. We obtain knowledge of the Most High by heeding that revelation, not by seeking another spirit-revelation to, in some way clarify the first. But the word itself is a power of the Spirit because it is the product of the breath, or Spirit of Yahweh, as we touched upon earlier. Thus Paul spake to the Corinthians of the formerly concealed mysteries of the Gospel: “God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit ... for what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God” (1 Cor 2:10,11).

So then, “no man” can know the things of God, but by the Spirit of God. But how? By a mystical impartation of understanding? By no means, as we have already established, it is by the words taught by the Spirit, for this is how the apostle spake of the revelations given to him, and committed to paper: “now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of

God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth, comparing Spiritual things with Spiritual” (v 12,13). So, true, we can only know of Divine things from the Spirit. That is, through the words which the Spirit teaches in the pages of our Bibles. What we must do therefore, rather than to give petition for additional power from the Father, is to attend to that which He has already imparted by the Spirit, and encapsulated within the word. We must shun the words which man's wisdom teaches, and give ear to the oracles of God, that showing ourselves “workmen” who need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of Truth, we might be given a spirit-nature, being heirs of the promises contained within that word.

There are those who glibly dismiss the above as “Word-Only Extremism”. That scoff at the idea that in these evil days of darkness when the love of many waxes cold, and iniquity abounds, that the only source of help we have been granted is words in a printed book. But such remarks merely serve to demonstrate the point made earlier, that natural men receive not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto them (1 Cor 2:14). Rather than to address the points of Scripture raised, instead an attempt is made to discredit particular teachings by bestowing inaccurate and derogatory labels upon them.

MINISTERING SPIRITS

The Scriptures do not teach that the only source of help provided to those who would be heirs of the kingdom is the Word, powerful though that be. Indeed, such a dogma, were it to exist, ought to be resisted with equal force as

belief in possession of a Divine Power that the Father has, in fact, not granted, for it would be to deny another vital source of aid to the believer, namely the work of the angels. It is a source of much comfort and consolation to the faithful that as they walk on their weary journey through the wilderness of life towards the city that hath foundations, they are not alone. They have Divine Ministers to attend to their needs, for concerning the immortal messengers of Yahweh, it is written, "are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb 1:14). Indeed, the Master himself referred to the presence of these, as a reason not to speak evil of his little ones: "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of the Father which is in heaven" (Mat 18:10).

The patriarch Jacob, father of the 12 tribes recognised the help granted to him by the angelic hands moving in the circumstances of his life. Accordingly, he bestowed a blessing upon Joseph's sons: "Elohim, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the Elohim which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads ..." (Gen 48:15,16).

Here is a most striking example of a man who recognised the hand of Yahweh in his life. But notice, rather than to speak of spirit-bestowals giving him understanding to direct his ways away from, and out of evil, he spoke of the direct intervention of the angel, the ministering Spirit sent forth to minister to him. It may be argued that our circumstance differs from his, in that men

today do not personally see their divine ministers. But though they go unseen, the reality of their presence and actions is readily seen by those who possess an eye of faith.

There are those, like Elishah's servant who will not believe until they see, and who are therefore fearful at the troubles which might come. Others, however, like Elijah go forward in faith, trusting that what Yahweh has promised, he will give - trusting in the promised angelic ministrations. "Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them" (2 Kings 6:18), is the spirit of those who trust in the deliverance of Yahweh. "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom 8:31).

True it is, that times of difficulty, tribulation and evil come upon the Sons of Yahweh, for such are brought upon them for the purposes of their chastisement and refinement (Heb 12:5-7). As it is written "many are the afflictions of the righteous ..." (Ps 34:19).

It is through much tribulation that the Sons of Yahweh shall enter the kingdom, for as gold is tried in the fire, even so their faith must be tried and purified by trial (Acts 14:22; 1Pet 1:7). But they are not alone in their trials, for the Psalmist continues " ... but Yahweh delivereth them out of them all". But how? By imparting His Spirit that they may be in some way strengthened, and helped by it's influence? By no means; Yahweh knows how to deliver them that trust in Him (2 Pet 2:9), and this same Psalm reveals how He is pleased to do such a thing, in response to their cries:

"This poor man cried, and Yahweh heard him, and saved him

out of all his troubles. The angel of Yahweh encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them” (Ps 34:6,7).

That is where David’s trust was, as with Jacob. Not in an unknown and unknowable mysterious influence, but in the reality of angelic activity. He trusted in Yahweh, he cried unto Yahweh, and Yahweh saved him out of his troubles.

DELIVERANCE FROM EVIL

There is another principle we would do well to note, from Psalm 34. Notice, the angel did not prevent evil from coming. There are those who suppose that if believers have angelic ministers with the power of the Almighty watching over them for their good, that therefore no evil should come. We have even heard it taught that the fact of brethren in many cases enduring many hardships is evidence that it is a mistake to assume the angels are with us. However, again, such reveals a lack of familiarity with what Yahweh has promised; as we have already seen there is no promise that tribulation will not come; on the contrary, if we do not experience such, the Scriptures declare that we are illegitimate, “and not sons” (Heb 12:8). However, the promise is that when troublesome times are upon us, there will also be deliverance:

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

And this, as seen in the examples of David and Jacob, is work which falls within the scope of angelic ministration.

By way of conclusion then, when consulting the Word of the Most High, we do not find prayers for Holy Spirit help and guidance, or exhortations for believers to offer such prayers. Literally all of the passages employed to suggest this (we have considered but one in this section) do so by inference only. But by contrast, we have shown that the Word itself is a living power, able to impart wisdom from above, able to draw the hearer to the Christ, and make him “wise unto salvation”. And deliverance from evil is not from some unknown and unknowable, undefined and indefinable influence imparting an armchair injection of ‘strength,’ but is via angelic ministration.

This highlights the vital importance of giving heed to the power Yahweh has given unto us via the Word. Should a man fail to heed it, believing in some other source of power that is not given, for it is not promised, he will not be found labouring in the Word and in the Doctrine to build for himself a foundation that can withstand the stormy blasts of life’s turbulent periods. Not heeding the exhortation given, he will not know enough of the word to perform it, and act upon the wisdom of its ways. Being founded upon the uncertainty of sandy foundations instead of the Rock of the word, his house will not stand: “and great will be the fall of it”.

Chris Maddocks