

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

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN WAYMARK

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

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

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*"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)*

THE LIGHT OF THE WORD

Psalms 19 describes the Millennial Heavens, and the Sun which will pertain to that age:

“The heavens declare the glory of *Elohim*; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork ... in them hath he set a tabernacle for the Sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof” (Psa. 19:1-6).

In these words, we have a picture of “The Sun of Righteousness” (Mal. 4:2) arising, with its healing beams bathing the earth with the warmth and splendour of the Glory of Yahweh. As every work and shadow of darkness is dispelled before the shining brightness of the morning Sun, nothing is hid from the heat thereof, and all the earth shall rejoice under the dawning of a New Age.

A feature of Psalm 19 which leaves some commentators puzzled, is that immediately following this description of the Sun, there is a description of the Word of Yahweh:

“The law of Yahweh is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of Yahweh is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of Yahweh are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of Yahweh is pure, enlightening the eyes” (Psa. 19:7-8)

The “problem” is that on the surface, this second part of the Psalm appears to have no connection with the first - with a seemingly different subject being spoken of. Some even claim that the 2 sections were written by different people, and at different times. But the matter becomes resolved, when we appreciate that a comparison is being made. Just as the Sun illuminates the earth, even so the Word “enlightens the eyes”. The common theme is that of *enlightenment*: and the shining splendour of the Millennial Sun of Righteousness is, in fact, the spreading of the Light of the Word, illuminating all the earth with the Glory of Yahweh (cp. 2 Cor. 4:4-6).

The Hebrew Alphabet (the language in which most of the Old Testament was written) reads from right to left. Only by reading it “backwards” to the western style, can it be understood. And the observation has been made, that this is the same direction that the Sun appears to take - East to West - as all of the earth sees its shining. It is also the direction that the Gospel message was spread, hence the glorified, Immortal rulers of the Age to Come are described as: “the kings of the Sun’s rising” (Rev. 16:12).

The “Sun” of the Age to Come is, of course, our Master Jesus Christ, and those with him who “shine forth as the Sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Mat. 13:43). The Master is “the Word made Flesh”, and therefore the brightness that shall radiate from the Millennial Sun is the enlightenment of The Word. And interestingly, the record informs us that when He comes, the direction He shall take, is Westward from the East (Eze. 43:2)! So it is that there is perfect harmony in the symbols used to describe the appearing of our Master.

The BASF—Its Importance and Teaching

Clause XXVI

“That the kingdom of God, thus constituted, will continue a thousand years, during which sin and death will continue among the earth’s subject inhabitants, though in a much milder degree than now.— Rev. 20:4-9; 11:15; Isa. 65:20; Eze. 37:22,25; 1 Cor. 15:24-28

As we saw in our last issue, Clause XXV considers the rewarding of men according to their deeds, and the elevation of the faithful to being immortal co-heirs and administrators over the coming kingdom with their Messiah. This next clause deals with the length of the Kingdom “thus constituted”, and the conditions under which mortals shall dwell there.

The testimony of the Apocalypse concerning the Redeemed, is that “they lived and reigned with Christ *a thousand years*” (Rev. 20:4). This defines the duration of the Kingdom, thus arranged with the Saints reigning as kings and priests, as being precisely one millennia. However, it must be borne in mind that the kingdom itself shall continue much longer than this, for it was promised to Mary concerning her son: “he shall reign over the house of Jacob *for ever*; and *of his kingdom there shall be no end*” (Luke 1:33). At the end of the thousand year reign of Christ and his saints, the kingdom shall not come to an end, but will change in it’s form and constitution. Paul hints at some of those changes, saying that:

“then cometh the end, when he shall have *delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father*; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power ... and when all things are subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself

be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.” (1 Cor. 15:24-28).

At the end of the thousand years then, the kingdom will be “delivered up” to the Father, with the Son himself becoming a subject - the end result being that “God may be all in all,” or that all of the glory of God (his attributes) shall fill all of the earth (in the glorified, immortal inhabitants thereof). Even so it is written: “all the earth shall be filled with the glory of Yahweh (Num. 14:21). The form, or constitution of the kingdom shall change - for there will be no more mortal population to be ruled over and interceded for after the Millennium - but the kingdom itself shall remain for ever. The BASF is careful in it’s wording, saying that the duration of the kingdom “thus constituted”, that is, with Christ and his brethren reigning over it shall end after one millennia—but as we have shown, the kingdom itself shall continue “without end”.

It has been truly said that the Millennial Kingdom Age is to be a transitional period between the Flesh and the Spirit. Prior to Messiah’s Return, the Flesh rules supreme in the earth. After the Millennium, the Spirit fills the entire globe. The Millennium is therefore the time in between, with the Flesh being subjugated to the Laws that Christ will institute as the basis, or Constitution of the new Age. During

that time, as the BASF states, sin and death will continue, albeit to “a milder degree than now”.

There is some indication of this in the words of Isaiah, speaking of affairs in Jerusalem during Messiah’s reign:

“ ... I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. *There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed ...* ” (Isa. 65:19-21).

Whilst these words are particularly speaking of affairs in Jerusalem, being that this city will become the capital city of the world from whence shall go forth Laws, Commandments and Blessings, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the subject-nations shall also experience these things. One who dies aged an hundred will be considered as a child, indicating that longevity of life not dissimilar to the early history of mankind (as described in the book of Genesis) will become the norm. But although men and women will become subject to the laws of the kingdom, sin will still continue, even if suppressed. Psalm 72, a wonderful word-picture of that age describes how:

“He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor ... he shall spare the poor and needy, and

shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight ...” (Psa. 72:4, 13-14).

According to this testimony therefore, there will be “poor” and “needy” who need to be delivered from oppression. And Messiah shall be their deliverer, “breaking in pieces” the oppressor, ensuring that true justice shall prevail over the earth. Again, Isaiah 11 describes how that “with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked” (Isa. 11:4). Again, we see that there will be the “poor”, and the “wicked” extant in the earth, but with the wicked being judged in righteousness. Even so, although Messiah’s Rule shall extend globally, there will be a need for the cause of the poor and the needy to be upheld, that oppression will cease, and the wicked destroyed.

In the language of the Apocalypse, the coming Reign of Messiah shall see the devil (sin incarnate) being “bound” for a thousand years (Rev. 20:2). The binding here referred to in symbol, finds it’s literal counterpart in the “bands,” or constraints of the Laws that shall go forth out of Jerusalem - enforced by Omnipotent Power (cp Psa. 2:3). Sin shall be suppressed, but will not be entirely absent in the Kingdom, as human nature remains inherently evil (Rom. 7:17). But after the thousand years, both sin and death shall be entirely removed, as all rebellion shall be destroyed by the devouring fire of Yahweh’s Glory (Rev. 20:9).

Chris Maddocks

Living A Life In Christ

So, we think we've done it. We believe in the Word of God. We acknowledge that God is the Almighty Creator. We believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, who was a human being just like us, yet who remained totally sinless. We believe that Jesus is now raised from the dead, and at the right hand of God. We read the Bible, and believe the Gospel message. We pray and talk to God daily, about everything. We've even made the decision and been baptised into the saving name of Jesus Christ. Well, that's it then!

Actually it's not! This essay would be the shortest one I've ever done if that were the case! Baptism can be described in two ways - the end of a journey, and the beginning of a journey. Both of these descriptions are correct. Acts 2:37-47 recognises this journey - I'll come back to this shortly. The journey can either be pictured as a road that we travel down, long and winding, with its many obstacles along the way, or as a ladder. We start at the bottom of the ladder and work our way to the top. This journey is talked about as a road in Matthew 7:14. Here it says, "But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it".

THE JOURNEY OF LIFE

In Acts 2:37-47 we are talked though the journey. In these verses we can pick out the "rungs on the ladder". The first step of the journey comes in the first verse of this passage. The first thing we must do when we set off on our journey is to realise that we sin. This is talked about in verse 37, "when the people heard this, they were cut to

the heart". This reflects their belief in Jesus and their regret over their former rejection of him. Unless we realise our sinfulness, we cannot progress to the next stage of our journey.

The second stage is mentioned in the very same verse in Acts 2, "... , what shall we do?" This is the question we need to ask ourselves too. We have to acknowledge that we sin. However this alone is no good. By asking, "What do I do?" we show that we care and want to change our ways. Wanting to change, and actually changing are two different things. We cannot change unless we truly want to. So this stage is important!

And so we move onto the third stage of our journey. This comes in Acts 2:38: "... Repent ..." .We must turn ourselves around. So, by this stage we have realised our sinfulness, asked what we should do next, and turned our lives around. In the same verse we are told, "be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ ...". This is stage four. Being baptised seals the decision. It ends the first leg of our journey. Unless we are baptised, we cannot move on to the second leg of our journey, and stage five.

Stage five is also in verse 38 of Acts 2, "... for the forgiveness of your sins". By being baptised, we are no longer sinners in God's eyes. We are forgiven. Baptism associating us with the death of Christ means that it is only through baptism that we can have access to forgiveness. Colossians 2:12-13 says, "having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who

raised him from the dead. When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins”.

So, onto stage six, which is also mentioned in Acts 2:38: ”And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”. This is the gift of the power of God; the gift of eternal life. Verse 39 tells us that “the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off - for all whom the Lord our God will call”. The promise talked about here is the promise of Abraham, which was repeated to David. The following five points can be either counted separately, or grouped together. The remaining verses, verses 40-47, talk about all five points. Verse 42 covers three of the five points. Here we are told, “They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer”. So, three more of the points are fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer. Another of the five points is mentioned in verse 42. The New International Version says, “They devoted themselves”. To me, this point is made stronger by the King James Version, “And they continued steadfastly”. It is clear that we must continue doing these things; not just half-heartedly, but *steadfastly*.

As well as continuing steadfastly and wholeheartedly in fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers, we must also continue in the same way loving and sharing with one another. Verses 44-45 of Acts 2 make this quite clear - “All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need”. The

for others. This is the top rung on our ladder; the second half of our journey. So by looking at it this way, baptism can be seen as the end of a journey. However, baptism is also, and perhaps more importantly, the beginning of a journey. It's the start of a lifelong journey; a journey where our destination is the Kingdom of God; a journey where we can wholeheartedly follow Jesus, and give God the glorification He deserves. This is the journey that we embark on when we are baptised into the saving name of Jesus Christ.

AFTER BAPTISM

Once we've been baptised, we must understand that there are a number of responsibilities that we must take hold of. By being baptised, we have an assured hope of eternal life in God's Kingdom. We are told in Romans 6:23, “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”. The more we believe and appreciate the certainty of this hope, the clearer it becomes that there are certain responsibilities upon us. These responsibilities revolve around living a life like Jesus. As someone who is baptised, we must strive to be like Jesus.

In Romans 6:6 Paul tells us, “For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin”. After baptism we are committed to a life of constantly crucifying sin. Unless we are willing to try and do this, baptism is meaningless. In baptism we die to the old, natural way of life, and figuratively are raised with Christ. After baptism, we commit ourselves to a life of seeing things from God's

perspective, thinking of spiritual things; exchanging the ambition of the things of the flesh for an ambition to overcome these tendencies, and thereby to enter God's Kingdom.

There are a number of things, which we know, after baptism, we should or should not do. These are things such as not getting involved in politics or jobs that involve the use of force or passing judgement on others, and not letting our desire for worldly pleasures overtake our desire for God. The list goes on. And so in this essay I have decided to focus on the practical life of someone who is baptised. I feel that this is important. As we are told in James 2:26, "faith without works is dead". It is so much easier to say we believe and have faith in something, but what do we actually do about it? In this essay I hope to focus on fellowship, Bible study, prayer, preaching, and Ecclesial life. Although, certain other aspects may also creep in!

BIBLE STUDY

I will go through these in no particular order, and so shall begin with Bible study. This is important both before and after baptism. Our Bible study must not stop when we are baptised. If we do not continue with our Bible study, then how can we increase in faith and knowledge? We can't! We will never develop and grow as God's children. Throughout our lives we must keep close to God's Word through regular Bible reading and study.

A careful and thoughtful study of the Word of God results in us realising the need for baptism, and making that great decision. This process of letting the Bible influence our actions and direct our lives should continue after

baptism. As we have established, baptism is the first step in a lifelong journey of obedience to God. After baptism we do face a danger. The danger of familiarity of the Bible; of the basic Gospel teachings. This can lead us to a position where the Word no longer influences us; no longer has an impact on us and our lives.

The Word of God should be our daily food. Job 23:12 tells us, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food". It is clear from reading this that Job's dependence on, and his natural desire for the Word of God was even greater than his instinctive need for physical food. This shows how important the Word of God should be to us. Therefore, making time daily for regular Bible reading and study is vital.

By reading and carefully studying God's Word daily, it becomes less of an academic exercise and more a heartfelt response to the message. We come to understand the message with greater knowledge. We can appreciate the personal reality of the message of the Bible doctrines. It is such a great feeling to be able to read a basic Bible doctrine, and suddenly discover it has a personal reality for us, as individuals, in different circumstances.

So, as far as Bible study goes, it really is quite simple. The more often we closely study the Word of God, the more we will get out of it, and the more we will give to God. The greater love of righteousness we will have; a true desire to bring our lives under God's control. 2 Timothy 3:7 says, "... never able to come to the knowledge of the truth". If we have a true desire for the Gospel, we will come to this knowledge. We will obey God, who we

are told in 1 Timothy 2:4 “ ... wants all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth”. If we take the time to carefully study the Word of God, we will develop our knowledge of the truth, and therefore take a step towards pleasing and obeying our mighty Creator.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER

In some of the previous things I have written, I have focused a lot on the aspect of prayer. As this is the case, I will not say too much about it here! Prayer is a very important practice we carry out before baptism, and must continue to do so after baptism. We should want to pray to God - at least once a day, if not more. We have so much to say to God each day. We need to pray in adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. If we have difficulty structuring our prayers, there are many templates for us in the Bible - the prayers of Jesus, and the Psalms for example.

We have so much to thank God for in our prayers. We must thank Him for all of creation for a start! Paul tells us in Ephesians 5:20 we must be “always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”. What we tend to forget to thank God for though is the bad times. We're all too quick to thank God in the good times; when we're in good health; when we get the grades at school, the good job promotion etc. But it suddenly becomes so much harder to thank God when these things don't happen. When we miss out on the job promotion or the grades; when our health is not so good.

Instead of thanking God, we turn against Him in a way, and we blame

Him. We question, “Why is this happening to me?” When what we should be saying is, “Thank you God for letting this happen to me. I know it happened for a reason. Please help me to search and to understand why this had to happen to me. Let me know that I am not alone through this hard time - that you are there to guide me. I pray that I will find the answers I need in your Word, that you will help me to stay strong, and that I will get through this and be a stronger person because of this”. How many times do we say that instead of questioning?

It is important that we show adoration to God in our prayers. He has given us so much, and continues to do so daily. As we thank Him for this, we should acknowledge His Almighty greatness. Someone as great as God deserves to have that greatness praised. God adores us; He loves us so much. He loved us initially so that we might love Him. So in our prayers we should remember to show adoration to the Almighty Creator, for without Him we would not be here. We would do good to remember that He can withdraw His breath from us at any time, so for each second more that He gives us, we should be so thankful and show Him how much we love Him and adore His great name.

CONFESSION

It is also important that we include confession in our prayers. Confession is “to state openly that you have done something wrong or have a weakness; to admit”. Unless we confess we cannot repent; we cannot turn around, away from our sins. By confessing our - wrongdoings we are saying, “Yes God I know I've done wrong”. We can then ask for forgiveness for these sins.

God knows we do wrong, but by confessing to Him, we show that we care and want to change our ways. In Psalm 38:18, David gives us a way of starting our confessions. He says, "I confess my iniquity; I am troubled by my sin". If we truly mean this, if we are truly sorry for our sins, then we should pray about it to God.

Supplication is "to ask earnestly and humbly of or for". Using supplication in our prayers is important. However it is important that this does not take priority, and our prayers don't turn into a "shopping list" of our needs or wants to God. We do well to remember that God provides us with all we need. We may ask for forgiveness, His guidance, help and strength whilst we are going through a particularly hard time. However it is not appropriate to ask "Please God let me have that top I saw today"! By reading God's Word regularly and carefully studying it, we learn what we should and shouldn't pray for. We must remember that everything is, of course, subject to the Will of God.

If our prayers are according to God's Will, we can be sure that they will be heard and responded to. 1 John 5:14-15 tells us, "This is the confidence we have in approaching God; that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us - whatever we ask - we know that we have what we asked of him". We can know God's Will through our study of His Word. Therefore our Bible study should teach us how to pray, and what to pray for. This should make our prayers powerful.

Just placing our problems before God in prayer should give a great sense of peace. Philippians 4:6-7 says, "Do not

be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus". The "peace of God" is a peaceful state of those whose sins are forgiven. It is the tranquillity that comes when we commit all our cares to God in prayer and worry about them no more, knowing they are in God's capable hands.

PREACHING

Now I shall move onto preaching. One of the greatest dangers which arises from knowing God is to become spiritually selfish. We can become so satisfied with our own relationship with God; and so absorbed in our personal Bible study, that we can neglect to share these things with others. We don't share these feelings with our fellow-believers, or with the world around us.

We should seek to share our knowledge of the Truth with all those we come in contact with. We should try turning conversations round to spiritual things, and discussing doctrine with members of other churches. This helps to build us and strengthen us spiritually. We should always be looking for ways we can let the light shine into the lives of others. The Word of God is likened to a light or lamp burning in the darkness. Psalm 119:105 says, "Your word is a light to my feet and a light for my path". Without the light of the Word, we would be in darkness. Jesus tells us in John 8:12, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life". As we are baptised, we now have

the “light of life”. We reflect the light that comes from Jesus.

All the things I have already mentioned in this essay - Bible study, prayer, and preaching - focus on our personal spiritual responsibilities. However, we also have a duty to meet together with others who share our hope. This should be something that we naturally desire to do. Our journey to the Kingdom is the same as any other journey we embark on. The journey is not easy. It is only natural that we should want to make contact with our fellow-travellers. We will want to ask for “directions” - help and guidance along the way. For this, we need the assistance of those who also share our hope.

To overcome the many trials which we face, we need to fellowship with those who are in the same position. Hebrews 10:25 tells us, “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching”. We should make every effort to make contact with each other through Bible study and preaching activities.

BEING CALLED OUT

We have each individually been “called out” of the world to the great hope of the Kingdom. The Greek word which is translated “*church*” in the Bible is “*ecclesia*”. This means “an assembly of called out ones” or believers. The “*church*” refers to a group of believers, rather than the physical building in which they meet. The purpose of an *ecclesia* is to build up its members through Bible study, and also to collectively witness to the world by letting their light shine through preaching.

The *ecclesia* is part of the family of God. The teaching which is given in the *ecclesia* should obviously be based upon the Word of God. The teaching should help to strengthen us and make us think about our faith and beliefs on a deeper level. Teaching from the Bible is another form of Bible study; another way that we can praise and glorify God.

FELLOWSHIP

I shall now move onto the aspect of fellowship. What is fellowship? Fellowship describes the state of having something in common. We have fellowship with God, and Jesus. 1 John 1:3 tells us this, “... And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ”. Acts 2:42-47 talks about the fellowship that we have with other believers. However we only have the fellowship with them, due to our fellowship with God. In 1 John 1:7 we are told, “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin”.

Because we know and practise God’s ways, we have fellowship with Him and with all others who are doing the same through being “in Christ”. Hebrews 13:16 reminds us “to do good and to communicate ...”. Philippians 1:5 speaks of our “fellowship in the Gospel”. Therefore it is quite clear that the basis of our fellowship is the doctrines of the Gospel. As we have already established from reading 1 John 1:2-3, the fellowship is based around a common understanding of the Gospel, and that this brings us into fellowship with other true believers, and also with God and Jesus on a personal level. So, it stands to reason that the more we apply the Gospel to

our lives, and the deeper we progress in our understanding of God's Word, the deeper our fellowship will be with God and Christ.

It is clear that there can be no halfway position in our relationship with God. We are either in Christ by baptism into him, or we're not! We are either in the light by reason of our grasp of true doctrine and practical obedience in it, or in darkness. We cannot have a foot in both camps. We can't be both sides of the fence.

Our knowledge of this gives us a responsibility towards God. We don't now go about our daily lives like the average man of the world. God is intensely watching for our response. People can only help us so much to make the right decision. Ultimately our salvation depends upon our own freewill decision to grasp hold of the great hope, which is offered to us through the waters of baptism.

No-one ever said that living a life in Christ would be easy.² Timothy 3:12 tells us, "... everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted". Being baptised does not ensure that we live a perfect, blemish free life, with no problems. It will still

be hard but the "reward" of the gift of God is so great, it's worth it! We now have God on our side and that's where He'll always be - at our side. He knows we need Him all the time. We are told in Joshua 1:5, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you". "If God is for us, who can be against us?" says Romans 8:31.

So, although the journey "in Christ" is an uphill struggle, and sometimes all we want to do is give up, we mustn't. We must look past our problems and look towards God's Kingdom. For as 2 Corinthians 4:17 says, "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all". Seen in the perspective of eternity, our difficulties, whatever they may be, diminish in importance. In comparison, the eternal glory is far greater than all the suffering we may face in this life. We should journey through our life in Christ knowing that God is with us every step of the way. We have the hope of the coming Kingdom of God. May God bless our walk to the Kingdom.

Laura Burdekin

OUR WALK

"Let not our faith die. The grimy and oppressive surroundings of the present dispensation, though they seem so permanent, are as transient as the disturbed dreams of the night. The hour will come when they will have disappeared from our view, and when nothing will be visible on earth but the blessedness in Abraham and his seed - long promised and come at last"

Robert Roberts

Sun, Moon and Stars in Scripture

In Joel 1:10, describing the Day of Yahweh, it is written: “The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: *the Sun and the Moon and the Stars* shall withdraw their shining” (2:10). The purpose of this study is to look at what is represented by the Sun, Moon and Stars in Scripture, to see what is being spoken of in Joel.

The first occasion in Scripture where the Sun, Moon and Stars come together is in Genesis 27:9, where we read of Joseph’s second dream: “And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me”. Then we read of Jacob’s reaction: “his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream, that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and the mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?”

The interpretation of the dream is clear. The Sun, Moon and Stars represented the different elements which existed within the family of Israel. Israel himself, who “observed the saying” recognized this, perceiving that he was represented by the Sun, his dead wife, Joseph’s mother, the Moon, and Joseph’s brethren by the Stars. These were portrayed as making “obeisance” to Joseph, typifying the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Sun, we are told, was created to “rule the day” (Gen. 1:16, Psa. 136:8). In 2 Samuel 23:3, David as he was being “moved” by the Spirit said: “The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds” (contrast Joel 2:2).

Ultimately, Yahweh is the Supreme Ruler, who is Just, and so we are told in Psalm 84:11: “Yahweh Elohim is a sun and a shield: Yahweh will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly”. But, the Lord Jesus Christ, the perfect manifestation of Yahweh, is just, and will rule the earth in righteousness during the Millennium. Thus in Revelation 1:16, his “countenance” is described as “the sun” which “shineth in his strength”, and he is spoken of in Malachi 4:2 as being the “sun of righteousness”, who shall arise “with healing in his beams” to those who fear the Name of Yahweh. And so, Jacob, the Father and Husband, the Sun, stood for rulership, “One who ruleth well his own house” (1Tim. 3:4).

In the dream, Jacob’s Wife, Joseph’s mother is symbolized by the Moon, which is said to have been created to “rule the night” (Gen. 1:16) in the absence of the Sun. In the natural order of things, the Moon does this by reflecting the glory, the light of the Sun. This is so with the spiritual. The ecclesia of Christ, the future

bride of the Sun of Righteousness, should reflect the glory of God manifested in his son. They are to preach the Gospel, and reflect the glory of the sun during the night, allowing their borrowed light to shine forth, until the morning, when the Sun shall arise.

It is then that the faithful will be “healed”, and be made partakers of divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). Having been given immortality, the bride, which is “fair as the moon” shall be “clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners” (Song. 6:10). Also, “the Light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that Yahweh bindeth up the breach of His people, and healeth the stroke of their wound” (Isa. 30:26).

The Lord Jesus Christ tells us that “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Mat. 13:43). Notice here there is a plurality of righteous, (indicated by “*their* father”) but only one sun. Those individuals who have been given “the morning star”, being united with the “star of Jacob” (Num. 24:17) which will then go forth and fight, being “terrible as an army”, as Yahweh Tzvaoth goes forth and avenges His people Israel.

In the natural order of things, the Sun is a star. In Joseph's dream, Joseph, who typifies the Lord Jesus, sees his brethren as stars. In Daniel 12, we are told that the brethren in Christ who “turn many to righteousness” shall shine “as the stars for ever and ever”. Thus, in the spiritual order of things, the “Sun” being referred to by the Lord Jesus is not one star, but an conglomeration of “stars” who will shine in unity “for ever and ever”.

NATIONAL SYMBOLS

These symbols, as used in Genesis 37 are applied to Jacob's family. And when his family had grown into a nation, the “Sun”, “Moon”, and “Stars” remained. Yahweh had promised Abraham that He would “multiply his seed as the stars of the heaven” (Gen 22:17, 26:4). Thus each individual Israelite was a “star”, as Moses told the people (Deut 10:22, 26:4). But yet it is only “Israelites indeed”, “they which are of faith”, the spiritual seed of Abraham who will shine as the stars for ever in the kingdom. Those Israelites who have forsaken the Truth are but “wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever” (Jude 13).

Jeremiah tells us of Jerusalem: “She that hath borne seven languisheth: she hath given up the spirit; her sun has gone down while it is yet day ...” (Jer 15:9). Joel also speaks of the elements within the Israelitish Heavens: “The sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining” (Joel 2:10). Thus, the Rulership, and Religious system were to be darkened under the wrath of Yahweh.

Babylon was destroyed because its king said in his heart “I will exalt my throne above the stars of God ... I will ascend above the heights of the

clouds; I will be like the Most High” (Is 14:13-4). But yet Cyrus, of whom Yahweh said “He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure”, was to say to Jerusalem; “thou shalt be built, and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid” (Is 44:28, 2Chron 36:23), and so his rulership was allowed to prosper, as he allowed the Moon and Stars of the Israelitish heavens to shine.

But our Lord Jesus Christ also spoke of a time when “the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken” (Mk. 13:24-25). Thus, not only would the Sun be affected, but also the Moon and Stars of the Israelitish heavens: the religious system which by now had become corrupted, would also suffer under the judgments of Yahweh through the Roman army who were to destroy the temple that “there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down” (Mat. 24:2). During this time the Jewish political heavens were to “pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat” (2 Pet. 3:10), as the Mosaic system of worship was ended, being replaced by what it typified - the New Covenant through Christ Jesus.

It is not only the Israelitish heavens which are said to contain a Sun, Moon, and Stars. Empires which had dominion over Israel are also said to possess them. Speaking of Yahweh's overthrow of Babylon, Isaiah wrote: “For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine” (Isa. 13:10). Hence, the Babylonian political heavens were to suffer under the judgments of Yahweh. Babylon was ruling over Israel, and attempted to suppress the worship of Yahweh, forcing the Jews to worship Idols (Dan. 3:6), thus exalting itself over the stars of God.

The Roman heavens are also portrayed as having a Sun, Moon and Stars: “and there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars” (Rev. 12:1). This power, we are told, “waxed great against the host of the (Israelitish) heaven and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them ... by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down” (Dan. 8:10-11). Thus the Mosaic system of worship in Israel was abolished. The Israelitish heavens were replaced by the roman heavens, and a false system of worship was established, based upon the Babylonian superstitions of old.

In Joel 3:15, we are told that at the time of the end, the Jewish heavens will again suffer: “The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining”. What we are currently witnessing in Israel is the revival of the political heavens. Once again they have a Sun, Moon and Stars, a system of rulership and religion, but yet they are in disobedience to Yahweh. They do not accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their Messiah, and trust in their own military might, rather than the power of God. And so Yahweh will once again punish Israel, by “bringing forth” the Gogian army against them, taking half the city

captive (Zech. 14:2).

But yet Joel tells us that "Yahweh will be the hope of His people, and the strength of the children of Israel". Israel, through the work of Elijah (Mal 4:5), will come to repentance, and look upon the Lord Jesus, whom they pierced, and mourn (Zech. 12:10). They will recognize Jesus as the Messiah, and turn to Yahweh, who shall "go forth and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle", and restore the Kingdom to Israel: "Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for Yahweh shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended" (Is 60:20). Then, the Sun, Moon and Stars of all Israel, including the family circle of Genesis 37 will worship the Greater Joseph, as the World is brought under subjection under his feet.

Chris Maddocks

Correspondence

The Nature of Christ

Dear Chris,

After looking at your web page I have some questions for you:

According to Christadelphian theology, Jesus had a sinful, fallen nature.

Deut. 17:1 says, "You shall not sacrifice to the Lord your God an ox or a sheep which has a blemish or any defect, for that is a detestable thing to the Lord your God," (NASB, See also Ezekiel 43:22-23, 25; 45:18, 23). Of course, Jesus is not an animal. The point is that the sacrifice to a holy God must have no blemish or defect.

"defect" in Hebrew is *ra*. In this verse, it is translated as "evilmfavouredness" in the KJV, as "defect" in the RSV and NKJV, and as "flaw" in the NIV.

Question: If Jesus had a sinful, fallen nature, then isn't that a defect?

Question: If Jesus' sinful nature is not a defect, then what would you call it?

Question: If Jesus sinful nature is a defect, then doesn't that mean His sacrifice is insufficient?

Question: If you state that being obedient is what makes a person "unblemished," then why are we damned by nature (Eph. 2:3) if it is only our sinful deeds that condemn us?

Darrel York

Reply:-

Dear Darrel,

I'm not sure exactly which of our web pages you were looking at, but respond to your remarks and questions as follows:

“According to Christadelphian theology, Jesus had a sinful, fallen nature”

There is no such thing as “Christadelphian theology”. There is, however Bible teaching which Christadelphians believe and teach. The Bible teaches concerning Christ that “he himself likewise took part of the same” flesh and blood (nature) as his brethren (Heb. 2:14). Therefore, if one accept that their nature is “sinful” and “fallen” (whatever that means), then one must also accept that so was his.

If Jesus had a sinful, fallen nature, then isn't that a defect?

Scripture does not use the word “defect” in relation to Christ. However, it does teach (see above) that Christ was physically identical to his brethren. That means he had to be sent in “the likeness of sinful flesh” (Romans 8:3). He was also under the dominion of death (Romans 6:9). These were aspects of his nature which he inherited by being “made of a woman” (Galatians 4:4), but did not constitute any deficiency for which he was accountable.

You need to define precisely what you mean in your use of the word “defect”. The dictionary definition is: “1. *lack of something essential; imperfection.* 2. *A shortcoming or failing,*” which suggests a moral deficiency. If you mean this, then, No, there was no moral shortcoming in Christ. However, there was something in his nature which he had to “condemn” and “destroy”, called “sin in the flesh” (Romans 8:3, cp Romans 7:17). Therefore, if you mean a “defect” in the sense of a physical flaw, or imperfection which had to be overcome, then Yes, Scripture is clear that he did inherit this from Adam. Not only so, but he had to be a partaker of such a nature, in order to overcome its resident law, or imperfect principle, styled “the law of sin”, or the “*diabolos*” (Hebrews 2:14), and bring it to the grave.

If Jesus' sinful nature is not a defect, then what would you call it?

Again, you must define precisely in ~~what~~ sense you are using the word “nature”. If you use it in the sense of embracing all the aspects, attributes and characteristics of a man, then this is a different sense to using it solely in relation

to his physical make-up. Physically, he partook of the same flesh of sin as his brethren (see above), but morally, he was absolutely without any defect whatsoever. If you refer solely to his physical constitution, then see above.

If Jesus' sinful nature is a defect, then doesn't that mean His sacrifice is insufficient?

Again, you must define in what sense you are using the word "defect". According to Scripture, Christ had to partake of the same "flesh and blood" nature in order to "destroy" it's resident principle of *the Diabolos*, or Devil, through death (Hebrews 2:14). If he did not partake of that nature, he would not have been able to overcome the Law of Sin, as it would not have existed in him, for him to be able to overcome it. So, no, the fact of Christ himself also likewise partaking of the same nature as his brethren does not render his sacrifice as being "insufficient", rather it is part of it's very virtue.

If you state that being obedient is what makes a person "unblemished," then why are we damned by nature (Eph. 2:3) if it is only our sinful deeds that condemn us?

There are 3 elements to this question: 1) what we state, 2) what does Ephesians 2:3 teach, 3) what condemns us:

- 1) We do **not** state that rendering perfect obedience is what makes a person "unblemished". Believers in Christ, who have previously been disobedient, having sown to the flesh in making provision for the lusts thereof, are themselves considered as "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing ... holy and **without blemish**" (Ephesians 5:27). This is not through works of absolute obedience (Ephesians 2:8), but "through faith" in the revealed Gospel. Scripturally therefore, faith, and a cleansing by the word (see context of Ephesians 5:27) **not** lack of sin, renders one "without blemish".
- 2) Eph. 2:3 does **not** teach that we are "damned by nature". It rather states that "we all ... were by nature the children of wrath ...". We are told that the Greek for "nature" here carries the sense of "from birth". So, Ephesians 2:3 conveys the same principle as that established by Psalm 58:3: "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies" – a very different concept than what you suggest.
- 3) Having said that, there are other Scriptures which teach that we all inherit a condemnation from Adam, though physical descent from him. See for instance, Romans chapter 5. Through partaking of the physical make-up of

Adam, we inherit “the law of sin and death” as an overriding principle of our being – that is, the principle of the *diabolos*, and the Father’s Judgment upon it. As the Christadelphian Statement of Faith puts it, Adam broke Yahweh’s Law, “*and was adjudged worthy of immortality, and sentenced to return to the ground from whence he was taken – a sentence which defiled and became a physical law of his being, and was transmitted to all his posterity*”. Not that we are individually held accountable in any way for his sin, or for the misfortune of bearing his fallen nature, but rather because the unclean can only bear the unclean (Job 14:4), or in other words, sinful mortal men, can only naturally bring forth sinful mortal men. Lord Jesus Christ also inherited mortality from Adam, for the Scriptures are clear in stating that during his mortal life, he was under the dominion of death (Romans 6:9). However, he declared the Righteousness of his Father in condemning human sin-nature to death, by allowing himself to be taken by wicked hands, and crucified and slain. In allowing himself to be put to death, he brought “the law of sin”, or “*the diabolos*” to the grave with him – that through death he might destroy that which had the power of death.

I hope that this goes some way to addressing your questions,

With kind regards,

Chris Maddocks

ALLEGED BIBLE CONTRADICTIONS (2)

Here, we continue our response to a challenge presented by a contributor to an on-line discussion group, who claimed that the Bible contains contradictions and failed prophecies:

Chariots of iron:

Jer 32:27 "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for me?"

- but -

Judges "1:19 And the LORD was WITH Judah; and he drave out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron."

Reply:

Your claim appears to be (you don't explain it, or any of your arguments) that the failure to drive out chariots of Iron¹⁸ is evidence that some things are too hard for the Lord. However, even on the surface, that would be absurd. If it pleased

the Almighty, he could have caused fire to come down from heaven and consumed them, as in the case of Elijah. He chose not to. The "he" referred to here, is obviously Judah. Yahweh chose not to overthrow the chariots of Iron. Why? See Psalm 106:34-36; Judges 2:1-3

The Righteous:

Rom 3:10 "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one."

- but -

Luke 1:6 "And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless."

Reply:-

Romans 3:10 has a context! You are very conveniently ignoring the context, and presenting bits of Scripture against themselves - not wise! The context is verse 9: "... we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; *as it is written*, "there is none righteous, no, not one ...". So the writer is here citing another portion of Scripture, and applying it to the case in hand. The passage quoted is Psalm 14, which reads: "Yahweh looked down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: *there is none that doeth good, no, not one*". Here, the Psalmist is speaking of a particular category: "*the children of men*," which in Scripture, is a term used for those who follow the carnal mind, as distinct from "the sons of God" (Cp Gen. 6:2) who follow the ways of the Spirit. Of this class then, there were none righteous, no, not one.

Luke 1:6 speaks of some who had kept the law, but yet they were still under sin (see Rom 3:23), otherwise they would have had no need for salvation through Christ. Paul is proving that all have sinned; this couple were "blameless" from the law, yet they were still under sin, and in need of redemption through Christ.

Face to face:

Ex 33:11 "And the LORD spake unto Moses FACE TO FACE, as a man speaketh unto his friend"

- but -

Ex 33:20 "...Thou canst NOT SEE MY FACE: for there shall no man see me, and live."

Reply:-

- 19 -

Ah, that old chestnut! Moses did not see the Almighty Creator literally "face to face". This is indicated by the following New Testament passages: 1 Tim 6:16;

1 Tim. 1:17; Jno. 1:18.

It is clear from Stephen's exposition in Acts 7 that Moses spoke face to face with God's accredited representative, an angel, who bare the name of Yahweh (cp Zech 3:2 with Jude 9) and not to God, himself. Note these verses:

Vs 30 - "there appeared unto him ... an angel"

Vs 35 - "the angel which appeared to him in the bush"

Vs 38 - "The angel which spake to him in the mount Sina

Vs 53 - "who have received the Law by the disposition of angels" (cp Gal 3:19).

(Taken from "Wrested Scriptures" by Ron Abel)

Jealous love:

1John 4:8 "God is love."

1 Cor 13:4 "Love is not jealous."

Exodus 20 "I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God."

Gal 5:19-20 "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are...jealousy..."

Reply:-

Please explain the point you are making here ... the Lord is jealous in the sense that He will tolerate the worship of no other (see context of Ex. 20) whereas we are commanded not to be jealous in the commonly accepted sense ... with 1 Cor 13:4 plainly speaking of the way humans are to love one another ... what's the problem?

Stealing:

"Thou shall not steal" and Lev 19:13 "Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him..."

- BUT -

Ex 3:22 "And ye shall spoil the Egyptians" - defrauded and robbed

Exo 11:2 Speak now in the ears of the people, and let every man BORROW of his neighbour, and every woman of her neighbour, jewels of silver and jewels of gold."

Reply:-

"Spoil" implies victories of war. The word "borrow" in the Hebrew, signifies "to take". They were to take the spoils of war from their enemies which the Lord commanded them to have. Very different from stealing from each other, which is the context of Lev 19:13.

Killing:

Ex 20:13 "Thou shalt not kill"

-BUT-

Exo 32:27.. "Thus saith the LORD God of Israel... slay every man his brother.. his companion.. his neighbour."

Reply:-

So ... Israel lived under a Law which forbade murder, yet permitted death as a punishment for those who disobeyed it. Not unlike many states today. And ... ?!

Returned to Egypt:

Deu 28:15 "But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that ALL these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee:"

Deu 28:68 "And the LORD shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships, by the way whereof I spake unto thee, Thou shalt see it no more again: and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy you."

-BUT-

Last I checked, this is just another failed prophecy. It just never happened even though they were found guilty by other prophets.

Reply:-

You ought not use the term "another" failed prophecy, when you have failed to demonstrate a single one yet. Actually, this is a prophecy of the future. See Isaiah 11:11, where we are told Israel will be brought out of Egypt a second time. Also see vs 15. It means they must go back there again, to come out of it.

Chris Maddocks

THE WORD

"In many respects, the wisdom of God that is communicated in His Word is hidden. It is accessible only to those who dig, and this digging to be serviceable must be a continuous process. It must not be done in fits and starts. It must be constant, patient, and reverential, - a daily feeding on the manna from heaven"

- 21 -

Brother Robert Roberts

Secretary's Notes

Absence of "The Christadelphian Waymark"

As indicated in the last issue, we have been beset by many problems and difficulties in the production of this magazine. Due to computer and printer failure, together with adverse personal circumstances, we have been forced to cease production of late. Some have indicated our difficulties are 'evidence' that God does not wish our work to continue. However, we prefer the Scriptural view that "*whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth*" (Heb. 12:6). Personally, I have been touched by the way Brethren and Sisters have given personal assistance in what have been very difficult times, and it is through their generosity that we have been able to recommence the work once more. In this, we see the goodness of our Father in making provision to meet our need.

Having substituted the failed equipment used to produce this magazine with better and more reliable replacements, and with the easing of somewhat difficult personal circumstances, we can at last recommence the work in earnest, seeking to set forth the Truth of the Revealed Word in these last days. Whilst we very much regret the gap in production, we have been reminded of our utter dependence upon Yahweh for all things, and we begin again with renewed vigour, as we see the day of Christ's coming draw near.

Sunday Exhortations

With the recommencing of this magazine, we have also recommenced the distribution of weekly Sunday Exhortations by e-mail for the benefit of brethren and sisters and ecclesias, who have previously found them to be profitable. To subscribe, just send an e-mail to:

exhorts@christadelphian-waymark.org.uk

And you will be added to our list.

An Exposition of Joel

Being based on a detailed verse by verse study given some years ago by the present writer, we are currently working on putting the notes together into book form of over 100 A4 pages long: further details including price will be available in the next issue, if Yahweh permits.

The Revelation Simplified

Taking one booklet per chapter of the Apocalypse, Bro David Cheale is now up to Chapter 6 in his valuable work. For further details, please contact Bro David at: *34 Linden Avenue, Dartford, Kent, DA1 2RA, UK.*

ARMAGEDDON AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

As we are aware that there are a number of different opinions on this topic, we have considered it appropriate therefore to include a detailed exposition of it. The Purpose of this study is not to oppose the false views which are promulgated on this subject, nor to uphold the so-called “traditional interpretation”, but by “comparing Spiritual things with Spiritual” (1 Cor. 2:14), we shall endeavour to discern what the Lord shall have us know. However, it is in the process of doing this, that we shall find that the view expressed by Bro. Thomas in *Eureka*, and *Elpis Israel* is broadly founded upon Scripture, and the other opinions with which we are presented are inconsistent with clear Bible teaching.

The importance of ascertaining the true interpretation is expressed in Rev. 16:15:

“Behold, I come as a thief. ***Blessed is he that watcheth***, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame”.

Here, the Lord Jesus Christ informs us that he shall come as a thief. A thief will usually come at night (cp. 1 Thes. 5:2), when the occupants of the house are sleeping. Then, swiftly and silently, he takes those things which he considers to be of any value, and leaves as discreetly as he came. In the morning, the occupants awaken to chaos - and only then do they realize what is missing. Even so, the Lord Jesus shall come amid the darkness of the Gentile night, to take his Special Treasure (Mal. 3:7) whilst the world is asleep (1 Thes. 5:7). Then, in the morning, when the Sun of Righteousness shall arise to burn up the wicked as stubble (Mal. 4:1), they shall awaken (Joel 3:9,12), to sudden destruction (1 Thes. 5:3), and the sudden disappearance of Christ's Brethren (Mat. 24:40,41).

However, we are “not of the night, nor of darkness”, but are “the children of light and the children of the day”. Therefore, we must not sleep, as do others (1 Thes. 5:5, 6), but as the Master tells us, we must “watch, and be sober”, and keep our garments, lest we walk naked. But what must we watch? Surely, the things that are going on around us! In order to prepare for Christ's Return, we must watch the unfolding of Bible Prophecy in the world's affairs - and with a correct interpretation of what lies ahead, we shall be able to discern at what point the Lord shall come, and so prepare. However, if we are not watching, and do not discern the signs of the times, we shall not be ready, and shall be found naked and shamed at his coming.

The Scriptures reveal that the world will be at sleep when the Lord comes. Joel elaborates on this, and tells us that the mighty men of war shall also be asleep (3:9), and there shall be a shortage of weapons to deal with the coming destruction (3:10). This implies a state of peace. Armies are at rest, and disarmament agreements have been made, reducing the amount of weapons possessed by each country, (which concurs with the cry of “peace and safety” of 1 Thes. 5:3). So then, just before the battle of Armageddon, it is as a result of peace that the world has been lulled into a false sense of security, resulting in a state of complacency, and sleep.

But there cannot be peace amongst the nations, whilst there is war in Israel. The Middle East must be at peace also. This is what we have described in Ezekiel chapter 38, which speaks of the Jews who are “brought out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely, all of them” (v8). And again, the words of the Lord to Gog, “in that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know it?” (v 14). And so Israel

shall dwell safely - and therefore be at peace - immediately before the Gogian invasion.

However, is this before, or after Christ has established himself as King in Israel? Undoubtedly before, for the Prophet alludes back to this period of peace in the description of the Kingdom Age in Ezekiel 39:26:

“After that they shall have borne their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have *trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid*”.

During this time of peace, then, the Jews are still in their trespasses. This is clearly before they repent and looking upon him who they pierced “mourn before him as mourning on account of the only begotten” (Zech 12:10). So it is that in our day, the Jews have returned back to their land in unbelief, as Bro. Thomas envisaged (Elpis Israel, p 441). There are those who suggest that Israel shall only have true peace after Christ Returns. This is true, of course, but then what we see in Ezekiel 38 is not true peace, for it is soon broken by the Gogian aggression!

As Ezekiel 28:25,26 shows, true peace shall only be in the land after Christ Returns - but also only after all Israel's enemies are destroyed. Interestingly, The word for peace in 1 Thes. 5, literally means “to join together”, as a basis of peace. In the world today, particularly in Europe, we see precisely that, nations seeking to join together, as a basis of lasting peace. Israel also has made peace treaties with its bordering nations, and with all it's borders secure, then it will be in safety. As unlikely as this may seem, with the Palestinian problem continuing to fester, it will be so, for Scripture tells us so.

SUDDEN DESTRUCTION

Following this state of peace, the apostle tells us there shall be “sudden destruction”. Joel informs us that the sleep shall be disturbed by

a cry to the mighty men of war, and a great rearmament campaign (Joel 3:9,10), as all nations awaken to prepare for war. These nations shall then be gathered together against Jerusalem to battle: “For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle”, declared Yahweh (Zech 14:2), and in Joel: “I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat” (Joel 3:1). These passages must refer to the same battle, for both Joel and Zechariah describe this confederacy of “all nations” as being brought by Yahweh, and destroyed by Him (Joel 3:12,13, Zech 14:3). The description is identical: and “all nations” cannot be destroyed twice!

Revelation 16 also describes such a gathering together. Firstly, verse 14 describes a gathering together of kings under the influence of the frog-like democratic spirits, or teachings spoken by the dragon (Russia), the beast (Europe), and the false prophet (The Pope). These “go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world to gather them to the battle of the great day of God Almighty”. Verse 15 describes the Return of Christ: “Behold, I come as a thief”. And verse 16 describes another, second gathering: “And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue, Armageddon”.

TWO GATHERINGS

What this tells us, therefore, is that there are to be 2 gatherings: one before Christ's Return, and one after. However, there are important differences between the two. The first is caused by Democracy, and the second by Yahweh. The first is a gathering together generally, but the second is a gathering "into a place".

The first gathering is said to be "to the battle of that great day of God Almighty". Bro Thomas renders this, “... *for* the war of the great day ...”, and is therefore descriptive of the *purpose* of the gathering, not the place.

Therefore, before the Return of the Master, there shall be a kind of gathering of the Kings of the Earth (a phrase which, as we shall see is associated with Europe), and of the whole World. We are living in the last days, and we see these words being fulfilled exactly.

As we have said, the word rendered, “peace” in 2 Thes. 5 literally means, “to join together”. We are currently witnessing the gathering, or joining together of many nations to form a basis of peace. This is not to a specific place, for it is not a literal gathering, but a figurative one, descriptive of how the nations are seeking to unite and gather themselves as one. That this gathering is upon the basis of Democracy, as described in Revelation, is amply illustrated by the collapse of the Berlin wall, which resulted in the joining together of Germany.

So then, this is the situation in the world described in Bible Prophecy, just before the Return of Christ. As we have demonstrated, this description fits the situation in our day exactly. It behoves us, therefore, to be diligent in the Truth, and prepare for him, that we be not found naked when he comes.

THE RETURN OF MESSIAH

The next event in this sequence is the Return of Christ. Then, there will be the second gathering, into a particular place, styled, Armageddon in Revelation, but by Joel, “the Valley of Jehoshaphat” (Jehoshaphat = The Judgment of Yahweh, being descriptive of the purpose). But who are those peoples who shall lead the confederacy?

This brings us back again to Ezekiel 38 - but before we examine any of the names mentioned there, let us first establish that it is speaking of the same invasion as Zech 14, (and therefore Joel 3 and Rev 16).

Ezekiel 38 describes a great confederacy of

nations being brought by God (v. 4, “**I** will bring thee forth” cp v. 16) against His people. Not recognizing the Hand of God in bringing them down, (Mic. 4:12), they shall have a natural motive, “to take a spoil, and to take a prey” (v 12, 13). Chapter 39:10 tells us that this purpose is achieved, for the Jews “shall spoil those that spoiled them”. When the confederacy has thus taken the spoil, the Lord shall fight against them (v 18-23), and during the Judgments which follow, there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel:

“Surely in that day there shall be **a great shaking** in the land of Israel” (Eze. 38:19, the word “shaking” is the same Hebrew as “Earthquake” in Zech. 14:5, and Amos 1:1), and the end result is that all the invading nations shall know God: “And they shall know that I am Yahweh” (v. 23, Cp Isa. 66:18).

ONE INVASION

If we are correct in claiming that this is the same event as described in Zech 14, then all the details must match exactly. When we compare the prophecies, we see an exact match. Verse 2 of Zech 14 describes how it is God who shall gather all nations against Jerusalem. Verse 1 describes the spoil they shall take. Verse 3 describes how Yahweh shall fight against them, and verses 4 & 5 describe the earthquake. And verse 9 describes how Yahweh shall be king over all the earth. As we have said, the details are identical, and we therefore have no reason to doubt that this is the same invasion.

So then, who is it who shall lead this confederacy of “all nations”? Ezekiel 38 provides the answer. There are those who claim that “we can’t be dogmatic” about who the names refer to, as “there are a number of different views” on the chapter. It is for their benefit that we shall prove who the leading nation is first, and then look at the names later.

THE INVADERS IDENTIFIED

Even if we don't understand any of the names, we can show from the description which Yahweh has provided us with which country is being referred to. Three times we are told that those who lead the attack on Jerusalem are from "the north parts" (Eze. 38:6,15, 39:12). Now, if we consult any map of the world, and draw a line directly from Jerusalem due North, surprisingly, we only go through 2 countries before we reach the North Pole - Turkey and Russia (notice, the line does not pass through the Arab counties). The Hebrew, so we are told, has it, "The *uttermost parts* of the north", indicating the northern extremities. Now consult the map - which of the two is it likely to be? Obviously Russia, which in any case, shall possess Turkey, as it establishes itself as the Kingdom of the North.

Now let us examine the names of verse 2: "Gog, the Land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal". As is indicated by some translations, the phrase "chief prince" should be rendered, "The prince of Rosh", or Ros. So, the man symbolically named Gog is of the Land of Magog, and is the Prince, or Ruler of Ros. According to Bochart writing in 1640, "*Ros is the most ancient form under which history makes mention of Russia*". We can see linguistically how this is so.

"Magog", (Literally, "the Land of Gog") is identified by Josephus with the Sythians, whose land, according to Herodotus, stretched from the Carpathians, to the Don. Thus, they inhabited the area we know as Russia. Although they later migrated to other places, such as Germany, Ezekiel is not concerned with the people themselves, but the geographical location of the land, and this appears to be where they were located at the time when the prophecy was given. The land of Gog, then, is the land of Russia. Gog⁶ = High, a name suggesting the location of the land of Gog, upon the top of the earth,

but also descriptive of the high-minded arrogance of the man (Cp Hab. 2:5). Zenaide A Rogozin, in his book on Assyria gives evidence to suggest that Gog was actually the name of a Sythian Chief, during the reign of Assurbanipal, the king of Assyria (as quoted by Bro. P. Whale in *The Testimony*, September 1985).

"Meshech and Tubal" are identified by Herodotus as the "Moschi and Tabereni". The Moschi originally inhabited the area by the Caucasus mountains, now known as Georgia, and Armenia, and migrated further north, to a land which was named after themselves, Moskva, the capital of which is Moscow. The Tabereni lived in the land east of the river Thermodon, in the mountainous district east of the Black Sea, part of the area of land Russia shall inhabit, as "the king of the north" (Dan. 11:40) expands his territory. Bro. Thomas identifies Tubal with the river Tobolsk in Siberia, and it's surrounding area, Tobolski. Either way, our attention is directed to Russia.

From the abundance of evidence which the Lord has provided us with, it should be clear that Russia is the leading force of the confederacy, which shall include the nations specifically named in verses 5 and 6, and "many people" with him, which shall make up the "all nations" of Zechariah 14, and Joel 3.

These then, are the nations which shall be gathered together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue, Armageddon. Micah also speaks of this gathering:

"Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion. But they know not the thoughts of Yahweh, neither understand they his counsel: for he shall gather them as sheaves into the floor. Arise, and thresh, O daughter of Zion ..." (Mic. 4:11-13).

So then, these nations are to be cut down, as in the time of harvest (Joel 3:13, Rev 14:15,16), and gathered together into a threshing-floor where they shall be judged. This is what is meant by the word “Armageddon”.

ARMAGEDDON

Bro Thomas shows in *Eureka*, how the Hebrew word “Armageddon”, is made up of 3 words, “aremah” (A heap of sheaves, cp Ruth 3:7), “gai” (valley) and “don” (Judgment). So, the word literally means, “a heap of sheaves in a valley for Judgment”, speaking of the threshing floor which Joel refers to as “the valley of threshing” (Joel 3:14), where all the multitudes of Gog’s host shall be gathered.

When the Lord Jesus Christ and his saints come against the united confederacy with the destructive impact of the Divinely slung stone, the whole confederacy shall be broken in pieces, and threshed under the Judgments of Yahweh. Then, they shall be as “the chaff of the summer threshingfloors: and the wind shall carry them away”, that they be no more (Dan. 2:35, cp Is. 17:13, 41:15,16).

But Israel shall also have a part to play in the destruction of the Northern Invader, for Isaiah 41 speaks of this:

“Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains; and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them; and thou shalt rejoice in Yahweh, and shalt glory in the holy one of Israel” (v. 15:16).

shall set on fire and burn the weapons ... and they shall spoil those that spoiled them, and rob those that robbed them, saith the Lord Yahweh” (v. 9,10).

And so, as a consequence of the work of Elijah, (Mal. 4:5), and the destruction of Jerusalem, the Jews shall turn to God once more, and he shall strengthen them to be his “battle axe” (Jer. 51:20), to overcome the enemy. It is only after the oppressor has ceased that Israel shall have true peace, as it is written: “They shall dwell safely therein, and shall build houses, and plant vineyards; yea, they shall dwell with confidence when I have executed judgments upon all those that despise them round about, and they shall know that I am Yahweh their Elohim” (Ezek 28:26).

After the conglomerate Image has been destroyed, then shall the Throne of David be established in Zion, occupied by the Lord Jesus Christ (Lu. 1:32), surrounded by his great company of holy ones, (Rev. 4:2-4), and the whole earth shall be called upon to surrender in obedience to the Son of the Most High. However, they shall not obey.

Psalm 2 describes how, after the Lord is seated upon His Throne, there shall be a rebellion against His Rule: “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against Yahweh, and against His Christ, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us” (Ps 2:2, 3, but read the whole Psalm for the context). So, following the destruction of the Gogian confederacy, there shall be another gathering against Christ, led by those styled, “The kings of the earth” (Cp Rev 16:14).

REVELATION CHAPTER 17

Ezekiel 39 also describes how the Jews shall fight against the enemy: “And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and Revelation 17 describes the Catholic Harlot sitting upon her European Sea Beast, (made up of many nations, cp v 1 with v 15) that is,

guiding and directing its movements, “with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication” (v 2). The kings of the earth, then, are not so much part of the European Beast, as other nations which have joined themselves to it, following the overthrow of nations at the battle of Armageddon.

In addition to the kings of the earth, we read in verse 12 that the beast shall receive strength and support from 10 other kings: “And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast”. These 10 kings are represented by 10 horns which are featured on the beast throughout its history. These answer to the 10 divisions of the Roman Empire, following its destruction by the barbarians (Dan 7:24). These were: Huns, Vandals, Visigoths, Burgundians, Gepidae, Lombards, Franks, Suevi, Alans and Bavarians. In the situation pertaining to the time of the end, powers after a similar pattern shall exist. The United Roman Catholic Empire of Europe, shall be supported by 10 king-powers, which shall only be given power for “1 hour”, or 30 years with the beast (v. 12 - See *Eureka* for an explanation of this).

These powers, then, are not literally the same powers as spoken of in Daniel 7 but are ten which shall exist after the same pattern of things. These 10 kings are said to “have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast”. In surrendering their power to the Beast they therefore, place themselves under the control of its rider, the Harlot.

So then, after the destruction at Armageddon, rather than submitting to the Rule of Christ, those nations which have already seen the Glory of *Yahweh Tzavaoth* manifested through His Judgments, shall unite together under the Catholic Banner to war against him. Firstly, the Harlot shall send out the 10 kings which have pledged

allegiance to her, to do battle with the Son of God:

“These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of Lords, and King of Kings, and they that are with him, are called, and chosen, and faithful” (v. 14).

Being defeated by the Multitudinous Body of Christ, these 10 nations shall then turn, and fight against the Harlot herself: “And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire” (v 16).

And so, after continuing for “one hour”, in submission to the Harlot, strengthening her beast, having been defeated by her Enemy, the kings rebel, and turn against her, beginning the process of destruction which shall be completed by the Body of Christ. Chapter 18 describes this destruction:

“Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird ... therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for great is the Lord God which judgeth her” (v. 2, 8).

In this chapter, we also read of the response of her kingly paramours: “and the kings of the earth who have committed fornication with her, shall bewail her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come” (v. 9,10). And so, the Kings of the Earth, of Psalm 2, those who united themselves with the Catholic Harlot shall be in great distress, and mourn over her destruction. Yet, despite

these repeated displays of the power and glory of the Lord God of Hosts, they shall not repent, but turn themselves against the Army of Stone.

Although the religious body of Catholicism shall be destroyed, the Pope shall still remain, as leader of the Beastly peoples, and the Kings of the Earth. These shall then unite themselves once more, in a final, desperate attempt to throw off the yoke of their destroyer. Rev 19 describes this: "And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army". This is the stage as described in Psalm 2. We note that under the rebellion commanded by the Harlot, it was not the Kings of the Earth, which actually fought, but the 10 kings which shall pledge allegiance to her. After the rider has been removed, her beast, and the Kings which committed fornication with her shall unite together to avenge her destruction, under the leadership of the Pope, apocalyptically styled, "the false prophet, who has lost his religious empire, but still retains his position of authority over the beast.

A REBELLION QUASHED

However, "he that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision". As mighty an army it will be that will be mustered in this last rebellion before peace is established, the rebels shall be coming against the Power of the Almighty. It truly is laughable how mortal man shall presume he is capable of overthrowing the armies of God! Rev. 19 continues: "and the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him ... these both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone, and the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his² mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh", as the Saints shall come like

birds of prey to take a spoil.

And so, the body of the beast shall finally be burnt, (Dan. 7:11), all rebellion shall cease, and the Kingdom of God shall extend over the whole globe. It is after the Cherubic Chariots have returned from going to and fro through-out the earth carrying out the Judgments of God, the earth shall be at rest (Zech. 1:11), as a sea of glass, without even a ripple of violence. Then, those who have been crowned with victory shall stand with the nations subdued under their feet, as kings and priests, and they shall "sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest" (Rev 15:4).

THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING

Such would appear to be the order of things at the establishment of the Kingdom of God. But why do we need to know this? The Lord does not provide us with the riches of His word simply so that we might accumulate a wealth of knowledge, but so that we might be filled with wisdom, and understanding of His ways. The purpose of any Bible study is to become "wise unto salvation", that we might be "perfect, thoroughly furnished with good works" (2Tim 3:15-17). And so, having learned of these things, we must seek to enrich our lives with an application of them.

What we have seen, is that the Establishment of the Kingdom of God is not an instantaneous event, but a process. It is a process, which may take some time to complete. As we have seen, the nations shall not surrender to Christ at his appearing, but shall do all they can to resist Him. This is

what the World is like - totally opposed to the things of God. We have seen the Roman Catholic System exposed for what she really is. The most disgusting of all women is used to symbolize the "Mother Church", which shall close her eyes to the glory of God, and to the end shall sit in pride and arrogance, saying in her heart, "I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow". Yet she shall be cut down, and all nations shall submit.

Let us not be of the world, for "all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of

the eyes, and the pride of life", shall "pass away" (1 Jno. 2:16-17), taking with it every abominable thing. Let us separate ourselves, and do the will of God, that we might "abide for ever". Let us not sleep, as do others, but let us be separate, knowing what the end shall be. We are not the night, nor of the darkness, therefore, let us "watch and be sober", that when our Lord comes, we shall be delivered from the destruction which is to come (Isa. 26:20), and rejoice for evermore in the coming Age of Glory.

Chris Maddocks

Being "in The Hand of God"

Men who have heard and received the calling of the Gospel become "renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Col. 3:10), as they seek to conform to the likeness of Yahweh, as revealed in Christ. The seed of the Word is implanted into their hearts, producing "a new creation", a new man of the spirit whose life is patterned after that of the Master. They become "born from above" (Jno. 3:3), and thereby become "the Sons of God" (1 Jno. 3:1). Although it doth not yet appear what they shall be, they know that when Christ is manifested from heaven, they shall be made like unto him, being partakers of Divine Nature, or Immortality. Such is the High Calling which we have been called to, brethren and sisters – just behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!

Being the Sons of the Living God is a most privileged position indeed. It is a position of responsibility, for we who seek the Divine Likeness must seek to crucify the flesh daily, as our Master spake concerning the man that would follow him: "let him *deny himself* and *take up his cross daily*" (Lu. 9:23). The warfare against the flesh is truly a gruelling one indeed – yet it is needful, for how can one expect to be a partaker in the victory of the warfare if he does not fight? And in our endeavours we are not left alone. We have a powerful arsenal of spiritual weapons at our disposal, which are mighty to the pulling down of the strongholds of sin (2 Cor. 10:4). The Father is with us, and will not forsake us. We are, as it were, in His protecting Hand, ensuring that the enemy - Sin in all its manifestations - will not prevail over us, so long as we retain our trust in Him.

This is the truth of what is expressed in the book of Ecclesiastes:

"... I considered in my heart even to declare all this, *that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God; no man knows whether love or hatred awaits him*" (Eccl. 9:1).

No man knows what lies ahead for him before his days of immortality. No man knows whether love or hatred awaits him in this life. But what we do know is "that all things

work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28). Though we may appear to suffer under the common lot of mankind, we know that actually our afflictions comprise a Divinely regulated chastisement, designed to perfect our characters that we might be suited to a life of immortality. We commit all things to our Maker in faith, knowing that we are in His Hands, and that all that happens to us will turn out for the best at the last. The Master gives us that assurance, saying:

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall not die in the *aion*, *neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand*. My Father ... is greater than all; and *no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand*.” (Jno 10:27-29).

Being in the hands of the Father and Son, we are comforted in all our afflictions, knowing that the chastisements we suffer are but tokens of our Father’s love for us (Heb. 12:6), and that we will not be tested beyond our limits (1 Cor. 10:13), even though it is through much tribulation that we shall enter into the Deity’s Kingdom (Acts 14:22). We remain fully persuaded that:

“neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Master” (Rom. 8:38-39).

Nothing can separate us from the Love of God ... except one thing which the Apostle doesn’t mention in this place – *ourselves*. If we forsake Him, and depart from His Ways, we shall remain in the congregation of the dead, and shall not be translated into the inheritance of the saints in light. But so long as we retain faith in the Revealed Ways of the Almighty, we are assured the victory in the warfare in which we are engaged.

This promise of Divine deliverance from evil features in many parts of Scripture, most notably perhaps, in the book of Psalms. In Psalm 34, David was “moved” by the Holy Spirit to express his trust in Yahweh:

“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*” (Psa. 34:7).

Though we may not readily perceive the Angelic Host encamped about us (cp 2 Kings 6:17), the reality of them remains. Here is the promise: “Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 Jno. 4:4; cp. 2 Kings 6:16). In us dwells the spirit of Christ - to the same extent as we are filled with the spirit-word that Christ spake. The Word, which is the Sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17), and the Angelic ministers who abound all around us comprise the powers that will keep us from the evil in this world.

Notice, David did not say that the Angel would prevent evil from coming (for it is Divinely regulated evil that forms the basis *of* our chastisement), but rather that the Angel would deliver the saints out of that evil when it came. “Many are the afflictions of the righteous” he wrote in the same Psalm, “But Yahweh delivereth him out of them all”

(Psa. 34:19). And as we look unto Jesus, our Great Redeemer, we behold not a man who rejoiced in earthly matters, but “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isa. 53:3). His sufferings were intense and unremitting, yet he did not waver from the path that lay ahead of him; rather he set his face as a flint as he purposefully walked down the path which led to Calvary. In him, we have the supreme example of enduring suffering for righteousness’ sake – and though he despised the shame, yet is he now set down at the Right Hand of God – and we are in His Hand, for our lives are hid with him in God (Col. 3:3).

These comforting words of Psalm 34 are an allusion back to the words of Jacob at the time of his decease. The story of Jacob is the story of a man who began life by seeking to use his own hand to overcome the flesh, yet who came to trust in the Hand of Providence instead. We read in the Genesis account, that before the birth of Jacob and Esau, the twins struggled against each other in the womb:

“... the children struggled together within her (i.e. Rebekah); and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of Yahweh. And Yahweh said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger” (Gen 25:22-23).

The two people would be separate from the womb; there was to be an enmity between them. Jacob, who was to become a man after the Spirit - loved of God - and Esau, the man who God hated, being a man of the flesh (Rom. 9:13). But Jacob had to learn reliance upon God. He began his life grappling against his brother (the flesh) under his own might, with his own hand:

“The first came out red all over like a hairy garment; and they called his name Esau. And after that came his brother out, and *his hand took hold on Esau’s heel*; and his name was called Jacob” (Gen. 25:25-26).

Beginning by wrestling with his fleshly brother with his own hand, Jacob, through the trials that came upon him, eventually learned reliance upon the hand of Yahweh. So it was that at the end of his life, when he blessed Joseph, he said:

“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. 48:16).

These are the words that are picked up again in Psalm 34: “*the Angel which redeemed me from all evil*”. Jacob - now Israel - came to recognise the work of the Angel in his life, and desired that the same Angel would bless Joseph’s sons, following his decease. He recognised that his own hand could not save him; he must rather rest in the Hand of God.

The exhortation is given in the first Epistle of Peter, to “Humble yourselves therefore *under the mighty hand of God*, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1 Pet. 5:6-7). These words are certainly applicable to Joseph, as he endured a period of humiliation and shame before being elevated to being a

ruler in Egypt, but they apply to Jacob also (cp. 1 Pet. 5:5 with Gen. 25:23), who endured much evil in his time, yet was exalted with his son in Egypt in due time – and who presently resides in the dust of the earth awaiting the coming day of awakening, when he shall rise to inherit glory, honour, and immortality in the Age to Come. And the exhortation is equally applicable to ourselves; we must submit ourselves to the care of Yahweh, trusting that His Angels encamp round about us, and will deliver us according to the Wisdom of the Father, knowing that our Master’s return is but a lifetime away for each one of us.

Another Psalm which expresses David’s confidence in the Father’s hand is Psalm 31. There we read:

“I trusted in thee, O Yahweh: I said, Thou art my Elohim. *My times are in thy hand*: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me” (Psa. 31:15).

In these words, we find the spirit of Christ speaking, for a few verses earlier it is written:

“*into thy hand* I commit my spirit ...” (Psa. 31:5).

These words quote our Master upon the Cross, as recorded in Luke 23:46. They therefore express our Master’s trust in his Father’s hand, that he would deliver him from all his enemies, and restore him once again to the land of the living. Accordingly this verse continues:

“... thou hast redeemed me, O Yahweh El of truth”

Messiah’s trust in the Almighty Hand of his Father was absolute. When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously (1 Pet. 2:22). Whatever difficulties we may be facing in life, we would do well to reflect upon the sufferings of Christ. In him, we see an absolute confidence that the Father would deliver him from the worst that could happen to him. “When he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him out of death, and was heard in that he feared ...” (Heb. 5:7).

As we come to consider the emblems of the bread and the wine, we do so from the aspect of beholding our suffering Saviour: a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Yet we see in him also an example of endurance in tribulation, as it is written:

“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps” (1 Pet. 2:22).

The steps of Christ lead us beyond the crown of thorns to a crown of glory. They may well lead us through hard times, into times of difficulty and tribulation, yet at the last all of our sufferings will seem to be but a “light” affliction for the eternal weight of glory which is laid up for us. Let us therefore commit ourselves into the Hands of Yahweh, as unto a faithful Creator (1 Pet. 4:19), and look to the better days that lie ahead, when we shall live and reign with our Elder Brother, our ~~redemption~~ redemption being secured both through his sufferings, and resurrection to glorious immortality.

Chris Maddocks