

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

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

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

HANNAH'S PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Psalm 73 describes the feelings of Asaph - feelings common to many of the faithful in their times of weakness - at the apparent prosperity of the wicked, as contrasted with the trials of the righteous:

“as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked ... They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish ... and they say, How doth El know? Is there knowledge in the Most High? Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches.” (Ps 73:2-12).

Such are the ways of those who enjoy and seek after the rewards of iniquity. Being desirous of the fruits of unrighteousness, they become filled with this world's goods, taking all that their hearts desire in open defiance to the Ways of the Most High El. They spread themselves out in power like a green bay tree (Ps 37:35), in apparent prosperity and blessedness. By contrast, Asaph considered his own circumstance:

“Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning” (v 13,14).

He felt that remaining pure hearted was vanity, given the tribulations that were being brought upon him. Forgetting for a faltering moment that the chastisement of the Father is a token of love towards His sons (Heb 12:6), he found himself becoming envious at the prosperity of the ungodly. So he pondered until: “it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of El; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction” (v 16-18). As he entered into the Sanctuary, he would have beheld the brasen altar and its covering of the beaten censers of Korah's company (Num 16:36-40). In seeing these, he was reminded of the eventual end of the wicked; to be cast down into destruction, descending into *sheol*, the pit from which there is no deliverance from the faithless. “Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins”, he said, as he recognised the folly of being envious of those who are destined to remain in the dust of the ground, as contrasted with the glory laid up for the faithful.

THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED

In a certain relation of things, the circumstance of Hannah, the mother of Samuel, was similar. She was barren, unable to bring forth fruit. But by contrast, her husband's other wife, Peninnah, possessed many children (1 Sam 1:2,4). As the family went up year by year to the Sanctuary in Shiloh, Peninnah exalted her fruitfulness against Hannah's barrenness:

“her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because Yahweh had shut up her womb ... year by year, when she went up to the house of Yahweh, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat” of the peace-offering, the meal of fellowship held at that place (vs 6,7).

Hannah was therefore much provoked by the fruitfulness of the unrighteous—and at the time of year which ought to have been the occasion of much rejoicing at the blessings Yahweh had given, at the feast in Jerusalem. She, in her bitterness, prayed unto Yahweh that he would grant her a son, that she might devote him to His service, ministering in the Sanctuary. And though Peninnah, as those whom Asaph became envious of, may have assumed that Yahweh was not cognisant of her trespass against Hannah, Yahweh, the El of Knowledge (1 Sam 2:3) hearkened to her prayer, and granted her heart's desire. She conceived, a son was born in due course, and as soon as he was weaned, Hannah brought him to present him before Yahweh in Shiloh. And thereupon, she uttered a most wonderful prayer of thanksgiving; a prayer echoed in that of Mary in thankfulness of the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, and a prayer which demonstrated a deep conviction and understanding in the ways of the Most High El (Luke 1:46-55). In order to grasp more fully the sentiments of Hannah, we propose to examine her petition section-by-section:

*My heart rejoiceth in Yahweh,
Mine horn is exalted in Yahweh:
My mouth is enlarged over mine enemies;
Because I rejoice in Thy salvation.*

In these opening words, Hannah expresses her joy in Yahweh. She recognises that the strength to conceive, was not her own, but of the Father, and accordingly commences her words by giving Him praise. In Scripture, a horn is the symbol of power; animals using the horn for purposes of both defence and attack. For the horn to be exalted, is for its bearer to achieve victory over the adversary (see verse 10). This is the first time such an expression is used in Scripture, and it is alluded to several times elsewhere, in other prayers of thanksgiving. For instance,

Psalm 89:17 speaks of the redeemed: “They shall walk, O Yahweh, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted. For *Thou art the horn of their strength; and in Thy favour our horn shall be exalted.* For Yahweh is our defence.” And again, speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the greater David, “My faithfulness and My mercy shall be with him: *and in My name shall his horn be exalted.*” (Ps 89:24, cp Ps 112:9).

The expression “*I will rejoice in thy salvation*” only occurs 3 other times in Scripture, all in the Psalms, and all in the context of the poor being exalted to victory against the prosperity of the wicked: Psalm 9:14, 13:5, and 20:5. Notice the terms that Hannah is moved by the Holy Spirit to use; here she speaks of “salvation”, and being enlarged over her “enemies”, rather than simply a thanksgiving for the birth of a son. So it is, that Yahweh’s handmaid is here looking beyond the difficulty of her own personal circumstances, to the greater victory to come. It is significant that throughout this prayer of thanksgiving, she does not speak specifically, and directly of the birth of Samuel. Rather, as we shall proceed to consider, she saw in that event, and in her triumph a shadow of greater times to come, when the poor shall be exalted, and those who magnify themselves against the servants of the Most High shall be brought low. And as we shall see, seeing in herself the principle of life emerging from that which was barren, she saw the greater deliverance to be effected by the Lord Jesus Christ; emergence from the womb of the earth - salvation from death in resurrection from the dust.

*There is none holy as Yahweh:
For there is none beside Thee:
Neither is there any rock like our Elohim.
Talk no more exceeding proudly;
Let not arrogancy come out of your mouth:
For Yahweh is an El of knowledge,
And by Him actions are weighed.*

In these words, Hannah speaks not of herself and her own affairs, but rather extols the wonderful attributes of the Most High; emphasising the fundamental principle that Yahweh being glorified ought to be pre-eminent in any form of deliverance; the means of salvation being but the means by which His glorification is accomplished. She speaks of *His Holiness*; there is none Holy like him (cp Ex 15:11; Is 43:10-11; 44:6-8) . *His Strength*, as a Rock (cp Deut 32:4; 2 Sam 22:32; Ps 18:31). *His Wisdom*, for he is an El of Knowledge (the only time this title occurs in Scripture, cp Ps 73:11). And *His Justice*, for by him actions are weighed in the balances of righteousness (cp Dan 5:27; Prov 16:2; 21:2; 24:12).

David also addressed *Elohim* as a Rock in his prayer of deliverance; and again in the context of there being none beside him who is able to save:

“Who is El, save Yahweh? And who is a rock, save our Elohim? El is my strength and power: and he maketh my way perfect. He maketh my feet like hinds feet: and setteth me upon my high places. He teacheth my hand to war; so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms ... thou hast enlarged my steps under me; so that my feet did not slip” (2Sam 22:32-37; v 2-3, 47).

Here, David, like Hannah (1 Sam 2:9), recognised that it is Yahweh who keeps the feet of His saints (1 Sam 2:9), that He girds with strength to break the bows of the adversary (1 Sam 2:4), that He exalts the righteous to high places (1 Sam 2:8), and that He is their Strength, and Rock of Salvation. And his prayer of thanksgiving, like that of Hannah, speaks of a day yet future when all the enemies of Yahweh shall be removed (2 Sam 22:38,39; 1 Sam 2:9,10), being trodden underfoot by the power of Yahweh vested in Christ and his brethren.

*The bows of the mighty men are broken,
And they that stumbled are girded with strength.*

This reference to “the bows of the mighty” proves that Hannah is looking to a day yet future to her own personal circumstance, for although she suffered at the hands of her Husband’s other wife, the Scriptures do not describe her being the target of mighty men’s bows. She here speaks of the Age to come when nations shall “beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks” (Is 2:2:4) and learn war no more. The Psalmist speaks in similar terms, presenting a glorious picture of the Kingdom age; a world at peace following the stormy judgements of Yahweh Tzvaoth: “Come, behold the works of Yahweh, what desolations He hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire” (Ps 46:8,9). In that day, the weapons of those who desire to overthrow the people of the Most High (Ezek 38:4; Joel 3:10) shall be destroyed, and those who take the sword shall perish with the sword (Mat 26:52). The mighty men shall be thus rendered powerless, as those who stumbled, are girded with strength (cp Ps 18:32).

But who are those that stumbled? Not those who trust in the Most High, for as we shall see, he keeps their feet from stumbling (1 Sam 2:9). Rather, those who have fallen, yet who shall now arise as the arms of their oppressors are broken. Those who stumbled at the Lord Jesus Christ; “for they stumbled at that stumblingstone; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him

shall not be ashamed” (Rom 9:32,33; 11:11). They who stumbled shall be delivered (Rom 11:26), and exalted, as it is written: “In that day shall Yahweh defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble (*Heb. he that stumbles*) among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as Elohim, as the Angel of Yahweh before them. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem” (Zech 12:8,9).

*They that were full have hired themselves out for bread;
And they that were hungry ceased:
So that the barren hath born seven;
And she that hath many children is waxed feeble*

During the yearly visits to the tabernacle in Shiloh, because of the provocation of the adversary Hannah was unable to partake of the peace offerings, and so went hungry: “she wept, and did not eat. Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? And why eatest thou not? And why is thy heart grieved? And not I better to thee than ten sons?” (1 Sam 1:7-8). So it is, that in her prayer of thanksgiving to the Father, she praises Yahweh that those who hungered have ceased to be hungry, and those who were full; the adversary, has now fallen on such hard times, that they have had to sell themselves as slaves for food.

Under the Mosaic Law it is written: “if thy brother that dwelleth by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee; thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bondservant: but as an hired servant and as a sojourner, he shall be with thee, and shall serve thee unto the year of jubilee” (Lev 25:39,40). Hannah speaks of how those who were full, have fallen into this state. Once being free, they have become like a sojourner in a strange land, a hired servant. This was the circumstance of the man, popularly styled “the prodigal son” who features in a parable of the Master. He was in a state of prosperity, enjoying his father’s goods, yet upon demanding his inheritance prematurely, he squandered it with riotous living: “the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.” (Luke 15:13,14). He joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, and found himself being sent into the fields to feed swine “and he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many *hired servants of my father hath bread enough and to spare*, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: *make me as one of thy hired servants.*” (verses 17-19). The parable continues, however, to show that the Father, filled with love and

mercy towards his son, received him back as if he had returned from the dead instead! He said to the elder brother, “It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found” (verse 32).

Hannah speaks of this same contrasting principle in terms of a barren woman yielding seven children, whereas a mother who yielded many children waxing feeble, or languishing. In her immediate circumstance, we can readily recognise her rejoicing over her adversary Peninnah, who had many children, but as Hannah only had six children in all (1 Sam 2:21), and as there is no reference in the record to Peninnah languishing, it is evident that as with the other matters detailed in her prayer, we are to look further, to later circumstances, concerning which her situation was but a type.

The Scriptures speak of another woman yielding children at the time of the end, having previously been barren; Jerusalem:

“Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; Break forth into singing, and cry aloud thou that didst not travail with child: For more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith Yahweh” (Is 54:1,2).

And again in expounding this passage, the Spirit through Paul wrote:

“Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband” (Gal 4:26,27).

The barren which hath born seven then, is Jerusalem, the “mother” of “all” the faithful. Seven is a number used frequently in the Apocalypse to denote the complete body of the redeemed (cp Rev 1:20; 4:5, 5:6), as in the *Seven* lampstands for instance. It therefore indicates the fullness of Jerusalem’s fruitfulness, as contrasted with her previous barrenness (see Jer 15:8,9).

*Yahweh killeth, and maketh alive:
He bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up.
Yahweh maketh poor, and maketh rich:
He bringeth low, and lifteth up.*

In these words, Hannah speaks of Yahweh as the Elohim of the spirits of all flesh; the One with the right and power to bring the wicked to dust, and raise up the righteous from the dead. Looking to the future, she speaks of

the fall of the wicked, to sleep a perpetual sleep in the dust of the ground, yet the exaltation of the righteous from the grave. Moses' song of redemption, outlining the experiences to befall Israel speaks in a similar vein: "See now that I, even I am he, and there is no god with me: *I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal*: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand" (Deut 32:39). And again the Spirit through James draws out words of exhortation from this same principle: "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: but the rich, in that he is made low" (Jas 1:9-10).

The true riches of which Hannah speaks, however, are not this world's goods in which men delight. Those who serve at the altar of mammon, being desirous of his dainty meats are not those whom Yahweh shall elevate from the dust. Rather, the riches of the saints are the riches of wisdom; to be more greatly desired than rubies and the finest gold. As the Proverb states: "there is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches" (Prov 13:7). A man may have an abundance of material wealth, yet if he lack wisdom he is as the beasts that perish. He is as those of the Laodicean class, who whilst supposing themselves to be rich, and having need of nothing, are in the Spirit's estimation, "wretched, and miserable, and poor and blind, and naked" (Rev 3:17).

The Lord Jesus Christ however, is one who made himself poor (Phil 2:7), yet who has great riches. He is the greatest example of one who was brought to the grave, yet lifted up by the glory of the Father. And he, "though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor 8:9). Here are the true riches granted by the hand of the Father; the fullness of grace extended through the Lord Jesus Christ, even life eternal.

*He raiseth up the poor out of the dust,
And lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill
To set them among princes,
And to make them inherit the throne of glory
For the pillars of the earth are Yahweh's
And He hath set the world upon them*

(Compare Psalm 113:7-9). So it is that those who are raised from the dust, being elevated from a humble station, shall be appointed to reign in the coming Kingdom. Notice however, that there is a plurality of persons who shall inherit a single throne: "to make *them* inherit the *throne* of glory". How is this so? Inasmuch as the Throne of Glory described in Scripture is the Davidic seat of power restored (Mat 19:28, see Jer 14:21), and that those who are kings and priests in the age to come, by a figure, occupy

that throne. The Lord Jesus Christ spoke of this: “to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my father in His throne” (Rev 3:21). Here, there are two thrones referred to, the Father’s throne that is shared by the Son, and the Son’s throne which will be shared by those who overcome. These will be set among princes, elevated to glory and honour and immortality; no longer despised of men, but administrators of divine justice throughout the globe. These constitute the pillars of the Millennial Age (Gal 2:9, Rev 3:12), upon which the government of the world shall rest.

*He will keep the feet of His saints,
And the wicked shall be silent in darkness*

By contrast with those who stumble (verse 4), the saints are kept from falling, their ways being under constant Angelic supervision (Heb 1:14). Jude alludes to these words, by way of encouragement to those who earnestly contend for the faith, against the wicked whose ways are darkness, and whose end is the grave. “Now unto him that is *able to keep you from falling*, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our saviour be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen” (verse 23). And speaking of the wicked, “these are spots in your feasts of charity (cp Peninnah 1 Sam 1:6) when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear (cp the priests 1 Sam 2:12-17)) ... wandering stars, to whom is reserved *the blackness of darkness for ever*” (Jude 12-13). Here we again have the two classes of men that Hannah speaks of; those who are kept by the father through faith unto salvation (1 Pet 1:5), and those who walk after their own ungodly lusts. For the one, their feet stand firm and sure, but for the other, they shall be silent in the darkness of *Sheol*.

*For by strength shall no man prevail.
The adversaries of Yahweh shall be broken to pieces
Out of heaven shall He thunder upon them*

Those who lift up their strength against the saints of the Most high prove themselves to be enemies not only of the righteous, but also of Yahweh himself. Indeed it will be, that when the Lord Jesus Christ is enthroned in Zion, that Harlot-system that sought to oppress his brethren in times past, shall gather the kings of the earth against Him (Rev 19:19). Psalm 2 describes how the strength of man shall be directed against the power of omnipotence: “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing: The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against Yahweh and against his anointed, saying Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. *He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh ... then shall he speak unto them in his*

wrath” (verses 1-5). The adversaries of Yahweh shall be broken to pieces, for Christ will issue the decree: “I will declare the decree: Yahweh hath said unto me, you art my son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. *Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potters vessel*” (verses 7-9). The strength of man shall certainly not prevail, as the rebellion is quashed in order that righteousness might be imposed upon the earth.

*Yahweh shall judge the ends of the earth;
And He shall give strength unto His king,
And exalt the horn of His anointed.”*

The horn of Yahweh’s Anointed shall be exalted over the enemy, as Divine Rule shall be enforced upon the earth. As the Spirit of Christ spake in the Psalmist of Yahweh’s adversaries: “Lo, thine enemies shall perish; all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered. But my horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn: I shall be anointed with fresh oil” (Ps 92:9-10). Herein lies the ultimate fulfilment of this prayer of Hannah, not merely a temporary victory over her adversary through the birth of Samuel - but a lasting victory over all the adversaries of Yahweh through His King, the son of His love; the coming deliverer of Israel, and judge of all the earth.

Chris Maddocks

THE BASF—ITS IMPORTANCE AND TEACHING

XX “That for this purpose God will send Jesus Christ personally to the earth at the close of the times of the Gentiles - Acts 3:20,21; Ps 102:16,21; 2 Tim 4:1; Acts 1:9,11; Dan 7:13

Having described how “the things concerning the kingdom of God” (Acts 8:12) are the things to do with a literal, future polity yet to replace the kingdoms of men upon the earth (Rev 11:15; Dan 2:44), the **Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith** next directs our attention to the One charged with the work of bringing these things about. The Lord Jesus Christ “personally” will be sent by the Father, at the time appointed (*Hab 2:3*), to execute the judgements written, and to set up the Kingdom fore-ordained from the foundation of the world. The Apostles recognised that for the Kingdom to come, its king must come first in order to establish it, even though the appointed time had not been revealed to them. Accordingly, as we saw in our last article, they enquired after a forty-day period of

instruction of such matters: "Lord, wilt *thou* at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (*Acts 1:6*). It is the Lord Jesus Christ who is to bring the Kingdom, which, as we shall see in our next article, is to be the ancient Israelitish polity restored.

There are those who believe that the Master's promised return is not to be a literal, physical, personal descent to the earth; but rather that his coming will be in some 'spiritual' sense of an indwelling in men's hearts. Similarly the Kingdom, it is thought, is not a literal one, but a 'spiritual' kingdom, where Christ reigns in men's hearts - we considered this latter dogma in our last article. But those who hold such ideas manifestly do not understand either the nature of the coming Kingdom - or what it is to be 'spiritual' either for that matter.

They use the word 'spiritual' as a term of distinction for a thing that is not actual, tangible or real. They 'spiritualise' a thing in making it not real; thus the return of Christ becomes not a real and actual return of Christ, but a 'spiritual' (not real) one, with him, in some unknown way dwelling in men's hearts. And the Kingdom becomes not a real kingdom, with a real king, ruling over a real territory, but a 'spiritual' (not real) kingdom - which in fact, is no kingdom at all, for it exists only in the abstract feelings and emotions of men's hearts, finding no tangible counterpart in the actual world. But

those who search the Scriptures daily to see whether these things are so, will quickly discover that the Bible does not use the word in such a way. For something to be "spiritual" in Bible terms is for it to be related to things of the spirit of God, rather than the flesh (1 Cor 9:11), or a thing teaching a particular principle

of the spirit (1 Cor 10:4). It does not use the term as distinct from literal and real. On the contrary, it teaches in plain and unequivocal terms, the literal, and personal descent of Christ from heaven, for the purpose of establishing a new order of things upon the earth.

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A PROMISE GIVEN BY ANGELIC MESSENGERS

Accordingly the angels that communed with the Apostles at the time of the ascent of the Christ to the right hand of His Father gave this promise: "this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (*Acts 1:11*). Here is language as plain and unequivocal as any man could desire; How will Christ come? As actually and literally as he departed. The risen Christ who ascended to the Right Hand of the Throne of the Most High, was no mere abstraction, but was the prince of life, able to

demonstrate to those who disbelieved the marks of the crucifixion he endured on his hands and his feet - and to the extent of inviting any who doubted to touch, and hold them as proof of his corporeal existence in the land of the living (Luke 24:39, cp Mat 28:9). Even so, the marks of his sacrifice remain as tokens of his identity - and evidence that he indeed overcame the world. They have, as it were, become badges of honour, emblematic of the victory of Christ over the *diabolos* itself. It is then, this Christ who is to come; not an invisible spirit, but a corporeal immortalised man, who shall descend from in like manner as he ascended.

And with this, the apostles who witnessed the event agree:

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the Heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:19-21).

“The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first ...” (1Thes 4:16).

“At the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” (Acts 17:30).

“To you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe” (2Thess 1:7-10).

THE COMING JUDGMENTS

The last two passages indicate that the Lord Jesus shall come for the purposes of judgement. Proof that the judge is indeed he, is his being raised from the dead, which fact is itself an assurance that the Father's purpose will stand sure, and that men will indeed experience His Judgements at the hands of His son. But he shall not come purely for judgement, for he shall also come “to be glorified in his saints.” So it will be, that whilst those who obey

not the gospel being plainly presented to them shall be removed from his presence with age-lasting destruction, there will be others who eat and drink before him (*Luke 14:15, 22:16,30*), in admiration of his person.

***THE BRETHREN OF CHRIST -
PRINCES IN THE AGE TO COME***

In fact, it must be so. Those who will have been confessed by the Master to be his brethren (Heb 2:11-13) shall live and reign with him. They will share in the power of his glory, sharing the ancient Davidic seat of power restored (cp Rev 3:21), and shall sing a joyful song to the Lamb who was slain for the remission of their sins: "... thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: *and we shall reign on the earth*" (Rev 5:9-10).

Indeed, we find that Christ's brethren, themselves have a pre-eminent role to play in bringing the nations into subjection before the Great King. The Psalmist describes the time of their glorified singing:

"Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of El be in their mouth, and a two edged sword in their hand; to execute vengeance

upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written: This honour have all his saints. Praise ye Yahweh" (Ps 149:5-9).

The saints of the Most High then, will themselves be involved in bringing the world into subjection to Christ. They shall execute the judgment written - which proves that they are not to bring the world into subjection by preaching alone. Rather, as the great company of the immortalised believers, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, they shall go forth with him to subdue the nations, to overthrow the kingdoms of men, and to establish the rule of Christ over them.

Such are things that cannot be 'spiritualised'. They are real events which shall really take place. The Lord Jesus shall descend from heaven literally, and really. He shall be glorified in his brethren, who shall be immortalised with him, literally and really. And together, they shall go forth against the kingdoms of men as a crushing stone-power, to set up the kingdom of the Deity upon the earth (Dan 2:44) - a literal and real kingdom that shall not be left to others, but shall endure for ever.

Chris Maddocks

"Oh reader! Repent thee of thy worldly follies! Give heed to the good message that speaks to thee out of thy Bible! Learn the truth from its neglected pages, and casting thine errors and thy thoughtlessness behind thee, give obedience to the heavenly requirements; and then wait in hope for the coming of the Son of Man, that thou mayest be his in the day when he maketh up his jewels"

THE ECCLESIA AT JERUSALEM— AND “DIRTY POLITICS”

The Acts of the Apostles commences by recounting the period of instruction that the Apostles received from the Master, immediately prior to his ascension to his Fathers right hand. He, “being assembled together with them, commanded them that *they should not depart from Jerusalem*, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me” (Acts 1:4). Accordingly, they returned to Jerusalem, to “the upper room”, where other of the disciples were assembled, and “these all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren” (v 14).

This would appear to be the beginnings of the ecclesia at Jerusalem. It commenced with the assembly of those who had been with the Lord from the time of John’s Baptism, until the day of Christ’s ascension (v 21,22) having as members the apostles, the women which ministered to him of their substance, and also the Master’s own natural family in the flesh; his mother and brethren. It also included many others at this time, for this same chapter of Acts, in verse 15 informs us that “the number of names together were about a hundred and twenty.” Many more were added to the ecclesia following the day of Pentecost, for the Spirit informs us that “they that gladly received his (i.e. Peters) word were baptised: and the same day there were added unto them *about three thousand souls*” (Acts 2:41).

This great company, we learn:

“continued steadfastly in the apostle’s doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles ... and they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the ecclesia daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:42-46).

Many of these would, doubtless, have returned from their respective homes in various places following the Pentecostal effusion of Spirit, and have become the nuclei of new ecclesias in those places. But that the record also informs us that many “sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men as every man had need” indicates that there were others living in the vicinity, who sold what they had to aid their poorer brethren; their lands and houses included (Acts 4:34). It is most probable therefore, that a substantial number remained at Jerusalem, being part of the ecclesia there.

CHARGES AGAINST THE JERUSALEM ECCLESIA

According to one author, this ecclesia, composed in the first instance, of the apostles, disciples and the Master's own family, was guilty of "Dirty Politics", involving lying, vying for greater status, objecting to the inclusion of Gentiles, and seeking to impose unrighteous decrees upon others. Accordingly, we read under the heading "*Dirty Politics:*"

"The Jerusalem ecclesia thought that they had the right to be the senior ecclesia, because Judaism was Jerusalem-dominated due to the presence of the temple there. They sent their brethren up to Antioch to enquire whatever was going on— Gentiles being baptised! And they summoned poor Peter before them to explain what he was doing, eating with Gentile Cornelius. Then later they sent more messengers to Antioch to bully the Jewish brethren not to break bread with the Gentile converts ...

Their tactics were political and aggressive—they made Peter so scared that he forgot all the lessons the Lord had taught him through the conversion of Cornelius, that from fear of them he refused to break bread with Gentiles when their representatives were present. James, the leader of the Jerusalem ecclesia, got Peter and John to join him in making Paul to agree to preach only to the Gentiles, whilst they would teach the Jews (Gal 2:9 NIV). This was contrary to what the Lord had told Paul in Acts 9:15—that he had been converted so as to preach to both Jews and Gentiles. And Paul took no notice of the 'agreement' they tried to force him into - he always made a priority of preaching first of all in the Jewish synagogues and to the Jews, and only secondarily to the Gentiles. He did this right up to the end of the Acts record. Although he went along with the Acts 15 decree and even agreed to propagate it, he never mentions it in his writing or speaking, and later he writes about food regulations and the whole question of Gentiles and the Law as if he disagreed with it. Perhaps as he matured, he saw the need to speak out against legalism in the ecclesias rather than go along with it for the sake of peace".

(Preaching Bible Basics, Duncan Heaster)

As is perfectly normal for this writer, and as we have amply demonstrated in previous issues, many assertions are made - but not from scripture. The words of the Spirit are employed, not to make the point being advanced, but to act as a prop, or peg, to hang up the ideas of a man. One reason for this is that there is no passage of Scripture which could be utilised to make those points - they are not found within the oracles of God. For instance, there is no Scripture that states how "The Jerusalem ecclesia thought they had the right to be the senior ecclesia, because Judaism was Jerusalem-dominated due to the presence of the temple there". This is sheer

unfounded supposition. On the contrary, the Scripture does provide other reasons why the ecclesia at Jerusalem had an exalted status - because that was where the Apostles were, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself had granted those Apostles especial authority. It would be quite correct therefore, for those apostles, and that ecclesia, to both respond to requests for issues to be resolved (Acts 15:2) and to send out communications on how to deal with those issues (Acts 15:23-28), for they were given authority by Christ to do such. Consider the following words of the Master:

“He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me” (Luke 10:16).

“But when they shall deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you” (Mat 10:19,20).

And again, the testimony of Paul himself:

“all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation ... now then, we are ambassadors fro Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, Be ye reconciled to God” (2 Cor 5:18-20).

When, therefore, the ecclesia at Jerusalem issued letters of instruction regarding the bringing in of the Gentiles, and the issue to do with the Judaisers from the ecclesia at Jerusalem, they were not acting out of any sense of grandeur (because the Temple was at Jerusalem, as the author of *“Preaching Bible Basics”* claims), but they did so under the guidance and direction of those who were divinely appointed to speak “as God did beseech you by us”, “in Christ’s stead”. This is the plain testimony of Scripture: “Then pleased it *the apostles* and elders, with the whole ecclesia, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch ... and they wrote letters by them after this manner ...” (Acts 15:22,23).

The claim is presented above, that Paul did not actually agree with this decree which he, and the other apostles send forth from Jerusalem. That he “*went along with*” it, “*and even agreed to propagate it*”, but that “*as he matured,*” he spoke against it in his later writings. Further, we are informed that “*James, the leader of the Jerusalem ecclesia, got Peter and John to join him in making Paul to agree to preach only to Gentiles*”.

Further claims against both the Apostles Paul, and James, are made in a subsequent paragraph:

*“James [not necessarily the same James who wrote the epistle] seems to have acted very ‘politically’. **He sent his followers to pressurise Peter not to break bread with Gentiles in Antioch (Gal 2:12).** Then there was a conference called at Jerusalem to discuss the matter. There was “much disputing”, there wasn’t the clear cut acceptance of Gentiles which one would have accepted if the words of Jesus had been taken at face value and **then James said ‘Nobody ever came from me telling any Gentile they must be circumcised and keep the Law.** They are all welcome, just that they must respect some of the Mosaic laws about blood etc., and keep away from fornication.’ **This contradicts Paul’s inspired teaching that the Mosaic Law was totally finished.** Gal 2:12 records that James had sent brethren to Antioch trying to enforce the Law upon Gentiles! And then later, the Jerusalem ecclesia boasted about how many thousand members they had, “and they are all zealous of the law”. They then asked Peter to make it clear that he supported circumcision and the keeping of the Law (Acts 21:19-24). In passing, we note how hurtful this must have been, since Paul was bringing funds for their ecclesia which he had collected at the cost of damaging his relationship with the likes of Corinth. **He meekly obeyed, although he had written to the Colossians and others that there was no need for any to be circumcised nor keep the Law, indeed these things were a denial of faith in Jesus”.**
(Emphasis in Bold ours—CAM)*

In the above, to summarise, we have the following charges against the apostles:

- James, an inspired apostle, lied in claiming he had not sent Jews to enforce the Law upon Gentiles, when in fact Gal 2:12 shows he did, that he had “sent his followers to pressurise Peter not to break bread with Gentiles”
- James also contradicted Paul’s inspired teaching regarding the Law
- The Apostle Paul “meekly obeyed” a decree from the Jerusalem Ecclesia to do something that contradicted what he had previously written in his epistles to the Colossians and others.

And in the previous citation, we have:

- The apostle Paul did not agree with the apostolic decree that he agreed to “propagate”, writing when he had matured “as if he disagreed with it”
- The apostles James, Peter and John joined together, according to Gal 2:9 to “make” Paul agree to preach to the Gentiles, which agreement Paul did not keep.

WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURE?

To begin with, the words of James, although they are narrated to us by D Heaster, do not occur in the Bible. There is no Bible passage which reports his saying “nobody ever came from me etc”. This being the case, although D Heaster claims of the words his puts in James’ mouth “this contradicts Paul’s inspired teaching,” the difficulty can be instantly resolved by recognising that as D Heaster is not inspired, we have no authority for the claim that these words were ever spoken - and as they are not recorded in Scripture, we can dismiss those words as the pure fabrication of man.

Further, Gal 2:12 does not state, or show that James had “sent his followers” to do anything. Acts chapter 15 records the words of the letter penned by Apostles who wrote “in Christ’s stead”: “certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying ye must be circumcised, and keep the law *to whom we gave no such commandment ...*” (Acts 15:24). There were those who came from the apostles, with such troublesome words, but who had not been sent by the apostles. All Galatians 2:12 proves is that there were those who came out from James, of this class, certainly the passage does not state that he sent them: “When Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. *For before that certain came from James*, he did eat with the Gentiles. But when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision” (Gal 2:12). So, we find that rather than James acting very “politically”, with “dirty politics”, and telling lies before the whole assembly, as we are being encouraged to believe, we find that the Scripture teaches nothing of the sort, and that his honesty, integrity and sincerity remains intact.

So far as Galatians 2:9 teaching that “*James, the leader of the Jerusalem ecclesia, got Peter and John to join him in making Paul to agree to preach only to Gentiles,*” that this is not true will be made patently plain to any who care to look that reference up. The passage actually reads:

“when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (for he that wrought effectually in peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) and when James, Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do” (Gal 2:7-10).

From the testimony of the Spirit in this passage, we learn:

- The Gospel of the Uncircumcision was committed to Paul by the Lord
- When James, Cephas (Peter) and John saw “the grace” given to Paul in this regard, they gave the right hand of fellowship, that Paul and his company would continue in that work which had been “committed” to him, and that they would go to the Jews.

We do not find any hint of the apostles seeking to force Paul to preach to the Gentiles; on the contrary we find them beholding him already doing it, and them recognising that this work had been “committed” to him by the Father (cp Acts 9:15; 13:47, 15:12, 21:19). We do not find any agreement by Paul, or being imposed upon him that he should not preach to any Jews. And we do not find in later records Paul not being in agreement with this decision; on the contrary we do find him magnifying the position he had in agreeing to it: “I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office” (Rom 11:13).

What we do find therefore is that the slander of a man against the apostles of Jesus Christ is utterly void of sanction from the Word of the Most High God.

FURTHER ALLEGATIONS

Further claims of like nature are made towards the end of this chapter, and by way of conclusion:

“ ... The Jerusalem ecclesia shouldn’t have assumed that their views must be accepted by everyone else. It’s easy to see what was wrong. But we can ourselves so easily form into groups of brethren and ecclesias, papering over our differences as happened in Acts 15, adopting a hard line (as Jerusalem ecclesia did in Gal 2:9 over Gentile believers), then a softer line in order to win political support (as in Acts 15), then back to a hard line (as in Acts 21). We ought to be men and women of principle. We look back at the senior brethren of those days arguing so strongly about whether or not it was right to break bread with Gentile believers ... and it all seems to us such an elemental disregard of the clear teaching of the Lord Jesus and so many clear Old Testament implications.”

We have therefore, the following:

- The Jerusalem ecclesia shouldn’t have assumed everyone else should accept their views
- That ecclesia changed its ‘line’ in order to win political support
- Their conduct was an elemental disregard of the teaching of Christ

- The decree of Acts 15 was merely papering over the differences.

So far as the first point goes, we have already demonstrated that as the ‘views’ of the Jerusalem ecclesia were those of apostles appointed by the Lord to speak in Christ’s stead, there was every reason why what they stated should have been accepted by all. No passage is presented to show that the actions of such apostles displayed a disregard of the teaching of Christ - we may therefore disregard this claim as mere unfounded allegations against the apostles of Christ. The claims that this ecclesia changed its policies for political motives, again, are totally unsupported from Scripture. Galatians 2:9, we have seen, teaches nothing like what is being claimed here; neither does the record state that the Jerusalem ecclesia was involved as a whole in the matter. Rather, it was an agreement made amongst the apostles themselves, in recognition of the respective roles appointed by the Father for both Peter and Paul. No evidence is provided that Acts 15 was “a softer line;” rather we have seen that the decree which went forth was an authoritative apostolic proclamation. Neither is any evidence given that it was merely papering over the differences - rather Scripture indicates it was the apostolic solution to a problem that had arisen because of those who had gone out, or departed from the apostolic fellowship, (Acts 15:24; 1 Jno 2:19) and who spoke with no authority from the apostles. Neither is any evidence given to support the claim that Acts 21 gives a “hard line,” or, for that matter, how it alters what was decided in Acts 15, given that this decree is actually cited in verse 25.

We may therefore categorically dismiss each of the allegations as made against the Lord’s apostles, having demonstrated the paucity of the case made against them by a consideration of the Oracles of God. It is indeed easy to see what is wrong. A man has set himself against the apostles of Jesus Christ, and at the same time as purporting to believe and teach “Bible basics.” But the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ concerning those sent by him is clear:

“He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me (Luke 10:16)”

Rather than to speak against, and lightly esteem (the Greek for ‘despiseth’) the apostles of Christ, the counsel of Scripture is for those who hear the Lord Jesus to hear them also, lest they be guilty of despising him, by slandering his ambassadors.

Chris Maddocks

THE CRY OF WISDOM

It is undoubtedly the case that the period from at least the latter part of the 20th Century through to the beginning of the 21st is an age of increased knowledge and learning. It is, as some have styled it, an “information revolution.” With the advancement of communication technology, bringing advanced knowledge of many matters within the grasp of increasing numbers of men and women, there is encouragement - and pressure like never before - for men to learn. In almost every area of employment changes are evident as a direct consequence of product ‘improvement’, new technology or some other innovative ‘advancement’, requiring employees to undergo training of some form or another. In order to obtain employment at the very beginning of working life, recognised certificates of learning are required, even if only at the basic level. More and more students are pursuing university courses in order to obtain jobs that can offer them the high standards of living that their peers induce them to expect—with all the pressure that the examination system brings, and the distress and bitter disappointment that comes when the labours of the past years appear to be wasted, with the failure to meet the required standard.

So it is, that much time, energy and enterprise is expended in the pursuit of education, to learn the wisdom of this world in order to ‘succeed’ in this life, and build a lasting career. But how is ‘success’ in this life measured? Generally speaking, by the types of car people drive, the kinds of houses they live in, the goods found in those houses, and how much their annual salary is. A man with a large expensive house filled with the fruits of his labour, is generally considered to have made a success of this life. In business terms, men are considered “successful” who have growing companies, and expanding warehouses to accommodate their increasing assets. They are certainly considered to have “done well” for themselves. But what is the true value of these things? What are the true fruits of this world’s wisdom? A “certain rich man” of the Master’s parable was ‘successful’ in business, building bigger barns to accommodate his wares; yet “God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” (Luke 12:20,21).

THE WEALTH OF SOLOMON

Solomon was a man who, in the terms of this world, was very successful in life:

“I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me

vineyards; I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: I made me pools of water, to water the wood that bringeth forth trees; I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before he: I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments and that of all sorts. So I was great and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy ...” (Eccl 2:4-10).

Solomon had the material pleasures which so many seek after. He had silver and gold, servants, a private estate of considerable magnitude - and whatsoever his eyes could desire. Yet in his mature years, he recognised the futility of it all: “Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.” (Eccl 2:11). But why? He considered the ultimate end of things. How the fruits of this world’s wisdom are temporary; being enjoyed only this side of the grave - they cannot deliver from death: “Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he be a wise man or a fool?” (Eccl 2:18,19).

THE VANITY OF FAITHLESS LABOUR

So it is, that men exert their energies in obtaining the meat that perisheth (Jno 6:27), spending their labour for that which, in the ultimate end, is not life-sustaining bread (Is 55:2), obtaining temporary pleasures that cannot extend beyond the duration of a man’s life—yea, and pleasures that so often hasten that day for the vexation of spirit they bring. Professing themselves to be wise, they become fools; bowing before the Altar of Mammon and doing whatever is necessary to earn the wages of unrighteousness, that they might delight in the material prosperity of this life, giving little thought to their latter end. So it is, that by contrast to the life-giving, and salvation-bringing word of the Deity, the wisdom of wise men of the flesh becomes exposed as being mere foolishness due to its inability to save the blind from falling into the pit. As it is written, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Cor 1:19,20).

THE WISDOM OF GOD

It is by the Wisdom of God that man cannot come to know Him through the principles of man's wisdom, but rather through the foolishness of preaching - foolishness that is, to men of the flesh. Men's ways are not Yahweh's ways; their thoughts are not his thoughts (Is 55:8), for although He made man upright, they have corrupted themselves and devised many evil devices (Eccl 7:29). They have therefore a natural inability to find out the things of the Most High by searching along the principles of fleshly wisdom: "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor 2:14). Only by giving heed to the Word of the Most High being preached can a man learn to hear, or understand, the things of the Spirit (Rom 10:17). Those who seek in the wrong place shall not find (Amos 8:12); and those who permit the god of this world to blind their hearts to the Word will never understand or discern the Wisdom of Yahweh - it will remain 'foolishness' to them.

Being "the Word made flesh," the Master Christ Jesus is the very embodiment of the Father's Wisdom. He is, "unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and *the wisdom* of God." He is "*made unto us wisdom*, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Cor 1:24,30-31). Seeing that the world's wisdom cannot save, whereas Christ, the Wisdom of Yahweh can, why should the wise of this world glory in their wisdom (Jer 9:23) - what is there to glory in? Far better to glory in the wisdom of the Most High, the wisdom which is from above, which is able to save.

The general disposition of the world towards the things concerning the name of Jesus Christ is proof that man's wisdom cannot accommodate him. The princes of the world were compelled to reject him two thousand years ago, such was the incompatibility between him and them: "we speak wisdom among them that are perfect; yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world that come to nought: but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery ... which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (2 Cor 2:6-8).

Even those who profess to acknowledge him do not believe the things taught by the Apostle Paul. Professing themselves to be wise with their theological degrees and PhD's, the doctors of divinity prove themselves to be no more enlightened than their historical counterparts of ancient Israel, of which it was said: "they have seen vanity and lying divination, saying Yahweh saith: and Yahweh hath not sent them: and they have made others

to hope that they would confirm the word ... therefore thus saith Adonai Yahweh; because ye have spoken vanity and seen lies, therefore, behold, I am against you, saith Adonai Yahweh” (Ezek 13:6-8). These were the divines of old, divining lies, claiming to have been sent by the Holy One of Jacob, seeing visions. And is there any difference between this, and modern clerics who pretend to receive visions, and speak with apostolic authority - and yet cannot receive the wisdom that Paul preached?

THE VANITY OF MENS' RELIGION

But one example of how the divines of today speak vanity is a Roman Catholic tract recently received, entitled “How to Pray the Holy Rosary,” which details words to be uttered to the departed ghost of Mary, “the Mother of God”, by those who desire to benefit from the magical properties of this device:

“HAIL HOLY QUEEN, mother of mercy; our life, our sweetness, and our hope. To thee do we cry, *poor banished children of Eve*. To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn, then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us. And after this, *our exile*, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ. Amen” (*emphasis in Italics ours—CAM*)

Here then, is proof, in their own words that the clerics of today are not among the congregation of Christ's brethren. By their own admission, rather than having been “reconciled to God by the death of his Son” (Rom 5:10, Col 1:20,21), they are still in “exile”. Rather than being “children of God” (1 Jno 3:10), “children walking in the truth” (2 Jno 1:4), having been begotten of the word (1 Pet 1:23), walking “worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col 1:10), they proclaim themselves to be mere “poor banished children of Eve” still needing to be “made worthy” by her - as if the sacrifice of Christ alone is inadequate for the purpose. They do not “look unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith” (Heb 12:2), but rather beseech the imagined phantom of his deceased mother to reveal him to them. And they let out “sighs, mourning and weeping” at the misery of their situation, not having received joy and peace in believing the true Gospel (Rom 15:13). By their own admission therefore, the religion of Catholicism does not bring them the benefits of belief in the Gospel, and is thus proved to be fraudulent.

THE CRY OF WISDOM

The book of Proverbs describes the crying out of Divine Wisdom, that sinners might hear, and the simple be given understanding:

“Wisdom crieth without; She uttereth her voice in the streets: She crieth in the chief places of concourse; in the openings of the gates: In the city she uttereth her words, saying, How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? And the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.” (Prov 1:20-24).

In fulfilment, Christ, who is made unto us the Wisdom of the Deity, taught in the streets and concourses of Jerusalem. He cried out in the gates, and in so doing spoke of the pouring out of Holy Spirit to those who would turn to him at his reproof:

“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scriptures hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water (but this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because Jesus was not yet glorified” (Jno 7:37-39).

Here, the Lord Jesus spake like no other man (verse 46), for he spoke of how that those who thirsted after righteousness, not being satisfied with that which the wisdom of the world provides, might drink deeply of the living water he would give. Yea, he spoke of how the Holy Spirit would be poured out to the disciples who believed in his name; as it duly was at Pentecost. Yet, for the most part, they refused his words, and despised his commands.

A WARNING TO REJECTORS

The cry of wisdom continues in the Proverbs, to issue a warning to those who refused to heed the words proclaimed to them:

“Ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me” (Prov 1:25-28; cp 1 Sam 22:38-44).

So it was, that following the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, and the apostolic proclamation throughout the streets of the land (Luke 14:21), the events of AD 70 brought the greatest desolation that Jerusalem has ever experienced. The people of Israel rejected the wisdom of Christ being proclaimed in their cities; they set him at nought (Mark 9:12; Acts 4:11), and sought to remove him from the land of the living, so ridding themselves of the discomfort of his teachings. Accordingly, they were to reap the consequences - and the judgement of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.

THE REJECTION OF TRUTH

The rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ at the hands of wicked men, albeit princes of this world, gives ample illustration of how the natural man cannot receive the things of God, whether they be His words, or His Word made flesh. The ways of Truth are not palatable to the flesh, for they are far too restrictive for the liking of most men. Those who walk down the paths of wisdom follow their Lord in crucifying the flesh, in denying the lusts thereof, seeking to do only that which their Master would have them do. There is no provision made for the flesh, and the fulfilment of its carnal desires; and because of this, those who enjoy the ways of the flesh, and the seeming prosperity that such ways bring, cannot bring themselves under the discipline of the Lord, that they might learn to please their Maker. Especially, when to do so will quite possibly interfere with the vested interests they have with communion with the world.

Just as men rejected the Christ so many years ago, even so are those who follow in his steps despised and rejected of men. They think it strange that his brethren run not with them to the same excesses (1 Pet 4:4), and seek to bring every pressure to bear in order to make them conform. In our day, for the most part in the western world at least, the threat of open persecution is passed, yet the pressures remain, albeit in a changed, and more insidious form.

THE INFLUENCE OF WORLDLY WISDOM

The system of this world's wisdom rejects religious devotions as mere fanaticism, and blind worship, relics from the Victorian era to be cast aside in a new age of learnedness and enlightenment. It encourages the young and inexperienced to question the wisdom of their elders, and believe what they will, rather than what Yahweh has revealed. It induces 'freedom of expression' as opposed to the abstention from vain and profane babblings (2 Tim 2:16). It promises 'liberty' from the shackles of old-fashioned values, encouraging men and women to break from the past, and 'progress' forward. And lest any escape from its pernicious influence,

it is compulsory for any who wish to 'succeed' in this life to attend its colleges and universities, for intensive courses in its ways. Such are the subtle and insidious ways of the Serpent's modern-day centres of learning - and those who desire to be partakers of the glory yet to be revealed must beware, for these influences have permeated even the household of faith, *to the extent that it has become an accepted and expected part of life for brethren and sisters to send their children to be taught by the Serpent for a period of years.* And of this class of serpentine philosophers, who promise liberty from the shackles of the past, the Spirit testifies that they remain in bondage to the flesh: "while they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage." (2Pet 2:19,20). If it be deemed vital for the sons and daughters of the saints to learn knowledge in order to pursue a particular working life until the Master comes, great care must be taken to ensue the spiritual diet is not lacking, that the serpent's philosophising do not gain a foothold.

SIMPLICITY OR WISDOM?

It is part of the perversity of man's wisdom, that whilst many attend universities and the like to learn the advanced intricacies of a particular topic; it has become most widely taught - and believed - that studying the Scriptures ought not be done to the same advanced level. "A simple faith is all that is required" is the cry of man's wisdom, when speaking of religious matters. Indeed, such a disposition has permeated the household to such an extent that we infrequently encounter those who are among the learned in particular skilled occupations, yet who have very little idea of how to understand the symbols of the Apocalypse! These are dismissed as being things "we cannot be certain about," or even "things we are not meant to know." *A Revelation* of Jesus Christ is about things we are not meant to have revealed to us? Such is the absurdity of the flesh, brought out by education from the Serpent. Those who have intellectual ability enough to attend the Serpent's centres of learning have more than enough intellectual ability to unravel the mysteries of Christ, revealed to that class of men who, for the most part, are not many mighty, not many noble, but are "the foolish things of the world" whom God hath chosen to confound the wise (1Cor 1:26,27). "We find Bible Study difficult," they say. "We find it too difficult to understand," and conclude that it is not meant to be understood, or if it can be unravelled, they do not have the time to do it. But the difficulty lies not in their mental capacity, which is more than adequate for the intricacies of fleshly learning; rather it is in the Mind of the Flesh which they have permitted their serpentine instructors to cultivate - which cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God. Serving Mammon occupies too much time for such men, to permit labouring in the Word to discover the hidden truths of the Most High El.

But what saith the Scripture about the “simple faith” that men enjoy speaking of, in order to justify their neglect of the Word, and attendance of fleshly things? The cry of wisdom is very different. Whilst it is true that men must embrace and accept the “simplicity that is in Christ,” (2 Cor 11:3), it is not true that therefore they must not move from a state of simplicity to become wise in Christ:

“Wisdom crieth without ... how long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge” (Prov 1:22).

This is the prevailing serpentine wisdom that permeates all things extant in this world. A “head-knowledge,” or an “academic knowledge,” of the Word, as they put it, is something to be avoided at all costs. Simplicity is advanced, whilst those who desire to search diligently for wisdom as hid treasures (Prov 2:4) are discouraged. But such are pronounced to be fools by the spirit of true Wisdom, for how can those who eschew searching out wisdom become “wise unto salvation?” (2Tim 3:15). Where else can a spiritual mind be developed but in the “head”? And how can such a mind be developed, but by the assimilation into the mind of divine principles? And where else can those principles be found but in the Word? And how therefore, can those principles be learned but by searching the Scriptures? Even so it is written that men must labour in the word and in the doctrine to become approved by God: “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of Truth” (2 Tim 2:15). The converse is true also; a man who does not study will therefore not be approved by God, and will need to be ashamed before the coming *bema* of Christ.

LABOURING IN THE RIGHT THINGS

So it is, that a man cannot be enlightened of divine things by all of his time and energy on the things of the flesh. True it is, that there are other activities to attend to, for to labour for daily bread is part of the Curse which all men are under: “in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return” (Gen 3:19). But men who devote their energies into refining their participation in this curse, to obtain as much of this worlds goods as possible, are merely attending to the curse itself, whilst giving no thought to the cure. In order to be redeemed from it in the coming age of glory, men must become wise in divine things. In order to shine with the brilliance of Yahweh’s glory in immortality, men must seek after the wisdom that gives life, devoting themselves to the reflection, and enaction of, the ways of the Most High. Then, “they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament: and they that turn many to righteousness as

the stars for ever and ever” (Dan 12:3), or as the Master expressed it in alluding to this place: “then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.” (Mat 13:43). Those who shine in the age to come are “the righteous”. They are also “the wise”, which teaches that a man cannot be “righteous” without being “wise”. “Who hath ears to hear, let him hear” indeed.

Chris Maddocks

Symmetry

Further to Bro Russell Ebbs’ article in the March issue considering the symmetry of Scripture, Bro Paul Moore considers a further example of similarities between those bearing the same name:

The following comparison details further evidence of the symmetry of attribute and function subsisting between characters sharing the same name.

Joseph the patriarch & Joseph the husband of Mary

Sons of Jacob
(Gen 30:24; Matt 1:16)

Recipients of dreams communicating the purpose of the Deity
(Gen 37:5-10; Matt 1:20; 2:13, 19, 22)

Instrumental in taking God’s Son into Egypt to preserve his life
(Gen 45:5-11; Ex 4:22; Hos 11:1; Matt 2:13-15)

The connection between these two men is further reinforced by the quotation of Jeremiah 31:15 in the immediate context of the work of Mary’s husband in protecting the infant Jesus (Matt 2:17-18), which mentions Rachel, the mother of the patriarch Joseph.

The parallels do not terminate with the husband of Mary. The work of the disciple Barnabas, who bore the proper name Joseph (Acts 4:36), also remarkably mirrors that of the patriarch. Like the son of Jacob, he brought relief to his brethren in a time of famine (Acts 11:28-30; Gen 41-47). Furthermore, through the labours of Barnabas “much people was **added** to the Lord” (Acts 11:24), a play on the meaning of the name ‘Joseph’ which is derived from the Hebrew verb *yāsaph*, which signifies ‘to add’.

Thus, it is manifest, that one the most detailed and explicit OT types of Messiah is echoed in the NT, memorialising and foreshadowing the work of the Son of God.

Moreover, note how the attributes “just” and “good” are shared by the New Testament Josephs (Matt 1:19; Luke 23:50; Acts 11:22-24).

There is a, largely untapped, rich vein of exposition to be found in symmetry and NT types of Christ awaiting the diligent student. Seeing the precision, complexity and beauty of the Divine record we are compelled to exclaim with the Psalmist, “my heart standeth in awe of Thy Word” (Ps 119:161).

Paul Moore

LOVE AND DOCTRINE—2 JOHN

This epistle brings out a few things about “love,” which it is important to recognise. “Love,” in the world, is one thing; “love” according to the ideal of the sects, another; and the “love” of apostolic discourse, yet another. The two former we may dismiss. The world’s “love” is an ephemeral affair, having its foundation in the instincts, dying with use and age, and passing away in death. Orthodox “love” is a sickly distortion, lacking the elements that give strength and comeliness to the “love” of the Scriptures. It works spiritual mischief now, and is destined hereafter to vanish like smoke. The “love” of John’s epistles has foundations, without which it cannot exist. This partly comes out in the very first sentence of this second epistle: “The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love IN THE TRUTH.” Outside the truth, a brother’s love is not operative. He loves not the world, neither the things that are in the world, remembering that “if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 Jno 2:15). His friendships are bounded by the truth, as regards both men and things. In Christ, he is a “new creature” (2 Cor 5:17). After the flesh he knows no man. The friendship of the world is enmity with God (James 4:4). Therefore he cultivates no friendship with those who know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. His love is bounded by the truth.

Does he, therefore, shut up his bowels of compassion against those who are without God? By no means. He recognises the obligation put upon him by the same law, to salute not his brethren only, but to do good unto all men, as he has opportunity, even to his enemies. But there is a difference between doing good to unbelievers and cultivating friendship with them; and the saint is careful to observe this difference, lest he come under the rebuke that greeted the ears of Jehoshaphat, on his return from friendly cooperation with Ahab: “Shouldst thou help the ungodly, and love them who hate the Lord? Therefore

is wrath upon thee from before the Lord” (2 Chron 19:2). We have our conversation towards the world in all courtesy and benevolence, without going on to their ground, and joining affinity in schemes of pleasure, profit or friendship.

The “love” that belongs to the household of faith is “*for the truth’s sake that dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever.*” This is John’s definition of its source and scope. Everyone that is truly of the household responds instinctively to it. To the carnal mind it appears very “narrow.” but this is an illusion of ignorance. It is the true breadth, for it relates to that which *shall be for ever*, while the world, which would have us unequally yoked, passeth away. The truth connects us with “the shoreless ocean of eternity,” while the friendship of the world is confined to “a narrow neck of land” - the brief existence of this animal probation. The at present “narrow” operation of apostolic “love” is also founded in wisdom; for unrestricted friendship of the world is full of danger: it draws away from the fear of God, the hope of the calling, and the holiness of the Master’s house, “whose house are we, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.” It is, therefore, a snare; pleasant and advantageous meantime, but having the suction of the maelstrom with it, drawing us to death; for when the Lord of Light stands on earth, to set in order destiny, according to the Father’s purpose, the world will have, from His presence, “fled away.”

John rejoiced concerning those to whom he wrote that he had found them “walking in the truth.” Saints walk not otherwise. Their actions, plans of life, friendships, aims, enterprises, hopes —everything connected with them, in some way or other comes from, originates in, and is conformed to the truth. The truth is their inspiration—the controlling energy. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” - not that all answer to this. There are professors who serve not the Lord Jesus, but themselves; but such are abortions and illegitimate. None but sons will be gathered in the day of the 144,000. They are few now, as they have always been, and the world “knoweth” them not in many senses; but they know what they are about. They are not dreaming; they are not fanatics. They are the children of wisdom; and wisdom is justified of them all, though they may be hard to read sometimes. They understand the world too well to be entrapped into its fellowship. They are known of God, and will be publicly revealed in due time, in glory, honour and immortality. Meanwhile, they “walk in the truth.” On this ground they are to be met and understood. Approached on any other ground, they will seem not what they are. They are not to be comprehended “after the flesh.”

“This is love,” says John, “that we walk after His commandments.” No man loves after the Spirit’s fashion who disobeys. Apostolic “love” is that state of enlightenment and appreciation in relation to the things of God that impels a man to be “a doer of the word.” John gives this an application that was special to his day; and yet is at all times appropriate wherever the same need and the same

danger manifest themselves. "This is the commandment," he says, "that AS ye have heard from the beginning, *ye should walk in it.*" We are wondering what he means when presently the light dawns; "*for, many deceivers are entered into the world who confess not that Jesus is come in the flesh.*" He means that they should hold fast to the doctrine of Christ as originally delivered; because many were drawing the disciples away therefrom. The obedience of this commandment is the evidence of New Testament "love," and it is also necessary for acceptable standing before the presence of the Lord's glory at his coming. This is John's view, as evident from the words immediately following: "*Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought; but that we receive a full reward.*" There would have been no need for these words if the things that had been "wrought" were not imperilled by the doctrine of the deceivers of which he is speaking.

He indicates, in strong language, the consequences to the individual ensnared by the deceivers: "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ *hath not God.*" This may seem a strange saying in view of the fact that the "deceivers" referred to believed in one God, the Creator of heaven and earth; and also in Christ, after their own fashion. But the apparent strangeness disappears when we look closely at the matter John is writing about. To "have" God in the sense of John's words, is to stand in His favour, both now and hereafter. All things are in His goodness. As David says, "Thy goodness is over all Thy works": but the goodness of God in common benefits that come upon all alike, is a different thing from that personal "favour" which guides, attends, and prospers (even if by chastisement), with a view to a perpetual sonship in the spirit-nature. The enjoyment of this favour is a thing of conditions. One of those conditions is a recognition of the channel in which He offers it. Out of Christ, sinners cannot come near. They have the goodness of God as creatures, like the sparrows, not one of which can fall to the earth without the Father's knowledge; but they are not in the privilege of children. They have not the Father's favour and purpose concerning the ages to come. This is only to be enjoyed in Christ; but even here, it must be the Christ of God's appointing. Any other than this is presumption, and a mockery of His wisdom: and they who teach otherwise than the truth concerning Christ, preach another Christ, though it be intended to refer to the Christ of Nazareth. This is evident from the case of those to whom John is referring. They believed that the person known as Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ; but in their reasonings upon him, they reasoned away the truth about him, and consequently believed and preached another Jesus than the Son of the Father. There were different sorts of this class, but all their heresies had a common origin in an attempt to bring the mystery of godliness within the rules of human reason, instead of accepting the testimony with humble and childlike simplicity. One set argued that such a character as Jesus was a moral impossibility in flesh and blood, and that, therefore, his whole life was a mere accommodation on the part of a spiritual being to the sense of mortals. Another believing him to be flesh and blood philosophised in a contrary direction, concluding that as such, he must,

from the nature of things, have been a “mere man,” and that the idea of him being God in flesh-manifestation, was preposterous. The Papacy blended the two and taught that though flesh, his flesh was not the corrupt and mortal flesh of men, but a superior, clean, “immaculate” sort. In our own day, as recent painful experience has made us aware, a class of believers are treading the same dangerous ground, in teaching that the flesh of Jesus was destitute of that which, in the flesh of his brethren, constitutes the cause or source of mortality.

In relation to all of them, John’s declaration reveals the mind of the Spirit: “Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ *hath not God*. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.” The doctrine of Christ is that he is God made and manifested in the mortal flesh of Abraham’s race for the deliverance thereof, on his own principles, from “that having the power of death.” Those who hold fast to this have both the Father and the Son; for in Jesus they have the Son, and the Father manifest in Him.

As to those who “bring not this doctrine,” John’s commandment is: “Receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed!” This command we can no more evade than any other commandment delivered unto us. The obedience of it may cost us something. It is crucifying to the flesh to refuse friends—some of them excellent people as human nature goes—who in one way or another have been seduced from their allegiance to the doctrine of Christ; but there is no alternative. Friends are but for a moment; the truth is forever; and if we sacrifice our duty to the latter from regard to the former, the latter will sacrifice us in the day of its glory, and hand us over to the destiny of the flesh, which, as the grass, will pass away.

“He that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.” This applies to all without distinction, and erects a barrier to fellowship with even some who hold the truth; for though they may hold the doctrine of Christ themselves, yet, if they keep up a “God-speed” connection with those who do no, by John’s rule, they make themselves partakers with them, and therefore, cut themselves off from those who stand for the doctrine of Christ.

The epistle, as a whole, is singularly applicable to the situation in which we find ourselves this morning. We have been obliged to stand aside for the doctrine of Christ from some we love. The Epistle of John justifies us in our course, both as regards those who have departed from the doctrine of Christ, and those who, while holding on to it themselves, see not their way to break connection with those who have departed. It is a painful situation, but we must not falter, nor need we fear or be discouraged. God is with us in the course of obedience, and we shall see His blessing in the increase in our midst, of zeal and holiness, and love and preparedness for the great day of the Lord, which is at hand.

R Roberts, 1879

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