

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

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN WAYMARK

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

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

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

Separation From The World

It was the apostle Paul who in telling words made the following urgent appeal to all those who aspire to be disciples of Jesus Christ:

“I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service and be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Rom. 12:1).

It would be almost impossible to express in words a more comprehensive explicit entreaty to us Gentiles after the flesh, for separation from the World both in mind and body than is there enjoined upon us. Compelling as this message is, it is by no means unique, for it encapsulates the theme of holiness to the Lord, which like a thread of gold runs through the entire Word of God, and etches upon the mind of the believer what is demanded by God as acceptable behaviour.

THE CARNAL MIND

It is written that the carnal mind is in its natural state at enmity with God, is not subject to the Law of God, and nor indeed can be. It is surely evident from this arresting statement that we must ever be on our guard to ensure that in whatsoever situation we find ourselves, whatever course of action we decide to take, whatever our attitude in the world in which we find ourselves, the decisions we take should at all times be governed by the teaching and power of the Word of God, and not by the ideas, instincts or reactions which come naturally to us.

Only continual exercise in this warfare, this confrontation with this powerful mind of the flesh which is our natural inheritance can we hope to succeed in overcoming it. This constitutes the battle of life. Success depends upon the measure that the Word of God dwells and rules our hearts for that and that alone can provide us with the power and source of strength that we need.

The mind of the flesh is essentially subtle, enticing and deceptive. It can make the most debased of thought appear wholesome and pure. It can find excuses for the most blatant evils, without any conscious effort. It is resistant to control or subjection, can make black appear white and can cloak the most heinous of crimes by the innocence of motives.

Such is the enemy within, with its penchant for evil which daily confronts us. None are immune from its activity – not even the Son of Man when he was here amongst us. Such is its prevailing dominance, that Jesus alone of all the children of men overcame its power by his superior moral strength derived from his Father, so necessary in his triumph over sin.

With these facts before us, it is surely our highest wisdom to separate ourselves as far as this is possible, from all that the world around us stands for, dominated as it is by the thinking of men astray from God. Although in the world, we are not of it, having been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Our thinking must be governed by higher and more noble thoughts than those which permeate the mind of the World around us, however beneficent that may, sometimes and at best appear to be.

At this point, we pause and reflect as to how we are getting on in this conflict in life. Sometimes we are stopped in our tracks by an event in our lives or maybe something we have read which caused particular reflection. Living as we do in affluent times, we can so easily be caught off our guard into forgetting whose we are and whom we serve.

THE EXAMPLE OF ISRAEL

When Israel of old prospered being blessed of God, it is recorded that "Jeshuran waxed fat and kicked ... and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation" (Deut. 32:15). Paradoxical as it may seem, the opportunity to do wrong is highlighted by reason of the greater scope and wider range of worldly activity which prosperity brings with it. The world around us beckons us ever more strongly to bow down to its idols and worship its gods. It is so easy to be beguiled by it all – to forget God and the line of demarcation between the

Holy and the Profane.

The fruit is so alluring, its taste so pleasant and soothing to the carnal appetite, that in the relaxation of both mind and body which ensues, we let go of the anchor of our soul, even Jesus our Redeemer and Friend.

We must never lose sight of the fact that when we would do good, evil is present with us, so that our own estimate of right action must always be in accord with the Word of God and not by our own instinctive judgment.

GIVING

Some short time ago, I was given a pamphlet issued by The Christadelphian Benevolent Fund entitled "*Giving as God has blessed us.*" Its title commended it to us, and we carefully read its contents. The giving of alms is enjoined upon us by Jesus Himself and it is one of the marks of our discipleship. But as with all other actions prescribed by our Master there are rules to be observed. If these are ignored or overlooked, our charitable works become valueless in the sight of God, however well-meaning in their apparent intention.*

Reading though the pamphlet with the principles of Separation in mind, we note the comments made in respect of each of the 7 charitable funds which form its contents. The first 5 funds have to do with commendable assistance both monetary and physically to brethren and sisters (with certain reser-

* *It is quite common when dealing with this subject to regard those who echo such sentiments to be regarded as plain mean, and hard hearted. However Bro Eric shows here that this is not the case, and that what is being discussed is not whether or not we should give, but rather who we should give so, and how that gift should be made, in the light of Bible Teaching concerning separation—CAM*

vations in respect of the Bible Mission Welfare Fund) and are in accordance with Scripture teaching.

But then we come to the Meal-A-Day and Samaritan funds which relate to help given to those outside the Truth. In respect of these 2 funds, we make the following observations:

The Meal-a-Day fund was evidently prompted by a United States Secretary of State proposing that each human being on the planet should be provided with at least one meal a day. It seems strange to say the least that Christadelphians of all people should wish to follow a powerful statesman of this world to do good as he saw fit. Our leader is Jesus Christ, not Henry Kissinger or any other man of the world. They are devoid of any understanding of the reasons for the existence of the very needs they wish to supply, or indeed the recognition that any effort they make will prove futile.

When Henry Kissinger can feed 4000 with 7 loaves and a few fishes, or 5000 with 5 loaves and 2 fishes, we may sit up and take notice! The present reality is, however, that since the Secretary of State made his appeal there are more hungry souls in the world than ever before, due entirely to increased international strife, along with evils of the grossest kind. It is only with the return of our beloved Master that a remedy will be applied. In the meantime, it is our prime concern to respond to the appeal of the Apostle Paul, as stated in Romans chapter 12 and verse 1 with which this article began. By so doing we may by the grace of God ensure a place in the Kingdom of God with the opportunity of spreading the gospel to the world at large with the Power of the Spirit and in the process the healing of

the nations. There is a time for everything!

As for the Samaritan Fund, this is founded on a completely false interpretation of the parable of “the good Samaritan”. This has nothing to do with our duty to those in the World, but everything to do with our duty to those who, having lost their love for the Truth for whatever reason have left it and are in the downward path to idolatry. We do not interpret the parables of Jesus as do the so-called Christian world with their humanistic beliefs, but rather in their teaching in respect of our need to stress the redemptive work of salvation from sin and death in Christ.

THE WORD OF GOD

Throughout its pages, the Word of God by dream, by oracle, by seer, not to mention plain speech, continually emphasises the necessity to keep ourselves unspotted from the World, and not to be associated with any of its enterprises. The methods employed by those operating both the Meal-A-Day and Samaritan funds are unscriptural. As a separate community, we should not voluntarily co-operated with the World’s organisations, however laudable their motives may appear to be. Their whole aim in action is humanitarian and excludes God and His purpose – of which they have no understanding, being astray from the Truth.

Moreover, an charitable work we support should be done anonymously eliminating any public notice as the Scriptures make plain - a fact which is compromised in the manner these two funds operate in conjunction with Ox-fam and the Red Cross. Where – may I ask – is in the scriptures any record of the children of God voluntarily and by

design making collections for those in the World to relieve their suffering?

When a would-be disciple of Christ approached him and indicated that desire, but asked that he might first go and bury his dead father and the response of Jesus completely negates the whole ethos which underlies the aims of the funds in question:

“Let the dead bury the dead”

Was the reply of our Lord. What a dramatic rebuff that must have been to one who from a humanitarian viewpoint wish to carry out what would seem a perfectly reasonable and necessary duty.

But to the True Disciples of Jesus there must be a constant awareness of the fact that outside the Truth there is a great gulf fixed. Touch not, taste not, handle not, is the maxim, so that we thus keep ourselves separate and not become involved in any of its activities, however “charitable” they may appear to be. Such a posture involves a discipline of the mind which often goes against our own personal natural feelings of sympathy and benevolence. But we must never forget that those natural feelings are the re-actions of a mind which has become infected with an innate powerful influence which, in its operation creates an antipathy to the thoughts of the Divine Mind, and does so without any conscious effort. It originated in the imbibing of the mind of the Serpent in the beginning, which resulted in the transgression of Divine Command.

The work of God and its absorption is essential requiring continual daily effort, for it alone can provide the power to overcome the evil in our nature. It

alone will enable us to get the right perspective in life – to see all things from the Divine point of view.

The lesson is driven home to us in the record of God’s dealings with men in the past. When God commanded king Saul to “smite Amelek and utterly destroy all that they have and spare them not, but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass” such action necessitated the exclusion of all feelings of sympathy which would naturally arise, especially towards apparent “innocent” children. But when it is realised that the idolatry and iniquity of these peoples had reached the point when destruction was the Divine Remedy we, paradoxical as it may appear, see the love of God in operation in the cleansing of the earth of what is abominable in His Sight.

Such is the degree of God’s anger, that Saul was removed from the Kingship because of his failure to completely fulfil Divine Command, allowing his own natural feelings to influence his judgment. It was left to Samuel to complete the work, for he hewed Amelek to pieces!

Now what was true then will be repeated again on a much wider scale and for the same reasons. The cup of iniquity of the nations is rapidly filling up and the same fate awaits them at the appointed time, when the words of the prophet Isaiah as recorded in chapter 69, verses 15-16 will be effected. When the “fury of the Lord will come up in His face and “the Lord will come with fire and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury and his rebuke with flames of fire, for by fire and by his sword will the Lord plead with all flesh, and the slain of the Lord shall be many”.

We are informed that as it was in the days of Noah, as it was in the days of Sodom and Gomorrah, so it would be in the days of the coming of the Son of Man. That we live in those days so described must be self evident to any perceptive mind. He who is coming shortly, who is even at the door, will come “with ten thousands of his saints to execute the judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly, of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed – as Jude records.

The whole of Isaiah chapters 2-3 needs to be read to appreciate the range and scope of the judgments to be administered in all their awful intensity.

And what has all this to do with the “Meal-A-Day” and “Samaritan Fund” we may ask: The answer comes when we relate these charitable endeavours with the knowledge of the reasons which are at the root of the evils which they are designed to alleviate, for it is then we realise how wrong they are. It is misguided philanthropy.

The Samaritan fund, it is stated, responds to the consequences of wars and natural disasters. This is for the relief of suffering and human needs outside the Brotherhood. But whence come wars and fightings amongst men? Are they not the result of the evils innate in our human nature astray from God and His Ways? Little do men know – it never crosses their minds – that God uses these evils for the punishment of the transgressors of His Laws as well as for the furtherance of His Purpose. When men turn to God and submit to his Laws, then and only then will war and all that ensues from its evils, cease.

In the meantime, it is not for us to relieve its consequences lest we be found

working against God – a very real probability! We have ever to remember that nothing is hid from his eyes. He is ever in complete control. As for natural disasters (so-called) the same principles apply. Take for instance the Tsunami disaster in respect of which a contribution of some thousands of pounds was sent to the Relief Fund. With that in mind, turn to what God has to say about such things:

“Behold, He [God] withholdeth the waters and they dry up. Also he sendeth them out, and they overturn the earth” (Job 12:15).

So it is the God causes both droughts and tsunami waves, and knows all about the consequences, the loss of life and distress they cause. With this knowledge, it is not for us to attempt to ameliorate what He directs, or say to him in effect: “What doest thou?”

In His eyes, the whole world lieth in wickedness and the judgments (for such they are) that he now brings upon it are, as we have stated, but the precursors of those more terrible and far-reaching judgments yet to be meted out at the Return of Christ. The natural disasters are no accidents. They occur to remind men of the Supreme Power of The Almighty. He is Omniscient as Omnipotent, and always in control. He requires His children to recognise and acknowledge the fact and not to interfere in what He considers it necessary at any time!

We recall the words of the Apostle Paul in his inspired letter to the Ephesians, chapter 6 and verse 12

“for we wrestle not against flesh and blood (i.e. in the physical sense), but against

principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places”

And you don't do that when co-operating with their organisations, however laudable their purpose may appear to be.

As we have pointed out, our task now (and it is a full-time one), is getting control of ourselves, allowing the fear of God's Word to mould characters which reflect His Mind and Purpose, and understand why in being called out of the world we are a distinct separate people with all the ignominy, suspicion, and scorn that so often is its consequence.

In all the foregoing – in all that we have here written, we are not unmindful of the words of the apostle Paul in Ephesians chapter 6, verse 10:

“As we have opportunity let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the Household of Faith”

This is an individual injunction to be acted upon, but governed by the rules which we have endeavoured to make manifest, so that at no time do we compromise that separation from the world enjoined upon us – lest we imperil our eternal salvation

Eric W Phipps

The Coming of Christ

Were the disciples of Jesus two thousand years out in expecting his imminent coming in their day?

Firstly look at James 5:1:

“Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.

When would these miseries come upon them? The end of verse three provides the answer: “the last days”. Paul also terms it “the last days” in Hebrews 1:2 when God spoke by His Son. James continues in verse 7:

“Be patient therefore brethren, unto the coming (parousia) of the Lord. Verse 8 “be ye also patient” (like the husbandman of verse 7). “stablish your hearts, for the coming (parousia) of the Lord draweth nigh” and verse 9: “behold the judge standeth before the door.” The Greek word for coming: “parousia” is rendered “presence” in 2 Cor. 10:10; & Phil. 2:12, a ‘being near’ specifically of Christ to punish Jerusalem. Peter used this word three times in his second epistle, in chapter 1 vs 16, and chapter 3, 4 & 12). Notice verse 7: “but the heavens and the earth which are **now**”. The Mosaic Heavens and earth, to “pass away” (v. 10), and the “elements” is referred to in verse 12. The elementary, or “rudimentary” things of the law to bring God's children to Christ (Gal. 3:24—note 4:3 “elements” (the Law of Moses) and verse 9, Col 2:8 & 20.

Returning to Peter's use of *perousia* in 2 Peter 1:16, Peter is referring to the presence of Jesus, on the mount with Moses and Elijah and Peter, James and John—Mat. 17:1.

The first time that the word occurs is in Matthew 24:3. The disciples showed the buildings of the Temple, in verse 1. Jesus answered by telling them that it was all going to be destroyed. “**See ye**” etc and “**I say unto you.**” “Ye” and “you” is used 17 times in this chapter, as he was speaking privately to his disciples (verse 3) about the signs concerning AD 70, for they asked three questions:

“tell us when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy presence and the end of the age”. See also Mark 16:15-20: “and they went forth and preached everywhere (see also Rom. 10:18, Col. 1:5-6, 23)

There is a very interesting verse in Matthew chapter 10 in connection with the disciples and preaching. From verse 16, Jesus talks about his sending them forth as sheep in the midst of wolves and the persecution they would receive. The interesting verse is verse 23:

“But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the son of man be come”

- which was AD70. It can have no other meaning.

Another interesting passage in connection with his “coming” in AD70 with the Roman Armies is the parable of the vineyard, as recorded in Matthew 21:

“But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves: this is the heir, let us kill him and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the Lord of the Vineyard cometh, what will he do unto these husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let it out unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.”

So he came in AD 70 and destroyed them.

In chapter 22 of Matthew is the parable of the marriage feast, with the invitation given firstly to the Jews “and they would not come”. But he continued to invite them “my oxen and my fatlings are killed” which points to the sacrifice of Jesus, followed by the persecution of the disciples in verse 6. So we read in verse 7: “But when the king heard thereof, he was wrath, and he sent forth his armies and destroyed those murderers (cp Acts 7:52) and burned up their city. Jesus was here alluding to Daniel 8:11-12:

“Yea he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away the place of his sanctuary was cast

down. And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practiced and prospered.

And chapter 9, verse 26:

“And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.”

Stephen also spoke of Jesus of Nazareth destroying Jerusalem and removing the Law (see Acts 6:14). Also, Paul in Hebrews 10:37, quoting Habakkuk 2:3 (but giving it an immediate application as he tried to encourage them to hold fast during their persecution and to be patient, v 36): “that after he have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise”. You will not have to endure much longer, for “yet a little while” and I like Brother Thomas’ comment upon this verse “a little while” - seven years longer, there was consolation in this for after the coming, the Jews would have no more power to persecute them (Herald 1860, p 274).

This shows again that his coming was immanent, not two thousand years away.

Another interesting verse is John 21:22: “Jesus saith unto him [Peter] If I will that he [John] tarry *till I come* what is that to thee? Follow thou me.” John was the only disciple to witness the coming of Jesus in AD70.

Ted Bailey

THE LOGIC OF THE STARS

In the Scripture read this morning, our thoughts are in a special manner directed to the contemplation of the rock on which we stand. Psalm 96, like all other Psalms, fixes our minds on God. One of the statements in it has a peculiar power in this direction. I refer to verse 5:

“All the gods of the nations are idols: but the Lord made the heavens.”

The force lies in the statement that Yahweh “*made the heavens.*” It is impossible to convey a more powerful idea of the greatness of Yahweh than is expressed in these few words. We realise this best, perhaps, on a starry night, when we walk abroad under the vast expanse overhead. We seem impressed at night as we are not in the day with the greatness of heaven above. In the daytime, the clouds limit the view, or the blue sky gives us the idea of a roof that shuts us in from the rest of the universe. Comfort and tranquillity belong to the daylight. At night, the

starry depths are revealed; the silent glory of a thousand twinkling points of light seems to speak of power and immensity more impressively than the sun's golden flood. As we scan the shining host and think of the magnitude of each single orb, and the vastness of the distances that separate them one from another, though apparently near together; and of the exactness of their order and their movements, though apparently massed in confusion, we are simply overawed and stunned. We feel we have no faculty to grasp the stupendousness of this wonderful creation. We sink tired to the ground. But the effort is not useless. It helps us to have some faint conception of the Creator. It helps us to respond to God's own appeal when He says:

“To whom will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by name; by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power, not one faileth” (Isa. 40:25).

If God made the heavens, it is a natural thing to argue how great must God be. “Ah, true,” say some; “but how do we know He made them?” There is an answer to that; but this is not the time for it. Suffice it to say that all minds of the higher order are impressed with the evidence afforded by the starry

host of the existence of a Creator. Napoleon 1, a man of unusual intellectual vigour, though a despiser of priests, was no deaf listener to the logic of the stars. It is reported of him that during the voyage to Egypt, when surrounded on deck by a number of officers, who were discussing Voltaire's doctrines among themselves, he said, “It is all very well, gentlemen, but who made these?” - pointing to the stars. That the stars have not always existed is a recognised and demonstrable fact. A cause equal to their evolution must, therefore, have preceded them, so that our sighing friends may take rest in the simple fact that God made them. “But how did He make them?” Well, He did not make them as a man makes a chair or table. His ways are higher than man's in all respects.

By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens” (Job 26:13).

The Spirit affects and controls the very atomic constitutions of all substance. All things are but the concrete of the invisible. I will illustrate what I mean. Take a piece of ice: here you have solid substance that you can see and handle. Place it out in the sun; it melts; now you have water, but wait long enough, the water will evaporate, and nothing will be left. The solid ice has disappeared. Its elements exist, but they are invisible. But you may say, “Well, of course, everybody knows ice disappears in that way; what has that to do with things in general?” It has this much to do with it:

that it is a common and easily-comprehended illustration of what can be done with everything. You burn paper or wood, and the flame dissipates their substance into the invisible. You dissolve the hardest metals in the appropriate acid, and compound it chemically into a solution that will evaporate and leave nothing behind but a sediment which can, in its turn, be treated and dispelled in the same way. In all these cases, you resolve substance into invisible energy. You do not destroy it; you transmute it; yet you can restore it, and it cannot of itself come back into the original combination. Now what is true of little things, such as those I have mentioned, is true of heaven and earth throughout, so far as abstract possibility is concerned. They could be resolved into invisible power. They are but the concrete or condensation of invisible energy. Invisible energy preceded them, and out of it they have come.

But the question is, how came they forth? How is it that out of the same simple primal energy that fills the universe have come such endless diversity of substance, form, function, and glory? (For it must be remembered that the various invisible elements into which substances can be chemically resolved—such as oxygen, hydrogen, carbon and the like, are themselves further reducible into a common primal force.) To this question, the science of our day vouchsafes no answer. It first says that it cannot tell, and then that it is

no business of science to tell. In a certain sense this is true, and we might leave science out of the question altogether, were it not that, in the hands of some of its professors, it dogmatizes against the answer which the Bible gives. In such a case we have to show that science itself is against the scientists, inasmuch as when thoroughly followed out, it shows us a situation of things that requires the existence of an all-wise and all-powerful initiative to account for things as they are.

All scientists, however, have not thus to be combated. The truly philosophic minds who can follow facts to their ultimate issues—such as Professor Tyndall and Professor Pritchard—admit the idea of a Creator as compatible with science. Some go further than allowing it compatible. They say that the minutest atoms that go to make this and that, have all the appearance of manufactured articles; that is, particles designed specifically and differentially for those chemical affinities that result in certain forms of substance. So that, at the lowest depth of investigation, science discovers things “made,” though unable to throw any light on the question—“Who made them?” Thus the child and the philosopher meet. They arrive by a different road, but reach the same destination. The philosopher, after much labour and thought, says, “Creation has been made”; the child in the nursery says the same thing on the strength of simple impression and direct information. The class between

think it beneath their education and their dignity to profess so simple a faith. But it is the true faith, at once simple and profound. At no greater truth can we arrive, and on no softer a pillow can we lay the wearied intellect than what is contained in God's own declaration:

"All those things hath mine hand made" (Isa. 66:2), re-echoed by John (chap.1):

"All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made."

And so we lift our eyes again to the heavens, and learn from their glory the unsearchable and unutterable grandeur of the Lord God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. Well may we tremble at His word; well may we have His name in reverence; well may we love and fear Him with all our heart and soul, and strength and mind, as required of us.

But the picture is not complete without His promises. Apart from these, the greatness of God would only seem an aggravation of our lot. The glory of heaven and earth would only mock us, so to speak, if we had no hope, and were without God in the world. What is the glorious sunshine to men cast away in an open boat at sea without food and water? It is an aggravation of their miseries. So might men say, "Of what good to us is this stupendousness

of power and wisdom? What interest can we take in the beauty and the glory and the magnitude of the universe? Why ask us to rejoice in the shining host of heaven? We are wretched. The human race is debased. Nine hundred and ninety-nine in a thousand are in poverty—poverty of pocket, poverty of mind, poverty of nature. Unscrupulous cleverness lords it over the interests of mankind. Iniquity is established. All are dying. Life is a troubled dream. Vanity and vexation of spirit is written over all." True, true, true, is the lamentation; and if we could know nothing more of God than the greatness manifest in heaven and earth, we might well join with Job and Jeremiah in wishing we had never appeared in such an orphaned state of existence.

But the case stands otherwise, and this is the gospel. Things are bad, but it is for a reason, and a good state of things will come.

"Yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace" (Psa. 37:10).

*"The whole earth shall be filled with his glory."
"The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord*

and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."

Sin hath reigned unto death; but death shall be swallowed up of victory. The redeemed of the Lord shall return and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads. The Lord God shall wipe away tears from off all faces, and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth. The tabernacle of God shall be with men; He shall be their God, and they shall be His people. And God will wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more curse and no more death.

The gospel of Christ exactly supplies our need. It gives us hope and joy in heaven and earth. It enables us to feel even now in the Father's house. True, it is only faith; but faith must come before sight; so it pleases God to appoint. Without faith it is impossible to please Him, and we must please Him before He will admit us to the riches of His glory. But let us realise what faith is. It is not the thing some people talk about. It is not a thing taken for granted without certainty. It is not a mental phantom; it is not a sentiment; it is not a fancy. It is "*the substance of things hoped for,*" and the things are hoped for because they have been promised, and we are sure they have been promised, and we know that He is faithful that hath promised. It is conviction founded on facts. The man of unbelief looks with contempt on the man of faith. The facts would justify

the contrary relation of things.

The man of unbelief is such because of ignorance, and his ignorance is due to a bias in favour of present things, which prevents him from subjecting himself to the agency of knowledge. He loves the present world, and he chooses to suppose that things will never be different from what they are. He listens to the glowing hopes of the believer with a patronising pity. "My dear fellow," he says, "it is all very beautiful, but it belongs to Utopia. Existence is a stern affair, and has no place for such roseate dreams."

What can we say? We can say this, that if we are to take what now is as the measure and interpretation of what is to be, our patronising friend may have some standing ground. But where is the wise man who would seriously propound such a doctrine, even a natural philosopher? He cannot be found; the fools, of course, are plentiful enough. There was a time when there were no men upon earth, our enemies themselves being judges; upon our patronising friend's principle there ought, therefore, never to have been men upon earth. The principle will not stand for a moment.

The limited experience of corruptible man is the unsafest of all rules to work by as to possible futurity. We must not confine our view to what we individually see and feel. We must take in facts we have not seen. In this respect we must go back in order to go forward. If we go back far enough, we find Christ

upon earth, doing wonders, speaking as man never spoke. We find Christ crucified; Christ raised from the dead, and Christ ascended into heaven. We find Christ preached by a miracle-working apostleship, and on these facts alone we find a foundation for the hope that the day is coming when the state of things on earth will be in complete harmony with the wisdom and the beauty and the glory, which our own eyes can see now in heaven above and earth beneath; a day when Christ will return according to his promise, and bring all things into subjection to his glorious will.

Let us rise to this wide range of vision. Let us reject the impressions which a too close confinement in the lines and channels of our petty life is apt to make on our minds. Let us not make the mistake of judging the ages by our few and evil days. This is the mistake that is made by men around us. They argue that because they find things in a certain way, things will never be different. It is as if a schoolboy were to conclude he would never be done with school. Or transfer the illustration to some of those animalculae that naturalists tell us come into existence and die with every breath. In a train going through a railway tunnel, many would be born and die during the passage. Suppose they could think; judging by their own experience, they would imagine the world was all darkness and noise. They would have no knowledge of the smiling country and the glorious sunlight at the other end of the tunnel. They would not be aware the tunnel had any end. That

is how it is with the poor mortals who set up their experience of the present darkness and confusion as the measure of our hopes. Because they live and die in darkness, they think we shall always be in the tunnel; they have no knowledge of the appointed exit into the light, and the arrival at the glorious terminus, where the train will stop and the passengers will get out for a settlement in safety and comfort and peace.

The truth emancipates us from the depressing company of such thoughts. It brings to us the joyful news of an age of light and strength and righteousness and joy, which shall dawn when the present night shall have passed away. It exhibits to us a destiny beyond every human aspiration in its height, and transcending our highest conceptions in its glory. It holds before us a prize that beggars all ordinary appeals to human motive and human exertion—a prize that combines, in an ineffable form, all the conditions of well-being that man has ever experienced or that the heart has ever conceived. This whole coming glory is, meanwhile, in the absolute prerogative of that wonderful man—the marvel of history—THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD—God manifest in the flesh—Jesus crucified and now exalted, in whom abides all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. What shall we say, then, but that Paul was a wise man, whose company we shall try to keep, when he said:

“I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of

Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him.”

*Taken from: - “Seasons of Comfort” Vol. 1
Pages 317-322
By Bro. Robert Roberts*

Drawing Near to God*

Reading: Psalm 73

My dear brethren and sisters, the Psalms are wonderful in that they deal so powerfully with the emotional ups and downs of life in the Truth. They portray before us the mind of the spirit in exhorting each one of us how to deal with those emotional highs and in particular the lows.

This seventy-third Psalm highlights for us the tremendous danger in only focusing upon the horizontal plane—in other words, the here and now. The Psalmist had temporarily lost that vertical focus to his life that is necessary for us to walk forward in faith, as it states in verse two “but as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped”.

Now that word “gone” in verse two is in the passive voice in the Hebrew and is a direct result of the psalmist focusing upon the wrong things, having lost his perspective. As is clear from verse 3 of the Psalm:

“For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked”.

This has been a problem for the saints in every age brethren and sisters and indeed who amongst us has not at certain times fallen prey to this very subtle sin. The title of the Psalm is instructive here for the word “Psalm” comes from a root word “to prune”. Do you not prune a plant to maintain and develop growth, so that better quality and great volume of fruit may be brought forth?

Whereas the name “Asaph” comes from a root word to “gather together in assembly”. So when we translate the title we have a song that when meditated upon properly will prune our thinking in order to develop our characters to bring forth much fruit to our Father’s glory. Now this song then is for all those who are gathered together, the ecclesia.

So what Asaph is describing here is a generic problem faced by us all brethren and sisters, especially at those times when we feel the chastening hand of our

* Based on an exhortation given at Colchester ecclesia on 10th February 2008

God upon us. We are being instructed here concerning a very real and present danger. For we live in an increasing age of wealth and materialism on one hand and spreading amorality on the other.

Envy brethren and sisters, is a subtle internal sin, but the scriptures describe it as being truly deadly.

“A sound heart is the life of the flesh: *but envy the rottenness of the bones*” (Prov. 14:30)

Elsewhere we read that none can stand before envy, for the foolish are slain by it. Indeed the psalmist himself nearly walked away from the truth and our Heavenly Father altogether because of it. In verse thirteen we have this faulty conclusion “Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain”, as a result of carnal thinking.

Envy robs us of our peace with God, because it introduces a distortion in that we regard our lot in life to be somewhat unfair. So as we become agitated and discontent with our lot in life and this reflects back upon our Heavenly Father. For even if the providence of the Father did not directly place us in the position or the difficult circumstance that brings on this envy. Our Father indeed has the power to change that set of circumstances and has chosen not too. Thus we judge it is his fault and our envy is justified by our fleshly mind.

The result is that our envy eats away at us from the inside and destroys our stability in the truth and makes a breach in our relationship with our Heavenly Father and possibly with the individuals we envy. For they might even be in the truth, rather than those, outside as I am sure is the case here with Asaph. We can just as easily envy our brethren and sisters, as the next man in the street. As verses fourteen to sixteen show envy is all consuming brethren and sisters:

Verses 14 – 16

“For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me”.

Envy is a work of the flesh and indeed the Eternal Spirit through James summarises the Old Testament warnings with regards to this deadly sin “do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?”

This verse might be translated literally as such “the spirit that dwells within us jealously regards us as his own”.

Now we all know the truth of this brethren and sisters because we daily have to fight against the lusts of the flesh, even though we are just dealing with its residue. For as we have come here today to remember the work of the Father in the son. We recall that supreme sacrifice, which took away the root of our problem

in the sacrifice of himself.

Having then been bought with that price of his precious blood we are no longer servants of sin, but servants of righteousness unto God. Yet our old master desires us back and does & will never give up the fight to reclaim us for his own.

Again the Proverbs speak:

“Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of Yahweh all the day long”. (Prov. 23:17)

This “Fear of Yahweh” is we are told elsewhere is the beginning of wisdom brethren and sisters for it tends to life, enables us to depart from evil and instructs us in the knowledge of our God. Note fear comes before the wisdom, so reverence is the primary component that wisdom flows from, thus it is reciprocal and these two strands strengthen one another.

The receiving of ‘wisdom’ results in “fear or awe” of our Heavenly Father, because we experience a more complete understanding of who He is. Through ‘wisdom,’ then the wise man comes to see or behold Yahweh our God, so that a real and fulfilling relationship may take place with our Heavenly Father.

That proverb instructs us to keep our sight and our minds on the vertical plane focusing upon our relationship with the Almighty and the eternal, rather than the temporal.

“While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal”. (2 Cor. 4:18)

Much of our individual difficulties in the truth come about because we either develop a distorted picture of our Heavenly Father, as Asaph did here.

Or indeed our knowledge of him is shallow to start with. We really must work both individually & collectively as an ecclesia to communicate the fullness of our understanding of the character and ways of our God. Likewise this is also true of our beloved Master and his current intercessory work.

The psalmist struggling with his discontentment caused by envy with regards to our Heavenly Father and his righteousness, his justice, resolves to take his problem to our Heavenly Father. Thus we read in verse 17:

“Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end”.

The psalmist experienced doubt brought on by the things he witnessed in every day life and indeed in Asaph’s case every day ecclesial life. Now some would say that doubt is evil and sinful, but that is not the case brethren and sisters. Doubt is only a boundary to our current level of faith in that doubts raise ques-

tions, based upon our experience or that of others, which we cannot answer or overcome. Thus a boundary or obstacle to our faith developing further is revealed and that is surely a good thing.

Now let me make myself clear here, brethren and sisters doubt if left unresolved will fester and lead, as was nearly the case in the psalmist here to unbelief. Yet doubts faced and overcome will only serve to strengthen our faith.

Let us follow Asaph's faithful example in how to deal with such conflicts of mind in that he attempted even in his unstableness of mind to draw near unto his God. Prayer, reading, meditation and fellowship are the means to overcome our doubts brethren and sisters. Sometimes we may have to confide in one another and seek counsel from others we know and love for their wisdom in the truth. Indeed let us not be fearful in doing so, for as Asaph's example shows these issues are common problems.

Asaph's visit to the sanctuary reconnected his vertical focus; it cleared the fog in his mind and drove away the envy he had been experiencing, because the truth of the situation became clear to him.

There is a lesson here for us brethren and sisters as we come week by week to gather together in an assembly to strengthen and remember that vertical axis to our lives. We need it brethren and sisters Asaph's example and near folly prove it to us.

Now it is suggested that what Asaph saw within the confines of the sanctuary were the plates of brass upon the altar that recalled to his mind the incident of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. Whether this is true or not, we cannot tell, but what is true is that Asaph shows us brethren and sisters how to overcome such conflicts of mind and experience.

Interestingly brethren and sisters there is a parallel in the language with the beginning of the psalm in this final section, as Asaph finally grasps the end of the wicked.

Verses 18 - 20

“Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image”.

In verse eighteen, the Spirit speaks of “slippery places” that is exactly where the Psalmists envy had taken him. Nigh to the point of destruction, as can be seen from the intense emotional reaction in verse twenty-one to his foolishness. The use of both the “heart” and “reins” here indicate the fullness of this shock to his system. Notice carefully brethren and sisters that it is not the fact that he nearly

was destroyed by his envying that shocks and shames the psalmist, although I am sure he did indeed feel that way.

Rather I believe that he was grieved in his spirit and felt greatly ashamed, because of the thoughts he was entertaining concerning his Heavenly Father and how far he had moved away from his God. For Asaph had been at the point of charging the Almighty with unrighteousness. The next two verses seem to bear this out:

Verses 22 – 23

“So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee. Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand”.

We are reminded here of some words in an earlier psalm “nevertheless man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish”. Asaph had been thinking like a common animal and this is so true of us all at times brethren and sisters when we only focus upon the temporal and let the mind of flesh run rampant over our apparent circumstances.

Now verses twenty-three to the end of the psalm show Asaph seeking to restore his fellowship with the Father in drawing near to him again.

This focus confirms to me that his greatest shock was how far he had strayed and how much he was out of fellowship with the Father, when he came to his sense. Do we feel like Asaph here brethren and sisters when we become aware of our own straying?

Now notice carefully verse 23 “thou hast holden me by my right hand” and let us take great comfort here brethren and sisters how that although Asaph removed himself from the Father. Our Heavenly Father remained faithfully and providentially at his side.

Hebrews Chapter 13 and verses 5 – 6 record:

“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me”.

When the psalmist entered the sanctuary he learned by experience the truth of these words from Hebrews. The imagery here brethren and sisters is important in that Asaph comes to realise exactly how close his God was to him, encamping around him. I am reminded here of a quote by the noted apologist C. S. Lewis who wrote in his book *The Problem of Pain* this well known line. “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, but shouts to us in our pains”.

The picture in this 23rd verse is of a father leading a child by the hand along the way, again let us take great comfort from this brethren and sisters. Here we do not have an angry God, incensed at Asaph's maligning of him. Nor does it show the Almighty displeased and disappointed at Asaph's failure to understand. Rather we have a loving, patient and longsuffering father passionately caring for his children; carefully leading the psalmist through his crisis of faith to the safety and security of faith renewed.

Psalm 37 and verse 24

“Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for Yahweh upholdeth him with his hand”. (Upholdeth here is an active participle a continuous principle that our Heavenly Father works by.)

Our Heavenly Father is faithful as is evidenced here by the psalmist, yet his faithfulness to us does not negate our responsibilities to respond. For we read elsewhere in the proverbs that “a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again”. To which we can add these words of explanation “the law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide”. Indeed the psalms also instruct us to pray that our Heavenly Father will uphold our goings that our feet slide not, which of course amounts to the Father leading us not into temptation, but delivering us from evil.

From all these passages we learn that we will indeed continue to fail brethren and sisters, sometimes badly. Yet we must in faith accept our Father's promises and his aid and rise up once more, dust ourselves down and walk forward in faith.

Indeed with the law of God implanted in our hearts, the greater the dwelling of that law the more stable our walk will be. Yet we shall still fall from time to time, the psalmist understanding this point say's the following at the beginning of that 23rd verse “nevertheless (but as for me – is the sense here) I am continually with thee”.

Here we see Asaph's renewed vigour of faith, determination and resolve to cleave to his God, because of his close shave. Glance at verse 25:

Verse 25

“Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee”.

The first part of this verse is an important question, rhetorical yes, but important none the less. When you see a question in the text like this it is meant to cause you to pause and carefully consider the truth implied within. For the entire rest of the psalm revolves around the psalmists' answer to this question.

If God be for us, who can be against us? Answer no one then let us, as the psalmist does desire our Heavenly Father above all. Now the last three verses of the

psalm are life-changing realisations that his painful experience has led him too:

Verses 26

“My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever”.

Asaph here firstly acknowledges that although his spirit is willing his flesh is weak and his heart is not strong enough for the task unaided. Then comes that little word “but”, which transforms his weakness. “But God is the strength of my heart”, here the psalmist learns an important lesson that it appears only experience yields that our Heavenly Father’s strength is made perfect in our weakness.

Now this word “strength” is the Hebrew word “tsur”, meaning “rock”. The sense here is of firmness and courage. Our Heavenly Father will render his heart courageous to endure firm unto the end.

It is not enough for Asaph to just to receive strength from the Almighty; he also wants Yahweh to be his portion in the land of the living. The sense here is not only in hoping in our Heavenly Father, but as he earlier spoke of desiring the Almighty. Here we see the psalmist’s desire is no longer for the life lived by those he was earlier envious of, but to have Yahweh alone, as his desire and portion.

His focus is clearly eternal rather than temporal, because despite his weakness of heart, he is now totally resolved to pursue our Heavenly Father above all else and to the exclusion of everything earthly, as is clear from verse twenty-three. Do you and I have this singleness of motivation brethren and sisters? Are we possessed with this same overwhelming desire?

Let us examine our selves in the light of Asaph’s example, since we have surely all fallen foul to his folly at one time or another. Now maybe not to the severity of his example, but nevertheless we have all had similar thoughts and questions. Yet have we each had the same corresponding intense response?

Now if we are honest brethren and sisters this pursuit Asaph now engages in does not really describe ourselves, does it? We can at times reach such a pitch, but it is not the norm to be so driven day by day. The reason we don’t feel this desire for the Father is because we instead pursue all the things the foolish do.

Matthew Chapter 6 and verse 33

“seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”?

Asaph teaches us brethren and sisters that our lives are to be distinct we are to march to be beat of a different drum. In doing so we become lights in this dark and evil age to those who themselves are unhappy with what this life has to offer.

What we are seeing here in the end of this psalm, is that refocusing of Asaph's passion no longer on the things of this life, but upon our Heavenly Father. Passion provides the motivation to maintain the disciple of pursuing after Yahweh, for what you are passionate about you act upon. Do we each have a passion for our Heavenly Father and the things of his kingdom?

Verse 27

“For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee”.

The psalmist not only understands the end of the wicked clearly now and secondly he repudiates all that glitters in that manner of life. He also acknowledges that they are covenant breakers (adulterers) who have pursued the wrong things and taken themselves away from Yahweh their God. If friendship with the world is enmity with Almighty God, then what is marriage to the world brethren and sisters?

Notice carefully how Asaph dwells here in this verse, upon the consequence of his earlier error of removing himself from the Father's presence. The thought of it now not only appals him, but strikes fear into his inner man. He no longer desires to be either counted with them or indeed to suffer their fate:

Verses 18 – 20

“Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image”.

He has finally learned to “abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good”. A lesson again that appears that only experience teaches us. Finally we read in verse twenty-eight his grand conclusion:

Verse 28

“But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Adonai Yahweh, that I may declare all thy works”.

The psalmist's mind is still focused upon this distance between him and our Heavenly Father. Is this something we ever give attention too brethren and sisters?

He realises that security in the truth is based upon this closeness to Almighty God, in developing a more intimate relationship with our Heavenly Father through our Lord Jesus Christ. This drawing near has benefits not only in this life, but also in relation to the age to come, as is clear from verse 24:

Verse 24

“Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory”.

Thus applying the counsel of our Heavenly Father in his word and in giving our selves unto prayer is the means by which, we like Asaph can draw near. Undoubtedly Asaph was also thinking of coming into the sanctuary as a means of drawing near and that is equally true of us brethren and sisters as we meet here today.

James Chapter 4 and verse 8

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

Notice we have to draw nigh first and our Heavenly Father and he will respond in kind. For He desires brethren and sisters to dwell in the high and lofty place with those that draw nigh. This high and lofty place spoken of in Isaiah is undoubtedly the temple of the age to come atop the mountain of Zion, which is to be lifted up in the topographical changes yet to take place in the earth.

In returning to James for a moment this drawing nigh is an aorist active imperative in the Greek. So it is an ongoing command and with the imperative comes a sense of urgency in our need to perform it brethren and sisters.

Returning to this twenty-eighth verse of the Psalm we find two results of Asaph drawing near to his God. Firstly he places his trust in Adonai Yahweh, note the use of the title here it has a dual application (due to the way it can be translated). It speaks in the first instance of our Heavenly Father - He who is my ruler and therefore sovereign over the psalmist's life. Secondly it speaks of He who will be rulers in this secondary application it harks back to the end of verse twenty-four “and afterward receive me to glory”.

Then finally we find the second result, that of declaring all Yahweh's works. Now brethren and sisters for this recounting and relating of our Heavenly Father's deeds to be effective. We need to live the message our selves for our declaration to have an impact upon those with whom we have to do!

Now it is interesting brethren and sisters that this reaction is common amongst those whom Yahweh restores. We only have to think of David who said in Psalm fifty-one:

Psalm 51 and verses 12 – 13

“Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee”.

Or in Psalm 71 and verse 18:

“O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come”.

It is incumbent upon us brethren and sisters to so recount and relate to one another and to our children and to any others who show an interest in the deeds of our Heavenly Father. Asaph is no longer concerned with his own security in the truth alone; he is now concerned for his brethren and he desires to make an impact in their lives. We might ask the question what sort of impact are we having on one another for God brethren and sisters?

Brethren and sisters as we now turn our thoughts from Asaph to the one we are gathered here to remember, our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us briefly review this last section of the psalm again with the Master in mind. For the full fulfilment of verses twenty-three to twenty-eight are found firstly in the Master himself and then in a secondary sense, as typified by Asaph in those gathered together in the beloved.

Unlike Asaph Christ was continually with his Father and as the Apostle John records. “He that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him”. The Father literally was his guide for we read in Isaiah “morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear”, so that he became the word made flesh.

Indeed the Son having faithfully completing his sacrificial work, we are shortly to remember was received into glory. “Into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us, we read in Hebrews”. Whilst in the days of his flesh the Master desired none upon earth, only his Father and the fulfilment of his will indeed was able to say: “I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me”.

We remember in the garden brethren and sisters that our Master was indeed touched with the feelings of the infirmities of the flesh in that he likewise suffered temptation. “And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt”.

In Luke’s record we find the Father’s immediate response “and there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him”. Thus Yahweh was indeed his strength of heart and his portion brethren and sisters. Indeed verse twenty-seven finds fulfilment in A.D 70 with the destruction of that generation, which

rejected the son and consequently his Father, their God.

The Lord Jesus Christ shows his nearness, his proximity (oneness) with the Father and his purpose, by his implicit trust. In that he was willing, as we remember now to “humble himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the stake”.

Psalm 40 and verses 8 – 10 declare:

“I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Yahweh, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation”.

Yet with regards to the Lord Jesus Christ the final line of this psalm is yet to have its richest fulfilment. For in the age to come, it is recorded in psalm twenty-two: “My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him”.

Brethren and sisters as we now partake of the emblems “let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith and Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering. Let us follow Asaph’s faithful example and declare all the works of our Father exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching”. That in the mercy of our God we might find ourselves gathered together in that great congregation to both witness and take part in our Master’s declaration of praise.

Wayne Marshall

Crossing the Red Sea

Speaking of the things experienced by Israel of old, the inspired Apostle writes:

“Now all these things happened unto them *for ensamples*: and they are written *for our admonition* upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1 Cor. 10:11).

When we look back therefore, at the Old Testament record concerning Yahweh’s chosen people, we do not do so simply with the objective of accumulating a knowledge of the facts and figures of what took place. Rather, we look to their experiences, with the view to comparing them with our own situation. When we see their examples of belief – and unbelief – we find a pattern of principles that we also can be “admonished” by, lest we fall as did they.

1 Corinthians 10 brings to us the spiritual lesson of Israel crossing the Red sea:

“Moreover brethren, I would not that you should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea: **and were all baptized into Moses** in the cloud and in the sea” (1 Cor. 10:1-2).

Passing through the waters either side of them, and above them (in the form of a cloud), Israel underwent a national baptism. They were baptised into Moses, the prophet and leader of their Nation. The comparison with our own situation is striking: just as they passed through waters to enter the land of their inheritance, even so we who trust in the Greater Prophet “like unto” Moses (Acts 3:22) are baptised into Christ - and in so doing we are delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of Yahweh’s dear son” (Col. 1:13). Not that we have received the kingdom as yet, any more than Israel had received their inheritance when they were baptised. But rather we, as they, embark on a journey through the wilderness of life, along the “narrow way” that will lead us to the coming kingdom of Messiah.

Our passing through baptismal waters symbolises the association with the death of Messiah. The water represents the grave and those who enter into it resolve to put to death the ways of the flesh. So the Apostle writes:

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised **into his death?** Therefore we are **buried** with him by baptism **into death** ... knowing this, that **our old man is crucified with him**, that the body of sin might be destroyed” (Rom. 6:3-4, 6).

This being the case, we can see how that in the parallel case when Moses brought his people through the baptismal waters of the Red Sea, this was symbolic of the nation passing through death in the faith of living a new life the other side. Indeed in these things, we behold two contrasting attributes of the Father: we have His Mercy and Salvation towards his people, but we also see His Judgment upon the ungodly who despise His Ways. The red sea, as well as being symbolic of death to Israel was very literally death to the Egyptians, and therefore also speaks of how Israel was delivered from bondage. Through judicial death and destruction upon Egypt, came mercy and salvation to Israel. Both aspects come together in Psalm 136:

“To him which divided the Red sea into parts: **for his mercy endureth for ever:** and made Israel to pass through the midst of it: **for his mercy endureth for ever:** But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea: **for his mercy endureth for ever**” (Psa. 136:13-15).

The overthrowing of Pharaoh and his host was therefore mercy towards Israel, but death to the Egyptians.

When we consult other passages descriptive of Israel's passing through the baptismal waters of the Red Sea, we find that there is another parallel with our own circumstance. Just as Israel were brought through the Sea by Moses, even so we are brought through a symbolic baptismal death by Christ. Isaiah 63 describes Israel being baptised into Moses:

“... then he remembered the days of old, Moses and his people, saying, Where is he that *brought* them up out of the sea with *the shepherd of his flock?*” (Isa. 63:11).

Now compare this with the apostle's description of Messiah:

“Now the God of peace, that *brought again* from the dead our Lord Jesus, that *great Shepherd of the sheep*, though the blood of the everlasting covenant make you perfect ...” (Heb. 13:21).

Note the parallel descriptions: Moses bringing Israel up out of the death-sea as a shepherd leading the sheep is aligned with Messiah bringing his people through the blood of the everlasting covenant. There is a shift in emphasis; (Isaiah 63 concerns Israel passing through the sea, whereas Hebrews 13 concerns Messiah himself being brought through death and back into life by his own blood). But the principles remain true for us: Israel passing through a symbolic death parallels with our own passing through the aqueous grave of baptism into Christ.

Exodus chapter 14 describes how Israel were led into a seemingly impossible situation. Brought to the brink of the Red Sea, the people were pursued by Pharaoh's armies: there was no going back, but also naturally speaking there would be no going forward either: humanly speaking, Israel were stuck! There is a parallel between this situation and our own lives as we walk along our wilderness journey. We are being relentlessly pursued by death. Sometimes the difficulties we have to endure seem to be so great and insurmountable, that it is all too easy for us to weaken in faith. Time and time again, adverse situations might seem impossible for us to overcome: we can see no way out. However, as with Israel, so with us - let us stand still and see the salvation of Yahweh. In alluding back to Israel's situation at the Red Sea, the apostle gives us the words of comfort:

“... God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted [Grk. tried] above that ye are able; but will with the temptation [Grk. trial] *also make a way of escape*, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13).

Or as David was 'moved' to write as he was also being pursued by the enemy:

“Many are the afflictions of the righteous: *but Yahweh delivereth him out of them all*” (Psa. 34:19).

Just as Israel were given an escape from the Egyptians, even so we must have

the faith that Yahweh will grant us an escape from the trials that come upon us – even when the situation appears on the face of things to be impossible to bear. Let us remember Israel’s circumstance, and the great deliverance that was wrought for them. Truly it is written that “the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of trials ...” (2 Pet. 2:9)

The parting of the Red Sea was brought about by Yahweh, who required Moses to lift up his rod over it:

“Yahweh said unto Moses ... lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea” (Exo. 14:15, 16).

This is most interesting, as the rod used appears to be the same rod that became a serpent before Pharaoh and his supposedly wise men. Exodus chapter 7 recounts how the changing of this rod into a serpent was to be a sign declaring Yahweh’s power. And Moses reaching out and grasping this serpent (cp. Exo. 4:4) demonstrated his authority over the serpent-power. Though he began by fleeing from it, he learned to take the mastery over it, and it became a rod again in his hand.

When this rod became a serpent before the wise men of Egypt, they likewise turned their rods into serpents – but Moses’ rod, held by Aaron swallowed up their rod-serpents:

“... they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron’s rod swallowed up their rods” (Exo. 7:12).

In these things, we have a *type*, or pattern of future things, how that through the work of Christ by obtaining the mastery over the serpent-mind, “death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Cor. 15:54).

From these things, we can see a pattern emerging: redemption came to Israel by the lifting up of a rod. Before Pharaoh, before the Red Sea, and also in Exodus chapter 17, before the nation of Amalek.

Amalek was the first of the nations to declare war on Israel, as they began their wilderness wandering:

“Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill **with the Rod of God in my hand**” (Exo 17:9).

So Israel went into battle against Amalek. But their success or otherwise appears to have been dependent on the “Rod of God” being lifted up, for as Moses grew weary of holding it up in his hands, and “when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed” (verse 11). So it was necessary to prepare a rock for Moses to sit

upon, and for Aaron (Priest) and Hur (of Judah = King) to help Moses to keep his hands, and therefore the Rod lifted up:

“Moses hands were heavy; and they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side and the other on the other side: and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun” (Exo. 17:12).

This situation with Moses is alluded to in Hebrews chapter 12. Just as Moses was helped by his brethren to hold up his hands, and give his knees rest by sitting on the rock, even so we ought to help each other in our warfare against sin:

“wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet ...” (Heb. 12:12-13).

Here is the real point: “the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong” (Eccl. 9:11), but all things of Yahweh. The victory over Amalek was not of man’s endeavours, but was due to the serpent-rod being lifted up, and the miraculous deliverance that came of it. The deliverance of Israel from Egypt, and from Amalek – both by the lifting up of the Rod was of God. Even so, we must recognise that we are “without strength” to save ourselves. Even Moses who was the rod-bearer had to recognise that even he could not secure the victory by himself, for due to the weakness of the flesh, he just couldn’t lift up that rod unaided. But through the means described, salvation was brought to Israel – and so became a pattern of things to come (cp Isa. 10:26).

This situation is very reminiscent of another serpent being lifted up in the wilderness, referred to in the Gospel record. Though is it another serpent being referred to the principles involved are the same:

“as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (Jno. 3:14-15).

The lifting up of Moses’ serpent-rod as the means for deliverance and salvation points forward to the way in which by the lifting up of Messiah upon the cross, sin is seen to be condemned, and the victory guaranteed. Our Master is described as being “the captain of salvation” (Heb. 2:10), who leads his followers into battle – a spiritual warfare against the flesh. Through his being lifted up, we can rejoice that “thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:57). But we can only be given the victory of Christ if we are engaged in the same warfare as he! Like Israel, we need to depart from Egypt: the water of baptism is death to the natural man, and mercy to those who seek a greater inheritance to come. Our wilderness journey, as with Israel, involves a warfare – a warfare of faith, against the flesh. Let us therefore be valiant in battle, knowing that with every trial there will be deliverance, and that though faith in the prophet like unto Moses, the victory is ours – guaranteed.

Chris Maddocks

God Manifest In The Flesh (1)

The set of Bible principles that we call “God Manifestation” together form what is probably the main teaching that separates us from Apostate Christendom. Yet paradoxically, it is also often portrayed as being very “deep”, having little practical value, and something better left to the more academic amongst us. However, this article seeks to show that “God Manifestation” in it’s essence is something that should be readily understood by students of the Word, and that it’s practical outworking in the lives of believers is something essential to prepare us for the coming Kingdom.

The quotation which forms the title of our article comes from the 1st letter of the inspired Apostle to Timothy:

“... without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: ***God was manifest in the flesh***, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (1 Tim. 3:16),

In order to understand this verse then, the two key things we need to know are what does “manifest” mean, and how can it be “in the flesh”.

The Greek word translated “manifest” is *phaneroo*, which incidentally forms the title of Bro John Thomas’ work on this subject: “*Phanerosis*”. It literally means “to render apparent,” or to “make known”. This is the sense in which it is used in Scripture. Take the following two testimonies:

“Afterward he ***appeared*** unto the eleven as they sat at meat” (Mark 16:14).

“After these things Jesus ***shewed*** himself again (Jno. 21:1).

For God to be made “manifest” therefore, is for Him to be Revealed in particular ways. This is a major theme of Scripture: how that it is part of our Father’s Purpose to reveal himself, and the principles of His Righteousness. Consider the following testimonies:

“There is nothing hid, which shall not ***be manifested***; neither was anything kept secret, but that it should be kept abroad” (Mark 4:22)

“Yahweh hath ***made known*** his salvation: his righteousness hath he ***openly shewed*** in the sight of the heathen” (Psa. 98:2).

This last citation is of particular importance, for it defines for us those things which the Father is revealing: His Salvation, and His Righteousness. As we shall go on to see, these two aspects are the two fundamental points manifested, or made known in Messiah.

GOD MANIFESTED TO MOSES

The Old testament record reveals the means by which Yahweh made Himself known to his Servents, particularly Moses. Exodus chapter 3 speaks of how:

“the angel of Yahweh appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed” (Ex. 3:2).

But verse 16 speaks of the same event in different terms:

“Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them: Yahweh Elohim of your fathers, the Elohim of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob appeared unto me ...” (Ex. 3:16).

Notice the difference here: in one place we are told that the Angel “appeared”, but the other, we are told that Yahweh Himself “appeared”. This demonstrates that the Angel was therefore, Yahweh’s representative before Man: Yahweh revealed himself through the Angel.

This aspect is brought out again in Exodus chapter 23:

“Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place that I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him” (Ex. 23:21).

Here, the same point is made, that the Angel represented Yahweh—but here, the situation is spoken of in terms of a Name: “my Name is in him”. The passage continues:

“But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies ...” (Ex. 23:22).

Yet again, we find that the Angel spoke on Yahweh’s behalf: ***his*** voice, but what Yahweh spoke.

FORESHADOWING MESSIAH

This role of the Angel is alluded to by Christ, and is appropriated to himself:

“I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself: that where I am there may ye be also ... he that hath seen me hath seen the Father ... I am in the Father, and the Father in me” (Jno. 14:2-11).

Notice the parallel points between the two passages: the Angel was to lead the people into “the place” prepared of the Father—as does Messiah. Of the Angel

it is said that “my name is in him” - and of Messiah it is written that “I am in the Father and the Father in me”. But also, most significantly, the citation of John 14 is to do with the Father being made known in His Son: “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father”. We see therefore, how the role of the Angel before Moses and the people foreshadowed Messiah, and the way in which Yahweh would be seen in him.

It is an important fact of Scripture that Messiah came “in the express image” of His Father (Heb. 1:3), so that the Father would be revealed in him:

“No man knoweth the Son, but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and **he to whomsoever the son will reveal him**” (Mat. 11:27).

“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father: **he hath declared him**” (Jno. 1:18).

Again, we also see the association of the Name with the Manifestation, or Revealing in Christ:

“His name shall be as a son **to continue his Father’s Name for ever ...**” (Psa. 72:17 marg.)

“being so much better than the angels, as he hath **by inheritance** obtained **a more excellent name** than they” (Heb. 1:4).

“I have **manifested thy name** unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world” (Jno. 17:6).

This is what we would expect even in the natural state of affairs. It is common in our own experience for sons and daughters to inherit the name of their parents. It is also common in our experience to see traces of the Mother or Father in their offspring. So much so, that often folk look at babies, and exclaim: “Hasn’t he got his Father’s eyes”, or “hasn’t he got his Father’s nose”! Of course, we all know what is meant: the child is reflecting, or showing forth the likeness of his Father. No-one supposes that the child quite literally has his father’s nose grafted onto its face - it is a likeness of character, not of substance.

Even so it is with Messiah and His Father—only much more so. As a Son, his role is to “continue his Father’s Name,” and in him the attributes of the Father can be seen. Here then, we see the basis of “God Manifestation”: it is to do with the Son revealing the Name and Character of His Father.

Our title citation is that “God was manifest **in the flesh**” (1 Tim. 3:16). Another passage teaching the same Truth states that Christ was “the word made flesh” (Jno. 1:14). John tells us that “the Word was with God, and the Word was God:” The Word is the means where by the Mind of Yahweh is made know to mortal

man. Being therefore “the Word made flesh,” Christ embodies all of the principles and aspects of the Father, as contained in The Word. The Word is divine: the Flesh is after the natural man. In Christ we have both coming together: Christ came “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom. 8:3) and he was “God Manifest in the flesh”. In him therefore, we see all the fullness of the Godhead.

Our Master has inherited a more excellent Name than the Angels (Heb. 1:4). That Name is the Father’s Name, as we shall consider more fully in part 2. Suffice it to say, that being possessed by the Father and the Son, it has become what we might call, a “family Name”. Believers enter into the Name through baptism: as Messiah instructed his disciples:

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them *into the Name* (Greek) of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mat. 28:19).

Again, we read of this Name in Proverbs:

“the Name of Yahweh is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe” (Prov. 18:10).

By being baptised into the Name of the Father, which is also the Name of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we enter a family of brethren and sisters which collectively form the united body of Christ. And therefore we, as Christ, share the responsibility of declaring the Name amongst men, and living by the principles that it includes.

Just as Christ shows forth the image of Yahweh, even so we must manifest, or declare (in our behaviour and conduct) Christ in all our ways. So it is written:

“put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge *after the image* of him that created him” (Col. 3:10).

We find, then, that the subject of “God Manifestation” is not a dry one, better left to the academics: rather it contains a set of principles to do with the way in which Yahweh has chosen to reveal Himself before men - and also the way in which we, as sons and daughters, must also seek to show forth the image of our Creator.

We noted earlier that fundamentally, the two principles of “salvation” and “righteousness” (Psa. 98:2) being revealed, form the main aspects of what Yahweh has declared, and revealed. In part 2 of this article, we shall proceed to examine their role in greater detail, especially in connection with the meaning of Yahweh’s Name.

(To Be Continued)

Chris Maddocks