

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

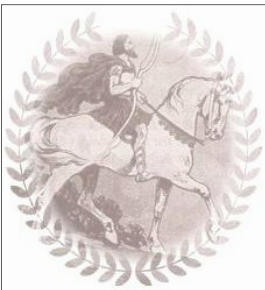
THE CHRISTADELPHIAN WAYMARK

Volume 8

Issue 7

**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)*

“The Love of Money ... ”

If there was ever an age that revolves around covetousness and the desire to have, it is the one in which we live. At every corner, there are advertisements designed to create in us a spirit of lust and want. Materialism is a word that encapsulates the predominant mindset of our day – and along with it, there is the desire to obtain money in order that we might be able to have those things that the advertisers persuade us to want.

The Bible, however, presents a different set of standards by which men should live. Teaching “the love of money is the root of all evil:” the holy writ continues: “which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Tim. 6:10). Covetousness is Idolatry (Col. 3:5), as it leads men away from God, to fulfill their desires instead. Men governed by covetousness are “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (1 Tim. 3:4), their thoughts rising no higher than their carnal instincts for personal gain, increasing in wealth and possessions.

The words of Paul to Timothy, cited above, are often misunderstood. The saying that “the love of money is the root of all evil” is not intended to convey the idea that all evil things originate from the love of money. Rather it is that the love of money itself can produce nothing else but evil. Whilst money itself is a necessary part of life in a capitalist society, it is not something to be coveted by the disciple of Christ. Being content with whatever circumstances our Father places us in, our primary activities ought not tend towards the pursuit of material things.

“Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? And your labour for that which satisfieth not?” (Isa. 55:2) asks the prophet. The man of God is not satisfied with the transient nature of the things that money can buy: he seeks rather to direct his energies towards seeking first the kingdom of God and His Righteousness (Mat. 6:33). The correct spirit in relation to the things of this life is expressed in the Proverbs:

“remove far from me vanity and lies: *give me neither poverty nor riches;* feed me with food convenient for me” (Prov. 30:8).

Seeking only those things needful to sustain a mortal existence, rather than to lust after material things, the man of God fixes his attention on Christ’s coming kingdom instead. So the Apostle taught: “Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content” (1 Tim. 6:6-8). Human selfishness and inordinate desire instead seeks after the riches and comforts of this life, with scant regard for the things pertaining to the age to come.

The Scriptures provide us with a number of examples of covetous men, who were lovers of money, rather than lovers of God: we shall consider some of them with the view to learning from their example.

ACHAN

Joshua chapter 6 recounts the besieging of Jericho by Israel, as they began to take up their promised inheritance. Verse 17 tells us that

“the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to Yahweh: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she, and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent” (Josh. 6:17).

Here, according to the alternative marginal rendering, the word translated “*accursed*” literally means: “*devoted*”. Another translation renders the verse thus:

“And the city shall be put under the ban, ***and all that is in it belongs to Yahweh ...***” (The Scriptures)

The idea here, is that all of the things in Jericho were devoted to Yahweh: it “belonged” to Him. There is a similarity here with the Laws concerning the firstfruits, and the firstborn: God was given His part first, and then the people could partake of what remained later. This was, in a sense, the firstfruits of the land that Israel were going in to possess. It was devoted to Yahweh. So we read in verse 19 of the treasures of Jericho: “But all the silver and gold, and vessels of brass and iron ***are consecrated unto Yahweh***: they shall come into the treasury of Yahweh”

Achan, however, was tempted to take for himself that which was devoted to God:

“but the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed (i.e. devoted) thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed (devoted) thing: and the anger of Yahweh was kindled against the children of Israel” (Josh. 7:1).

Through a process of selection, Achan and his family were taken, and Achan himself made confession of what he had done:

“... indeed I have sinned against Yahweh, Elohim of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it” (Josh. 7:20-21).

Here, we see raw covetousness: “the lust of the eyes,” as it is styled elsewhere. He “saw” the proscribed items, and took them for his own use. This is a pattern often repeated both in Scripture, and our own experience – taking that which belongs to someone else. In our experience, covetousness is not simply about taking that which we desire: all too often it also involves desiring that which

belongs to somebody else. It is written that “he that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two and three witnesses” (Heb. 10:28), and Achan provides and example of that, being put to death for his sin. But “that man perished not alone in his iniquity” (Josh. 22:20), as wrath came upon the whole congregation for his iniquity. Brother H P Mansfield describes the situation thus:

“Achan soon became a sad example of the precept of Moses: “Be sure your sin will find you out” (Num. 32:23). When deliberate sin such as that of Achan is committed it is a transgression against that society as well as against Yahweh; and though hidden for a time, it will ultimately be manifested. Yahweh’s action in the case of Achan revealed the seriousness of transgression and showed that there was no escaping the consequences of such. Bearing this in mind Ecclesial leaders should overlook those placed in their care with the greatest concern. In this case, one sin affected the nation as did one sin the human race at the beginning (Rom. 5:17-18).” (*Joshua Expositor*)

What of ourselves? Hebrews chapter 10 continues: “Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing ...” (Heb. 10:29).

In all of our dealings in life, we must put Yahweh first. First in terms of time, and how we use it. First in terms of this world’s goods that have been entrusted to us, that we might use them in service to our God. Our maxim, as cited above, ought to be “seek ye *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness,” with all that we need to follow. If Achan had waited, he could have partaken of the fatness of the land legitimately – but he could not wait, and stole that which belonged to the Almighty. The example of Achan then, is that we should put Yahweh first in all our ways, and He will ensure that we have those other things we need to sustain a mortal existence.

BALAM

Jude characterizes certain false brethren as having “ran greedily after the error of Balaam *for reward* ...” (Jude 11). Peter elaborates on this, saying that they have “gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved *the wages* of unrighteousness” (2 Pet. 2:15). The spirit of Balaam then, is one of greedily seeking a reward, to the expense of others. But notice the words of Jude: they “*ran*”. They were eager to obtain their “wages”, just like Balaam was, and ran to collect them. Numbers chapter 22 records how Balaam (evidently a renegade prophet), was hired by Balak, the king of the Moabites to curse the people of Israel. His motivation was not that Israel would be cursed, but that he would receive “wages” for cursing them. It was a foolish enterprise to begin with: why should the Almighty listen to a greedy man, and curse His people? But Balaam was blinded by the prospect of having much gain out of the matter. He continued to try and speak words of cursing against Israel, but on each occasion, he found himself restrained from speaking his own words, and was instead

made to speak God's Words - and so blessed, not cursed God's people:

“nevertheless, Yahweh thy God would not hearken to Balaam, but Yahweh thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because Yahweh loved thee” (Deut. 23:5)

Being unable to speak words of condemnation towards the People of God, Balaam did not give up. Desperate to obtain the wages of unrighteousness, he instead changed his tactics. He “taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication” (Rev. 2:14). The record in Numbers simply tells us that “Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab” (Num. 25:1). In fact, this was at the instigation of Balaam, eager to cause Israel to fall. Being unable to curse them directly himself, he orchestrated a situation where the Moabite women were brought in, who taught Israel to fornicate with them, and partake of feasts to their gods. Through his actions, Israel brought a curse upon themselves.

There are many examples for us here. We should not seek to advance ourselves at the expense of others. That is the way of the world: to tread others down in the endeavor to elevate ourselves. But Balaam's subtle tactic brings a salutary warning for us. Man cannot curse us any more that Balaam could curse Israel. No man can separate us from the love of Christ. So it is written:

“who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:35-39).

Nothing then, can separate us from the love of Christ. At least nearly nothing: the only thing that can separate us is our own selves. “every man is tempted when he is *drawn away* of his own lust, and enticed” (Jas. 1:14). We can, through succumbing to our own carnal desires, be “drawn away” from the love of God. This was Balaam's approach: get Israel to bring a curse upon themselves, by inducing them to commit fornication, and fulfill their desires with the Moabitish women. And this is the only possible way that we can become cursed: of our own doing, and the unwise exercise of our own free will.

NABAL

1 Samuel chapter 25 introduces us to Nabal, who was a rich man: “the man was very great” in terms of his wealth. He was approached by David (who was fleeing from Saul) for help by way of providing sustenance. Nabal refused, saying: “there be many servants nowadays that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be?” (1 Sam. 25:11).

Nabal then, is an example of a man who had plenty of this world's goods, yet refused to use his wealth to help others. This is what we find in the world around us: men and women, for some reason, appear to be very possessive of their money and wealth: they want it for themselves, and don't want to part with it for the benefit of others. A similar example comes out in Messiah's parable of the Rich Man who built bigger barns to contain his goods.

In this parable, a certain rich man increased his possessions, and ran out of room to store his fruits. His solution was to pull down his barns, and build bigger ones which he could use to store his surplus goods. In the parable, the rich man trusted in his riches, saying: "I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But 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?" (Luke 12:16-20). What the rich man ought to have done with his surplus goods was to give them to the poor and needy, but in his selfish delusion, he thought he was settled for many years to come. However, the end of his life came sooner than he anticipated, and as Paul testified elsewhere, we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out.

This parable appears to echo some of the principles seen in the case of Nabal. Just as the rich man said "take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry", so we find that Nabal "held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king, and Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunken ...". Indulging in his own wealth, Nabal's life was cut short: "it came to pass in the morning, when the wine was gone out of Nabal, ... that his heart died within him, and he became as a stone. And it came to pass about ten days after, that Yahweh smote Nabal, that he died" (1 Sam. 25:37-38). So it was, that just like the rich man in Messiah's parable, his life was cut short, and the abundance of his riches could not save him from the grave. As it is written: "wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence: but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it" (Eccl. 7:12). Nabal was not wise: his name literally means "fool", and the record indeed demonstrates his selfish greed and folly – what a contrast between him and the wonderful spirit exhibited by his wife Abigail!

JUDAS

Judas Iscariot's name is notorious for his betrayal of his Master. He was the keeper of the bag, but he was also a thief. On the occasion where a woman of faith anointed the feet of Messiah with "very costly ointment", Judas was most displeased. He said: "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor ..." (Jno. 12:5). But the reason for his objection was not because he cared for the poor at all – the record continues: "This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but *because he was a thief*, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein" (Jno. 12:6). It would appear that in the bag was the collected money, to be used to help the poor. A modern example would be of a brother receiving money to pass onto the needy, but who took it for himself instead: this is the spirit of Judas: a self-seeking thief, who despised the poor. His greatest

crime was denying the Lord Jesus himself, selling him for the cost of a Hebrew slave. Notice his words to the chief priests: “*what will ye give me*, and I will deliver him unto you”. Self interest, not caring about his Master at all.

“What will ye give me” is a spirit all too often seen in the world around us. Men and women will do nothing unless there is a clear personal gain from it. This was the attitude of Israel of old. Consider the following testimonies:

“who is there even among you that would shut the doors for naught? Neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith Yahweh of Hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand” (Mal. 1:10).

“the heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money” (Mic. 3:11).

This is the spirit of our age; “what will ye give me?” by way of money or material advantage. But the better position is the reverse of this: “what can I give you?” In Judas we see a man motivated by the love of money, stealing from the poor fund, even to the extent of denying his Master for material gain.

ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA

The early believers, in order to meet a particular need, sold their houses and property to provide money for the poor. There was a logic behind this: in Matthew chapter 24, Messiah had warned them of the coming judgments upon Jerusalem, and so it made sense to leave in advance, and to sell their property, rather than to suffer the loss of it when the Roman Eagles came to take their prey. In Acts chapter 5, we find that Ananias and Sapphira sold a possession, and brought some of the proceeds of that sale to lay it before the Apostles. However, they claimed to be giving all of the proceeds, not some of it. There would have been nothing wrong in them only giving some of the money, if they had said that was what they intended to do. But they lied and claimed to be giving everything. So the Apostle rebuked them: “... why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God” (Acts 5:4). Men might have an appearance of giving their all to the Lord, sometimes an apparent lifetime of service: but if they are not in reality, their sins shall find them out: they are lying to the Holy Spirit.

In these few examples, we have principles for our learning, that we might not be like them. The predominant features of each case are as follows:

Achan:- did not seek after Yahweh first, and stole from that which was devoted to divine service.

Balaam:- sought riches to the expense of others, who he sought to condemn in

order to elevate himself.

Nabal:- a selfish fool, who indulged himself in his opulence rather than to help the poor and needy.

Judas:- sought self-interest, a thief who stole from the poor, and betrayed his Master for money.

Ananias &

Saphira:- Gave an appearance of devoting everything to the Lord, whilst holding back things for themselves

Our Master taught: “take heed, and beware of coveteousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15). Men run to and fro, being busied with the affairs of this life, and to increase their worldly goods. Laboring for meat that perisheth, both men and women leave little time for Yahweh, in meditating upon His Word, and developing the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5). The love of money can produce only evil, and this is what we see in those who seek it to the expense of spiritual things. Instead of accruing money which rightfully belongs to somebody else, we need to divert our energies into seeking after the hidden treasures of Wisdom, that we might recognize our position before the Almighty, and at the last, receive blessings at His Hand.

Christopher Maddocks

THE NEED FOR A VISION

In speaking of the Acts of the Lord’s Apostles, the Spirit records how that Philip was engaged in “preaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ” - and that those who heard and believed his sayings “were baptised, both men and women” (Acts 8:12). This illustrates the vital importance of “the things concerning the Kingdom of God” - they are principles that formed half of what the Apostles taught as the Gospel! And in the case of Philip’s preaching, they were “things” to be accepted and believed as a prerequisite to Baptism - by implication therefore, they are “things” to be the object of faith, in order that Forgiveness and Salvation might be received. But those “things” are not simply doctrines to be believed; they are fundamental principles for daily life.

Our Lord Jesus taught that the primary things to be sought after in this life, are those “things” pertaining to the Righteousness of God, and His Coming Kingdom: “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness ...” (Mat 6:33). The Kingdom of God then, must feature predominantly in our daily prayers, thoughts and meditations. No matter what evils the day brings - and they may be many - they are but the transient affairs of this life of mortal travail and sorrow. But “the things” of the Kingdom are eternal, and whilst being hidden from the natural eye, they present themselves to those that believe in bold relief - a glorious picture of coming reality.

So it is, that with the Apostle Paul, “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” (2Cor 4:18).

a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city” (Heb 11:15-16).

Maintaining such a vision of the things promised by the Father is a characteristic of all the faithful. In our New Testament reading for today, we consider those outstanding characters enumerated in Hebrews 11:

Like Abraham of old, they “looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (verse 10), that is, New Jerusalem - the City of the Great King.

“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (verse 13).

So it is, that although the promised inheritance is yet future, we must learn to live the standards and principles of that age now in the age of our sojourning, for we belong not to this benighted kingdom of sin, but to the brightness of the age to come, when all nations shall walk according to the standards and dictates of Almighty God: “the night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day ...” (Rom 13:12,13, cp. 1Thes 5:5). In forsaking a world of sin, iniquity and death, a world which is soon to pass away with all its’ lust (1Jno 2:11), we commence a journey through life to a new Kingdom, whose values and ordinances, we must walk in accordance with now, “as in the day”.

These brethren had not yet “received the promises”, yet had “seen them”, which means they visualized the fulfilment of them in their minds. And having been “persuaded” of them, they “embraced them”, which means that they held on to them in love. But more than this, in actually seeing these promises in faith - in seeking their fulfilment “first” above all other things, these saints were taught that they belonged, not to this age of iniquity, but were citizens of a Kingdom yet to come - they confessed themselves to be but “strangers and pilgrims on the earth”.

THE EXAMPLE OF ABRAHAM

It was their faith in that future age of glory that taught them the need to “come out” from a world of sin, and journey towards “a better country”:

Hebrews chapter 11 sets forth Abraham as an example of faithfulness, providing three occasions in his life to illustrate the point. In each of these three, we have an example of spiritual sight, looking with the eye of faith to those things that are hidden to the natural man.

“truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive

for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went: (Heb. 11:8).

The account where this is recorded is Genesis chapters 11 and 12. The occasion is well known to us: Abraham is told to forsake his unbelieving family, and commence a journey to an unknown place, where he would be blessed sevenfold. So Abraham (then called Abram) went in faith, following the directions given to him, and “dwelt in the land of Canaan” after he had separated from his nephew, Lot. In the land, Yahweh appeared to Abraham:

“And Yahweh said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward, for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever ...” (Gen. 13:14-15)

Abraham was told to lift up his eyes, and look over the land - and he spent the rest of his life wandering through that land, looking at it, and waiting patiently for it to be given to him. The only portion of land that he ever owned was the cave of Machpelah, purchased by him to bury his dead. Even then, Abraham recognized the incongruity of a Gentile providing the land as a gift, for he trusted that Yahweh, not the Gentiles would give it to him. So, he bought it with his own money, and continued his wait in faith. Like Moses after him, Abraham saw from his vantage point up a mountain, the Promised Land. Unlike Moses however, he continued to walk through it for the rest of his life, with a seeing faith, anticipating that it would be

given to him in due course.

There is another point in the Genesis record, which Hebrews 11 brings out. After Abraham and Lot parted company, we are told: “Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent towards Sodom” (Gen. 13:12).

Later on, we find that whilst he initially pitched his tent “towards” the iniquitous city, he further moved to live in that city. And no longer living in a tent as a stranger and sojourner, he had made it his home: he lived in a house (see Genesis 19). Abraham however, in the land of Canaan, lived away from the cities, and dwelt in a tent. Hence Hebrews 11 points out in its second reference to Abraham:

“by faith, he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:9-10).

Here is an aspect of Abraham’s faith, which perhaps we do not readily remember: that he dwelt in tents (tabernacles), in the spirit of a stranger in the wilderness, whereas Lot set up his home in the city, in a house. Though the Scriptures calls him “Just Lot” and a “righteous man” (2 Pet 2:7), with his “righteous soul” being vexed daily at the sinfulness of those around him; his choice to live in Sodom was not wise. We can see this when we compare the example of Abraham – a sojourner living away from the distractions of city life, a wandering nomad, awaiting for Yahweh’s promise to be fulfilled.

In our own circumstance, away from the hot climate of the Middle East, it would not be practical to live in tents: we need 'permanent' housing to last us as many years as we live, or till the Lord come. But we can try to live out the spirit of Abraham: King David had the need for a house, and he lived in the city of Jerusalem. Yet he did so as one living in a foreign country:

“hear my prayer, O Yahweh, and give ear at my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears: for *I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner*, as all my fathers were” (Psa. 38:12).

We must also live in that spirit. Like Abraham, in the places where we sojourn, we find no permanent abiding place, but look forward with the vision of true faith towards our future residence in “a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10).

The third reference to Abraham in Hebrews 11, is to the occasion when he was commanded to take Isaac, his only accounted son, and to offer him up as a sacrifice on Mount Moriah. Here, the record takes us back to Genesis chapter 22, where God said:

“take now thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of” (Gen. 22:2).

Notice that again, Abraham went out without knowing where he was to go: to “one of the mountains” that Yahweh would reveal to him. So it was that he

went in faith – but notice the words of verse 4:

“then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and he saw the place afar off” (Gen. 22:4).

This phrase is picked out by the Spirit, and used again in Hebrews 11:

“these all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Heb. 11:13).

Abraham “saw the place afar off”. What he saw was the place of sacrifice, where he was to offer Isaac as a burnt offering. But the record in Hebrews continues:

“... accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure” (Heb. 11:19).

What Abraham saw “afar off”, then, was also the place of resurrection. He believed that Isaac, once slain, would rise again from the dead; and although his hand was stayed by the Angel, he nevertheless received him again as one brought from the dead – in a figure. So it is, that in meeting week by week to reflect upon the death and resurrection of Yahweh’s only begotten Son, we also as it were, visit the place of sacrifice and resurrection. Beholding the significance of the emblems of bread and wine with spiritual sight, we partake of them in faith, knowing that Yahweh’s son was sacrificed, and

raised up from the dead literally. In Him is the source of life, and to him, we also look, that we also might be delivered from the hand of death.

STRENGTH IN TRIBULATION

Those who like the faithful of old, are persuaded of and embrace the promises of the Lord who has “delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son” in prospect through faith (Col 1:13, Eph 1:11, cp. v 14,2:7), will inevitably find that they will face trials, and difficulties because of their separation. As it is written:

“whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye illegitimate, and not sons” (Heb 12:8).

And so the Lord will bring trials upon us to purge us as gold is purified in the fire, (1Pet 1:7, Job 23:10) that we might learn how to do the will of God. As the Psalmist testified, “before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word” (Psalm 119:67,71) and as the apostles taught, “we must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22 cp. Rev 7:14). The form and intensity of those trials do vary greatly; but they will come, for they are necessary for our spiritual growth and development into beings suitable for the bestowal of Immortality and Glory.

We must “think it not strange” then (1Pet 4:12), concerning the trials that will come upon us, but we must rather learn to endure, being encouraged and strengthened by our sight of things yet future, to remain steadfast to the end “for we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor 5:7). We must rather “rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy” (1Pet 4:13). And if we have a vision of that coming revelation of glory firmly fixed in our minds, like the faithful ones in Hebrews 11, we shall have the strength and determination to overcome. As we have seen, like Paul, we shall be able to compare our present difficulties with the blessings of the future, and say:

“though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2Cor 4:16-18).

And for an example of One whose thoughts were always directed towards the world to come, we look to the Lord Jesus Christ, who, “though he were a Son”, we are informed “yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered” (Heb 5:8). The Lord Jesus certainly bore a weight; the weight of the cross upon which he was crucified. But his is the supreme example of endurance, for he looked beyond his present suffering to the greater eternal

weight of glory laid up for him at his Father's Right Hand. He, "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down on the right hand of God" (Heb 12:2). It was this joyous vision of the future that was ever set before his mind that ensured his separation from the world, and enabled him to remain faithful even unto death. We then, must be "looking unto Jesus" as an example. Like him, we must have a vision of the future in order for us to maintain our separation, and endure trials faithfully.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A VISION

In Proverbs 29:18, the importance of such a vision is expressed:

“where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he”.

Here, those who have no vision, are contrasted with those who keep the Law of God - the clear implication being, as we have seen, that it is by maintaining a clear focus on the Kingdom that we might be able to remain obedient (i.e. keeping the Law) in times of adversity. But here, the Hebrew word rendered “perish”, literally, is “to be loosed”, and can have the sense of the removal of a garment. Hence, an alternative rendering is, “where there is no vision, the people is

made naked” as in the AV margin. Being the brethren of Christ, we must seek to be clothed with righteousness, as with a garment. And rather than to allow ourselves to be drawn into the world around us, allowing our fine white linen garments to be “spotted by the flesh” (Jude 23) the exhortation is given “Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame” (Rev 16:15). We must therefore remain fully clothed with the purity of righteousness; we must use that vision Scripture presents us with to remain faithful, and separate, to “keep” our garments, that we might not walk naked and shamed before the Son and his Angels at his appearing. Let us therefore, rather than being mindful of the world from which we have come out (Heb 11:15), be as the faithful of all ages, “forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before” (Phil 3:13). The value of maintaining such a vision of those promises that are “before” us is self-evident - for without it, we cannot remain a holy people prepared for the coming of our Lord. We have Christ Himself to look to as the supreme example, and so let us share his joy that we also might learn to endure, that we might reign with him.

Christopher Maddocks

*“The Truth is but the doctrinal expression
of the love which dwelt in the bosom of
the Father from eternity;
and when men get hold of the doctrines
without the love, they get hold of
a rose without the perfume”*

Brother Robert Roberts

Offence and Forgiveness

The thoughts of the exhortation are based upon the 18th chapter of Matthew, a very serious and powerful chapter. It describes a way of life, the very opposite of the natural way of the flesh. If we are not living in harmony with it, we not only have no hope of life, but we have assurance of the very dreadful punishment to which it alludes.

It has to do with offences—causing them and dealing with them—and with the spirit of forgiveness to the utmost depths of the heart.

The chapter begins, v. 1, with the disciples asking Christ who will be greatest in the Kingdom. Mark and Luke add more revealing details. From them we learn that they had been disputing among themselves about this; that Jesus knew their thoughts and asked them what they had disputed about, and that they were ashamed and would not say.

They were fleshly enough to dispute about it. They had enough discernment to be ashamed of it before him. They were learning. Only just before (17:23) he had told them of his coming suffering and death and they had been very saddened. Now they are squabbling among themselves like children. These men went on to be mighty, unshakeable pillars of faith. They had deep devotion and love and complete dedication of their lives to him and they grew up, they matured unto him.

Jesus, in verse. 2, called a little child to him. Luke says he “set him beside him,” Mark says “he put his arms around him,”—both very significant and very revealing details. And he said to the disciples, v. 3, “Except ye be converted”—the word means completely reversed, turned around in the opposite direction,—“Ye shall not even enter the Kingdom.”

There must be a complete reversal from fleshly thinking and doing to Spiritual thinking and doing.

How often proud wives or doting parents tell us about their husbands or children being ‘over’ so many people at their work. Being ‘over’ people seems to be such a wonderful thing to be had!—it’s power—it’s glory—it’s success.

But Jesus said, v. 4, “Whosoever humbleth himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom.” Any desire to be great and important and powerful is fatal to the achieving of it. God has no place for that kind—that is the flesh.

A child is not consciously humble. It does not think about humility or deliberately try to act humble. To act humble or talk about our humility is not humility at all—no matter how sincere. That’s just well-meaning hypocrisy. Humility is simply recognizing that we are nothing and having no difficulty facing the fact and living with it. We are no use to God until we have

accumulated enough Spiritual wisdom to eliminate pride and desire for place and position. Humility cannot be contrived or consciously developed. It must happen to us as a result of learning and wisdom. It comes from seeing through the falseness and emptiness and groundlessness of pride.

It must have been a very little child. As soon as children become conscious of themselves they cease to be humble, the flesh takes over. They become greedy and selfish just like adults. Stupid, foolish boasting and pride begin increasing more and more as the flesh develops and matures.

Christ goes right on to the subject of offenses. This whole chapter is a consecutive, related discourse and it gives more meaning to all the individual parts if we recognize that fact.

We remember that the disciples had pushed little children away from Christ on an earlier occasion. It was part of their unbalanced outlook of their over-importance.

Jesus says, v. 5, "That whoso receiveth one such little child in his name,—because of him and his name— receiveth him himself." Mark and Luke go further and say that, "whosoever receiveth such receiveth God," who had sent Christ and was in Christ.

It is clear there is now a transition from the literal little child Christ had set before them and had chosen as an example to the seemingly insignificant among the believers. These he begins to talk about now. Those who may not have a deep grasp, and may be in special need of consideration and care. To receive them is to receive Christ; and to offend them is to offend Christ. A dreadful responsibility upon those who consciously and unconsciously think themselves the strong, the capable, the more understanding, as, of course, most of us naturally do.

Verse 6, "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." This is a terrible warning! Have we given it sufficient thought as it applies to ourselves and our actions and our course of life?

The word 'offend' has somewhat contracted its meaning in modern use. Throughout the chapter and throughout the New Testament it generally means to cause others to sin or to stumble, or be discouraged or weakened. This is still the first definition that Webster gives, although not the common one at the present time.

This verse 6 teaches a very dreadful responsibility that we can never fully comprehend. All our actions have a bearing upon others. We either help or hinder them; strengthen or weaken them. And for the results of all our actions or failures to act, we must give an account at the judgement seat before Christ Jesus.

He plainly tells us here that if we are the cause of just one believer, however insignificant, stumbling or being weakened, we'd be far better off if we were obliterated in the sea and did not have to face him at the last day. This is not exaggeration for affect, this is plain, cold, sober fact. We shall, of course, repeatedly fail in this. The flesh is weak. But one of our greatest concerns in life should be to recognize our failures in this and seek forgiveness and as far as possible repair the damage.

Paul said that if meat made his brother to offend, he would eat no meat while the world standeth. This is not a special example of outstanding consideration on Paul's part. It is simply a plain statement of the necessary required working out of this solemn and dreadful warning of Christ to all his professed followers.

If we willfully seek our own pleasure and desires in anything, knowing it is upsetting and distressing sincere brethren and sisters and disturbing to the ecclesia, then we are completely cutting ourselves off from any hope of life. Love of Christ, we are told, is essential to salvation. Love of Christ means love of the Brethren. And love of the Brethren means always putting their welfare ahead of our own selfish pleasure and desires and gratifications. These are not our teachings, they are Christ's. We endeavor to extract them, so we may escape the judgement.

Jesus continues his terrible warning in verse 7. Truly there must be offenses, as he said, and divisions, and ecclesial and personal problems and difficulties. In the wisdom of God, these things are necessary for our development and training that the approved may be made manifest. That His people may be developed and His purpose fulfilled.

But woe indeed, woe indeed, to those who in any way are responsible for these things! How careful and prayerful we should be in everything we do! At best we shall repeatedly fail and need forgiveness, but any selfish willfulness or even thoughtless, self-centered carelessness, is absolutely fatal, unless thoroughly repented of and purged from our hearts.

Verses 8 & 9 still pursue this solemn warning—If thy hand, foot, or eye offend thee—cause thee to stumble, or to be a cause of stumbling to others—cut it off! Pluck it out! Cast it away. Get rid of it while there is time—for it is better to enter eternal life maimed, than to be cast whole into the latter-day awful Gehenna of Christ's coming judgment.

How can we enter eternal life maimed with some part missing? Actually a lot will have to be missing and amputated. What does hand, foot and eye mean here—that must be ruthlessly cut off and cast away? Anything—however close to us, however useful to us, however precious or desirable to us, that stands in the way of the race for life, or that hinders anyone else in that race, must be cast off and gotten rid of.

Jesus is trying to get us to realize the terrible urgency and importance of these things, for this is life and death and time is short and we are so slow to comprehend this urgency, like a drowsy sleeper in a burning building.

We tend to just comfortably assume that we'll comfortably drift through life; comfortably attend the meetings (unless some worldly matter interferes or for some reason we do not feel like it); and then at last comfortably drift into God's Kingdom, who is so anxious to preserve us in glory forever, even though He is letting the common billions pass away daily into oblivion. What a delusion. What a pitiful delusion. One thing is certain, from this chapter and many Scriptures: if we are not very sincerely aware and concerned about the effect of all our actions upon the welfare and salvation of others, we shall never see life.

Jesus comes back in verse 10 to his little ones, the weak ones, the shallow, easily-offended ones. How easy to lose patience! How easy to feel superior! How easy to just plain forget and neglect! And that—the forgetting and neglecting—is what he is speaking of here.

“Take heed,”— verse 10,—“that ye despise not,”—think little of—be unconcerned about—“these little ones . . . for their Guardian Angels stand in the presence of God.”

Perhaps they won't ultimately make it. We know many will not. Only a few. But woe to us in that day if anything we have done has contributed in the slightest way to their loss, or if we have failed to do everything humanly possible to prevent that loss.

What time or energy, therefore, do we have—or dare we waste—for anything except these urgent, eternal things? How can anyone waste their time and be comfortable, or say they do not know what to do with it. How pitiful, when there is so much that's crying out to be done and is not being done. What does life in the Truth mean—life in Christ? A dreamy drift or a 24-hour-a-day dedication? Do Christ's words leave any doubt?

Verses 11-14 are about the lost sheep. The concern and exhortation is still about the weakest of the little ones. One of the first—and worst—things that evil man has ever been recorded as saying is, “Am I my brother's keeper?”

We righteously and rightly profess to abhor the callous cruelty of Cain's outlook, but how easily, in our pleasure and pre-occupations, we manifest the same selfish disregard and forget we are our Brother's keeper.

Our every act is for good or evil—for ourselves and for others. Nothing is neutral. Nothing is unimportant. Any missed opportunity for help or service is a sin that must be answered for. We are not put here just to fill space or to please ourselves.

Verses 15-17 deal with serious offences within the fellowship of God. Verse 17 makes it quite clear that these verses are within the ecclesial fellowship circle—for the final step, if necessary, is withdrawal.

Christ's first rule here is, and it is vitally important: speak to no one else about it, but go directly and privately to the individual concerned. What crowds, what vast crowds, will be turned away at the judgment seat of Christ just for neglect of this one command alone! How little its urgency is realized! How quick the tongue is to run on about others. How little its spirit is manifested!

And yet ignoring it or treading it down, the spirit of this command is probably worse in Christ's sight than any offense that we may be concerned about in others.

Must this course that Christ outlines here be followed in every case of offense and must it always be carried through to the final step?

There is much practical apostolic example showing that many errors and failures and shortcomings and offences fall short of requiring this serious course outlined here.

The general picture of New Testament instruction reveals that offenses fall into 3 categories—

1. Those that should be lovingly overlooked, yet prayed for.
2. Those that should be lovingly approached with an attempt at correction, but short of disfellowship.
3. Those that must be carried through to disfellowship.

Paul said: —“Put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercy, kindness, longsuffering: forbearing one another and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you.” (And obviously here he is speaking of legitimate quarrels and concerns.)

John said, “If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death what must he do? He shall ask, that is in prayer of course, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death.”

The Law of Moses said on this subject and these verses come together in Leviticus 19, they are part of a pattern:

“Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer.
“Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart.
“Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor and not suffer sin upon him.”

We find these same 3 basic principles here in this Law of Christ: —

No repeating of the matter to others.

No secret bearing of grudges or offences.

And a duty to personally and privately attempt to persuade and correct.

On this last point, everything depends on purpose, motive and previous preparation. The previous preparation must have been a consistent course of manifested concern and love. It is hypocrisy to profess that we are rebuking someone in love when we have never previously done anything else for them in love. The foundation of love must have been previously laid.

The pattern of Christ's commands is a solid, consistent, whole-life pattern. Not pieces we can pick out to suit us. We are in no position to rebuke if we have not previously and consistently loved and served. If our pattern is not full and balanced, then our rebuke is merely from the flesh. Let us not add hypocrisy to our neglect, but let us leave the rebuke to someone else, who unlike ourselves, has been faithful and obedient in love and service.

V. 17 "If he neglect to hear the ecclesia (interestingly enough this is the second place the word ecclesia occurs—the first is that very well known passage "Upon this rock will I build my ecclesia), let him be unto thee as a heathen and a publican." Let us get the whole meaning out of this, but let us not let the flesh go beyond the legitimate meaning. How are we to treat heathens and publicans? Certainly we can have no fellowship or intimate communion or association with them, but equally certain we must treat them, as we must treat all, with kindness and courtesy and helpfulness and graciousness and Christ-like love—not the love of fellowship, but the love of concern, service and desire for their well-being, as God loves the world.

Vs. 18-20 are a wonderful and unearthly promise, very difficult for us to comprehend the magnitude thereof, but they bring also a tremendous weight of responsibility and accountableness in all we do.

Jesus says: "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.
"If 2 agree on anything they ask of God, it shall be given them.

"Where 2 or 3 are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

Who is sufficient for these things? Our natural reaction is like Peter's: "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man."

God, through Christ, is offering us, is freely offering us participation and responsibility in eternal things.

It may be argued that since God is all powerful and knows everything from the end to the beginning, that this is actually meaningless. This is a matter of our bringing ourselves into line with what God Himself, from the beginning, intends

shall be and shall be done. But there is more to these 3 verses than this. God is not just mocking us with a powerless, puppet-appearance of reality.

We are told that "The fervent, effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much"—and not just in relation to himself, but to others. This certainly means that things occur because of his prayer that would not have occurred without it. He has had a real effect on the Divine Plan—an effect programmed in from the beginning by God's foreknowledge. But none the less real and effective.

These verses create a tremendous responsibility, they lift our every thought and action to a much higher level of accountability. We are partners with God in eternal things. Our whole life must be in harmonious conformity with this same high level, or it is a mockery or hypocrisy. We cannot have one foot in these things and one foot in the flesh. If we want to be a part of eternity, we must leave the flesh behind.

We would perhaps prefer a less demanding role in the pattern of eternity, but God gives us no choice. It is this or nothing. The way of life is all or nothing. It must mean everything to us, and permeate every thought and action of our life or it means nothing at all.

V. 21: "Then came Peter to him and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Till 7 times?"

Seven times is quite a lot to forgive the same brother for perhaps the same repeated, serious offense. There is nothing really small about Peter's viewpoint here, although it did not begin to be big enough to fit the glorious, spiritual way of life.

Jesus' answer must have been a terrible shock. For Peter felt very magnanimous with his seven times. On a similar occasion when he said they must forgive a brother 7 times in one day, they had cried, "Lord, increase our faith!"

But beginning with v. 23 Jesus gives a parable which, when properly thought through, shows that any reluctance in or restriction of full, eager, uncoun­ted forgiveness by man destroys, for him, the whole way of salvation.

Divine forgiveness is the foundation of salvation, without immeasurable and innumerable divine forgiveness no man can be saved. The Body of Christ—the Redeemed—is pre-eminently the Society of the Forgiven.

If we are in the slightest degree restrictive in our forgiving, then we repudiate the whole foundation upon which our salvation is based.

Jesus makes this very prominent in the "Lord's Prayer"—Forgive us, as—to the same degree, in the same spirit, as we forgive others. We shall receive as we forgive.

We shall receive mercy, as we show it. We shall be judged, as we judge. We shall be forgiven, as we forgive.

Now, the question arises. Are we required to forgive if there is no correction or repentance, and forgiveness is not sought?

I am sure that pondering upon this question can lead to only one answer, for several reasons.

Jesus prayed for his murderers—"Father, forgive them."

He knew there could be no divine forgiveness without repentance and confession, but he made his desire and spirit in the matter very clear and put his powerful weight of prayer on the side of mercy. In pity for misguided ignorance he cleared his own spirit of bitterness and resentment. This is our example and it is wisdom. Forgiveness does more for the forgiver than the forgiven. Harbored resentment is a gangrenous, rottenness in the bones. We owe it to our own peace of mind to flush it out of our systems.

To bar the spirit of forgiveness from our heart until forgiveness has been sought is to rob it of 99% of its value and beauty. It is the largest heart that makes the first move.

If forgiveness is not asked, and we consequently carry resentment in our heart to the judgment seat of Christ, does it add to our hope and chances for divine mercy, or detract from them? Surely the answer is obvious.

We are commanded to manifest the spirit of beneficial love toward all. Non-forgiveness toward any breaks the universal pattern of this spirit, and therefore, destroys its meaning and power.

Jesus has told us in this chapter how fatal it is to our salvation to offend, or cause to stumble, the least and weakest of his brethren. He has labored over and over on this point with terrible words and warnings.

In closing this chapter, he has another dreadful warning to any who harbor the slightest, ugly seeds of unforgiveness in their hearts.

He speaks of the very well-deserved fate of the unmerciful creditor, himself so mercifully forgiven—

"Delivered to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due."

There is an awful and awesome reality to this in the fiery judgment of the last day. "Delivered to the tormentors, till all is paid for." For some—the critical, the harsh judging, the unmerciful, the unforgiving—there will be many stripes, before final annihilation.

The chapter closes: —

"So likewise shall my Heavenly Father do likewise unto you, if ye from your heart forgive not every one his brother."

And it is at such a time as this, as we solemnly partake of the New Covenant in his blood, that we more fittingly examine ourselves in this respect, and so partake not to our condemnation.

The calling is high. The associations are divine. The responsibilities are great. The prize is infinite, endless joy. The mind must be holy and spiritual, purged of all the evil of the flesh, lifted up from the animal level to the divine level. Let us live wholly in the atmosphere of the Spirit and the mind of Christ.

Gilbert V. Growcott

Correspondence

Dear Brother Chris,

Greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Re: Positive preaching Bible Talk subject titles

Erith Ecclesia prefaced all the Sunday evening public Bible presentation talks in 2011 with the words, "According to the Bible...". This approach has enabled us to present our faith in a positive manner. A further benefit was a clear unambiguous witness to the first principles of our faith to passers by. Speakers were quite ingenious in framing subject titles that met the requirements of our template. This approach bought a clear Biblical focus to their subjects.

For example:

According to the Bible – there is only one true God.

According to the Bible – Jesus is coming back to the earth.

According to the Bible – the Holy Spirit is a power not a person.

According to the Bible – the Devil is human.

Feedback suggests that visitors and speakers found this helpful in ensuring a solid Bible treatment of the subject in hand.

If any one would like a copy of the 72 titles generated, please contact the undersigned: (proymoore@gmail.com)

Your brother in the Hope of Israel

Peter Moore

(New Barn, Kent)

SACRIFICE FOR NATURE?

Brother Chris,

I was quite pleased to have read your article on clause 9 of the BASF. I felt it hit the mark and got the balance right – as to what all men inherited from Adam. Not a deferred legal sentence, but a situation of being “made sinners”, and as well expressed by Bro. Thomas, under the constitution of sin. This balance properly includes Jesus in the arrangement, without in any way besmirching his perfect character or diminishing the righteousness of God – or himself.

I would be quite interested in your perspective on a related topic of whether a sacrifice was made “for” nature or simply “of” nature. In other words, did Christ require cleansing as well as destruction of his flesh, or simply the destruction of his flesh.

I have heard some disturbing thoughts on this topic, but based on the balanced approach you have taken in the referenced article, I feel I can likely look forward to some good thoughts on this question.

In the One Hope,

Brother D F

Reply:-

Dear Brother D F,

Thanks very much for your e-mail:

I would be quite interested in your perspective on a related topic of whether a sacrifice was made “for” nature or simply “of” nature. In other words, did Christ require cleansing as well as destruction of his flesh, or simply the destruction of his flesh.

Firstly, Christ did not require the destruction of his flesh. His flesh was not destroyed, and we are explicitly told this in Acts 2:26-27. What was destroyed according to Hebrews 2:14 was the *diabolos*, also called by the Apostle "sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3) - not the flesh itself. In submitting himself to be a sacrifice, Christ was declaring that God's Righteousness required both overcoming sin through obedience in life, and the destruction and condemnation of the *diabolos/sin* in the flesh through death.

Did Christ require a cleansing? According to Hebrews 9:23, the "heavenly things themselves" which include Christ had to be "purified". Again, (alluding back to the Brazen Altar) of himself Christ stated: "for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified" (Jno. 17:19). The defilement which required purification is not literal dirt, but is a figure to describe how that the law of sin/sin in the flesh/*diabolos* which existed in Christ (being a partaker of the same flesh and blood as those he came to save, (Heb. 2:14)) was to be removed

by being destroyed through death. Our association with that sin-destroying sacrifice through a symbolic baptismal death is the basis of our forgiveness, reconciliation to God, and future physical purification (bestowal of immortality).

Interestingly, Bro Thomas advances a definition of a spiritual body thus:

"Now, a spiritual body is as material, or substantial and tangible a body as that which we now possess. **It is a body purified from "the law of sin and death."** (emphasis ours – CAM) Hence it is termed "holy", and "spiritual," because it is born of the spirit from the dust, is incorruptible and sustained from the *ruach*, or spirit, independently of the *neshemeh*, or atmospheric air"

(*Elpis Israel*).

Did Christ require a sacrifice for nature? If you mean: was he required to be physically purified from the Law of Sin and Death through a sacrificial death, and a physical change to immortality, yes. But people use the phrase to represent something different to this, to which I would reply "No!". There was nothing about the nature of Christ which was under a legal condemnation, which needed to be atoned for. He was never alienated from his Father, and consequently never needed to be reconciled to God by a sacrifice for his nature, as some suppose. However, there was as part of his nature "sin in the flesh" AKA the *diabolos*, which it was his purpose to destroy, and which God condemned through his death (Rom. 8:3). It exists as both a consequence of sin, and the cause of sin, and having the power of death it must be removed in order for mortality to be swallowed up of life (2 Cor. 5:4). Like a doctor who loves his patient, yet hates and despises a mortal disease, God sought to destroy the disease of sin (compare the parable of leprosy), and did so in the sacrifice of his Son whom He Loved. As I say, Jesus was never alienated from his Father, but there was something in Christ which had to be "condemned" and "destroyed", and which could not be condemned or destroyed if it did not exist in him. It was Christ's mission to overcome it in life, and destroy it through death, and having overcome it, to be elevated to Immortality in His Father's Presence. This removal of "the law of sin and death" in order for immortality to be given, might be described as a purifying (see Heb. 9:23, and as per Bro Thomas (above)).

Bro Thomas also gives a very succinct summary of the need for sacrifice thus:

"If the death of a transgressor would have sufficed, the, Adam and Eve might have been put to death at once, and raised to life again. But this was not according to the Divine wisdom. *The great principle to be compassed was the condemnation of sinful flesh, innocent of actual transgression*"

(*Elpis Israel*).

This condemnation, and subsequent removal of sin in the flesh is likened to a purification, or cleansing (Heb. 9:23).

Jesus had to save himself as part of the process of saving us (see Heb. 7:27). A good illustration is seen in the Ark that Noah built. Its entire purpose was to

bring salvation to those who sought it. But in order to save it's occupants, it needed to float itself, and not sink. Its floating was the basis of their salvation, as well as it's own.

I hope this helps, but there are many other important aspects of this vital subject to consider. You might like to view the Atonement section of our website, which deals with some of the other aspects here:

<http://www.christadelphian.uk.com/Name.htm>

Your brother in the Slain Lamb,

Chris Maddocks

THE BLESSEDNESS OF FORGIVEN SIN

Portion read: Psalm 32:

*“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.
Blessed is the man to whom the lord imputeth not iniquity.”*

This is quoted by Paul in Romans 4 as applicable to believers. Wherein consists the blessedness of forgiven sin? We must be able to answer this question to ourselves before we can enter into the sentiment. No man can count it to be a happy thing to be delivered from that which does not cause him distress. No one thinks it well to be delivered from that which does not trouble him. “Blessed is he whose sin is covered.” Sin—what is that? Disobedience to God. But have we attained to the state of feeling that disobedience to God is a source of unhappiness and trouble? It is manifest that no one can attain to this who has not attained to the knowledge of God. Paul says,

“He that cometh unto God ‘must believe that He is,’ and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Heb. 11:6).

Those to whom God is not a reality will never feel the distressfulness of sin. Here is the very foundation: that God is. We have been reminded this morning that we are “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Eph. 2:20).

But the statement points to another foundation—underneath? What is underneath the apostles, the prophets and Christ? This is a matter requiring the exercise of the understanding. Let us not be deterred from the exercise of the understanding in connection with spiritual things. Many people are so deterred by the systems of superstition from which we have been emancipated. God Himself commands us:

“Be ye not as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding.”

Paul prays that the brethren might be filled with understanding (Col. 1:9). So let us exercise our understanding. In this exercise we look at the apostles, the prophets and Christ. We are enabled to look at them, because they have left us a monument that nothing can remove or conceal. They have left us the Scriptures. Impossible it is that anyone could have written these Scriptures except the apostles and prophets. How came they to write? How came they to speak? How came they to do the things that they did, which brought no gain to them at all? Whether we look at Christ, or John the Baptist, or any of the prophets, it is always the same: they suffered. We ask—Why? There is only one answer; and that brings us down to the foundation which is underneath them. Moses did not go to Egypt of his own accord. He did not want to go. God sent him. Jeremiah did not want to prophesy. He said:

“Ah, Lord God! Behold I cannot speak, for I am a child.”

He was made a butt of ridicule—

“The word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me and a derision daily,”

But he could not restrain the fire that impelled him—

“His word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing and I could not stay.”

So with them all; there is a cause for their visible appearance upon the stage of time. There is a cause for all their work; and the application of the understanding will show there was only one cause. As soon as a man tries to explain the matter by another cause, the matter is beyond all understanding. The cause is that God sent them; God inspired them; God commanded them. As it is written—

“God at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets.”

Let us look at God then; He is the Alpha—the beginning of all. Not only the beginning of the work of prophets and apostles, but the beginning of creation—the beginning of life—the beginning of all, in a most absolute sense. No man can be said to have hold of the truth who has not hold of that, because that is the foundation—“God from everlasting—Our Father.” Let us get at that. We come to see it by the exercise of our mind. There is no other way. Are we tired of exercising our mind thus? Do we begin to feel apathy with regard to understanding? What then? Well, what happens to any man who tires on any road? Suppose he be a traveller in the snowy wastes of Russia; he tires, lies down, is frozen to death or eaten by wolves. Or suppose he be in the arid deserts of Africa; he tires, lies down, dies, and the vultures devour his flesh. Or suppose a man be in business, and tires in the direction of his affairs. He has splendid prospects, but he tires. What comes of it but failure and ruin? Now then, are we going to tire here? Are we going to cease the exercise of the understanding on

matters which are of the supremest importance of all? If so, what is before us? Nothing but present misery and future perdition. ‘Present’ misery, for where can we get satisfaction and joy if not in the way of godliness. There is no satisfaction in folly. Oh, no; it is “out of the frying pan into the fire” if we forsake the Truth. Well, that is not a right comparison, for the Truth is not a frying pan in this sense. It is a place of comfort and peace. Whatever else we do, let us not weary in the way of understanding. It is a spring of life even now, and a source of glory inconceivable in time to come. Let us open our eyes. Let us look at God. He comes to be a fact to us at last. Understanding sees He must be, and the whole mind and feeling at last sets in the conviction that He is.

When we get thus far, we can feel the truth of this psalm. We learn what sin is, and understand the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. The greatness of God and the dreadfulness of sin are ideas that go together. Practically, we see what sin means in the case of Adam. One sin—not a great sin as men would reckon—brought death, and the countless evils that have since afflicted the human race. Sin is the non-conformity to God’s will as expressed in His commands. Why it should be esteemed so dreadful a thing we realise when we think what it is in relation to ourselves. It is the misuse of the highest prerogative God can confer upon a created being. He has given us the possession of an independent will, a free volition. It is a sharp instrument, a high privilege, but a dreadful responsibility. God hedges it by this proviso that it must not be exercised against Him. So stringent is this proviso that it is enforced by death. The will used against Him will be withdrawn.

“The wages of sin is death.” Now we are all sinners, for “there is not a man that hath not sinned.” If we understand this in the sense of feeling it to be true then we can understand this psalm. Though so very deep, it is so simple that a child can understand it, for what is forgiveness? It is the consent of God not to impute the sin that has been sinned—to let it pass. He offers to do this—to justify us, to consider us righteous on condition of our compliance with the conditions provided in the case. Surely the man is blessed—happy—who is in this relation to God. But, here we must consider again. Many people are happy that are not forgiven. They mistake the nature of forgiveness. Theology has taught them to regard it as an affair of feeling, they ‘feel’ they are forgiven; therefore they are forgiven. This is dangerous logic. Forgiveness is God’s act, not ours. It is something that takes place in God’s mind, and if he does not forgive, it matters not how we may feel. It may be illustrated in human affairs: suppose you have been offended, and you do not forgive the offender, because of his non-compliance with what you require, and suppose he is under the idea that you have forgiven him, does his idea alter the fact? The forgiveness to be a fact must be a something in your mind, not in his feelings. So forgiveness to be real must be in God’s mind.

It is in this aspect of the matter that the tremendous importance of God’s conditions appears. It is no matter how we may stand with men in the matter, if we are not right with God. Look at the Roman Catholics. Their priests claim the

power of forgiveness; and they exercise the power for a consideration in cash. Nay, they will go further, and sell you liberty beforehand, to sin for 12 months or any other period. Now, the poor Roman Catholic, knowing no better, says to himself: "If the priest forgives me I am all right," and he pays his shillings and feels comfortable. Does that make God forgive him? Every one will say, "Of course not." But then they will say "But we are not Roman Catholics." Well, suppose they are not Roman Catholics but Episcopalians, is there case better? Episcopalianism is but a branch of the same thing modified, a daughter of the great Roman mother. "We have been baptised," say they, by which they mean water sprinkled and signed with the sign of the cross in babyhood. We have been confirmed", say they; that is, the bishop has laid his hands upon their heads. Or, "we go to the confessional," for even this abomination is finding a place in the country again. The clergyman says that Christ has given him power to forgive sins, and the Episcopalian may say "I have confessed to my clergyman," or, "I have confessed to my bishop and he says I am all right." Well, supposing 700 clergymen say you are all right, does that make God forgive if He choose not to forgive because of conditions totally disregarded? If God forgives not, what is the use of forgiveness at the hands of Episcopalian clergymen? If every soul in the church consider you forgiven, what is that to God if He sees fit not to forgive? But, you say, "I am not an Episcopalian; I am an Independent, or, I am a Baptist, or I am a Methodist (worse and worse)." Well, where is the difference if these systems are not in harmony with the apostolic system of righteousness? The same principle applies to all. If God forgives not, the approval of earth's total inhabitants is unavailing. There is but one safe test. It is the simple question whether we have complied with God's conditions, God's terms, God's requirements.

Peter said to Christ: "Lord, to whom shall we go but to thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life." So may we say: "To whom shall we go?" The apostles are not in the land of the living. They are dead; but there is a living Christ with the Father. We cannot go to this living Christ as they went; but we become related to him by their testimony and invitation. They are in their graves, but their testimony lives, and this was the essential part—the treasure in earthen vessels. God has taken care that the treasure should not perish with the earthen vessels that contained it. He has caused as it were an immense many-chambered casket to be formed, into which it was placed for all to receive who sought for it. The Bible is this many-chambered casket. Reading therein we become built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. We become enlightened and justified by the faith we receive by hearing them.

The consequence, though glorious, is painful in one direction. We become despised and hated of men. The world detests what it calls the exclusiveness and bigotry of this position. This we must endure. No one buys a thing of any value without paying a good price for it. Justification, leading to salvation, is the most precious thing upon earth. Therefore you pay a heavy price for it towards man, though as regards God, it is cheap, "without money and without price." It demands the sacrifice of what is sweet to all men; the friendship of the world. No

man can be a friend of the world and the friend of God at the same time. There is only one way in which a man professing the Truth can be a friend of the world, and that is by hiding what he is. As soon as you begin to let it be known that you believe in the forgiveness of sins by God's way alone, you are looked upon as a soft-brained fanatic, fit only for the society of women and children. What does Christ say about hiding the Truth?

“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.”

This is Christ's cue for us. This is the position for his servants to take. There must be no mistaking you—what you are, where your affections are, what you are living for. That is what Christ says. It is the devil who says, “You need not let it be known who you are.” We have all got the devil to deal with. He is in us and around us. He says, “It will not pay.” We answer, “It will pay splendidly by-and-by,” for what does Christ say:

“Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.”

It seems a poor affair, and worse at present; but see it out. Let life close as it will, let Christ come as he will. It will then be seen that Christ's affairs are the only affairs of ultimate consequence. Wisdom consists of sincerely and steadily looking the facts in the face, and conforming to the logic of them, refusing to be blinded by any of the many forms of dust-throwing.

Robert Roberts, Seasons of Comfort

Joseph's Dreams

Numbers chapter 12 describes the way in which Yahweh reveals his purpose through his prophets:

“...hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I Yahweh will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream ...” (Num. 12:6).

Our Old Testament reading for the day (according to the Bible Companion planner) introduces us to Joseph, a man who experienced great trials and hardship, as he waited for the promise of God to be realized. It has often been pointed out that in Joseph, we have a type, or pattern which points forwards to our Lord Jesus Christ. In the events that befell him, and the dreams that were revealed to him, we see many principles that foreshadow the life and works of our Redeemer. Our exhortation for today will consider the dreams and the circumstances of Joseph, particularly in relation to our Master, as we prepare our

minds for the partaking of the emblems before us.

The first point that comes out from the inspired record is Jacob's love for his son Joseph, and his brother's hatred for him. So we read:

“When his brethren saw that *their father loved him* more than all his brethren, *they hated him*, and could not speak peaceably unto him” (Gen. 37:4).

Three times in five verses (vs. 4, 5, and 8), we are told that his brothers “hated” him. In these things, we have a foreshadowing of our Master. In relation to his Father, we are told in Colossians chapter one that he was: “the Son of his love” (Col. 1:13 margin). Being His only begotten Son in whom He was well pleased, Christ had a unique position of love before his Father. But his brethren – the greater extended family of Jacob – hated him, and sought his destruction, just like Joseph's brethren sought to remove him.

The First Epistle of John describes those who hate their brother thus:

“... he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes” (1 Jno. 2:11).

Joseph's brothers then, were dwellers in darkness. In these things, we have a striking warning for ourselves. We are told elsewhere “Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door” (Jas. 5:9). Holding a grudge against our brother can originate in many ways, many of which are minor things in themselves. A thoughtless word spoken out of place, an ill conceived action that causes offence. We all labour under the bondage of sin and death, and we ought to focus on building each other up in the Master. There is no place before Christ for grudges; consider how he dealt with those who rose up against him, inflicting upon him the most painful death possible: “then said Jesus, Father, Forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). Before him, each thing that might cause offence fades into insignificance before what he endured – and what he forgave. We must exercise love that covers a multitude of sins (1 Pet. 4:8), and recognize that we need forgiveness for our own indiscretions, as well as those who sin against us. In Joseph's brothers, we have an example of hatred towards Joseph – but the story does not end there, for in due time, they repented, and recognized his God-Given position over them. We look to them, therefore, in hope, and realization that our own sins can be blotted out by the one who is Greater than Joseph, even as we forgive those who trespass against us (Mat. 6:12).

THE DREAMS

Turning to the dreams that Joseph had, the details are very well known to us. The first dream was to do with the rising up of Joseph's sheaf of wheat, and his brother's sheaves bowing before it:

“behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright: and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf” (Gen. 37:7).

His brethren quickly grasped the significance of the dream: “Shalt thou indeed reign over us, or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words” (Gen. 37:8).

Both dreams were to do with Joseph’s immediate family subjecting themselves before him. But just as Joseph himself was a Type of the Lord Jesus Christ, even so his dreams have a wider fulfillment to do with his greater family, and those who become Israelites through faith. So it is, as we shall see, the dreams of Joseph point forwards to things that will take place at the resurrection, and elevation of Christ.

CHRIST THE FIRSTFRUITS

The language is very specific: Joseph’s sheaf “*arose*, and also stood upright”. We have a lifting up of the sheaf referred to again in the Law that came through Moses, to do with the offering up of the firstfruits of the land. When Israel were come into the Land, it was commanded of them:

“ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest, and he shall wave the sheaf before Yahweh, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it” (Lev. 23:11).

In order for the firstfruits to be accepted, they had to be lifted up, and waved before Yahweh. This is alluded to by the Apostle, in speaking of the resurrection:

“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept ... as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits: afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming” (1 Cor. 15:20-23).

As the first sheaf of wheat in Joseph’s dream “arose”, even so Christ was the first to rise up from the dead. But not he only, afterwards those that belong to him at his coming. Then, they will be subservient to Christ in the resurrection, and bow before him.

Notice the response of Joseph’s brothers to his dream:

“his brethren said to him, shalt thou indeed reign over us? Or Shalt thou even have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams and for his words” (Gen. 37:8).

“*Shalt thou indeed reign over us?*” This is the pattern repeated in those who rejected our Lord Jesus Christ. In his parable of the Nobleman who went to a far country to receive a kingdom, and then return to take up his dominion, the interpretation is clear. Jesus himself was to depart into heaven, but shall return to

take up his dominion. But this is the response: “his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying we will not have this man to reign over us” (Luke 19:14). And of those, it is said: “those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me”. So it will be that those who refuse to accept Christ will be excluded from his kingdom and dominion to come.

THE SECOND DREAM

The second dream was different, in that it spoke of how Joseph’s mother and father would also subject themselves before him, as well as his brothers:

“Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and behold, the sun and the moon, and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. And he told it to his father and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth” (Gen. 37:9-10)

This dream then, was to do with the heavenly orbs being subject to Joseph. Genesis chapter 1 tells us of the purpose of the Sun, Moon and Stars:

“God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also” (Gen. 1:16).

The Sun was to “rule” the day in providing light for man upon earth. Ultimately, God himself is the Sun (See Psa. 84:11: “Yahweh Elohim is a sun and shield”), but our Master is also depicted in this way, being the Sun of Righteousness who Malachi predicts shall arise with healing in his beams (Mal. 4:2). And nations are elsewhere said to have a sun, moon and stars in what we call the political heavens (Isa. 13:10, Ezek. 32:7, Joel 2:10, 3:15; Mat. 24:29).

The principle in the use of these figures is that God is in heaven, and we upon earth. He rules over us, and so the heavens speak of the place of rulership, and the earth those who are ruled. Hence, nations generally are said to have a sun, moon and stars, and the extended family of Israel more particularly, being subject to Messiah when he comes.

In the future, the resurrected brothers of Messiah are likened to stars:

“many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake ... and 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. 12:2-3).

Abraham was told that his seed would be as the stars for multitude (Gen. 15:5), a picture of the resurrected saints ruling in the kingdom to come. So it is, that the future inheritance is described as “the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col. 1:12).

Joseph's brothers, however, were not fixed stars giving light in the absence of the Sun. Jude gives a fitting description of the false brethren in the ecclesia: "... *wandering stars*, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever" (Jude 13). Joseph's eleven brothers were in darkness, hating him, and rejecting the visions God had revealed.

It is interesting to note some other details in Jude in this context:

"likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignitaries" (Jude 8).

So we think of Joseph's brothers rejecting the dominion depicted in the dreams, and speaking evil of Joseph himself. They called Joseph a "dreamer" (Gen. 37:19), but in fact it was they who had defiling dreams, of being rid of the One that God had appointed over them. And ultimately, their dreams never came to pass.

JOSEPH IN EGYPT

Returning to Genesis 37, we find that Joseph was sold as a slave, at the instigation of Judah. The brethren together determined to kill him, but Judah, being greedy of gain, did not see a personal profit in doing this. Far better to sell him, and have profit in ridding themselves of "this dreamer" and his aspirations:

"Judah said unto his brethren, *What profit is it* if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him ..." (Gen. 37:26-27).

In these things, we have a pattern to be later repeated in the case of our Lord Jesus Christ. The name "Judah" is the same as "Judas", and it is significant that Judas betrayed his Master, by effectively selling him to the enemy. His overriding characteristic was the pursuit of personal gain. He was the keeper of the bag, and stole the money that was given for the poor (Jno. 12:6). For the love of money, he betrayed his Master. Judas's hand was not personally against Christ to put him to death, but through his instrumentality, he was killed by the Romans (Compare David in the case of Uriah the Hittite).

Joseph then, was sold into bondage, and became a slave to Potiphar, the captain of the guard to Pharaoh. In this position, we see that he was "well favoured," and that his was a "goodly person" before his Master (Gen. 39:6). He was second only to his Master, being placed over all that he had. Potiphar's wife, however, had eyes for him, and sought to persuade him to lie carnally with her. He refused, and said: "... how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

Notice here, Joseph's concern was that he would sin, not only against his Master, but "against God", who had brought him into that position. Potiphar's wife, however, became insistent, verse 10 telling us that "day by day" she sought to

wear him down, and grant her request. As time went on, there came about a situation whereby she and he were alone in the house, and she sought to take advantage of the situation:

“she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out” (Gen. 39:12).

So it was, that Joseph refused to fornicate with his Master’s wife. Interestingly, there is an allusion to this in the inspired writings of the Apostle Paul:

“Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? Know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? For two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication ...” (1 Cor. 6:15-18).

Joseph refused to fornicate with his masters wife, as with an harlot. He literally fled fornication, as he ran to bring himself out of the situation. But interestingly, the Apostle continues to give the reason why we ought not be joined to the ecclesiastical harlot, in terms that remind us of Joseph:

“Ye are not your own ... ***ye are bought with a price:*** therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:20).

Here is the point. Like Joseph, we are bought with a price. We are not our own, and neither was he. We must remain resolute in refusing to defile ourselves through a forbidden union with the world of iniquity, and the wiles of the harlot-system of spiritual Egypt, which can only bring us to destruction. Though sin will pressure us “day by day” we must not give in: flee fornication is our maxim, as we seek to remain pure and chaste to our Master.

With Joseph refusing to lie with her, Potiphar’s wife orchestrated a situation whereby it appeared that Joseph had raped her, when no one else was about. The consequence of this was that he was cast into prison (39:20), where he was to remain for some time. But even in this dire situation, it is written that “Yahweh was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy” (Gen. 39:40).

Whilst he was in the prison, Joseph was not alone. Pharaoh’s chief of the butlers, and chief of the bakers were with him, and they had two dreams, one each. Not knowing what the dreams meant, they told Joseph “we have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it.” (Gen. 40:8).

Joseph’s response demonstrates humility before his God. “Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me them, I pray you.” Like Daniel before the wise men of Babylon, Joseph recognized that “there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets” (Dan. 2:23, 28) and that of his own self he could do nothing. So the dreams were related to him, and he accordingly gave the interpretation, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The first dream was the Butler's, and signified how that in three days he would be restored to his office and be taken out of prison. Though the Baker also desired a good answer, the second dream was very different, in that it spoke of how in three days, he was to be executed. Recognizing that the Butler would be blessed, Joseph asked him to "think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house" (Gen. 40:14).

In the event, however, we read that "yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him" (verse 23). So it was that Joseph's hopes of leaving the prison seemed to be dashed – humanly speaking - and he was left there in bondage.

Interestingly, we find that Jesus was not alone in his condemnation. Being crucified with him, there were two others. And like in Joseph's experience, one was saved, and the other died without hope. But whereas the butler forgot Joseph, Jesus will not forget the one who turned to him in hope and faith.

JOSEPH IN PRISON

Psalm 105 gives us some insight into the experiences of Joseph in prison:

“... He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant: ***whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron:*** until the time that his word came: the word of Yahweh tried him” (Psa. 105:17-19).

Reading the narrative in Genesis, when we find that Joseph was given authority over the other slaves and prisoners, we tend to forget, perhaps, the difficulties he was faced with. Taken from his family, sold as a common slave into a foreign land whose language he did not understand, he was “laid in iron.” This Psalm hints at some of his suffering: his feet hurt him, being held in fetters. Yet, in all this, we find that “Yahweh was with him.”

Psalm 105 tells us “the word of Yahweh tried him”. How was this so? He had been given great and precious promises, and in these he trusted, even though every indication was, that he would spend the rest of his days in the darkness of an Egyptian prison. They tried him greatly. How could they be brought to pass? Like Abraham before him, against hope, he believed in hope, looking to the time when his dreams would be come reality. So Psalm 105 continues: “The king sent and loosed him; even the ruler of the people, and let him go free” (verse 20). In a moment, he was taken, and lifted up above the people.

There are a number of passages that seem to allude to Joseph's experiences:

“Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king. Who will not more be admonished. For out of prison, he cometh to reign; whereas also he that is born in his kingdom becometh poor” (Eccl. 4:13-14)

So we think of Joseph brought out of prison to reign, taking the place of those who were born in the kingdom.

“he raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill. That he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people” (Psa. 113:7-8).

How appropriate these words are to Joseph's experiences! He knew how to be poor, and how to abound, he was in the depths of despair in the darkness of the prison house, but was lifted up in glory. But notice the words here: God “raiseth up the poor *out of the dust*”. This is the language of resurrection! The saints from all ages shall emerge, and be raised out of the dust, as we saw from Daniel 12 earlier – such is the hope that we share.

Joseph was elevated in authority, second only to Pharaoh, even as Jesus was raised up second only to God Himself. Of Joseph it is written that: “they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt” (Gen. 41:43). Even so, it written of Messiah, that: “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:11).

Whereas in our day, the name “Jesus Christ” is used as a term of abuse, contempt, and derision, in the Kingdom age it will be honored. At the mention of it, folk will submit themselves, and bow before Him, out of respect for what it means.

RETURNING TO THE DREAMS

We have shown in our brief consideration of the dreams given to Joseph, that whilst they have a clear application to the way in which his brethren would ultimately bow before him, they take us through to his wider family in the day of resurrection. We saw the reference in 1 Corinthians 15, to Christ, as the first fruit sheaf, elevated above his brethren; but it is significant to note that later in this chapter, the Resurrected body is likened to wheat, and the sun, moon and stars. So we read:

“that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that will be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain. But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body

... there are celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead ...” (1 Cor. 15:37-42).

This is the ultimate fulfilment of Joseph’s dreams: the resurrection of the dead, with all things being subject to Christ, the son of Yahweh’s Love. Again, Psalm 148 provides us with a description of the orbs in the political heavens being subject to Christ: “Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts. Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all you stars of light. Praise him ye heavens of heavens ...” (Psa. 148:2-3). These are the days that we so earnestly long for. Like Joseph, we may pass through affliction and difficulty – but we have the same confidence that Yahweh will be with us. The Word of God tried him – as it does us. There are times that we wonder how His Purpose will be realized, and how we can be lifted out of the difficulties of our own situations according to His Word. But the days are surely near when we shall join Joseph’s repentant brethren in giving praise to Yahweh, bending the knee before His Son, and being part of that great host that shall be given life: Christ as the firstfruits, then we as his brethren at his appearing.

Christopher Maddocks

WE BE BRETHERN

LET there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren” (Genesis 13:8).

We be brethren: Here was the dominant factor, which must guide and influence all relationships, between Abraham and Lot. By comparison nothing else mattered. Before this over-ruling bond of brotherhood all else was unimportant. They were near of kin; they had travelled a thousand miles together; together they had shared the hostility of a new land and the special dangers of Egypt. And were they now to squabble over something which only the blessing of God had brought?

We be brethren! A thousand times since Abraham and another thousand times since God revived Abraham's Faith in these last days, men have become blind to this truth and its deep eternal obligations. Many a wrangle about trivialities of mundane level and many a bickering about spiritual truth of massive unimportance would have been still-born if only this simple wholesome truth had been written in larger capitals in home and ecclesia.

(Author unknown)