

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

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN WAYMARK

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

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

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

THREE FAITHFUL MEN

We are reminded so often in Scripture that there is no easy way to the Kingdom. Now to remind ourselves of this fact need not be depressing. Most, if not all of us, are facing difficulties of one sort or another. If we know this is to be expected then we can cope with them the better; indeed, we can even find encouragement in the fact that we are having problems in life. It is the apostle Peter who bids us to:

“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”

We are here especially to remember Christ’s sufferings. If we also are suffering in one way or another, how much more significant to us are these emblems. Not only do they remind us of our Master’s experiences but they carry the assurance of finding the same deliverance as he found on that wonderful morning of the third day. We are fellowshiping his sufferings that we might also share the glory which is to be revealed. In the words of the Hymn:

*The heirs of salvation.
We know from His Word.
Through much tribulation.
Must follow their Lord.*

As we have said, the Scriptures testify to that truth.

In the Word of God we have three men brought before us whose lives we will consider, the prophet Elijah, Baruch, Jeremiah’s faithful attendant and amanuensis, and the apostle Paul. Elijah was fleeing for his life. He was deeply depressed. He prayed that he might die, “I have had enough, Lord,” he said, “Take my life, I am no better than my ancestors.” In today’s reading from the words of Jeremiah we find Baruch similarly depressed. “Woe to me The Lord has added sorrow to my pain. I am worn out with groaning, and find no rest.” And from Paul’s Letter to the Corinthians we can read his assessment of the life to which the apostles had been called:

“Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; and labour, working with our own hands; being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.”

Now, these three references have much in common. All three men were very diligent in the service of the Lord. Yet to them their efforts seemed to achieve very, very little. This was very clearly the feeling of Elijah, as we read:

“I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.”

Baruch must have felt much the same. This period of his depression coincided with the time when he had to rewrite all Jeremiah’s words after king Jehoiakim had destroyed them, first by slashing the scroll and then by burning it.

So Baruch had suffered this experience. All that he had written had been destroyed and he had to write it all over again, with extra words added. What was the use. when this was the attitude of the king? Surely Baruch was wasting his time. And what of Paul, with the dissension and corruption in the ecclesia at Corinth? “Ye are yet carnal” he said to them, “for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and division, are ye not carnal, and walk as men’ Not much to show for all the effort he had put into the establishment and building up of that ecclesia. All that the labour of these men seemed to bring was self—sacrifice, hardship and even the very real threat of death. It seemed to do little more.

Can we expect our lives to be really any easier? Should we complain if life for us is hard? Should we be surprised if we also find that our experience of life and service in the Truth can be very depressing and frustrating at times? Should we be discouraged if our efforts appear to achieve so little? Shall we give way to the temptation which must present itself, especially in this modern western world, to ease up, to take the easy way out, and to escape to the leisure and even the luxury which the world can offer many of us?

A MOMENT’S REFLECTION

Well, let us reflect for a minute or two on the experiences of these three men, as far as time permits, and see what we can find in them which will help each one of us to carry that cross which we know is inseparable from the experiences of the true follower of Christ. First, Elijah. What was the cause of his depression? We have already referred to it briefly. It was not so much the fact that his life was in danger as the thought that he had been a failure. His work had been no more successful than that of the others before him. If that great power which had been displayed on Mount Carmel had made no impression on the heart of Jezebel, what was the use of carrying on? If her only reaction to the slaying of her prophets was to seek the life of Yahweh’s prophet, what hope was there of achieving anything? The evil still prevailed in Israel. Power was still in the hand of sin and of sinners.

We might become equally depressed at times. We are preaching to an unbelieving world, fighting rapidly falling standards in our own community, trying to build up those scattered far and wide in the earth, caring for increasing numbers of elderly and incapacitated and those who are spiritually sick, and all the time trying to overcome our own innate personal weaknesses, problems and frustra-

tions „ So much effort, so little achieved. Sometimes it seems as if, in certain areas both at home and abroad, ecclesial life is falling apart, as it must have seemed to Paul in those early years of that ecclesia at Corinth.

THE EXAMPLE OF ELIJAH

Well, what was God's answer to Elijah? First, we note that He did not offer him any hope of early release. The work had to go on. So what encouragement did He give him? He sent an angel. We are reminded of our Master in the agony of the Garden; He knew what lay ahead of him. He feared it. But there was no way out, he knew that, and he was prepared to accept the Father's will, and God sent an angel to strengthen him. So God sent an angel to Elijah, one of those ministering spirits whose special work is to act in support of the heirs of salvation. There was no reproof for Elijah in his depression, no impatience „ God knew His servant, He knew his zeal, He knew his difficulties, He understood his nature completely:

"He knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust,"

"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."

The angel brought food and drink. He touched Elijah and told him to eat and drink and in the strength of that bread from heaven he travelled for forty days and forty nights, until he came to Horeb, the mount of God, to Sinai. There he confessed his failure, which was how he saw his experiences: "I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." So just as He had done for Moses in that same mount some 600 years earlier, God revealed to Elijah something of His glory. To Moses God had declared the glory of His character; to Elijah He showed the glory of His power. A mighty wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks. The earth shook with a great earthquake. Finally came the all-consuming power of fire. Here was irresistible power. These must have been manifestations of God's power. No other could so control and use the forces of nature. And yet the record says that Yahweh was not in the wind, He was not in the earthquake, He was not in the fire.

THE STILL, SMALL VOICE

What did He mean? As we have said, these must have been manifestations of Divine power, and yet the record says that God was not in them. What did God mean? Well, it meant, surely, that this was the power which was available to Elijah, this was the power which was working with him, the power which had been openly manifested on mount Carmel only a short time before. This was not the time, however, for it to be used continually on Elijah's behalf. The power was there, all was under God's control, but it was not the time for such power to operate to vindicate His servant and to deliver him from his distress. It was the day of small things, the time for the "still small voice," "the gentle whisper," as another translation has it.

What a contrast! After the noise and the turbulence, the wind, the earthquake and the roaring fire, a gentle whisper. This was all that Elijah could expect, all he could offer the people, but it was the voice of God, and for those of a right disposition, for those willing to tremble at God's Word, this was sufficient, and there were, God said, 7000 of those in Israel. Elijah was not alone. His work was not ineffective. There were these 7,000 to support and to encourage. And these did not need the earthquake and the fire, they needed only the gentle whisper of God's Word.

Furthermore, Elijah was told that for the rest, the heedless and the rebellious, their recompense was not to be indefinitely postpone. Elijah was told to go and anoint Hazael king over Syria and Jehu king over Israel, the men appointed by God to execute judgment on Ahab and on his evil wife Jezebel. And Elijah was also told to anoint Elisha to carry on his work in Israel.

Well, the parallel with our own day must be obvious, it is a day of small things. We do not have the power of the Spirit. God does not manifest Himself openly in the mighty acts of power. We have the Word of God which is quite sufficient to convince those of a right frame of mind. But these are very few in number, so few that sometimes it seems as if our preaching and our exhortation is ineffective, as if we are failing in some way. The few who do respond are those whom God has reserved, as He told Elijah. That was what God told Elijah, and Paul quotes God's words to him in his Letter to the Romans to prove that there was in his day also a remnant according to the election of grace, and surely we trust that it is so in our own day. We believe that we are part of that remnant chosen by God by His grace, called by the gospel, responsive to that still small voice.

Yet the vast majority remains totally unmoved. Even within the community of the saints there will always be those who are not responsive. But we press on, struggling to remain part of the faithful remnant, and we are sure that in time, in God's time, judgment will be poured out on the rebellious, the hard-hearted; not by men like Jehu, men who proved in the end to be no better than were those they destroyed, but judgment will be in the hands of One whom God raised up in righteousness.

We shall remember that this was how Paul comforted the believers in the first century who were suffering persecutions, "it is a righteous thing with God" he said, "to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

BARUCH

So we move on to Baruch. Let us turn over to the prophecy of Jeremiah and look at that very short chapter which records the words we wish to concentrate on for a few moments. We are concentrating on the two Old Testament characters; ob-

viously we shall not have time to dwell upon the apostle Paul. Turn to Jeremiah 45, the chapter which records the words we are to reflect upon for a minute or two, verse 1:

“The word that Jeremiah the prophet spoke unto Baruch the son of Neriah, when he had written these words in a book at the mouth of Jeremiah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, saying, Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, unto thee, O Baruch; Thou didst say, Woe is me now for the Lord hath added grief to my sorrow; I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest.”

Why was he depressed? Well, as we have already indicated, he had a good reason to be depressed. A comparison of this chapter with chapter 36 shows that the book, or rather, it should be of course scroll, referred to in the 1st verse of this 45th chapter must have been either the one which king Jehoiakim destroyed or the one which Baruch had to write to replace that one. We may remember from the record in that 36th chapter that after the first writing of the scroll at Jeremiah’s instruction, Baruch had to read it in public three times, first in the temple before the people, then in the chamber of Gemariah the son of Shaphan the scribe, and a third time before the princes. They seemed to be moved by it, but when the scroll was taken before king Jehoiakim and read to him, though not by Baruch this time, we know what happened. After hearing only a few columns of the scroll read, Jehoiakim first slashed it with his penknife and then threw it on the fire to make sure it was totally destroyed, and then Baruch had to write it all over again with many additional words.

Here then was Baruch in precisely the same situation as Elijah had been; he seemed to be wasting his time. His work and that of his master Jeremiah, together with Jeremiah himself, were despised and rejected of men. Baruch evidently found this especially hard to bear. Reading on in that 45th chapter:

“Thus shalt thou say unto him, The Lord saith thus; Behold, that which I have built will I break down, and that which I have planted I will pluck up, even this whole land. And seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not: for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the Lord: but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest.”

We might think, there was not much comfort for Baruch in those words. These were words of reproof, very gentle reproof but reproof. “Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not.”

What were these great things? We are not told. Was it perhaps honour and respect as a faithful minister of the prophet of the Lord? Or did he hope for an inheritance in the land, despite Jeremiah’s prophecies of desolation and captivity? We do not know, but evidently, despite his faithful service, there was need for this reproof.

It is a sobering thought that one who had been faithful, who had shared the sufferings of his master, should yet merit reproof at his master's hand rather than consolation in his depression. It is a reminder to us that God knows the hearts of His servants. Human motives can be very mixed. We can serve for very mixed motives, especially in offices which bring us into the public eye and which carry some authority and carry a certain amount of respect. We remember how in the days of his flesh Jesus' immediate followers showed on more than one occasion that their motives in following Jesus were not altogether pure. Some of them were seeking great things for themselves. Jesus showed them that there was only one way to greatness, the way which he exemplified to perfection:

“Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.”

This is the day of small things, the day for faithful service, no matter how little we seem to achieve, the day for accepting whatever difficulties and frustrations come our way as a result of that service, the day for bearing whatever burdens an all wise God sees fit to place upon His servants.

REMEMBERING MESSIAH

Well, we have reminded ourselves especially of the burdens borne by Elijah and by Baruch. As we read through the book of Jeremiah we are reminded of the burden carried by Jeremiah and how deeply he was affected by his experiences, even to the extent of wanting to give up at times. We can also read about Paul's description of the heavy load carried by him and his fellow apostles. They too would have welcomed relief from that burden. But now we remember the One who carried the heaviest load of all, who was:

“despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief... Surely he hath borne our grief's, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

No-one could have carried a heavier burden than that.

So now, as we share together the bread and wine, we consider him, and this is what we are exhorted to do in the letter to the Hebrews, again in some more very familiar words:

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses”

And we have dwelt this morning on two or three of those witnesses,

“let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking

unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.” Then the apostle goes on: “Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God.”

May we not fail, but be worthy to receive of His grace and of that wonderful reward in the Kingdom of God.

(Bro E. T. 1986)

The Restoration of Israel—To God (3)

The Ministry of Elijah

It is interesting to observe that in every chapter of the prophecy of Malachi, a “messenger” is presented to us:

Chapter 1 verse 1—Malachi the prophet (whose name means ‘messenger’)

Chapter 2 verse 7—the Priests

Chapter 3 verse 1—The Lord Jesus Christ, John the Baptist (Mark 1:2), and possibly Nehemiah (a comparison of Neh. 13 and Mal. 1:7-13 and 3:8 seems to bear this out).

Chapter 4 verse 5—Elijah the prophet.

Is the ministry of John the Baptist the complete fulfilment of the words in chapter 4:

“I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord”?

Whilst appreciating that John the Baptist came in “the spirit and power” of Elijah (Lu. 1:17, citing Mal. 4:6), the context of the above chapter is that of the kingdom of God. This short chapter provides an answer to the question posed earlier by the people. To illustrate: In chapter 3, verse 7, God reprimands Israel for continual backsliding and giving Him second best in their service and offerings. However, he still appeals to them to “return unto me”. The people ask: “wherein shall we return?” God indicates later in that chapter that they will only return at that time when the remnant who feared him are granted immortality (see 3:16-18). His words are: “*then shall ye return ...*” Following up on this, God then indicates who is going to guide them in this spiritual reformation and how it is to be done: “Behold, I send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great

and dreadful day of the Lord: *and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the chiden, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land (RSV) with a curse*". The children of Israel through Elijah and others (Malachi, John the Baptist etc?) will be made aware of the promises made to their fathers—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and these Fathers will respond to these children.

What a delightful picture this evokes in one's mind—Abraham discoursing with his natural seed, bringing out the spiritual lessons from his life, shoing the delightful types and shadows of Jesus, with Isaac and Jacob joining in the conversation. May that day come soon! This delightful vision of Malachi can only have its fullest meaning in the Kingdom Age. Furthermore, it is important to note that after coming down from "the mount of transfiguration" (Mat. 17:9-12), Jesus answers the question regarding the coming of Elijah by saying "Elias truly shall come first *and restore all things.*" This John the Baptist did not fully do, as Jesus confirms in verse 12. The "all things" mentioned by the Master is the hearkening of the children of Israel to the Fathers, as spoken about in Mal 4:6. In other words, a true conversion. When this happens, the appeal of Isaiah will have had its impact upon the Jewish people—"Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you (Isa. 51:2).

The occupancy of the land of promise by the Jews depended upon their obedience, so the conversation of the remnant scattered throughout the world means that they, and only they will be allowed to go into the "pleasant land". The prophet Ezekiel is quite explicit

(Ezek. 20:38): "And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, *and they shall not enter into the land of Israel:* and ye shall know that I AM YAHWEH".

GOD'S MERCY TO THOSE OUTSIDE THE LAND

There are more Jews living outside Israel than actually dwell in the land and in recent times, Jews have been leaving because of violence and terrorism. It has been suggested that by 2020 there will be more Arabs living in Israel than Israelies! The Scriptures clearly reveal that those outside the land will, during their journey back, progressively become reconciled to their God. The delightful words of Deuteronomy chapter 30 are appropriate here:

"And [thou] shalt *return* unto the Lord thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, and thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; that then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will *return and gather thee from all thee nations* wither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee. If any of thine be driven out unto the utmost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee: and the Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it ...".

It is right that Moses having stated here the principles whereby returning Jews will occupy the land finalises his message in chapter 33, with these glorious words regarding the Kingdom Age.

“Israel *then* shall dwell in safety alone (see Num. 23:9): the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also *his heavens* [i.e. Divine Rulership from Jerusalem—see Psa. 72:6] shall drop dew. Happy art thou, O *people saved by YAHWEH*.

RETURN TO GOD AND THE LAND

Let us then glance at some of these glorious passages which reveal the spiritual and physical return to God and the Land. But first note the words of Zech. 2:8: “for thus saith the Lord of hosts: *after the glory* hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye”. The context is the call for the Jews to come back from the “four winds of the heaven” (v. 6). The “*glory*” is the glory of Yahweh in verse 5—the Lord Jesus Christ and the saints. So first, Jesus establishes his rule and administration in Jerusalem, and then gathered the scattered the scattered Jews “afar off”. Was not this the pattern established in the first Century, preaching beginning from Jerusalem and then to the uttermost parts of the earth?

No nation will be able to stop their emigration when Jesus has returned. The prophet Micah uses the figure of Dew (5:7) “and the *remnant* of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people, as dew from the Lord, as showers upon the grass, *that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth* for the sons of men”. Men cannot control or stop the dew, so with the return of the “seed of Abraham”. The power of God through them will be awesome, after they have responded to God. A few examples will suffice to illustrate this:

“And the *remnant* of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver...” (Mic. 5:8).

“according to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I shew unto him marvelous things. The nations shall see and be confounded at all their might: they shall lay their hand upon their mouth, their ears shall be deaf. They shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth: they shall be afraid of the Lord thy God, *and shall fear because of thee*” (Mic. 7:15-17).

The opening phrase of this verse is seen by some Bible Students as indicating a 40 year period for the establishment of the Kingdom—“according to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt”, but the RV indicates that it is similarity of events that is being spoken about: “as in the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt”. The period of time for the establishment of the kingdom may well be 40 years, but this verse would not seem to prove the point.

Nations will be called upon to bring back God’s children, Tarshish being one of the “first” to respond (see Isa. 60:9). Note that the reason for this response is: “because he hath glorified thee (Israel)”. Zechariah adds in chapter 10, dealing first with those in the land (verses 1-6), and then he writes

about Ephraim (those outside the land). “The Ephraimites will become like mighty men, and their hearts will rejoice in the Lord. I will signal for them and gather them in. Surely I will redeem them: they will be as numerous as before. Though I scatter them among the peoples *yet in distant lands they will remember me. They and their children will survive, and they will return*” (NIV, verses 7-9). They will come from the north and from the south (Zech. 10:10; Isa. 11:11-16).

It appears the ancient “Kings Highway” mentioned in Numbers 20:17 (RSV) a road from Edom to the promised land will be used by those coming into the land from the south. In Isaiah 34 and 35 we have set before us the destinies of both Edom and Israel. At the conclusion of chapter 35 we have the words: “and a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called, The Way of Holiness, and upon this way shall the Redeemed come to Jerusalem (verse 10).

Yes, there is a spiritual significance to these details, which we shall look at later, but as with so many aspects of this subject, there is a mingling of the literal and the spiritual, the latter being based on the former. However, these two chapters are underpinned on the events described in Numbers chapter 20, when Edom refused Israel to pass through their land.

During their journey back, spiritual instruction will be given to them. Time will be required for individual instruction and repentance (as today), and not mass conversion. As Jeremiah writes: “Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord: for I am married unto you: and I will take *one of a city and two of a fam-*

ily, and I will bring you to Zion. And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding” (3:14-15). In this delightful chapter, Jeremiah provides for us a question that God asks himself regarding these returning children: “But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of the nations ...?” (verse 19). In the following verses and in the opening two verses of the fourth chapter, we have an overview of the spiritual progression of the Jewish pilgrims:

Verse 20—Israel had been a faithless wife to God

Verse 21—Great weeping among the people because of rebellion

Verse 22—Opening phrase of this verse, the call to repent, followed by the gracious offer by God is presented: “*Return ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings*” The response of the people? “Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God. Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains (trusting in alliances with the nations of the world) truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel ... “for we have sinned against the Lord our God from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God.”

Chapter 4, verse 1: Appeal of God to Israel: “If thou wilt return of Israel, saith the Lord, return unto me ...”

Verse 2— The outcome of all this repentance has worldwide repercussions “and the nations *shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory*”.

At long last the Jews will experience the blessing of forgiveness which is enshrined in the promises made to Abraham. Peter talks about this to the Jews in Acts 3:26—“unto you [Jews] first God, having raised up his son Jesus, sent him to *bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.*”

THE NEW COVENANT

The promises to Abraham and forgiveness are linked closely with the “new covenant” spoken about by Jeremiah in chapter 31, verses 31-34, which are explained to us in the epistle to the Hebrews, in chapters 8, verses 9-13, and 10 verse 15-17 as linked with the sacrifice and priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ. So the passages we have looked at regarding God’s forgiveness to the returning Jews and those already in the land, are bound up in the redemption in Jesus Christ.

Thus the Lord causing the Jews to be brought “into the bond (margin: delivering) of the covenant (Eze. 20:37), is not the Mosaic Covenant, but the covenant of grace in Christ Jesus. By receiving this forgiveness, they will, as Jeremiah records, “Know me from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord (verse 34). The depth of their penitence can be seen by his words in verses 8 and 9:

“Behold, I will bring them from the North country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travailed with child together: a great company (but still only a remnant—see verse 7) shall return hither. They shall come with weeping,

and with supplication shall I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born”.

In Hebrews chapter 10, verse 20, in the context of this “*new covenant*” the writer notes that we can draw near to God “*by a new and living way*”. This is what will impact upon these returning Jews, no wonder we read of the great emotion displayed by them. It is in the prophet Jeremiah that we have so much recorded of this spiritual reformation amongst the remnant of returning Jews. Isaiah gives us glorious glimpses of Israel in the Kingdom, but Jeremiah stresses how it will come about.

In the prophecy of Hosea, the return of the betrothed of Israel back to Yahweh is beautifully presented, particularly regarding the Jews living “*afar off*”: “*Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably (Heb. on her heart) unto her. And I will give her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the days when she came out of the land of Egypt*” (2:14-15).

Because of this fruitfulness of faith, her land shall become exceedingly fertile (v 21, 22). The prophet concluding this section with a delightful play upon the names of the principal characters of chapters 1 and 2: “*And I will sow [Jezreel] her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy [Ruhamah] upon her; and I will say to them which were not my people [Lo-Ammi]. Thou art my people [Ammi]; and they shall say,*

Thou art my God—Yahweh being married again to his people.

Zacharias, guided by the Holy Spirit, speaks of the reason why the Jews are to inhabit the land: “That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies *might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life*” (Lu. 1:74-75). This was not accomplished during the ministry of John. This delightful vision will become a reality when God “restores again the Kingdom to Israel”. May we prepare ourselves for that day.

(To be continued)

Brian Woodall

SECRETARY'S NOTES

New Subscriptions:

Readers should be aware that Subscriptions are now due, at £13.00 for 12 issues, **or free of charge to any who cannot remit the requested amount.** In addition to *The Christadelphian Waymark* magazine, in the past year we have been able to include some extra special issues, “*World Signs and the Nearness of Christ's Return*”, and “*A Scriptural Review of the Nature and Sacrifice of Christ*” at no extra cost.

In the forthcoming year, we have further special issues planned (in addition to the magazine), including “*The Truth concerning the Holy Spirit*”, and “*The Parable of the Good Samaritan*”. It is intended that the additional special issues be circulated to subscribers again at no extra cost. In addition to these, we are working on a reprint of a book currently unavailable by Bre Tooth and Holton, on The Tabernacle and associated studies: further details will be available in due course.

The Internet

Our website has been completely overhauled to become more “user friendly”, and to make it easier to access the articles on it. All of our publications are currently online, and are available for free download. We also have available all the booklets produced by the former Bexleyheath Ecclesia, again for free download. And of course, *The Christadelphian Waymark* magazine is available online monthly (approx) free of charge. The website address is: www.christadelphian.uk.com

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Christopher Maddocks

HalleluYah

We have come once again B & S to remember our Heavenly Father's faithfulness as exhibited in the emblems before us upon the table. Our fellowship together in remembrance is not only of our Heavenly Fathers and our beloved Master's sacrifice. But it is, also importantly a reminder of the certainty of the fulfilment of the purpose of God, because of that sacrifice, we are shortly to remember.

The Psalms brethren and sisters provide us with a window through which we can more fully understand our own current state. Particularly the intense emotional struggle against the nature we bare and the fullness of the victory of our Master in that battle. Yet at the same time the Psalms also present us with a window through which we can contemplate that state for which we all long. "Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom 8:23).

So on one hand we are able to see into the hearts and minds of those that have gone before and gain valuable insight, exhortation and comfort. This is especially true with regards to the one we have come to remember the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet on the other hand through the Psalms we can also gain a glimpse and enter into the joy and ecstasy of that time yet to come. So that we too might be victorious in faith, enduring unto the end, because of the joy set before us, after the example of our beloved Master.

Thus the Psalms have tremendous power to impact us in the present to rise us up out of our complacency and lift our feelings towards our Heavenly Father whom we have come to worship. Now this impacting aspect of the Psalms, especially with regards to their ability to speak to us emotionally is no accident, the Eternal Spirit designed them so. That we might be aided in the process of coming to terms with enormity of the change that Yahweh desires to achieve not only in us, but also more especially through us in his service.

Turn with me to Psalm 150 pause and read: "Praise ye Yah. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power. Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness. Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp. Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs. Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals. Let every thing that hath breath praise Yah. Praise ye Yah."

Psalm 150 is a Psalm that takes us from the present into the glorious future age and reveals to us that our Heavenly Father is indeed faithful and what He has promised He is more than capable and able to perform. Therefore my dearly beloved brethren we ought to be fully persuaded that He which, has begun a good work will perform it.

This Psalm is therefore prophetic in that it takes us to a time when Yahweh is all and in all in that it ends with "let every thing that hath breath praise Yah." Yet brethren and sisters it does not start in that time and place.

Come back to verse one “Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power.” Here we have a picture of the angels of God glorifying the Father at the time of creation.

Job Chapter 38 and verse 7

“When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy”

The Lord Jesus Christ taught us to pray in similar terms “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”

So this Psalm takes us from the very beginning at creation to the time of the end of the millennium. When the glory of Yahweh fills the earth, so shall the earth be equally filled with the vocal praising of our God brethren and sisters?

Turn back to Psalm 148 and verses 11 – 14

“Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth: Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children: Let them praise the name of Yahweh: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven. He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him. Praise ye Yah.”

Now if you are like me brethren it is difficult to contemplate, for the earth is far removed from that glorious state at this present time. And in that regard it does presently seem as if all things continue as they are from the time of the fall?

Yet let us not despair for the psalm instructs us to take heart brethren and sisters for what we experience today will not always be the case. Indeed we know from the signs of the times that the time when these things shall begin to change in the direction spoken of in this jubilant psalm is fast approaching.

Personally brethren and sisters the psalm takes each of us in the mercy of our Father from worshipping now in this obscure little hall too the time, when we shall not rest day or night crying “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty”. It is lifting us into the temple worship of the millennium in the first place. Can you see yourself there? Are you able to close your eyes and imagine the scene and the sounds of the music lifting up as a joyful noise as an acceptable offering unto our God?

Can you here your voice being added to the great throng gathered in the temple to praise the exalted name of Yah?

We need to be able to see ourselves taking part in such activities for them to become visions that truly orient and motivate us in the present. The scriptures here

endorse years of psychological research that states “it is not the past, but the future that conditions you”. Because what you commit yourself too determines what you are and become. The Eternal spirit through the psalmist is both encouraging and inspiring us with this vision of the future.

Let us then let this scene instruct, uplift and exhort us brethren and sisters with regards to our worship. Undoubtedly although the psalm is prophetic the scene pictured has to some degree already occurred during the days of Solomon in the temple worship of his day. We see the order and arrangement of Israel’s worship worked out under inspiration by his father David applied here.

Indeed I am convinced that 1st Chronicles twenty-three to twenty-nine actually provide us with a representative picture of worship in the age to come in the temple for all nations as Ezekiel’s visions describe.

Our Psalm opens then with the collective worship of Yahweh in his sanctuary. We have seen that in the first instance this performed by the Angels, then later Israel carried out this same function of praise in the temple in Jerusalem. In the apocalypse we find both groups combining along with the saints to fulfil these verses, before they are finally completed at the end of the millennium.

Revelation Chapter 5 and verses 10 – 11

“And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”

Thus the psalm both begins and ends with “praise ye Yah” or “HalleluYah” a refrain that is exclusive to the Psalms. Now it is important to understand brethren and sisters that this refrain was not only sung, but also played upon the instruments. Hebrew as a language not only has numerical values assigned to the various twenty-two letters in the alphabet, but also musical notations, so that words could be set to music and sung.

This refrain meaning, “thou Yah are our boast” is actually the key, which sets the musical tone led by the “loud cymbals” of verse five of the psalm. These cymbals exclusively used by the Levites were used to provide the pitch reference to both the musicians and the singers. Most fascinating is the fact that the very noise they gave to set the pitch to guide the worship was the notes representing the name Yah.

In 1st Chronicles Chapter 15 and verse 16

“And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers with instruments of music, psalteries and harps

and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy.”

To this we add **Ezra Chapter 3 and verse 10:**

“And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of Yahweh, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise Yahweh, after the ordinance of David king of Israel.”

Thus they literally played the name of Yah and He became their melody or their song, as Psalm 118 records “Yah is my strength and song, and is become my salvation.” This surely is the sense of the Eternal Spirit’s instruction through the Apostle Paul in Ephesians? “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”

Thirteen times in this psalm we are instructed to “praise or have our boast” in Yahweh our God. Thirteen of course is the number of rebellion in this case it is against the flesh. If we desire to overcome brethren and sisters we must make our God our boast rather than our own selves or anything of flesh, such as wealth, power or influence.

It is fascinating that twelve of these occurrences in the psalm are in the strongest and most emotionally intense form in the Hebrew, plus they are imperative commands. Speaking to us of the necessity of praise for our sakes, because praise is a gift so that we might learn to place worth where it truly belongs and to deepen our love for our God. Indeed such praise becomes then a means of developing and enhancing us both individually and collectively as we both worship and serve.

The number *twelve* also speaks to us symbolically of the whole Israel of God rendering unto him the perfection of such praise.

What about the other one of those praise statements, since there are thirteen in all. Well the only difference is in the first occasion in verse six “Let every thing that hath breath praise Yah”. Where the imperfect form is found indicating that such praise from those Yahweh has given life to, shall never end. Finally in this regard we are instructed nine times in the psalm to “praise him”, indicating to us that finally all praise will be directed to the Father.

The Psalmist now moves onto describe why we should give such praise to our Heavenly Father in the rest of verses one and two:

Verses 1 & 2

“Praise ye Yah. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power. Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness.”

Thus the next phrase in that first verses is to “praise God” the Hebrew word for God is El or Ail indicating to us that Yah is the source of all power. He is the one who will bring about this jubilant state spoken of in the psalm through the work firstly of his Son, whom we shall shortly remember. Then through the saints and Israel restored under the direction of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This fact is borne out by, the further use of a different word for “power” at the end of the first verse. This word meaning “might” comes from a root word, which carries the idea of “prevailing”.

Herein is great comfort brethren and sisters “for if God be for us, who can be against us?” The answer to this rhetorical question is no-one, there is no power in heaven or earth can prevail against him and his will, except of course our free will, which our Heavenly Father has chosen himself to be limited by, because of his principle characteristic of love. The only thing then that will stop you or I brethren and sisters from entering into this joyous scene of worship in our psalm is our own unbelief.

The scriptures already declare that our Heavenly Father has prevailed in that our Lord whom we have come to consider has been raised from the dead, the outcome is already assured. The only question left remaining is can we believe it?

Yahweh has prevailed in the firmament we are told. Now this word is speaking of the expanse of heaven, but it is also used symbolically of the ruling powers over the earth. In terms of firstly the physical natural creation; secondly of the political powers and finally of religious powers.

Now this word “firmament” only appears in a few key places in scripture, namely it is concentrated in both Genesis chapter one and also in Ezekiel chapter one. It is found in three other places once in Daniel twelve speaking of the future role of the saints and twice in the psalms, here and in Psalm nineteen. Speaking of the rule of Christ.

Psalm 19 and verse 1:

“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.”

Thus since Yah is the ruling power in the firmament then all that is under it, is likewise under his control and subject to his will. Thus the psalmist continues that we are to praise our Heavenly Father “for his mighty acts and according to his excellent greatness.”

These mighty acts are those things that relate to the fulfilment of his plan and purpose, which have prevailed against the will of men and the strength of flesh.

The focus then is upon those acts that have to do with salvation. Such as the sacrifice we have come to remember. We know this is the case because this same

expression is used twice in Psalm 145 to speak of the preaching during the millennium to the people still mortal.

Now the mightiest of all Yahweh's acts is recorded for us in Ephesians:

Ephesians chapter one and verses 19 - 22

“And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the ecclesia.”

Thus the “excellent greatness”, being spoken of in verse two of Psalm 150 is the work of the new creation in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. This phrase is highlighting for us the abundance, the magnificence and the magnitude of these mighty acts.

Again we note the descriptions here brethren and sisters it's His mighty acts & His excellent greatness. Drawing attention to the quality of the person of Almighty God and particularly his actions. For in those actions we see the very character of the Almighty revealed.

Thus all Yahweh's powerful acts and His surpassing greatness call for praise. As Yahweh himself is superlative, then the praise rendered unto him should likewise be unlimited.

The Psalmist having explained why Yahweh is to be so praised and boasted in now moves onto how the praise that is Yahweh's due is to be expressed. Thus in verses 3 – 5 the central and main body of the psalm, we have a glimpse backward to the worship, of Israel under its past glory. Also we have window to see forward into the worship of the temple in the age to come. A temple brethren and sisters that you and I will have a part in which we will sing and praise Yahweh throughout the period of the millennium.

Such worship as described here is totally foreign to us brethren and sisters. We generally worship with only one instrument at best and most of us if we are honest struggle with singing. Yet here we have ten instruments listed, trumpet psaltery, harp, timbrel, dance, stringed instruments, organs, cymbals two types and finally the human voice.

The number ten speaks firstly that this praise is according to law, as was revealed unto David in 1st Chronicles 23 & 25, then secondly it speaks of the corporate nature of worship in the age to come. There are only a few instances in scripture where we have this picture of the full range of music for worship used by Israel.

- David bringing up the ark unto Zion
- Jehoshaphat in the crisis with Ammonites
- The completion of the wall in the days of Nehemiah

Our Heavenly Father has given us the language of music, as it is firstly a powerful aid to help us assimilate divine ideas. For example one of the tests to see if a person has been drink driving that the Los Angeles Police Department use is the ability to verbally recite the alphabet. Apparently if you are under the influence you cannot recite the sequence properly. But you can still sing it correctly, because the music layers the alphabet concept much deeper in your brain.

Music also carries with it the ability to engage our emotions and our body, so that our whole being becomes involved in the worship. This is clear from verse 4 where dance is cited as an instrument of music and worship. Yet our Heavenly Father regards dance as an acceptable form of worship.

In Biblical antiquity, as in many eastern cultures, dancing was the bodily expression of music. It was performed to the accompaniment of musical instruments, especially the timbrel, to convey feelings of pleasure and joy. The use of the body as a musical instrument involved stamping of the feet, clapping of the hands, rhythmic twisting and writhing, and using accompanying instruments such as timbrels and small cymbals. The Hebrew word here for “dance” in verse 4 means, “to whirl around”, obviously with great activity and joy. Thus dance was considered an instrument producing music in its own right.

If you glance at the first three verses of Psalm 149 it seems to indicate brethren and sisters that we shall likewise so dance before Yahweh in the age to come.

Good music brethren and sisters according to scientific studies actually enhance the natural rhythms of the body and mind creating feelings of harmony and peace. Music appears to have many positive properties, which can be utilised brethren to aid in our worship and praise of our Heavenly Father.

The psalmist then having described this incredible noisy and jubilant worship scene of the age to come, brings the psalm to a close in verse six:

Verse 6

“Let every thing that hath breath praise Yah. Praise ye Yah.”

Thus the psalm ends with the same refrain it began with the “HalleluYah” a call to give praise. Yet before that in the first part of the verse we read “let every thing that hath breath praise Yah”.

The Hebrew here actually only has “all breath”, to which the translators have given the sense. This undoubtedly is a subtle reference back to Genesis chapter two and the creation of Adam and Eve into which Yahweh breathed the breath of life. Yet this praise “all breath” rings true of the one we have come to remember in which every breath taken was used to praise his Father.

In another sense this phrase “all breath” likewise stands collectively for what shall be the case at the end of the millennium when all shall be like the Master and “with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

We must brethren and sisters, learn to make scenes from the future like the worship and praise depicted here in the 150th psalm part of our desires and longings as they must have been and still very much are a part of our beloved Master. These windows into the millennium were designed by the Eternal Spirit to develop our longing “for (that) new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness”.

Now as we finally come to break bread and to drink wine in memory of our Lord until He comes to make this wonderful scene of complete praise a reality in our lives. We see in the bread brethren and sisters our forerunner the Master the word made flesh. This bread which speaks to us of the power of the word of life to enlighten our minds and set before us and fill our thinking with that joy of the realities of the age to come. That we might be comforted encouraged and inspired to see their fulfilment.

Likewise in the wine we see the Master the lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Who was slain to redeem us to the Father for the purpose of being able to both serve and praise him throughout the ages of eternity? Thus in the wine we see not only the price that was paid, but also more importantly the choices that the Master made. His faithful worship of his Father in a life of praise, where every breath he took was used to fulfil the Fathers will, even to the laying down of his life, as the acceptable sacrifice for sin.

What of us brethren and sisters are we equally willing to make the same personal choice to give our lives in praise in service, as living sacrifices for one another. So that we might one with one voice praise the Father throughout the ages of eternity, as depicted here in this final psalm?

Wayne Marshall

COMPANIONSHIP

We all need companionship. One of the curses particularly of western society is loneliness. Modern society is more mobile, people move for education, to seek employment or maybe because they see another area as a desirable place to live. Yet this trend leads to a colder, insular and socially isolated society. By moving many people leave families behind and by doing so either end up single and alone, or become a single family unit in isolation of their extended family. People are thus away from parents, grandparents, siblings and friends.

Loneliness can lead to feeling isolated, lead to depression and even lead to suicide. Some people are able to establish new friendships, but for others forming

friendships is more difficult. For most people finding close friends that they can trust and confide in, is not easy.

Brethren and sisters in Christ are no different, often family can be far away and we all need companionship. But for us knowledge of the gospel message of hope, brings, or should bring, a totally different perspective. You see no matter what our circumstances, we are never alone!

If the Truth is truly within our hearts, our life will never be hollow. If the Truth is the primary focus of our lives, as indeed it should be, then the companionship of God and His Word, the knowledge that the angel of the Lord encamps around those that fear Him and the knowledge that we belong to a vast divine family spanning the ages, will provide the companionship and stability that is so lacking in secular life.

If we have this knowledge ever in the forefront of our minds, then loneliness will not assail us to the point of despair. Even if physically on our own, we know most surely that the Lord our God sees all, knows all and is present in all avenues of life. The Lord our God is only a prayer away!

Our primary relationship is with God, He is our Father and if we live according to the light of His word, then we have fellowship with Him. Fellowship with others who share the same precious faith comes as a product of fellowship with God.

But equally so, the companionship of fellow pilgrims is very much needed. How else can we be encouraged and built up in our most holy faith. Does not the proverb say:

“As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.” Prov 27:17

Thus it is not good for one to seek isolation from those who share the same precious faith. But there are many who live in isolation through circumstance beyond their control, or who go into isolation because circumstances dictate that they must. Those in that position need the support and encouragement of all the other members of the body.

But if we do live alone then we still have that sure knowledge that God is ever mindful of His children. We can all read books about the Truth, read magazines, read exhortations, listen to tapes and in many do things that help to make us feel part of the one body. A husband and wife can support each other, but if companionship of other brethren and sisters is present, then this is a great blessing from God.

If we do have the companionship of brethren and sisters, let us then be grateful for it and make the most of our time with each other. Let the focus be upon building each other up and encouraging each other while we can. Let us never take this benefit for granted or neglect meeting together. Let us be givers and not

takers, workers and not hinderers, supporters not complainers. Let us be grateful to God for companionship, yet content if need be to be dwell alone. Though we truly are never alone, for He is always with us.

When we have the opportunity to meet together with our brethren and sisters let us be available to all, but with a view to help them, not unburden ourselves. Let us neither expect nor overly seek help and let each one make few demands upon others. Paul writes: “every man shall bear his own burden” Gal 6:5. Yet at the same time Paul exhorts:

“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” (Gal 6:2)

To bear the burdens of another involves actively seeking out what is amiss, ways to help and ways to support. It involves not getting wrapped up in our own feelings, but rather being sensitive to another’s needs and feelings. You know if we all did that, then we should not need to make our own needs known, for as we help others, they would be seeking to help us!

Everybody has their own problems in life and one of the best ways to not become bogged down with your own problems, is to forget self and to help others. Indeed the Proverb says:

“The heart knows its own bitterness; and a stranger does not share its joy.” (Prov 14:10)

The truth is we can never fully appreciate another’s feelings; all we can do is just being present and attentive. As another Proverb says:

“Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but a good word makes it glad.” Prov 12:25

Each one will have their own trials and troubles, but knowing that our God is an ever present companion and grateful acceptance of our lot whatever it may be, will bring great peace of mind. If this is our attitude of mind and if we prepare our selves to be alert for the needs of others, then we are becoming truly ‘Christ like’.

Jesus never put himself first, but became as a servant. When he was weary, whenever he was troubled, he still healed the sick and never turned away one in need away. Surely:

“Godliness with contentment is great gain”!

Andy Peel

“GOD ALSO BEARING THEM WITNESS”

There are chapters in the Bible that stand out like the events that are turning points in a man’s life. Such is the chapter read in our hearing—the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. It marks a new trend in the current of divine affairs upon the earth. Let us devote a part of the short time we are together this morning to the endeavour to realise the momentous bearing it has on our own life and the life of the world in the final upshot of things.

It is a narrative of events, to perceive the bearings of which, we must consider what happened during the previous two months. Christ, whose wondrous ministry had filled Judea with a new and extraordinary excitement for three years and a half, had been publicly executed, and had been buried under a public certificate of death, and a public guarantee against the surreptitious removal of his body. On the third day, his grave had been officially certified as empty. That same day, as Acts 1:3, and other parts of the apostolic testimony inform us, “He showed himself alive . . . by many infallible proofs”—proofs not leaving the smallest loophole for unbelief or doubt; every proof by which it was possible for a man once dead to demonstrate to his friends that he had come alive again, showing himself to them in a succession of interviews, first to one group and then another, and then to all simultaneously allowing himself to be handled, exhibiting marks of personal identity with which they were acquainted, talking with them of matters they were all aware of, and finally eating in their presence of food provided by them, which when he was gone was gone also.

Not only so, but he gave them instructions for their guidance when he should be taken from them (as he had often said to them he would be). The instructions were quite practical. We read in this first chapter of the Acts, that:

“Being assembled together with them, he commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem but WAIT for the promise of the Father which (saith he) ye have heard of me. Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

There is something here deserving the deepest consideration. The apostles were to be “witnesses,” because they had “seen and heard” the things which they were to bear witness to (Acts 4:20). As Peter so frequently said afterwards in his public addresses, they were “his witnesses to the people” (Acts 2:32; 3:15; 4:20-33; 5:32; 10:39 and many other places). But if they were to be his witnesses in the sense of declaring what they had been personally cognisant of, why was it necessary that they should “wait” a certain time before beginning their work? The whole narrative shows us. The object of their testimony was to create conviction with reference to the things testified. Now, had they presented this testimony in the form of their own personal knowledge merely, it is certain that their labour would have been unsuccessful. The things they had to testify were so extraordinary that the people could not have believed from them on the mere assertions of

any number of witnesses. The apostles were to be qualified to give an effective testimony by the witness that God should give to their witness, in the “miracles, wonders and signs,” which they should be enabled to work. This is what Jesus had said:

“When the comforter is come whom I will send unto you from the Father, he shall testify of me, and ye also shall bear witness Because ye have been with me from the beginning” (John 15:26).

The words of Paul are to a like purport:

“Confirmed unto us by them that heard him, God also bearing them witness by signs and wonders and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will” (Heb. 2:4).

It was for the promise of this powerful cooperation that Jesus told the disciples to wait.” Jesus did not tell them how long they would have to wait. As a matter of fact, it was only ten days. The occasion and form of its arrival challenge the utmost admiration in view of the object to be accomplished. So far as we know, it had not been revealed that the feast of Pentecost would witness the fulfilment of the promise, nor had the apostles been apprised of the arresting and convincing form the manifestation would take. What rendered the occasion so suitable was the presence at Jerusalem at that time of –

“Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven” (verse 5).

The very cream of the Israelitish race, in a spiritual sense, were brought together at such a time, in the spirit of obedience to the Law; a prepared accumulation of good soil for the good seed to be sown. The city would be crowded with people at holiday leisure, and in a mood to be interested in what would be said and shown to them. The disciples, also, when “the day of Pentecost had fully come,” were “all with one accord in one place,” to keep the feast in the same spirit that had brought together large numbers of devout Jews from all parts. This was a suitable moment chosen for the bestowal of the promised equipment for the apostolic enterprise, and now consider the form of it. A “sound of a rushing mighty wind filled all the house where they were sitting.” This was the first token of the preternatural crisis that was upon them. By itself this would have been nothing as a sign to the unbelieving community of Jerusalem. What could a sound like the swaying of trees have signified, either to believers or unbelievers? So next, the rushing, however, concentrated itself over the heads of the twelve apostles in the form of “cloven tongues, as of fire, sitting upon each of them.” But this also, by itself, would have failed of intelligible significance. Men would simply have exclaimed, “What an extraordinary thing. Whatever can be the cause? What a state these men’s blood must be in to show a fiery appearance like that.” But quite another complexion was given to it by the next phenomenon. “They began to speak with other tongues,” not unknown tongues—not jaber or jargon that nobody could understand.

MODERN DELUSIONISTS

There is much misunderstanding among the common run of people on this point. They have the idea that what happened on the day of Pentecost was on a par with the incoherent rave of modern delusionists, who think they imitate the apostles in pouring forth a stream of inarticulate and meaningless rodomontade. This is a terrible mistake. These fishermen spoke in the known language of their day, which they had never learnt. One spoke in Latin, one in Greek, one in Coptic, one in Persian, others in other current dialects, all in a clear grammatical style. They discoursed intelligibly in these tongues which they had never learnt, on “the wonderful works of God.” In the crowded state of Jerusalem the marvel soon got noised abroad, and the visitors from other lands, in large number, “came together and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in their own language.” Their curiosity was intensely aroused. The question was, “How is this?”

“How hear we every man in our own tongue wherein we were born— Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God? And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, ‘What meaneth this?’”

What could it mean? It was something entirely beyond human experience or capacity. It was as if a company of working men should begin all of a sudden to lecture learnedly in French or German, or Russian, on the profundities of chemistry or electrical science. No wonder that enquiring attention was fixed. This was one of the very objects aimed at. When people are curious to know, they are prepared to listen. There were, of course, some foolish suggestions as to the meaning of it, as is the manner with a crowd. Some “mocking said, These men are full of new wine.” Absurd! Drunkenness has been known to take away what sense and utterance a man has, but who ever knew of it imparting knowledge to him—whether of languages or anything else?

Peter stands up with the eleven and gives the true explanation. To appreciate the force of it, we must remember that the public execution of Jesus had taken place in less than two months before, and that the immense crowd assembled in the front of the house knew all about it, some from report and some from personal knowledge.

“These are not drunken as ye suppose.”

It is something else altogether. It is connected with:

“Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, as

ye yourselves also know. Him . . . ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain . . . This Jesus hath God raised up whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath shed forth this which ye now SEE AND HEAR . . . Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

It is not possible to conceive a more convincing testimony to the resurrection of Christ. The conjunction between the personal witness of the apostles and the evidence of divine cooperation with them was overpowering. No wonder that the crowd was stirred to the very heart, and anxiously enquired what they were to do. They had been convicted of being murderers of the Son of God; and the pain of the conviction would not be much assuaged by the apostolic assurance that the crucifixion was a matter of the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, and that “David had spoken concerning the matter.” What hope could there be for the perpetrators of such a crime?

“Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Peter told them what to do (verse 38) and they did it, “and the same day, there were added unto them about 3,000 souls.” Thus was a beginning made to the work of planting the name and the faith of Christ in that position of worldwide acceptance and honour which they occupy in our own day. Thus was the foundation of Christendom laid and though Christendom is a poor counterfeit, having but little in common with the faith of Christ as originally promulgated by the apostles, yet its existence is of great value to us as an evidence of powerful means having been employed to establish it in the first case.

The nature of the means is manifest. It is nothing short of an absolute demonstration of Christ’s resurrection. Nothing else could have caused thousands to embrace the faith of it at a time when to do so was to sacrifice everything dear to men. Having been so established, the fact remains unchanged and unchangeable to the present day, however much men may forget the fact or be weary of it.

Christ has not died since he rose, nor can he die any more. It is a glorious fact in itself; but how much more when coupled with the other fact that he is coming again and that the world, in a short time, will know him as it has never known him in times past as a powerful, personal, actual ingredient in the current, visible, practical life of men in all countries.

It is not possible that God could have contrived a more convincing testimony to the resurrection of His Son. We have only to imagine such circumstances in connection with the case of any public men in our day being publicly executed, as Ravachol or Valliant was recently executed—to see the force of them in carrying conviction. Some say, “Yes, very forcible, but you see, such

circumstances do not happen in our day.” Friends, if they would be forcible in our day, they were forcible 1,800 years ago, and their force cannot be spent by the lapse of time.

Men fail to feel their force merely because they lose sight of them through engrossing attention to other things. Lift the veil of time, by means of the undeniable record of them, and there they stand in all their naked glory. It is the part of wisdom to be influenced by facts, however much our immediate surroundings may seem to shut them off. It is our part therefore to open the mind and heart without reserve to this fact of facts that Jesus rose from the dead, and was proclaimed to the nations of the earth as the ground of hope for man through reconciliation with God.

The same “some” say the case would have been more satisfactory if the resurrected Christ had been shown “to all people,” and not “to witnesses chosen before of God who did eat and drink with him after he arose from the dead.” This is both unreasonable and a presumptuous criticism. It is unreasonable because the divine object in the case required the belief of accredited testimony, as the means to be employed in working the work of salvation among men with which the restoration of Christ to familiar intercourse with men would have been incompatible. It is presumptuous, because it is the part of created intelligence to bow in the presence of an attested work of God.

True reason tells a man that whatever God appoints or enjoins must be wise and of binding force, and that a man must be a barbarian to raise the least demur. The only question in any case is: Has he appointed? To this there is but one answer in the case of the resurrection of Christ: it is the demonstrated work of God for the salvation of men who believe and obey His Word in the case. Be it ours to have the wondrous appointment always before us, and the heart in that docile and loving attitude on which Christ lays so much stress when he says:

“Except a man receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein.”

“Seasons of Comfort” By Bro. Robert Roberts

*“When we direct our eyes forward,
we see Christ more distinctly than even in the past.
We see ourselves on the verge of that great change
by which kingdoms of the world are to be abolished,
and transferred to a new order of rulers
who have been in slow and painful preparation
for ages past”*

(Brother Robert Roberts)

Laying a Good Foundation

In describing the initial requirements of an obedient believer in Christ, the Apostle speaks of laying a foundation:

“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to full growth: not *laying again the foundation* of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God” (Heb. 6:1).

The things concerning Repentance and Faith are therefore part of what we call the First Principles of the doctrine of Christ, and constitute a foundation upon which the rest of the believer’s life is built. The language here is descriptive of the process by which a building is erected, with the foundation being laid, and the building itself constructed upon that foundation – in fact, it is the language used in our reading for today (Ezra 3 & 4) for the building of the House of God.

Ezra chapter 3 describes the reinstatement of worship in Jerusalem by the exiles who had returned from the lands of dispersion at the command of Cyrus the Persian, and the things described here contain many principles and lessons for the believer in Christ today. Firstly, we read that: “when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together *as one man* to Jerusalem.” Here we have described an ideal state of fellowship, with individual members collectively forming a single body of people, all with the sole purpose of worshipping together before Yahweh. This is a good starting point for any work in the Truth - for those taking part to be united together. The New Testament speaks of the body of Christ similarly: “he is the head of the body, the ecclesia” (Col. 1:18). Again: “as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ” (1 Cor. 12:12).

It is interesting to note that the very work in which the Body of Israel were engaged, in building the House itself showed the principle of unity: the individual stones used to erect the Temple foreshadowed the individuals who make up the spiritual House of God: “ye also as lively stones are built up a spiritual house ...” (1 Pet. 2:5). Notice the point again: many constituent parts of a single whole.

The point goes deeper than this, however. Israel’s enemies made the complaint before the king that: ... the Jews which came up from thee to us are come unto Jerusalem, building the rebellious and the bad city, and have set up the walls thereof, and joined the foundations” (Ezra 4:12). The marginal rendering for “joined” is “sewed together”, and from what we are told, the Hebrew signifies to bind together with a cord. Quite how this worked in terms of the practical aspect of building is beyond the present writer’s knowledge, but the language used here is picked up again in the New Testament to describe the uniting of the constituent parts of the spiritual House of God: “that

their hearts might be comforted, *being knit together in love*, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding ...” (Col. 2:2). Again, speaking of the false brethren it is written: “not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and *knit together*, increaseth with the increase of God” (Col. 2:19).

The exhortation is therefore, that as Israel stood together as “one man,” and as the foundations of the city were “knit together”, even so Messiah’s brethren should be found labouring in the House as one, their hearts united in the work their Master has set before them.

Another point of exhortation from the Ezra record is that the offering of sacrifice preceded the work of the people. The Altar was the first item to be restored, and we read that: “from the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt offerings unto Yahweh. But the foundation of the temple of Yahweh was not yet laid” (Ezra 3:6). It is, of course, a first principle for us to understand that any work that we set our hands to must be upon the basis of Messiah’s offering. The Sacrifice of Christ comes first, and it is in seeking to emulate his life of obedience that the believer lays down his life in service. This is a principle that we show in all our ways.

Having begun the work of building the House and City, we find that others, who were not of Israel asked to join in the work:

“Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto Yahweh God of Israel: then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God as ye do ...” (Ezra 4:1-2).

In these words we see a principle at work not dissimilar to the ecumenical movement of our day. Why should we, as Christadelphians work alone? Why not allow the churches to join with us in our worship, and build with us? Why do we have to be different? The response of the leaders of Israel is most instructive:

“Zerubbabel and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto Yahweh God of Israel, as King Cyrus the king of Persia hath commended us” (Ezra 4:3).

Notice the emphatic statement “ye have *nothing* to do with us”. That ought to be our response to the churches of our day. Christendom at large worships a god that does not exist: a triune god foreign to Bible teaching. They deny the Gospel that was preached to Abraham, rendering it of none effect by their notions of heavingoing. They do not worship Yahweh, the God of Israel, though they may profess to. Though they may seek to join with us in matters of worship they remain, as in Israel’s case “the adversaries,” being in opposition to the things we stand for. Being part of a system that persecuted our brethren and sisters of old, they remain opposed to the Woman’s Seed, and we to them. We, as Christ’s

brethren eschew union with the churches not because we like to be different, but because God has commanded us:

“Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness And ***what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?*** ... Wherefore ***come out from among them, and be ye separate,*** saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you” (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

Just as the exiles came out from the nations of their dispersion, separating themselves from idols to the ministration of the Temple, even so we, with them, proclaim emphatically: “Ye hath nothing to do with us”.

In due course, the foundation was completed, finished by the hand of Zerubabel, and there was a time of great rejoicing for the labourers: “all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised Yahweh, because the foundation of the house of Yahweh was laid” (Ezra 3:12). But it would appear that there were those who remembered the former glory of the Temple built by Solomon, and lamented how the rebuilt Temple did not match the glory of the former (see verse 12). Zechariah spoke of these, saying: “who hath despised the day of small things?” (Zech. 4:10). Rather than to encourage their brethren in their labours, they rather mourned that things today are not as they used to be. Our day, it might be said, is a “day of small things”, when Christ’s brethren are very much in the minority, and are generally despised by a humanistic age of self indulgence. We do not lament this however, for small things can bring great results – that is the point of Christ’s parable of the mustard seed:

“he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what comparison shall we compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: but when it is sown, it growth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it” (Mark 4:30-32).

Should we despise the small seed, and refuse to sow it? By no means, for it hath pleased God to make great things known through the foolishness of preaching (1 Cor. 1:21), and thereby save those that believe.

THE TEACHING OF CHRIST

Our Master spoke a parable concerning foundations:

“Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation upon a rock: and

when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth and doeth not, is like a man, that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great” (Luke 6:47-49).

When times of tribulation come upon the believers, those who are well grounded and settled in the faith will be able to withstand, looking with the eye of faith towards the glory of the Age to Come, when men shall be rewarded according to their deeds. Those who are not well-founded however, have no defence against the stormy winds of life. Though he may hear Messiah’s words, he does not build his edifice upon the right foundation of faithful works, and so will fail at the last.

Of course, in the ultimate sense, the Foundation upon which we build is Messiah himself, and the things testified concerning him: “for other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11). These other things we have considered in connection with foundations are all bound up with the sacrifice of Christ. Though we, as stated earlier, must lay a foundation of repentance of good works and faith, that which brings about our repentance and gives us faith, is Messiah, the Holy One of God. It is upon such a foundation in Him that eternal things shall stand. Indeed, it is said of Abraham’s faith: “he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10). Living a life of dwelling in a tent as a stranger and sojourner in the land of promise, Abraham looked towards the time when this spiritual city shall be built, and rejoiced to see that day.

The Heavenly Jerusalem referred to here, is said to “have foundations”. Ephesians chapter 2, and verse 20 describes those foundation, in speaking of the Household of God:

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens of the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the Chief Corner Stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together growth unto an holy temple in the Lord” (Eph. 2:19-21).

Again, the book of Revelation speaks of this:

“the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (Rev. 21:14).

The testimony of the Apostles therefore are all part of this foundation. The number 12 emphasises the Israelitish aspect of our Hope, as well as being the number of Messiah’s apostles.

Returning back to the days of Ezra, we find that the adversaries of Israel wrote a letter to the king in opposition to the building of the House of God. In this letter, there are basically two charges made against the building:

“Be it known unto the king, that the Jews which came up from thee to us are come unto Jerusalem, building the rebellious and the bad city ... be it known now unto the king, that, if this city be builded, and the walls set up again, then will they not pay toll, tribute, and custom, and so thou shalt endamage the revenue of the kings ... this city is a rebellious city, and hurtful unto kings and provinces, and that they have moved sedition within the same of old time ...” (Ezra 4:12-15).

Notice the two points here: firstly the city was rebellious and “moved sedition”, and secondly, they would refuse to pay the taxes: “toll, tribute and custom”. Interestingly, these two accusations were also made against Messiah:

“they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and *forbidding to give tribute to Caesar*, saying that he himself is Christ a king ... *he stirreth up the people*, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Gallilee to this place” (Lu. 23: 1-5).

Human nature never changes, and so just as the adversaries raised accusation against the foundation builders of God’s House, even so Messiah’s adversaries raised similar accusations against him. Seeking to put him to death, they wrested certain of his teaching to present him as being some sort of political activist, standing in opposition to the Roman leaders. Of course, Messiah did not forbid to pay taxes, but he did present himself as being the king of the Jews, foretold from ancient times by the prophets of old. A mixture of truth and error was directed against him, to secure his death.

Though they put Messiah to death, nevertheless all things were being directed by “the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23). It was in the purpose of Yahweh that Christ should not only be put to death, but also raised to everlasting life. In so doing, he laid a foundation that cannot be moved by either the adversaries, or by adverse circumstances. It is written concerning him that:

“... if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man’s work shall be made manifest, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is” (1 Cor. 3:12-13).

This is the work that we must set our hand to: building upon the foundation laid by Messiah and his holy apostles, that at the last, we might be found to be faithful labourers looking beyond the difficulties of this life to the “city which hath foundations” – even the New Jerusalem of the Age to Come.

Christopher Maddocks