

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

The Living Way

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*Upholding the Original Christadelphian Faith concerning:
"the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 8:12)*

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

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The record in Acts describes how that “the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (Acts 11:26). The term “Christian” therefore, was designed to distinguish the believers and followers of Christ from other religious systems. It was a distinctive title, which left no doubt as to who the bearer of that name was: a follower of the Christ, Jesus of Nazareth. However, this title soon lost its meaning and significance. The Apostasy set in, and the ecclesia of Christ became an apostate church. The Apostle Paul spoke of this prospect: “... but I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Cor. 11:3). Again, to Timothy, he warned: “so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith” (2 Tim 3:8). The Truth was resisted, the virgin ecclesia was corrupted by serpentine sophistry, and a Mother of Harlots came into being - that great system of apostasy seen by John in his apocalyptic visions (Rev. 17:5).

In latter times, the Truth has been revived, chiefly due to the Hand of Providence in the labours of John Thomas and Robert Roberts. The fellowship they established was a revival of the Apostle’s fellowship (Acts 2:42), as they continued steadfastly in the true doctrine, setting forth the elementary principles of the Truth concerning the Kingdom of God, and the Name of Jesus Christ (Acts 8:12). They continued for some time without a name, but due to particular circumstances, a name was adopted: “Christadelphians”, a citation from Colossians 1 verse 2, signifying “brethren in Christ”. Robert Roberts wrote of this, in his work “The Sect Everywhere Spoken Against”:

“if men are to be faithful to the apostolic testimony, they have no alternative but to “come out” from communities that both in works and words deny it; and if being spoken against is the result, they will accept it in the spirit of the Apostles, who rejoiced that they were accounted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ. This has been the decision of many. Their “coming out” has necessarily resulted in the formation of a sect, and *they have called themselves by the name “Christadelphian” because of a necessity for a name that will distinguish them from those who profess a belief in the Bible, but do not submit to its teachings, and because that name proclaims a fact that Christendom has forgotten: viz., that all who believe and obey Christ are his brethren, whom “he is not ashamed to call such” (Heb. 2:11).* But as a sect, they have no sacerdotal pretensions. They are a number of private men and women who have surrendered to the claims of Scripture teaching, by the exercise of the inestimable right of private judgment, and who, on that basis, are seeking to “work out their own salvation” by conformity to the law of Christ in all things ...”

(R Roberts, The Sect Everywhere Spoken Against)

But sadly, like Christendom of old, the name *Christadelphian* is no longer expressive of a community held together by a mutual understanding and defence of the Gospel. Divisions are rife, and false doctrines abound. There is the open and public acceptance and endorsement of Sodomy, even by an “official” Christadelphian organisation, and ecclesial websites. The idea that men and women in the churches can be saved whilst

believing in a personal devil, the Trinity and the Immortal soul is not uncommon, as they said to be “fellow-Christians,” who only have a “different perspective” to us. There are those who deny the Inspiration of the Scriptures, and brand the Apostle Paul as “misogynistic”, because they cannot accept his teaching regarding the role of sisters in the ecclesiastas. There are prominent preachers who openly teach that Christ died as a substitute for us, and that there is no such thing as sin in the flesh. “The Hope of Israel” is minimised - as we see elsewhere in this issue. The nature and sacrifice of Christ is not understood, and the Bible doctrine of the Person of God is denied by a form of pantheism. There are those who claim Holy Spirit possession, and believe in faith-healing. There is an overriding acceptance that differences of opinion are “alternative points of view”, or a “fresh perspective” - where the Bible uses the expression: “damnable heresies” (2 Pet. 2:1). And there is an “open fellowship” whereby the emblems are shared with others, regardless as to their beliefs and fellowship standing: the BASF is openly denied as a basis of fellowship for Christadelphians.

In the book “Christadelphian Treasury”, J M Evans wrote the following:

“I have borne the name of Christadelphian for forty years, and upon the significance of that title a few words may be useful. It came into existence when it was necessary to distinguish the brethren from other so-called Christians. Ever since, that name has stood for the One Faith and for separation from the present evil world in its Religious, Social and Political aspects.

“Brethren in Christ,” a high and noble calling, an honourable name! ***Has it lost its meaning since it first came into being?*** The Ecclesia at Sardis had a “name” that it lived, but it was dead. They called themselves Brethren in Christ, and they had a high reputation, but in Christ’s estimation, they were like the Pharisees, ‘whited sepulchres’, outwardly beautiful, but inwardly full of dead men’s bones. Should the salt lose its savour, should the name Christadelphia ever become a misnomer; should it come to be borne by a people who have become false to the Truth it signifies, lax, latitudinarian and worldly, ***it might become necessary for “a few names” who had lived up to the Name to repudiate a title which they once rightly glorified in”***

J M Evans, Christadelphian Treasury

It is a sad fact that the name “Christadelphian,” whilst it was once expressive of the community of true believers, it is now a corporate branding held by many who don’t even accept the doctrines described by the BASF as a basis for fellowship. As a survey of ecclesial websites will show, to claim the name “Christadelphian” is to claim a living name, yet the holders thereof do not necessarily believe the elementary principles of the Gospel that saves. It is mainly because of this reason that whilst we do not altogether “repudiate” the title, we have renamed The Christadelphian Waymark to The Living Way magazine, which does not bear or imply the modern connotations associated with the Christadelphian branding.

There is also another reason for our change of Title. The record in Acts chapter 18 describes the experience of Apollos:

“... and he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Prisilla had heard, they took him unto them, ***and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly***” (Acts 18:26)

This example of Apollos demonstrates that it is quite possible to be zealous and bold in expounding the Word, yet be lacking in understanding. Apollos had the humility to stand corrected, and heeded the instruction of Aquilla and Priscilla, and as a consequence, understood the Way “more perfectly.” The example of the Apostle Paul also demonstrates how it is possible to be highly motivated with a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. He had to be corrected, and redirected in his understanding in order to promote the entire counsel of God.

The present writer also had the need to have the Way of God expounded to him more perfectly. In the year 2000, he began producing The Christadelphian Waymark magazine, with its stated mission to be: “Devoted to the Defence and Proclamation of the Way of Life, in Opposition to the Dogmas of Papal and Protestant Christendom”. The intention was to present and defend the Christadelphian position on particular First Principles, primarily the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the Atonement. However, it was more recently pointed out that whilst the present writer was contending against errorists, he himself lacked an understanding of certain principles, that the BASF plainly teaches. These included the acknowledgment that the Kingdom God is essentially as the BASF has it: “the kingdom of Israel restored, ***in the territory it formerly occupied***, viz. the land bequeathed for an everlasting possession to Abraham and his seed (the Christ) by covenant.” Our previous position was that the Kingdom over which Christ will reign will be a worldwide Kingdom, albeit with Jerusalem being its capital. But as we demonstrate elsewhere in this issue, the kingdoms of men will still retain their national identity during the Millennial Reign of Messiah. They be part of his empire and under his rulership, but they are not the “first dominion”, or the kingdom proper. This will be Israel, which will remain when the other kingdoms are ultimately done away with.

Another issue was to do with the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ over the *diabolos*. Assuming that we die because we transgress, and that sin in the flesh was “the Carnal Mind”, it was previously thought that the victory of Christ was in his death, when the thinking of the flesh ceased. However, the truth of the matter, is that Scripture uses the word “victory” in the context of resurrection, and not of death. So Paul wrote: “So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that it is written, Death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Cor. 15:54). The victory therefore, is in the resurrection from the dead, and not descending into the death-state.

Some of these errors found their way into our earlier publications, and therefore must be corrected. Whilst we anticipate the scolding criticism of our adversaries for changing our position, we believe that it is better to stand corrected than to continue with erroneous beliefs for the sake of pleasing men.

This was another reason for renaming the magazine: it draws a line under what has gone before, and provides impetus for going forward to proclaim the Truth. We have developed a completely new website for The Living Way magazine, and the address is here: www.bibleonline.uk

THE LIVING WAY

Why “Living Way”? The title comes from the book of Hebrews, which reads:

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, **by a new and living way**, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb. 10:19-20).

The believers in Christ, then, have access to “a new and living way”. In the early history of the ecclesiastas, the system of doctrines they followed was described as “the Way”. Hence Paul described his persecution of the believers, saying: “I persecuted **this way** unto the death ...” (Acts 22:4). Again, we read that he desired of the High Priest “letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of **this way**, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem” (Acts 9:2).

So it is that those who have left the Truth have left the Way:

“There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all **gone out of the way**, they are together become unprofitable; there is none good, no, not one” (Rom. 3:11-12).

Instead, they walk along a different way:

“For they have gone **in the way of Cain**, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward ...” (Jude 11:)

The Proverbs also speak of those who have forsaken the Way:

“the man that wandereth **out of the way of understanding** shall remain in the congregation of the dead” (Prov. 21:16).

It is clear then, that we need to ensure that we are walking along the path of understanding and wisdom.

The Lord Jesus Christ also spoke of “The Way”:

“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there by which go in thereto. Because strait is the gate, and **narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life**, and few there be that find it” (Mat. 7:13-14).

There are only a “few” that find the strait gate, and there are even fewer who enter in through it. A gate is designed to be both a barrier to keep out the undesirables, and also an entrance to provide access to a Way. Only those who have the Key can enter

therein, and the leaders of Jesus's day took away that key from those who would otherwise enter:

“... for ye have taken away ***the key of knowledge***: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered” (Lu. 11:52).

We need then, to use the Key of Knowledge to unlock the gate, and proceed along the narrow path that leads to life.

One of our adversaries, whilst steadfastly refusing to discuss the Scriptures with us, mocks and scorns the fact that we are few in number. Another asks whether or not what we promote is just a “minority view” that can therefore be discarded. But according to Messiah himself, the Way is accessed and traversed by a despised minority - so, yes, according to our Master, our “view” is only held by a few. Doubtless in Noah's day, there would have been the same scorning and deriding. Out of the entire world population, only eight individuals had faith. They would have been laughed at, and despised because of they were so few, amongst multitudes who had no faith in the things of the Truth. But, when the rain fell, and the floods came, it was only those few who entered into the Ark who were saved. No matter how righteous the pious of their day thought themselves to be, they were outside the ark - and were therefore outside of the arena of salvation. The door was shut, and the day of opportunity came to an end. We do not write for the majority who have no interest in the things of the Truth, but for the few that might yet have ears to hear and eyes to see.

John chapter 14 records the words of Thomas to the Master concerning the means of access to salvation:

“Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and ***how can we know the way?***”

Then we read that:

“Jesus saith unto him, ***I am the Way, the Truth and the Life***: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (Jno. 14:6).

Messiah, therefore, is “The Way”. But being the Word Made Flesh, he is also “the Truth” and “the Life”. Often the first and third of these aspects are referred to: the Way and the Life. But he is also “The Truth”. Christ is the epitome of truth and holiness, and is the Way of reconciliation to the Father. Whereas in the Edenic paradise the Truth of God was denied and the serpent's lie embraced, in Messiah we have absolute Truth epitomised. We must therefore seek to forsake the deceitful ways of the flesh, and embrace the Truth as it is in him. Then we will overcome, being participants of his victory through Resurrection. Walking back along the Way to the Tree of Life, we will be granted the privilege of partaking of its life-giving fruit, and live eternally with our Redeemer. This is the purpose and mission of “The Living Way” magazine. We are devoted to upholding the original Christadelphian faith concerning: “the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 8:12). To contact Christadelphians who still uphold the doctrines of Scripture described by the BASF as their basis of fellowship, please do message the undersigned here: cchris@bibleonline.uk

Christopher Maddocks

The Hope of Israel

The CMPA publishes a booklet entitled “The Kingdom of God Upon Earth - God’s Plan for the World”. Although it appears to begin by speaking about Israel, so far as this booklet is concerned, they are merely part of the mortal population of the Kingdom, who are “allowed to live” in the land. So we read of the mortal inhabitants:

“... the second group will consist of the mortal peoples of the world who, at Christ’s return, survive the judgements on the earth and are willing for Jesus to be their king. ***This will include Jews who are allowed to live in Israel***” (page 8, emphasis ours).

Very little else is written there regarding Israel. The BASF however, is very clear that it will not only be the case that the Jews will be “allowed to live in Israel” - the Kingdom itself will ***be*** Israel. So Clause XXI reads: “That the kingdom which he will establish ***will be*** the kingdom of Israel restored, in the territory it formerly occupied, viz., the land bequeathed for an everlasting possession to Abraham and his seed (the Christ) by covenant” - and various supporting Scriptures are cited to prove the point.

Notice the difference: the CMPA state that in the kingdom, the Jews will be merely “allowed” to live in Israel, whereas the BASF states that the kingdom actually ***is*** Israel restored. They are not only mortal inhabitants of the kingdom - they actually comprise that kingdom. A common misconception is that the coming kingdom will be worldwide, with Jerusalem happening to be the capital city - and this appears to be the position of the CMPA. It is also a position that the present writer once held, as referred to in our opening article. But this is only part of the truth: the BASF teaches that not only is the kingdom to be a restoration of a similar polity of old, it is also to occupy the same territory: “in the territory it formerly occupied”. The geographical extent of the kingdom will be within the borders of Israel. True it is, that the dominion of Messiah will be over a worldwide empire, but the “first dominion” (Mic. 4:8), or kingdom proper will be Israel itself. As this article hopes to show, the testimony of Scripture is that the kingdoms of men will continue to exist - they will not be removed until the end of the Millennium - but they will be subjugated under the rule of the King of Israel.

Brother John Thomas wrote of the situation thus:

“Indeed, the testimony concerning the territory and throne of the kingdom are so intimately connected with the gospel, that a person cannot believe the gospel and be ignorant of it; for the territory and throne are principal subjects of the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the covenant made with David. These are “the covenants of promise” which the ignorant, and consequently unbelieving, are “strangers from.” It is useless to talk about believing the gospel, and at the same time to be ignorant of these and of their true import; for they contain the gospel as we have shown abundantly in Elpis Israel. They define not only the locality and throne of the kingdom, but its subjects, the line of its king’s descent, his humiliation and exaltation, &c., the duration of the kingdom, the contemporary blessedness of all nations, and so-forth. But we cannot particularize every thing here. He that studies the word

will find the things of the kingdom shining forth from the writings of all the prophets and apostles. The more he understands the more he will see. We will only add here at present *that they teach that the territory of the kingdom of the heavens is the land in which Abraham dwelt with Isaac and Jacob*, and tended his flocks and herds; the subjects of the kingdom, Abraham's descendants in the line of Isaac and Jacob; the King, one of his seed, the antitype of Isaac when he died and rose again "in a figure;" the throne, David's in Zion and Jerusalem; the empire, all the nations of the earth in a state of blessedness; the duration of the kingdom, like its king "for ever."

(Herald of The Kingdom 1852 Vol. 2, p. 33)

According to Bro Thomas therefore, if somebody believes that the territory of the Kingdom during the millennium will be the land of the whole globe they are ignorant of a fundamental principle of the Gospel!

Bro Thomas taught in *Elpis Israel* and his other writings, that there would be a Kingdom and an Empire during the Millenium. For instance:

"A kingdom is the dominion of a king. An empire is also the dominion of a king, but with this difference: the kingdom proper, or "the first dominion", is restricted to a regally constituted territory; while the empire, or secondary dominion, though belonging to the same king, extends over other peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues, than those of the royal domain. This is illustrated in the case of the British kingdoms and empire. The kingdoms are restricted to England and Scotland, which are by constitution regal territories; but the empire is a secondary dominion of the same united crowns, extending over Canada, Hindostan, and other parts of the globe, with all the nations, languages, and people, they contain.

There are various elements necessary to the constitution of a well-organized kingdom. In the first place, *a kingdom must have a territory*. This is only saying, in other terms, that something must be somewhere. To maintain the opposite would be to contend that something is nowhere. A kingdom is not located in feeling, or in heart; though a belief of its future existence, a comprehension of its nature, or an attachment to it, may exist there. It must have a place, a locality, as well as a name."

(Elpis Israel. p. 221)

There are those who characterise our position as saying that the rule of Christ will be over Israel only, and that the nations will be free to do as they please. That, however, is not our position at all - and it is significant that our adversaries have to distort and misstate what we teach in order to discredit it. Our position - as taught by the BASF, Brother Thomas, and Scripture itself - is that Messiah's kingdom will be Israel, but that he will rule over the other kingdoms as part of his world wide empire. And this, we believe, is what the Bible teaches.

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES

The promise of the Angel concerning the Lord Jesus Christ was this:

“... he shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and **he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever**; and of his kingdom there shall be no end” (Luk. 1:32-33).

Here it is plainly stated that the Son of the Highest will reign over the house of Jacob, which will be an unending kingdom. Later, the Apostles enquired further regarding this: “they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel” (Acts 1:6). So it was that following a 40 day period of instruction from the Master, the Apostles understood the kingdom to be Israel Restored. This fact of Messiah being Israel’s future king was the basis of hope for the believers - hence the Apostle described himself as being bound “for the hope of Israel” (Acts 28:20). The restoration of Israel is bound up with our salvation, for Paul declared that: “if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shallt he receiving of them be, **but life from the dead?**” (Rom. 11:15). And to this we can add the testimony of Messiah himself, that “**salvation is of the Jews**” (Jno. 4:22).

But how is it so? What has our Salvation got to do with Israel dwelling in the land? In the prophecy of Daniel, we learn that during the Millennial reign of Christ, the kingdoms of men will retain their distinct identities, yet being overruled by Messiah, the Great Prince: “as concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away, **yet their lives were prolonged** for a season and time” (Dan. 7:12). Again, Isaiah describes how that: “... the nation **and kingdom** that will not serve thee shall perish; yea those nations shall be utterly wasted” (Isa. 60:12). These testimonies prove that there will be nations and kingdoms under the Israelitish administration, and they will be subservient to Israel.

However, ultimately those subject nations will be brought to an end. So Jeremiah spoke concerning Israel:

“... for I am with thee, saith Yahweh, to save thee: though **I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee**, yet will **I not make a full end of thee**: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished” (Jer. 30:11).

From this we learn that eventually the nations will be made “a full end” of, yet by contrast, Israel will continue to exist. Though enduring a measured correction at the hand of their God, the Deliverer shall come, and “turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (see Rom. 11:26-27, and Isa. 59:20), and establish himself on the ancient Davidic seat of power.

Isaiah also describes the future for Israel:

“Israel shall be saved in Yahweh with **an everlasting salvation**: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded **world without end**. For thus saith Yahweh that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it, he hath established it, he created it not in vain, **he formed it to be inhabited**: I am Yahweh; and there is none else” (Isa. 45:17-18).

Notice the way in which Israel's "everlasting salvation" is linked with God's Purpose with the earth, it being formed "to be inhabited." Being as that the nations shall have an end, and all that remains will be glorified Israel, it is only logical that if we wish to have "an everlasting salvation," we need to separate ourselves from the nations, and become joined to Israel.

This is, in fact, the position taught by the inspired Apostle Paul. Speaking of the believers before they were brought nigh by the blood of Christ, he writes:

"at that time ye were without Christ, **being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel**, and strangers from the covenants of promise, **having no hope, and without God in the world**. But now in Christ Jesus ye who were sometimes afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:12-13).

Those who are not grafted to the Israelitish olive tree (Rom. 11:17) are outside the scope of the promises made to the patriarchs of old. For them, there is no hope, for the nations and world of which they are part will ultimately end. But those who embrace the national Hope of Israel become part of the "Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16). They constitute the *ecclesia* of Christ, looking to the fulfilment of the great and precious promises (2 Pet. 1:4) made to them. Israel will last forever, and so the Ecclesia who join themselves to her will also last forever. Hence, the Apostle quotes Isaiah 45:17, in speaking of those future days: "Unto Him be glory **in the ecclesia** by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, **world without end**. Amen." (Eph. 3:21).

Israel will endure "world without end," - and so will those who join themselves with her. This is the hope of salvation, and it is the Hope of Israel. As the Angel said to Mary, the house and kingdom of Jacob will continue "for ever", and will have "no end". This is the reason why "salvation is of the Jews."

Just as in the case of Israel God took him "a nation from the midst of another nation" (Deut. 4:34), even so now, God is calling out a people from the Gentile nations for the glorification of His Name: "God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out from them a people for his name" (Acts. 15:14).

In the kingdom to come then, it will not be simply the case that Jews will be "allowed" to live in the land - their national existence will comprise that kingdom, the tribes over which Messiah shall reign. Our part therefore, is to embrace the Hope of Israel, and spiritually separate ourselves from the kingdoms of men. Only then can we be joined to the commonwealth of Israel, and inherit the promise made to the Fathers of old: truly this is "life from the dead".

Christopher Maddocks

"Men were not ushered into being for the purpose of being saved or lost. God-manifestation, not human salvation, was the grand purpose of the Eternal Spirit. The salvation of a multitude is incidental to the manifestation, but it was not the end proposed. The Eternal Spirit intended to enthrone himself on the earth, and in so doing, to develop a Divine Family from among men, every one of whom shall be spirit because born of the Spirit, and that this family shall be large enough to fill the earth, when perfected, to the entire exclusion of flesh and blood."

John Thomas, 1858

Apparent Failure

Peter has said, "Desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby". This we have learnt to do. Nothing short of the undiluted Bible will make us grow. Our system of daily reading enables us to get the full benefit and to realise the apostolic precept in the most effectual manner. Under this system, many, many features of the Divine Thought are brought under our notice that we should never notice, or noticing once, forget. Every time we read, we get something fresh - something we had not seen just in the same vivid light before; and when the "every time" is every day, we slowly get enriched in a way not possible with those who only look into the Bible occasionally.

This morning, we have a message through Ezekiel which, though not addressed directly to us, has a bearing on our position, from which we may take comfort. I refer to what we find in Chapter 12:22-23: "Son of man, what is that proverb that ye have in the land of Israel, saying, the days are prolonged and every vision faileth? Tell them, therefore, thus saith the Lord God, I will make this proverb to cease, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel, but say unto them, the days are at hand and the effect of every vision."

It is worth while considering how the proverb thus rebuked, originated, and what was its precise meaning. That it had reference to the visions of Ezekiel, as well as to the prophets that had gone before him, is evident from verse 27; "Son of man, behold they of the house of Israel say, the vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are afar off".

Now the visions that Ezekiel saw (as regards the bulk of them) were visions of "lamentations, mourning and woe". This very chapter illustrates their leading character: e.g. verse 15,20, "I will scatter them among the nations, and disperse them in the countries ... and the cities that are inhabited shall be laid waste, and the land shall be desolate". All the prophets had prophesied like this. All of them foretold calamity for the people of the land, and they had done so for many years, without the calamity coming; and the result was that the people in general became sceptical about it. Because it had not come, they thought it would not come. Their scepticism took the form of a proverb, which got into circulation, and which here receives notice and rebuke at God's hands. "The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth".

But the time, in Ezekiel's days, was close at hand, and here Jehovah says to them: "In your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word, and will perform it". "There shall none of my words be prolonged any more" (verses 25,28). And so it came to pass. Nebuchadnezzar invaded the land, and emptied the cities of their inhabitants, and laid Jerusalem in ashes. As we contemplate the condition of Israel and their land for the last 1,800 years, we are able to realise that the word of God, however it may appear at any time to be deferred, will at last come to pass, and the flippant unbelief of a heedless generation be put to silence in the grave.

There is a parallel to these things in our days. For a long time, the proclamation of the same sure word has rung in the ears of men, "the coming of the Lord draweth nigh", and because the time has gone on without bringing the Lord, the subject has become

a scorn with the majority of civilised mankind. The disappointment of prophetic expectations has, in fact, become proverbial. The fact has passed into a proverb, with the implication accompanying, that because the Lord has not yet come, he will never come, or, at least, "not in your day nor in mine", as they say, by which they mean not for thousands of years yet, if he ever comes at all. "The days are prolonged and every vision faileth". It is exactly the proverb they had in the land of Israel - exactly the proverb which events confuted and confounded in a terrible manner in Ezekiel's days, and which will be confuted and confounded in a similar manner concerning the subject of Christ's coming.

The proverb is more unreasonable in our day than in Ezekiel's. There are signs and tokens in our day which were lacking then. During the past forty years and more (that is, speaking in 1908 - CAM) a great variety of prophetic anticipations have been realised, bringing a guarantee of the sureness of the prophetic word which did not exist in connection with the predicted overthrow of Israel. From the outbreak of a European Revolution, in 1848, to the British occupation of Egypt in 1882, and the commencement of the Jewish colonisation of Palestine (on however small a scale), there has been an unbroken series of signs of the Lord's approach, and about which there can be no doubt, because all of them have been anticipated on the strength of the prophetic words.

PREMATURE EXPECTATIONS

The only point of failure has been as to the place in the programme at which the Lord's appearing would occur, and this is a failure not of the prophetic word, but of human estimate of probability. It seemed likely that the ending of Papal coercive power would be the time for the Lord to appear. The ending of the Papal coercive power came at the expected time, but not the Lord; and because of this, the thoughtless cry "failure". Perhaps this failure was divinely permitted (i.e. the mistaken expectation allowed to be entertained) to try the faithful, and give the other class the pretext for going away. True failure there has not been; on the contrary, prophetic expectations that were truly warranted have in all particulars been realised in a very wonderful manner.

Dear brethren and sisters, the word of the Lord standeth sure. Onward the divine programme will go till the very consummation itself is reached, in the glorious event to which this ordinance of the breaking of bread has been pointing for the last eighteen centuries - the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ in power and great glory. This event may take place any day, and the days may yet be prolonged, though the vision cannot fail. The all-important question for each of us is, in what attitude ought that event to find us so that we may find favour of the Lord in that day? On this question we have light thrown by the portion read from Luke this morning.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

I refer to the parable of the sower. We are all acquainted with the features of this parable uttered by the Lord. A sower scatters seed-grain in the field, which, being a Syrian field, is not ploughed all over as in western agriculture, but is merely scratched, and consequently has a very diversified character of surface - stony wayside places, thistly

places, rocky spots, and bits of good ground in the right condition. The seed falls into these various sorts of ground, and produces various results accordingly. From the hard places it is picked off by the birds; in the shallow places, it grows to wither in the sun; in the thorny places, it is choked by the growth of the weeds; in the good places, it grows to maturity, and gives a good liberal return.

In the application, we need make no mistakes, because the Lord has plainly indicated it. In the first place, the seed is the word of God - the word or gospel of the Kingdom, as He explains. It is not human tradition, or theological sensation. It is not dream, vagaries or imaginations. It is God's own word, as we have it in the writings of the apostles and prophets - alias The Bible. In the goodness of God, we have become the subjects of this word; we have been delivered from the nightmare world of imagination that exists around us in Christendom. The word itself has been sown in our hearts. The question is, as to the results. There were four results in the parable, and only one of them effectual. To which do we wish to belong? Let us look at them one by one.

"Those by the wayside are they that hear: then cometh the devil and taketh away the word out of their hearts". The people in question get the words into their hearts at the start, or it could not be taken away. Let us measure ourselves by the case. We have got the word into our hearts. Good: but that is no guarantee that it will remain. The devil may take it away. Who the devil is, I will not stay to argue. We all know it is not the supernatural devil of clerical theology. We all know it is a devil that takes various shapes; but in every shape, is human nature in some attitude of antagonism to divine ways. The old man within is one shape of the devil - the natural man "who is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts". He may take away the word: he may whisper, "It won't do: it will injure your standing: it will bar your way: it will cut you off from lively friends and pleasures: it will spoil your life". Resist these suggestions if you wish the seed to remain and bring forth fruit.

Or the devil may take an outside shape. It may be a friend; it may even be a man called a brother. There are devils in the camp as there have ever been, even in the small camp of twelve. We have to try the spirits whether they are of God. The devil in this shape will tell you that you need not take it in such terrible earnest; that there may be such a thing as salvation and there may be not; that if there is, it is easy to get; that you need not put yourself very much about; that you should, at all events, look after the main chance, and not be too strait-laced; "don't make a nuisance of yourselves; enjoy yourselves while you may, and let other enjoy you; there are lots of fine people in the world, and plenty of good entertainment if you don't unfit yourself for it by righteousness overmuch".

Brethren, this devil is dangerous, because he presents himself as an angel of light. It will be easy for you to say to him that his talk does not at all resemble the talk of Christ and his apostles; that the effect of his philosophy would be to take you away from Christ, and put you in the company of sinners which you desire by Christ's command to avoid; that in a work, he is pecking at the seed sown in your heart, and that you will have nothing to do with him. Of course, the devil may come to you in his own native hues - the out and out antagonist of the world, perhaps. He will ply you with various arguments against what will seem to him the unwisdom of staking your all upon a pos-

sible misadventure. He may even go further, and maintain that the whole affair of the gospel is an effete and mistaken thing, with which it is a mistake for any liberal-minded, educated man to have anything to do. You will not be in much danger from this gentleman. He sets himself too directly in opposition to palpable truth. You will quickly dispose of him with a decisive “get thee behind me, Satan”.

The second class are they who, when they hear, receive the word with joy, and these have no root, which for a while believe and in time of temptation fall away.” Here is something for our attentive consideration. We may succeed in warding off the seep-picking raids of the devil, and fail for want of root to the seed retained. We have received the word with joy: How do we stand the times of temptation? This is a question of root. If we are rooted and grounded in the faith, we shall hold fast in the toughest trial. To be rooted and grounded in the faith, is to have the faith rooted and grounded in you. You say, perhaps feeling the roots are rather slim in you case, “Happy are they who have their faith strongly rooted in them”. True; but what do you mean? “We mean what we say,” answer you. Yes; but let us look under your meaning. You think this rooting to be an affair of natural constitution, and that, if you haven’t got strong roots, you cannot help it. Now you are not altogether correct there. Christ’s parables are uttered for instruction, and it would be no benefit to teach fatalism which Jesus never did. No; if the seed is not rooted, it is because you have not rooted it. Two men might each have a garden plot of equal quality, and sow it with the same seed. But suppose the one dug it up and manured his ground, and was careful to keep it in right condition while the seed was growing; and the other did not take these measures, but merely cast the seed on the unbroken ground, and left it to take care of itself. The seed would take and have root in the one case, and very slight root in the other. So it is with the seed of the word. The seed will take root if you adopt the means, which mainly consist of two things:

1. The daily study of the word with prayer, and the use of all helps in that direction, as regards meetings, companions, books &c., and:
2. The avoidance of everything that will check the growth of the seed, such as worldly pleasures, sinful companions, flesh-pleasing and foolish literature, such as novels, comic publications. By such means the seed will take root, and in time of temptation, it will be there to withstand all assault.

The third class is an easily recognisable class, and one in which it is very easy to be included. “They who fell among thorns are they who when they have heard, go forth and are choked with cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life and bring NO FRUIT TO PERFECTION.” Surely, dear brethren and sisters, none of us wish to be included in this class, and yet how liable we are to fall into it. How much all of us know of “cares” - few of “riches” - perhaps some of “pleasures”. These are the thorns. We must keep our eye on them. Pluck them up in every possible case. Whatever happens, we must not let the word be choked in our hearts. It is here where Christ’s exhortation applies with especial force. “If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off; if thy right eye offend thee pluck it out”. There are many things that people do and enjoy, to their own hurt, in this matter. The wisdom of the cutting off will be very manifest to them in the day of the Lord, if not before. It will be too late to pluck up the thorns when the day

comes to inspect the garden. If the king's plants lie all sickly and stunted and dying, and the devil's thistles are flourishing in a vigorous and umbrageous development, we may be quite sure there will be no prize awarded for such horticulture. Practically, it means this: while giving ourselves to the word of God and prayer, let us, having food and raiment, be content, and decline all temporal aims and enterprises that would only mean an increase of "cares and riches and pleasures" which choke the word.

We may then hope to belong to the fourth class - the seed that fell on the good ground - being "they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, kept it, and bring forth fruit with patience". The fruit consists of those things that men do from the conviction of the Truth. This fruit will come where conviction is at work, and conviction will remain and acquire increasing strength from the keeping of the word in the heart by the daily reading and meditation thereon, and a patient continuance in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. In such a state of things, there will be a fruitfulness, "some thirty-fold, some sixty-fold, and some an hundred-fold," according to the nature of the good soil, in which there are differences of natural fertility. This fruitfulness is not a question of the absolute size of what a man does, but the proportion it bears to what he can do and ought to do. The Lord settles this in the case of the widow's mite, which was small in itself, but very large in relation to the widow's ability. With fruitfulness of this sort, the Lord has declared he will be well pleased, and will accept and seal, and reward the same in the bestowal of the inconceivably larger stewardship of the Kingdom of God.

It is clear, then, what the attitude is in which the Lord should find us, in the fast approaching day of His appearing. He should find us in the attitude of faithful servants: much interested in Him: much given to the promotion of His affairs: much addicted to the word and to prayer: much controlled by His commandments: and much abstinent from the friendships and riches and pleasures of this life, which choke the word and make it unfruitful. If, in this attitude, there is much crucifixion of the flesh, much carrying of the cross, much denial of self, there is also much of the answer of a good conscience, much peace and joy in the Lord, and much unspeakable promise for the day that must come, when every man shall stand before the judgement seat of Christ, and receive, in body, according to what he hath done - good or bad.

Robert Roberts, "The Christadelphian", Sept 1908

Principles of Discipleship

"If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jno 8:31)

In the age in which we sojourn, there is much talk amongst those who profess to be Christ's brethren about discipleship, as if it is somehow distinct from doctrine. The thing that matters, we are told not infrequently, is not that we understand the intricacies of Scripture, rather that we are able to apply the ways of Christ in our daily lives. "Head knowledge" is seen as being less important than practical living; the term "academic understanding" being used instead of "spiritual discernment," to bolster the notion that

diligent searching of the Scriptures is some kind of optional extra for the more educated amongst us. And accordingly therefore, there is a strong emphasis in some quarters, away from the exposition of the Word, towards the principles of ‘good living,’ or a “Christian way of life.” A “simple faith” and clean living is all that is said to be required; and this concept is widely taught as being the very essence of Discipleship – and not just by the Churches around us.

There is, of course, an element of truth in the above proposition, but as is so often the case, there is also untruth. It is quite true that to implement the commandments of Christ in daily living is essential - it is a vital aspect of the believer’s walk that they follow the ways of their Master. Christ himself taught: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends *if ye do* whatsoever I command you” (Jno 15:14). None are confessed to be the Friends of Messiah therefore, save those who *do* those things commanded by him. A Christ-like manner of life is an integral part of discipleship, and an aspect that ought never be neglected under the erroneous supposition that belief alone will save (cp Jas 2:14-26).

THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING

But notwithstanding all this, it is quite incorrect to speak of Christ-like living, as being distinct from Scriptural discernment in the disciples’ life. There is, in fact, as a logical flaw in elevating the practical outworking of the principles of The Word to a status which is above an understanding of it. How can a man do those things commanded by Messiah, unless he knows what those things are? And how can he know what they are, unless he diligently applies himself to a study of the Master’s life and sayings? Surely, he cannot. Simple logic alone demonstrates the fact; an understanding of The Word of the Most High - which underpins all that Christ taught - is essential to know what the Master would have us do; and therefore also to do it.

Indeed, the importance of sound doctrine in discipleship is spoken of by Christ himself, when defining the qualities required of men to be his disciples: “if ye *continue in my word*, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (Jno 8:31). Again, nothing could be plainer; in order to be liberated by the Truth, a person must know, and understand what that Truth actually is. And in order to “continue” in Christ’s Word, a person must know what Christ spoke. Far from being distinct from discipleship, soundness in the Word of Truth is a vital prerequisite to it - if none are recognised as either Christ’s Friends, or his disciples who do not his Words, surely those who desire the friendship of Messiah will endeavour to learn those words, and know them in order that they can do them? Yet, all to often we find personal study of the Scriptures being neglected; life is too busy – and “as long as I live the life of the Truth, I don’t need ‘head-knowledge’” we have been told on so many occasions. But those who reason like this fail to recognise that without the knowledge of the Father’s Word in our heads (for where else could we have it?), it is just not possible to “continue” in that Word, and be so regarded as a disciple.

A TEST OF DISCIPLESHIP

It is to the disciples only that the Word of Truth is committed, as saith the spirit of Christ in Isaiah: “Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples” (Is 8:16). The Master himself confirmed this; when “the disciples came and said unto him, Why

speakest Thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, “Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given” (Mat 13:11). The matter is thus confirmed and settled. The Disciples of Christ are not those who, in their simplicity, have no knowledge of the hidden things of the Word - on the contrary, they are those to whom the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven are given; they are those in whom the testimony and law of Christ are sealed. Those to whom those things are “not given” are that class of men who refuse Christ’s ways, and are not His disciples. Thus, any who claim to be disciples can in this manner be put to the test - does what they believe concur with the teachings of Christ concerning the revealed mysteries of the Kingdom? Does what they teach concur with the Law and the Testimony? If so, and they manifestly walk in the light of the Truth, they may be accepted as disciples, according to the conditions of Scripture. But if their teachings be found wanting, they are exposed as being mere pretenders in whom there is no light (Is 8:20), “clouds without water, carried about of winds, trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; and wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever” (Jude 13). Choosing the darkness of ignorance, rather than the light of revealed wisdom, the “the blackness of darkness” in *sheol* is their appointed portion. These are no disciples, and when they manifest themselves, they must be excluded from the circle of those who are, lest being “sunken rocks in your feasts of charity”, they cause others to make shipwreck of their faith, as did Hymenaeus and Alexander, concerning whom Paul spake elsewhere (1Tim 1:19, 20).

SIMPLICITY OR WISDOM?

There is a marked contrast between the teaching of the Spirit concerning the need for knowledge, wisdom and discernment, and the advocates of a ‘simple faith’ who would have us believe that to search the Scriptures is some kind of optional extra for the academically inclined. Consider the following testimonies:

“Doth not Wisdom cry? And Understanding put forth her voice? ... she crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in of the doors. Unto you, O men I call; and my voice is to the sons of man. O ye simple, understand wisdom: And, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart” (Prov 8:1-5).

“How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! And to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!” (Prov 16:16).

“He that getteth wisdom loveth his own soul; He that keepeth understanding shall find good” (Prov 19:8)

“Buy the Truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding” (Prov 23:23)

And conversely, for those who do not delight in seeking to understand the ways of the Most High, preferring to leave such things to the ‘higher educated’, there is this warning:

“the man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead” (Prov 21:16)

“A fool does not delight in understanding, but in uncovering his own heart” (Prov 18:2 T/S)

So it is, that those who, rather than delighting in the revealed wisdom of Yahweh, prefer to “discover their inner selves,” by searching and exposing their own hearts, or having that done for them by professionals whose specialise in such things; those who advocate this type of new age philosophy, are pronounced “fools” by the Eternal Spirit. The Scriptures alone are able to give necessary enlightenment for deliverance, for the Apostle declares that they are “able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2Tim 3:15), and those who neglect them will not therefore obtain that wisdom, or that salvation. Not studying the spirit-word, they will not shew themselves approved unto God (2Tim 2:15), and will prove to be workmen who do need to be ashamed, for not having done the work required. Only by firstly obtaining understanding can a man walk within the way thereof; all others will quickly wander out of that way, and shall remain amongst the congregation of the dead. This is the Spirit’s testimony, which we would do well to take heed.

FOLLOWING CHRIST

For those who humble themselves to receive the testimony of Christ with child-like meekness, yet who seek to grow in understanding as men (1Cor 14:20), there is a requirement to walk according unto it, to “continue” in his word. If they would truly be disciples, there is a requirement to follow their Master in all his ways: “for even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps” (1 Pet 2:21); even as the Master himself said: “if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it” (Mat 16:24).

The spirit of discipleship then, is the spirit of self-denial, and self-sacrifice, rather than self-pleasure. “Whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it” in the latter days of resurrectional glory, is the great and exceeding precious promise given to those with ears to hear; and certainly those words would have been of great comfort and consolation to our brethren of former ages who literally did lose their lives for their adherence to the Testimony of Christ.

But there is also another sense in which a life is lost when a disciple desires to follow his Lord. In taking up his cross, the believer must follow Christ into the grave, for that is where the Master went with his burden – the place of death and sacrifice. And this is accomplished through Baptism – an identification with the death of Christ:

“how shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death … knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is

free from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him; knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 6:2-11).

The obedient disciple then, is dead in Christ. He has resolved to crucify with him, the "old man", the fleshly manner of life, and disposition of thought - and so the life of the 'old man' becomes lost to us. We have lost that former existence, wherein we pleased ourselves rather than he who laid down his life for us; when we gave ourselves over to the satisfaction of our own desires. Thus, we have willingly lost our own lives for Christ's sake, for having been redeemed by his shed blood, we are now not our own, for we have been bought with a price, and therefore must glorify the Father in our body Spirit, which are His (1Cor 6:19).

"we thus judge, that if one died for all, then are all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again" (2Cor 5:14).

Having lost their lives, in willingly laying them down them in the aqueous grave, the believer is as one who is alive from the dead; having risen up from the Baptismal waters. Their lives are not their own; they belong to another, and must walk through the time they have remaining bearing the cross of Christ, that is, bearing reproach and suffering for His Sake.

However, there are those who, having taken on the yoke of discipleship to Christ, have failed to plough a straight course, and have turned either to the right hand side, or to the left, through being distracted by the things of the world. Indeed, they seek to remove that yoke from off them, desiring to regain their lives once again. But, as their Master has decreed, those not willing to lose their lives, but seeking rather to save them shall, at the last, lose them. They may well rescue the Old Man out of his watery grave, and resurrect him to a temporary existence once again - but his end is to perish in the pit for evermore. Far better it is to willingly lose him now by voluntarily crucifying him with Christ, that we might gain all things in the world to come, than to lose all things at the last.

BUILDING AND WARFARE

In his discourse on Discipleship, the Master describes the life of a disciple as one of both building, but also contending in battle:

"Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after that he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, 'this man began to build, and was not able to finish'. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the

other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:31-33).

There is a requirement then, to both count the cost, and consider the perils of discipleship before taking up the cross. The Disciple's role is twofold – to build up, and to wage a warfare, and such an one therefore must consider whether or not he has sufficient resources to commence building, or sufficient courage to go to battle. Not that he is in a position to decide that because he doesn't have the resources that he will not build, or that because he is fearful, he will not engage in the battle – both are necessary for his survival. He must needs build a tower, for a place of safety, refuge, and to provide a vantage point to watch for coming danger - if the tower is not built, he will have no place of safety to flee to. Also, he is under threat from a hostile power—shall he go to battle, or not? The choice he has, is to either yield in shameful surrender; and suffer the consequences, or to stand and fight for his life. He must determine therefore whether he is able to contend against the adversary with so few resources – and if not, obtain more before it is too late, because for the believer who desires to follow Christ, surrender to King Sin is no option: "Let not sin reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof ... know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whetherof sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Rom 6:13, 16). To rebel against Sin is then, a matter of survival; those who serve sin will reap only death as their wages (Rom 6:23). The believer must carefully consider the options before him, in order to ensure the success of his warfare.

But what is required in order to obtain the victory? In human terms, the odds are high against, for the enemy is twofold greater, "whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand". In human terms, the situation does not look at all promising - but to the eye of faith, the victory is assured. Remember Gideon, the outstanding man of faith who came against many with few - and deliberately so for a reason: "Yahweh said unto Gideon, "The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, "Mine own hand hath saved me" (Jud 7:2), and so the number was reduced to a mere 300 to contend against the mighty host of the Midianites.

The manner by which the victory was obtained is most instructive to those who desire to war against the power of sin - it was by causing light to shine in the darkness:

"So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that were in their hands. And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal: and they cried, "The Sword of Yahweh, and of Gideon" (Jud 7:19,20).

Such a startling occurrence in the quiet stillness of the night terrified the opposition, who were quickly defeated, for in the confusion of events, they fought against them-

selves (v 22), and so assisted their own destruction. But the victory was achieved by causing the light to shine out of clay vessels, which were broken, by the cry attributing their efforts to Yahweh, and his Chosen captain, and by sounding the trumpet, or ram's horn. And the victory is guaranteed for the disciple in like manner: "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2Cor 4:7). So it is, that the Light must dwell with us, and within our hearts. But the apostle continues, in direct allusion to Gideon: "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (2Cor 4:7).

The light of the Father's glory must dwell within us, as in earthen vessels, ready to be manifest at the appointed time. Christ himself is the first broken vessel, setting the example for his disciples, for it is he "who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2Tim 1:10). But the deliverance of those who follow him is yet future; at the time of the shout, and the sounding of the trumpet:

"for the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them ..." (1Thes 4:16,17).

So it is, that life and immortality shall be caused to shine in all the saints, as mortality is put away, and those who have voluntarily broken the earthly "old man" of the flesh in times past shall be caused to shine with elohic splendour in the kingdom of their Father.

There is, therefore, the need for the disciple to engage in the spiritual warfare in order to be recognised by the Captain of salvation, and be granted the victory due to those who contend in the battle, in due time. But also, as we saw, there is a need to build. The disciple must also give earnest attention to the construction of an edifice which will serve as a place of refuge and protection for himself and others, from the dangers without. But what is this tower which he needs to be building?

The Spirit declares the faithful saying, that: "the name of Yahweh is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe" (Prov 18:10). So, the Father's Name is a strong tower, into which those who desire safety must enter. And this is so, for in baptism, those who desire to follow Christ are baptised into the Family Name of Yahweh: "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of (Greek) all nations, baptizing them into (greek) the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit ..." (Mat 28:19). Notice this; there is but One Name possessed by both Father and Son, and in which the Spirit operates. And those who desire the safety and refuge of the Gospel enter into that Name, and so become part of it, and part of the Father's Purpose to perpetuate His Character in a whole multitude of sons.

In this regard, it is pertinent to note that the Hebrew word for "son", is Nb ben, being derived from hnb banah, which signifies, "to build." A son therefore, is a builder - the builder of the Family name, the son being the One through whom that name is perpetuated. Those who seek to be disciples, are those who are builders of the Family Name

of Yahweh, becoming part of that Name, and members of the continually expanding Divine Family on earth (cp Eph 3:15).

But what is the cost needed to build up the Divine Family, and edify it against the Adversary? The cost is our entire selves; we are no longer our own, for we are bought with a price; even the shed blood of Christ. We therefore must devote all that we have into the enterprise; if we cannot do that, the tower will not be built sufficiently, and the dwellers therein will be exposed to the dangers outside. And indeed, that is precisely what we find to be the case today, when rather than seeking to build heavenward, some seem to be more desirous of bringing into the tower the pollutions of the World, so threatening the salvation of the vulnerable.

Christopher Maddocks

Words and Deeds

Our Old Testament readings for today introduce us to the underlying reason for Israel's fall:

“... For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen: because their tongue and their doings are against Yahweh, to provoke the eyes of his glory ...” (Isa. 3:8).

There was then, a twofold failure in Israel – 1st their tongue, and 2nd their doings. Both that which they said, and that which they did were in opposition to the ways of their God. By way of exhortation, we need to heed their example of unbelief, lest we also fail in this two particulars.

Words

James chapter 3 cautions us to have control over the things that we utter:

“... the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that is defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell ... the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison” (Jas. 3:6, 8).

The damage that a loose tongue can cause is immeasurable. Gossip is like a wildfire – it spreads very rapidly, and causes much harm. The solution is for those who hear the gossip not to pass it on any further – that way, the fire will be contained, and burn itself out. So it is written: “where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth” (Prov. 26:20). We must individually provide no fuel to the fire – and certainly not spread the gossip to others.

According to James, the tongue is also “full of deadly poison”. Paul also speaks of this, describing the speech of the ungodly: “their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is

full of cursing and bitterness" (Rom. 3:13-14). The lips of the unrighteous (vs 10), send out the poison of serpents – words are the vehicles of meaning, and the serpent-speak of men of the world can only bring death and destruction to those who heed it. We must always avoid speaking lies – like the original serpent – that can cause others to fall.

This brings us to consider another aspect spoken of by James: "... For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body" (Jas. 3:2). It is all too easy to give offence by foolish talking, and unguarded lips – the disciple of Christ must always consider the impact of what they say upon others. Their words must bear no malice or wickedness, but impart grace to the hearers: "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Col. 4:6). And again, "The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself. The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness: and the end of his talk is mischievous madness ..." (Eccl. 10:12-13). And to this, we can add the example of the wisest man of them all, even Messiah himself: "... all bear him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth" (Lu. 4:22). Salt is a preserving influence, as well as a seasoning – both aspects will be present in the utterances of the righteous.

In the age in which we sojourn, there is much talk of individual human rights, including freedom of speech. Men and women have a "right" to say whatever they please – yet this is not a new thing, the Psalmist spoke of this very same aspect:

"Yahweh shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things: Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us?" (Prov. 12:3-4).

The underlying assumption is not new: like the time of the Judges of Israel, every man does that which is right in his own eyes (Cp. Jud. 17:6), and every man speaks that which he chooses. Under an assumed freedom of action and speech, men please themselves, yet they remain under the yoke of sin: "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage" (2 Pet. 2:19). Being the servants of sin, they shall reap death at the last, for nothing can save the unrepentant sinner from the folly of his own way. So Messiah taught: "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Mat. 12:36) – our words will be highly pertinent as to how we will stand in the judgment to come.

Those who are wise will speak wise sayings, which are in harmony with the words that their Creator has uttered. The admonishment is given: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (2 Pet. 4:11), and this can only happen if a man has the Word in his heart. Hence it is also written:

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord"

And then he continues:

“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father. By him.” (Col. 3:16-17).

Here is the secret to success in things pertaining to the Truth – be filled with the Word of Christ richly. To ensure that all that we speak and do reflects thanksgiving to God for his mercies and lovingkindness extended toward us.

Deeds

Both what we say, and what we do should be “all in the name of the Lord Jesus” – and both aspects are required for a balanced walk in the Truth. We need to speak graciously – but also live wisely in a manner that is fitting for disciples of the Lord. Hence Messiah addressed those whose religion was in words only: “Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luk. 6:46). And again, he warned about the scribes and Pharisees: “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say and do not” (Mat. 23:2-3). We must both say, and do in order to be accepted of the Lord.

In his Epistle to the Galatians, Paul describes the various means by which men might exert their energies – and the consequences of them:

“For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Gal. 6:8-9).

There are therefore only two classes in the Divine estimation: those who sow to the flesh, and those who sow to the spirit: it is clear which category we would desire to be part of.

Again, James demonstrates the importance of demonstrating faith by the things that we do:

“be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (Jas. 1:22).

And again:

“... even so, if it hath not works is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works” (Jas. 2:17-18).

It is not that we can earn salvation by works, but rather that our works should demonstrate a living faith. Living men move and do things – dead men do nothing and cannot move. The ecclesia at Sardis had this problem: “I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead” (Rev. 3:1). Not that they had no works, for Messiah

acknowledged their works. Rather, their works did not manifest their faith – hence they were spiritually dead.

TWO DECLARATIONS

Returning to our reading in Isaiah chapter 3, we find that the sin of Israel was open and easily discernible:

“The shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not …” (Isa. 3:9).

They made no efforts to cover up their sin, they were quite open about what it was they were doing. Like Sodom, their wrongdoing was laid bare for all to see. And significantly, that is the case in our age: there are at least 4 Christadelphian websites known to the present writer, where the sin of Sodomy is openly endorsed as being acceptable conduct: there seems to be no effort to hide it, or cover it up. There is very little opposition – if any at all – to it, such are the days in which we live. The situation is described by Paul:

“Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after. Likewise also the good works of some are manifested beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid” (1 Tim. 5:24-25).

But by contrast to those who provided an open declaration of sin, in Messiah we behold a declaration of Yahweh’s Righteousness. The Apostle described Christ Jesus “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the redemption of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. To declare, I say, at this time His Righteousness: that he might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom. 3:25-26).

In the example of the Lord Jesus Christ, we see One who was righteous in both word and deed. He was able to link the two together as part of a Divine process:

“Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: But the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works” (Jno. 14:10).

The work of the Lord Jesus Christ was a work of God in him. Of him, it was said that:

“the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of Grace and Truth” (Jno. 1:14).

And again, this was the witness of John:

“... no man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him” (Jno. 3:18).

The spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, was one of self-denial, and a desire to perform his Father's Will:

“... then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy Will, O God” (Heb. 10:7).

So it was that “even Christ pleased not himself” (Rom. 15:3). His prayer was always “nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Mat. 26:39, 42, 44). We look to him as the supreme example therefore, of one who was wholly righteous in both words and deeds.

In these things we see the true spirit of the followers of Christ. In all utterances and actions, the desire must always be to do the Father's Will. This is the true spirit of the Sabbath – a cessation of mortal labours and words: “... Nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words ...” (Isa. 58:13). Rather than to be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, we must let the mind and words of Christ dwell in us richly. In all that we say and do, the overriding concern must be, Will the cause of the Truth be advanced in those things? Only we can know the answer: yet the day must surely be near when the thoughts and intents of the heart shall be revealed, and when what we say and do will determine our ultimate destiny.

Christopher Maddocks

Patience and Longsuffering

The following notes are from a recent exhortation, and are included for the benefit of our readers:

We read in our readings from the Proverbs recently that

Prov 19:11 The discretion of a man **deferreth** his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression.

The Expanded Version translates this as

Expanded

Prov 19:11 The wise [insightful] are **patient** [L hold in their anger]; they will be honored [praised; glorified] if they ignore insults [offenses].

So the preacher is instructing us here that it is wise to be patient.

James 1

2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh **patience**.

4 But let **patience** have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

Let **patience** have her perfect work

Expanded

James 1:4 [L And] Let your **patience** [perseverance; endurance] **show itself perfectly in what you do [have its full effect; finish its work]**. Then you will be **perfect and complete** [mature and whole; or completely mature] and will **have everything you need** [L lack nothing].

So clearly it is very important that we are patient, in all our ways, this is not easy for the flesh as Dr Thomas says “Its lusts and affections are **impatient** of control”, the flesh is naturally impatient, it is a battle to keep it down.

Eve was not in the sinful state as we find ourselves in but she manifested the spirit of impatience in the garden. She was not willing to wait in order to be ‘as wise as the gods’ but it was something she wanted instantly. She was subsequently condemned. The Lord Jesus, who was by contrast in the same sinful state as we find ourselves in, had power to turn stones into bread when hungry, seize the kingdoms of the world, come down from the cross, etc yet he manifested the spirit of patience. He was subsequently rewarded.

1 Tim 6:11 But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and **follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness**.

2 Peter 1

5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; **6** And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance **patience**; and to **patience** godliness;

7 And to godliness **brotherly kindness**; and to brotherly kindness charity.

8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall **neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ**

Being in Christ means we need to be fruitful. If the branch does not manifest fruit then the branch will be deemed worthless. This would be rejection at the judgement seat.

We are also commanded to be longsuffering, we can not be longsuffering if we are not patient

Eph 4:

1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

2 With all **lowliness and meekness**, with **longsuffering, forbearing one another in love**;

Part of the walk and to be classed as worthy is to walk the walk with longsuffering.

Col 1:

10 That ye might **walk worthy** of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;
11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all **patience** and **longsuffering** with joyfulness;

Hence patience and longsuffering are linked with walking worthily.

Col 3

12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of **mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering**;
13 **Forbearing one another**, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.
14 And above all these things put on charity, which is **the bond of perfectness**

It is only through Love that we can develop patience and longsuffering.

If God is prepared to forgive us, should we not also be prepared to forgive others? Surely this would be to manifest a quality that God himself has! Likewise if God is prepared to have us in a state of no condemnation (Romans 8:2), then we shouldn't condemn others. Jesus sent to save, not to condemn. We are here to not only work out our own salvation but also to try to put others on the track to save themselves too.

1Cor13

4 Charity **suffereth long**, and is **kind**; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,
5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is **not easily provoked**, thinketh no evil;
6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;
7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

If God is prepared to love us, who are in the sinful state, should we not love others (especially brethren) who are also in the sinful state? By being patient and longsuffering with them is how we can manifest such love. Our actions in doing this will always speak louder than our words simply professing such a case.

Paul expresses how Jesus was longsuffering with him so as to show the pattern to others

1 Tim 1

15 This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.
16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all **longsuffering**, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting

And so Paul in turn manifested these qualities to be an example to his brethren

2Tim 3:10 But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, **long-**

suffering, charity, patience

And of course we have the ultimate example in the way God deals with us

Exo 34:6 The LORD, The LORD God, **merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth**

Num 14:18 The LORD is **longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.**

Psa 86:15 But thou, O Lord, art a God **full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth**

If God is these things, surely then we should be too. So if we are men of God we have to be patient and longsuffering as He is. Manifesting godly qualities despite being in the sinful state is a prerequisite to putting on the godly state (immortality).

2Cor 6:

1 We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye **receive not the grace of God in vain.**

2 (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)

3 Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:

4 But in all things **approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses,**

5 In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;

6 By pureness, by knowledge, by **longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned**

Rev 14:12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they **that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.**

Lee Murtagh

“No one has any right to set up his own ignorance as the limit of what God hath revealed. A thing may be unknown to such a man, but it doth not therefore follow that it is either absolutely unintelligible or a secret. He may not know of it, or, if explained to him, he may not have intellect enough to comprehend it, or his prejudices, or sectarian bias may darken his understanding - this by no means makes the thing unintelligible or mysterious to other people. All that such persons have a right to say is, “We do not know anything about it.” They may confess their own ignorance, and resolve to look into the matter, or not: but they are presumptuously overstepping the bounds of propriety to venture to do more.”

John Thomas, Elpis Israel

Inheritance

Our New Testament reading in Titus chapter 3 speaks of the believer's position as recipients of Grace: "... that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Tit. 3:7). There is then, a "hope of eternal life," which is bound up with receiving an inheritance. The Apostle again alludes to this in his epistle to the Galatians:

"... there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:28-29).

Our hope, then, is to be made heirs according to the promises that were made to Abraham of old. Being unified as one body in Christ, the believers will inherit the promises made regarding Abraham's greater Seed – hence those promises are made to us also:

"... Whereby are given **unto us** exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Pet. 1:4).

Our Old Testament reading in Joshua chapter 14 describes how the Gentile Caleb was also promised in inheritance: great and precious promises had been made to him by Moses:

"Moses sware on that day, saying, Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children's for ever, because thou has wholly followed Yahweh my God" (Josh. 14:9)

And again, we find that his desire was granted:

"and Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh Hebron for an inheritance. Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite unto this day, because that he wholly followed Yahweh, God of Israel" (Josh. 14:13-14).

This reference to the promise of Moses to Caleb, is back to Numbers chapter 13. Here, we read that Joshua and Caleb were amongst 12 spies that were sent to out to view the land, prior to Israel taking it. After searching out the land for a 40 day period, they returned to Moses, "and brought back Word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and shewed them the fruit of the land ..." (Num. 13:26). The fruit that they brought forth comprised an extraordinarily large cluster of grapes, which was so great that it had to be carried by two, and also some pomegranates and figs (see verse 23).

Some of these principles seem to be alluded to in the New Testament, which describes: "the word of the Truth of the Gospel; which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in Truth" (Col. 1:6). Here, this Gentile ecclesia was said to bring

forth fruit. Again, they heard and heeded the words of the Gospel, which Israel did not do.

As an aside, we read in the marginal rendering of Hebrews 4:2 which is speaking of these things, that “unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them, but the word preached did not profit them, because they were not united by faith to them that heard it” (Heb. 4:2). The positive words and report of Joshua and Caleb, was “the gospel preached” unto them – yet it went unheeded, they were not untied by faith to those who believed it.

Returning back to Colossians: just as Israel – and particularly Caleb and Joshua - were promised an inheritance, we read that God: “hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col. 1:12), and just as Caleb was strengthened in his old age (Josh. 14:11), we read of the saints being “strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power” (vs 11). And finally, Colossians speaks of the saints being: “filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding ... increasing the knowledge of God” (vs 9-10).

Herein, we see the difference between knowledge and wisdom. All 12 spies had the same knowledge – they all saw the same things, and they all saw the adversary that had to be overcome. But the majority lacked faith, and therefore wisdom. Only 2 individuals had the faith to overcome: despite the promised fruitfulness and prosperity, 10 of the spies were disheartened by the scale of the enemy that would have to be defeated:

“... And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, the land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof: and all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight” (Num. 14:32-330).

Caleb was of a different spirit: “forty years old was I when Moses the servant of Yahweh sent me from Kadesh-barnea to espy out the land; and I brought him word again as it was in mine heart ...” (Josh. 14:7). His word was a confident assurance in the power of his God to save: “... if so Yahweh will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as Yahweh said” (Josh. 14:12).

As a consequence of Caleb’s faith, “Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh Hebron for an inheritance” (Josh. 14:13-14). But why Hebron? Hebron was where Machpelah was, where the patriarchs were buried (Acts 7:15-16). They died in faith, not having seen the promises being realised, but beholding them afar off (cp. Heb. 11:13). This, we suggest, was the reason why Caleb went to Hebron when he was sent to spy out the land, and why it was subsequently given to him: he wanted to be associated with those who slept in faith, waiting for the coming resurrection.

Notice the words of Moses in connection with this point: “... Moses sware on that day, saying, Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children’s for ever ...” (Josh. 14:9). This brings our attention back to Abraham, and the promises made to him: “Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee ...” (Gen. 13:17). So it was that Abraham

spent the rest of his life walking throughout the land, as a stranger and sojourner, waiting for the fulfilment that promise. This was the faith of Caleb, who walked where Abraham ceased from his walk in life – and this is the hope of the believers in Christ. To them, Abraham is their Father also, for he is: “The father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham” (Rom. 4:12). We, as heirs according to the promise, must be like Caleb, and walk in the steps of Abraham’s faith.

Hebrews chapter 3 describes how that although the majority were excluded from entering in the land, “not all” perished in the wilderness:

“some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he grieved forty years? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcases fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief” (Heb. 3:16-19).

It is interesting to note that Caleb is categorised as amongst those “that came out of Egypt”, yet who did not provoke. The record in Exodus describes how that when Israel left Egypt, there went with them those who were not Hebrews: “and a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle” (Exo. 12:38). It would appear then, that Caleb was one of this “mixed multitude” who came out of Egypt in the faith and anticipation of receiving the land of promise.

But ironically, it was this mixed multitude that brought Israel down:

“and the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers and the melons, and the leeks and the onions and the garlic: But now is our soul dried away: there is nothing at all, besides this manna before our eyes” (Num. 11:4-6).

Here is the irony, the mixed multitude lusted back to the flavours of Egypt – yet when presented with the abundance of fruitfulness of the land promised to them, they lacked the faith and courage needed to take and enjoy that fruitfulness. Only one of their number had that faith, and one would assume that it was he, and Joshua who were the two spies that brought the fruit up from Eschol.

DRIVING OUT THE ANAKIM

The hearts of Israel fainted, when they learned of the scale of the enemy. This is what was regarded as the evil report: “... there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants ...” (Num. 13:33). Caleb, however, was a man with a different spirit: “Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it” (Num. 13:30). Subsequently, it would appear that he overcame the Anakim single-handedly, for the record describes how that “Caleb drove thence the three sons of Anak, Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmai, the children of Anak” (Josh. 15:14).

The principle that Caleb recognised, was the same as David before the giant Goliath. Their God was far greater than the idols of the heathen:

“then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of Yahweh of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied” (1 Sam. 17:45).

Here is the principle by which we should engage in our spiritual warfare. Speaking of how the faithful would overcome the spirit of antichrist, John wrote:

“Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error” (1 Jno. 4:4-6),

This is the spirit of Elisha of old: “Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them” (2 Kings 6:16). Despite being surrounded by the enemy on every side, Elisha was strong in faith, trusting that the Angelic host which was with him, would be greater than the horses and chariots of the adversary.

The reason for Caleb receiving his inheritance, is because of his trust in the power of his God to save: “Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenelite unto this day, because that he wholly followed Yahweh, God of Israel” (Josh. 14:14, see also verses 8-10). Here is the true spirit of holiness, to follow Yahweh entirely with every fibre of our being: “... to love [God] with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices” (Mrk. 12:32-33).

As we come to consider our own standing before the Lord, we have a powerful example in Caleb to follow. To us it is also said: “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children” (Eph. 5:1). And we have another powerful example in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the slain lamb:

“for even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did not sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously ...” (1 Pet. 2:21-25).

We then, must follow the steps of Faith. We walk in the steps of Abraham, the steps of Caleb – and we follow the steps of Messiah. Let us therefore lift up our heads in faith and hope, knowing that we shall shortly receive our inheritance – but only if we wholly follow Yahweh, the God of Israel.

Christopher Maddocks