

"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)

Nebuchadnezzar – The Servant of the Lord

The second portion of our Old Testament readings for today describes king Nebuchadnezzar in very interesting terms:

“... and now have I given all these lands into the hand of **Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant**; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him ...” (Jer. 27:6).

Babylon’s king, therefore, is styled by Yahweh: “my servant”. That is to say, he was to perform a particular work in service to the God of Israel. This is further described earlier, in chapter 25:

“Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith Yahweh, and **Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant**, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations” (Jer. 25:9).

Nebuchadnezzar’s work then, was to go against certain nations, including Israel, to carry out the judgments of Yahweh against them. But the nature of this Divine commission was not lost on him. Although it was through the unseen hand of Providence, and Angelic manipulation that this mission would take place, the king knew that he was performing the Will of Israel’s God. Hence we read in chapter 39 of this prophecy:

“Now Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard, saying, Take him, and look well to him, and do him no harm; but do unto him even as he shall say unto thee” (Jer. 39:11-12).

So the King of Babylon was aware of the prophet Jeremiah, and gave charge concerning him. But we read the words of Nebuzar-adan to Jeremiah in the next chapter:

“And the captain of the guard took Jeremiah, and said unto him, **Yahweh thy God hath pronounced this evil upon this place**. Now Yahweh hath brought it, and done according as he hath said: because ye have sinned against Yahweh, and have not obeyed his voice, therefore this thing is come upon you” (Jer. 40:2-3).

This demonstrates that when the Babylonians came against Israel, their king knew that he was but a tool in the hand of the Lord, executing His Wrath upon His disobedient people – possibly through the prophet Daniel?

There is an interesting point that comes out from the timing of things. Daniel chapter 2 recounts the metal man that was shown to Nebuchadnezzar by Yahweh in a vision, expressive of the empires which would follow that of Babylon. But verse 1 informs us that this took place in the 2nd year of Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah 25:1 informs us that the first year of Nebuchadnezzar was the 4th year of Judah’s king Jehoiakim. Then

Jeremiah 36 describes a particular thing that took place in the 5th year of Jehoiakim. This means that the events described in Daniel 2, took place in the same year as the events of Jeremiah 36 – and in these things we have a tremendous contrast.

Jeremiah chapter 36 describes how Jeremiah's prophecy was read before king Jehoiakim – who promptly sought to suppress and destroy it:

“... And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the earth. Yet were they not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heared all these things” (Jer. 36:21-24).

As we say, this rejection of the Word of God took place in the same year as the events of Daniel chapter 2, when the king of Babylon honoured Israel's God:

“the king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is , that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret” (Dan. 2:47).

The contrast could hardly be greater: when the king of Judah was destroying the Word, the King of Babylon was receiving it, and honouring the God who had revealed a certain thing to him!

DANIEL CHAPTER 2

Whilst we will not consider the detail of this prophecy here, the circumstances of its revelation provide us with an insight as to the way in which the God of Israel has chosen to reveal things to His prophets. A certain thing was revealed to Nebuchadnezzar in a dream, and he desired to find out what that dream signified. So, he gave the challenge to the wisest men of his kingdom to interpret the dream – but to make sure that they were not just making things up, he set a test for them: not only were they to give the interpretation, they had to tell him what the dream was: “if ye will not make known unto me the dream, there is but one decree for you: for ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me, till the time be changed: therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that ye can show me the interpretation thereof” (Dan. 2:9).

Upon hearing the words of this decree, the wise man confessed their inability to do as the king asked, saying that it was impossible to do. Then we read that: “for this cause the king was angry, and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. And the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain” (Dan. 2:12-13).

In these words, we have a pattern. The wise men of this world could not reveal the hidden secret – and none of the princes knew it either. They were, therefore, sentenced to certain destruction and there was nothing they could do to remedy the situation. Daniel, however, was the wisest man in the king's court, and trusted in the power of his God to save. It is written that: “The wrath of a king is as messengers of death: but a wise man will pacify it” (Prov. 16:14). Daniel pacified the king with the promise that he would show the king the dream and interpretation. He trusted in the power of

his God, who “revealeth the deep and secret things” (vs 22), and prayed with his three brethren for the revelation to be made.

There are similarities between this, and the revelation of the Gospel message. Just as the wisest men of Babylon did not know the “secret,” it is written concerning the revelation of the Gospel: “... we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery ... which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Cor. 2:8). And just as Daniel trusted in the God which revealed deep and secret things, it is said concerning the Gospel mystery: “But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1 Cor. 2:10). And just as the wisest men of Babylon were shown to be impotent, “it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent ... hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? (1 Cor. 1:20). So it was that the great king Nebuchadnezzar came to recognise that “your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets” (Dan. 2:47).

DANIEL CHAPTERS 3 & 4

The main thrust of the prophecy in chapter 2, was to demonstrate that the successive kingdoms of men that would supersede that of Babylon. But Nebuchadnezzar defiantly set up his own image – which was all of gold, not just the head. In effect, this was a rejection of the message formerly revealed to him, and a declaration that his kingdom would, in fact, last for ever. Daniel chapter 3 describes how he set up the golden image, and called upon all his subjects to worship it. Everyone did so, and prostrated themselves before the image - except three faithful Jews (Dan. 3:7). Whilst everyone around them were falling down to worship the idol, these three men stood tall - hence it would be immediately obvious that they were refusing to bow in worship. They refused to conform to the ways of the world - and so should we. When all around us are bowing before the altar of Mammon, we must be “separate” and refuse to conform: “be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom. 12:2).

We are told by Paul to be ye transformed by “the renewing of your mind.” (Rom. 12:2). We need to adopt a new mindset, devoted to the things of the Truth. As Paul commands the Colossians, they had: “... put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (Col. 3:10). Instead of conforming to this world, we need to conform to the image of Christ (see Rom. 8:29), having our minds being renewed in knowledge of the things of the Word. Being diligent Bible Students, we can embrace the Truth, renew our mindset, and come out from the world of darkness. Not only are we in the bodily image of our Creator (Gen.1:27), we need to mentally conform to his ways also, and be like Him morally. Then we will be partakers of the Divine Nature when Messiah comes again (2Pet.1:4), escaping the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Chapter 4 describes the self-exultation, and subsequent humiliation of Nebuchadnezzar. Again, a particular thing was revealed to him in a dream, and the purpose of it is stated: “to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men” (Dan. 4:17).

In this dream, the king saw his empire being likened to a tree: “the tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven ...” (Dan. 4:11). Notice, the language used here, which seems to allude back to the foundation of Babylon, and the erection of a tower:

“And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may **reach unto heaven**; and let us **make us a name**, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth” (Gen. 11:4).

The overriding purpose of both structures was for self-elevation, and the making of a name. And whereas at Babel men were scattered, and their language confounded, in Nebuchadnezzars kingdom, men of various languages came together to bow before the idol: “... when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of music, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up” (Dan. 3:7)

By contrast, it is written that: “the name of Yahweh is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe” (Prov. 18:10). This is the only name that should be elevated: the Name of God Himself. Interestingly, this chapter of Proverbs continues to say: “Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility” (Prov. 18:12). This matches the circumstance of Nebuchadnezzar, whose haughtiness brought destruction, yet whose repentance and humility brought about the restoration of his kingdom.

Ecclesiastes chapter 3 gives the writer’s request:

“I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and **that they might see that they themselves are beasts**. For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts: even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast; for all is vanity” (Ecc. 3:18-19)

In his 7 year bought of insanity, Nebuchadnezzar was brought to this realisation, and again recognised the greatness of Yahweh, the God of Israel. In his attempt at self-elevation, the king had said “is not this the great Babylon, that **I** have built for the house of the kingdom by **the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?** (Dan. 4:30). Notice the highlighted words: they come together again in the Master’s model prayer for his disciples to give: “thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen” (Mat. 9:6). Notice the context here is to do with the elevation of God, and not man. God’s kingdom will last forever, but not Nebuchadnezzar’s.

In his humbled state, the king changed his words:

“I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation ... and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth” (vs 35).

Whereas he began by seeking his own aggrandisement, he ended by recognising the greatness of “the Most High” God, whose will is done in heaven and earth. So Messiah taught his disciples to pray: “thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Mat. 6:10). The overriding principle is that God’s kingdom will endure for ever, and not the Babylonian. It is Yahweh who is to be honoured, and not the idols of this world. So the record concludes the record concerning the king:

“Now I, Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase” (Dan. 4:37).

In the character of Nebuchadnezzar, we see a man selected by Yahweh to be His Servant in carrying out His Will in judgment against Israel. Although he knew that this was his situation and gave charge concerning Jeremiah, he became lifted up in his own conceits. But he was brought to a state of contrition and humility, and the record concludes by speaking of his new humble mind-set, and the exaltation of Israel’s God. Whether or not Nebuchadnezzar will be in the Almighty’s coming kingdom we cannot say, but in his example, we have the warning and admonition: “nevertheless man being in honour abideth not; He is like the beasts that perish” (Psa. 49:12). But for those who humble themselves and trust in the power of God to save, they will be part of a kingdom that will truly last for ever!

Christopher Maddocks

Running the Race

In Hebrews chapter 12, the exhortation is given to:

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

The life of the believer then, is in certain respects like a race – a race which requires us to forsake everything that might hinder us in achieving the victory. We are to patiently run, the apostle continues: “looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:1-2).

From these words, we learn that our Master is waiting for us at the finishing line. He has gone before us; he has already won the race, and achieved the victory. But as we continue running through life, we see him ever before us, encouraging us to continue, enduring all things for his sake, that we might share his victory. We look to him as one who has endured much shame and suffering, but also as one who now sits at the Father’s Right Hand in Glory, having accomplished his work. This theme of running the race is one which features a number of times in the Apostolic writings, and in each place where it is referred to, a different aspect of that race is emphasised.

FORGETTING THINGS BEHIND

To the Philippians, the Apostle Paul speaks of how he had forsaken everything (or, laid aside every weight) for Christ's sake:

“... this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13-14).

Paul was a man of high standing in the Jewish world of his day. He was “circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the ecclesia; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless”. He was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and was therefore as learned in Jewish things as the best of the Jews. But he forsook all for Christ's sake:

“What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss ... and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ” (Phil. 3:7-8).

Considering the best that this world could offer him as being mere refuse – a hindrance to his entry into the Kingdom – Paul cast it all aside, and instead chose a life of persecution and poverty for Christ's sake. Truly he could say that he forgot those things which were behind, as he pressed towards the mark for the prize of Christ's granting.

But can that be said of us? The Master himself warned: “remember Lot's wife” (Luke 17:32). She could not forget the things which lay behind her, as they pressed onwards to the refuge of Yahweh's granting. In her heart, she turned back to Sodom – and so became consumed in the judgements that Yahweh brought upon that place, as she petrified into a salt-pillar. The example is plain; we must forsake the things of this world, in order to be granted the riches of the Age to Come. We must follow the example of Paul, and rid ourselves of anything that might hinder us in the race. Just like a runner, who does not want to be laden down with baggage on the race track, even so we should cast aside “every weight” which will make our strivings more difficult.

COMPETING ACCORDING TO THE RULES

Again, in 2 Timothy 2, the Apostle uses the same figure under Spirit-guidance:

“... and if a man also competes in a game, yet is he not crowned, unless he competes according to the rules” (2 Tim 2:5 TS).

Here, a different aspect is being emphasised: we must “strive lawfully” as the AV has it, or strive “according to the rules”. We are the servants of the Most High God, and as such, we must run the race on His Terms. In a natural race, there are rules that must be followed in order to succeed. If the rules are broken, then even if the runner reaches the finishing line first, he will not be granted the victory. The rules prohibit perform-

ance-enhancing drugs, ensuring that men only run according to their natural ability. They outlaw interfering with the competitor's running, such as seeking to place obstacles in their way, or tripping them up. The rules are many and varied, but the objective is to ensure that no man has an unfair advantage over his fellows, so that the victory is gained fair and square.

To some extent, the race that we are running is like that. Disciples of Christ are forbidden to contrive an advantage over their fellow-runners. To do so, is to adopt the ways of the flesh, something which is outlawed. They must not seek to hinder their brethren who are running with them, and must not seek to present a show of being better than them, running faster than them, like the athlete who takes steroids. Rather, all must run together, in harmony.

BEING SELF-CONTROLLED

Today's reading in 1 Corinthians 9 focuses our attention on further aspects of the race: the need to be self-controlled, with our minds set on the coronal wreath of glory:

“know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man who competes **controls himself in every way**. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible” (1 Cor. 9:24-25).

Every man who competes in the race “is temperate in all things” as the AV has it, or “controls himself in every way”, as another rendering has it. Every man who runs must be self-controlled, ensuring that no energy is wasted, but that rather every action is governed by an overwhelming desire to reach the finish-line.

So it is in the race of life. There is no scope in our endeavours for resources and energy to be used in ways which do not assist us in our journey to the Kingdom. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His Righteousness” is the exhortation of Christ, as he encourages us from the finishing line (Mat. 6:33). If we truly seek the Kingdom above all other things, those other things will not find any undue attention in our minds, but rather, we will be running with singleness of heart to win the race.

“Temperance”, or “self-control” is something which must be added to a knowledge of the Truth that saves:

“giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge **temperance** ...” (2 Peter 1:6).

It appears to be thought by some, that all that is needed to gain entry into the Kingdom is knowledge. That the primary goal is to accumulate as much knowledge as possible, and that this knowledge will secure our redemption. But like most half-truths, this is only part of the picture. Yes, a knowledge of the ways of Yahweh is essential – for how can we walk in them, if we don't know what they are? But more than this is required. Knowledge is only one of seven qualities to be possessed by the believer, as

described by Peter in this place. We must add to our knowledge temperance, or self-control, that we do not seek to accumulate a wealth of understanding to appear to be more clever than other men, but that we rather direct our knowledge in wise ways, to the benefit of others, abstaining from every work of the flesh.

THE CORONAL WREATH OF GLORY

The other aspect emphasised in 1 Corinthians 9, is that of the reward:

“Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible”.

The word for “crown” here, is the Greek *stephanos*, and refers to the coronal laurel wreath which was awarded to victors at the Olympic Games. It was a token of how they had overcome; that all their endeavours and efforts had been worthwhile, as they had proved themselves to be worthy of it. But this crown was a fading one; it was corruptible and would not last for very long in the grand scheme of things. Men strove to obtain it, yet once they did, it quickly faded away into dust. But the crown which we seek after is an incorruptible one, one that “fadeth not away” (1 Pet. 5:4) – a golden crown of incorruptibility. Paul expresses his desire to be granted one of these wreaths, when Messiah comes again:

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me **a crown of righteousness**, which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Tim 4:7-8).

Ordinarily, only one of the runners would be granted the wreath – but in this case, it is granted to Paul, and also “all them that love his [Messiah’s] appearing”. Here is a multitude of victors. This is where the race that we run is different to the Olympic Games: whereas there, men compete against each other so that one is seen to be better than his fellows, in our case, we must all run together, seeking to help each other to the finishing line. This is the exhortation:

“Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed” (Heb. 12:12-13).

Whilst men of the flesh look on with delight as those who compete against them begin to flag under the strain, men of the spirit will bear each other up in the way. The weary hands and knees which we are exhorted to lift up are not our own in this place, they are the hands and knees of our brethren. “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others” is the exhortation given elsewhere (Phil. 2:4). We must never forget that left to our own devices, we could never finish the race. Growing weary in the way, we would soon give up, and consider the Crown to be unobtainable. But the race we are running is not to do with getting to the finishing line first – Christ has already done that. He has the Stephanos, emblematic of his success in overcoming the world, and he will cause his brethren who run after him to be

a partaker in his glory. Here then, is a powerful exhortation given by the Apostle: let us look unto Jesus, the One who is at the finishing line encouraging us along the way. And “let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily best us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us”.

Returning to Hebrews chapter 12, we read of the example of Christ:

“... let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:1-2).

That which enabled our forerunner (Heb. 6:20) to patiently run the race, was “the Joy that was set before him”. But what was that joy? The Spirit of Christ in the Psalms describes the Master’s hope of resurrection:

“... therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” (Psa. 16:9-11).

Here is the vision of Joy that Messiah had: it was in the presence of God, with Joy at his Right Hand. This is cited by Peter thus:

“... because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance”

And the writer

“seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses” (Acts 2:27-32).

When we come to consider the example of the Lord Jesus Christ therefore, we see one who for a vision of his Father’s Glorious presence, was enabled to strive and obtain the victory. But our victory will not be accomplished by our efforts alone: “the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong ...” (Eccl. 9:11). “So then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God which sheweth mercy” (Rom. 9:16). We desire the incorruptible crown, yet we cannot obtain it through our own endeavours. We need the mercy of our God to be extended to us, and we trust that He will lead us in victory to the glories of the Age to Come.

Christopher Maddocks

Solomon and Christ

When we examine the Reign of Solomon, we find that in a number of particulars, there is a foreshadowing of the future reign of Jesus Christ: in today's considerations, we shall examine some of those parallels.

The record of 1 Kings chapter 1 describes the anointing of Solomon to be king in Jerusalem over Israel:

“Zadok the priest took an horn of oil out of the tabernacle, and anointed Solomon. And they blew the trumpet; and all the people said, God save king Solomon” (1 Ki. 1:39).

These events marked the end of David's reign, and the beginning of Solomon's. David the mighty warrior had established the kingdom in Israel, centred around Jerusalem. His dominion foreshadows the way in which the kingdom of Messiah will be established by conquest—again centred around Jerusalem. There Jesus the Christ will be established upon the ancient Davidic seat of power, styled “The Throne of his father David” (Lu. 1:32). David established the kingdom by the shedding of blood, and because of this he was not permitted to erect the Temple and it's associated procedures for worship. As he testified himself: “the word of Yahweh came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight.” (1 Chron. 22:8). The task of building the House of God was therefore conducted by Solomon, David's Son, whose peaceful reign typifies the future reign of the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6), when kings and princes shall be subjected to his world wide dominion.

PRELIMINARY JUDGMENTS

But before Solomon could become established upon David's throne, it was necessary for him to commence his reign by carrying out certain judgments upon particular individuals. David himself gave him commandments to this effect:

“Moreover thou knowest also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, and what he did to the two captains of the hosts of Israel, unto Abner the son of Ner, and unto Amasa the son of Jether, whom he slew, and **shed the blood of war in peace**, and put the blood of war upon his girdle that was about his loins, and in his shoes that were on his feet. Do therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace.” (1 Kings 2:5-6).

He similarly gave commandment regarding Shimei (verse 8-9). But these judgments, whilst being to the condemnation of certain individuals, were also to the blessing of others. For example, the sons of Barzillai:

“But shew kindness unto the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be of those that eat at thy table: for so they came to me when I fled because of Absalom thy brother” (1 Kings 2:7).

So it will be that at the first appearance of Messiah upon the earth, there will be judgments upon those who comprised his Household: “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word …” (2 Tim. 4:1).

At the commencement of Messiah’s Kingdom, there will be personal judgments upon individuals according to their deeds. Indeed, just as Solomon was told to condemn particular persons, even so it is written of Messiah’s judgments: “Alexander the copper-smith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works …” (2 Tim. 4:14).

A GENTILE BRIDE

Two features of Solomon’s early reign, were his union in marriage to the daughter of Pharaoh—a Gentile bride—and the building of “the house of Yahweh”:

“And Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh’s daughter, and brought her into the city of David, until he had made an end of building his own house, and the house of Yahweh, and the wall of Jerusalem round about” (1 Kings 3:1).

Even so, our Master will become united to his ecclesial “bride” (Eph. 5:27-32) made up of individuals called out from the gentile peoples, spiritually called “Sodom and Egypt” (Rev. 11:8) for the glory of His Name (Acts 15:14). Moreover, like Solomon, Christ will be a builder of the temple of the Age to Come: “he shall build the temple of Yahweh: Even he shall build the temple of Yahweh; And he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne” (Zech. 6:12-13).

SEEKING FIRST THE KINGDOM

In his early reign, it is testified that “Solomon loved Yahweh, walking in the statutes of David his father” (1 Kings 3:3). His love was expressed by the offering up of many sacrifices at Gibeon, even a thousand burnt offerings. In response, “Yahweh appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, Ask what I shall give you.” Here was the opportunity for Solomon to ask whatever he desired, but his primary desire was to rule well over Yahweh’s people. He asked: “give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?” (1 Kings 3:9). Here, Solomon established a precedent: his concern was solely to do with the kingdom over which he would reign, and that he might have the necessary wisdom and understanding to judge justly. This being so, Yahweh also gave him the things that he did not seek after: riches and wealth:

“And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; behold, I have done according to thy words … and I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days” (1 Kings 3:12-13).

The same principle is established by Messiah himself:

“see ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Mat. 6:33).

The context of this saying is also significant:

“Ye cannot serve God and mammon (i.e. riches - CAM). Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on ... Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these ...” (Mat. 6:28-29).

Solomon did not accrue his glory by seeking after material things. His concern was to have wisdom, so that the Kingdom would benefit from a just ruler, and Yahweh blessed him with the other things besides. Even so, we, who hope to be part of the kingdom of Messiah must not seek after the riches of this life: we seek after the glories that pertain to the age to come, and not present personal advantage.

Again, interestingly, the next chapter of Matthew’s Gospel narrates the words of Messiah: “Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” (Mat. 7:7-8). Solomon asked, and it was given to him. Amongst the things that we ought to ask for is Wisdom, even as James wrote: “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. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering” (Jas. 1:5-6).

The wise rule of Solomon typified the wise rule of Messiah over the kingdom to come:

“he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, Neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth ...” (Isa. 11:3-4).

GIVING GIFTS TO SOLOMON

A characteristic of Solomon’s wise reign, was that he ruled over the neighbouring territories, and the kings of those nations brought gifts in recognition of his position:

“Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought presents, and served Solomon all the days of his life” (1 Kings 4:21).

Again, this foreshadows the way in which nations shall be subjected to Christ, and shall bring presents to him:

“Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles. And that their kings may be brought. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish ...” (Isa. 60:11-12).

“The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: The kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: All nations shall serve him” (Psa. 72:10-11).

Amongst those who came with gifts to Solomon was the queen of Sheba:

“And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to prove Solomon with hard questions at Jerusalem with a very great company, and camels that bare spices, and gold in abundance, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart. And Solomon told her all her questions: and there was nothing hid from Solomon which he told her not” (1 Chron. 9:1-3).

Having heard from others about the wisdom of Solomon, she came to hear it first hand for herself. And according to Christ, she provides an example to others:

“The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, a greater than Solomon is here” (Luke 1:31).

The queen of the south went to great lengths to see Solomon, travelling from afar to hear his wise words, and to see his glory. What an example to us! Those in Christ’s day (who lived in the vicinity, who had the word directly spoken to them) exerted no effort to hear his wisdom, and he was “greater than Solomon”. Even so, we have the teaching of the inspired Word before us, readily available for all to read—yet how much effort do we go to, in order to dig out its wisdom? Would we travel from the ends of the earth to hear and receive it?

MORE BLESSINGS

Describing the blessedness of Solomon’s kingdom, we read that:

“Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon” (1 Kings 4:25).

And speaking of Messiah’s reign, it is written:

“they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of Yahweh of Hosts hath spoken it” (Mic. 4:4).

The picture here is one of contentment, each man having his own possession, and being content with such things as they had.

Contrasting his dominion with that of his Father David’s Solomon said that:

“now Yahweh my God hath given me rest on every side, so that there is neither adversary nor evil occurrent” (1 Kings 5:4).

And speaking of Messiah's reign, the Revelator describes how that:

"he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent which is the devil and satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years be fulfilled" (Rev.20:2-3).

Here, the word "satan" literally means "adversary": that is to say, there will be no adversary during the reign of Messiah, with sin being suppressed during the thousand years.

What we have endeavoured to show in this brief study, is that in a variety of ways, Solomon stands in the record as a type of Christ. His dominion closely parallels the dominion of our Messiah, and his reign is a shadow of greater things to come. And the main characteristics of both, is the way in which the kingdoms will operate upon the principles of Wisdom and Righteousness. We must therefore, apply ourselves to the Wisdom of the Word with all the effort of the Queen of Sheba, that we might be granted a place in Messiahs' kingdom to come.

Christopher Maddocks

An Aged Apostle's Letter

John, Second Epistle. This letter (short and sweet) though apparently addressed to an individual, is without doubt, written to an ecclesia. John by this time was an old man. He was nearly 100 years of age when this was written; and we know that when a man gets up into life, his mind develops with advancing years. He loses the plain, cold, literal style of speech that belongs to the first stage of mental action, and becomes mellow and metaphorical. This is a universal rule, and you find it illustrated here. John styles his brethren and sisters, his children: he says he had no greater joy than to see his children walk in the truth. Now his children were not boys and girls as the term literally construed, would express; but men and women whom he had brought into Christ, by the preaching of the truth. The same style of expression is observed in the beginning of this letter: he addresses himself "to the elect lady whom I love in the truth;" not a literal lady, but the ecclesia to whom he was writing. You will find that he sends, in the last verse, the love of the ecclesia with which he was connected, in a similar form. "The children of thine elect sister greet thee." The children were the members of the ecclesia with whom he worshipped.

LOVE IN THE TRUTH

The next feature to be noticed is the fact stated in the commencement of this epistle, that his love to them had its basis in the truth. "Whom I love in the truth." Now we can all to some extent understand what John means by that; because we have all in a greater or less degree, experienced in some shape, and are prepared by contrast to understand, love in the truth. There are various kinds of love. There is even among thieves a kind of brotherly love; they are attached to each other as members of the same gang,

having a common interest. Among the lowest and most degraded, you will find some form of attachment. Wherever men's interests are identical, there is always a certain interest in each other, which does not exist towards those who are strangers to their pursuits. There is on the other hand a mere neighbourly love, which springs up with mere contact—a mild sort of interest that does not go below the surface, and belongs to the day and the hour. Between the sexes, there is another and more special form of love.

THE WORLD'S LOVE EPHEMERAL

All these loves have their origin in the flesh; that is, they result from the action of the mere instincts with which we are endowed in common with the brute creation—instincts which form a valuable element in the mental composition where the higher faculties rule, but which are neither capable nor designed in themselves to afford a basis of lasting happiness. The love that exists in the world is based upon one or other of these shallow feelings, and is, consequently, of an ephemeral and uncertain character. It burns dimly and selfishly while it lasts, and quickly vanishes before a change of circumstances. The love that springs from companionship in pleasure flies before adversity. The love that comes from identity of business or social interests is destroyed by a single breath of misfortune. Nothing is more notorious than that the world goes cold and turns its face away when the sun of prosperity ceases to shine. Even the love of the sexes dies with age, and cannot flourish against ill-favoured conditions.

A HIGHER LOVE

Now, love in the truth is a very different affair from all these; it is quite a higher thing, in every respect; higher in the conditions it requires for its activity—higher in the nature of its action. It is at once a more delicate and more enduring thing, more refined, and more tough. It lays hold of, and has relation to, a much higher aspect of being. It deals with higher things. It mounts to God, stretches to futurity, and strikes root deeply into the very foundations of being while the love of the world ignores God, fixes on the present only, and has relation to the mere surface of things.

Nothing can be done without the truth. Love in the truth must start with the truth; it cannot make a beginning without it. You will find, as a matter of religious experience, that our love is bounded by the truth. It cannot be bestowed in a very warm form where the truth is unknown, and still less where it is opposed and rejected. Where the truth is received there is a starting point; but even after that, the degree of its intensity is determined by conditions. Personal love will exist in the ratio of the love existing for the truth itself. You have only to pass in review the different classes of people professing the truth to see the truth of this.

NOMINAL FRIENDS OF THE TRUTH

Take first the individual who simply gives in his adhesion to the truth in its doctrinal form: he has come to the conclusion that the popular doctrines are fables, and the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, are the truth; but it is with him simply a matter of intellectual recognition. It is only theory with him. His practical estimate of things has not been altered by his new convictions. The things involved in the truth have not engaged his love. His interest still runs in a worldly channel. He is taken up with the things that belong to the present. His affec-

tions are set on things on the earth, and not on things above. Conversation on the truth is impossible with him. His replies on religious matters are monosyllabic. He assents to a remark made, but he never supplies fresh material; his mind is not running on the matter. Only turn, however, upon another subject, begin to ask him about his business, and instantly he will become voluble, his tongue will be loosed; he will be able, with multiplicity of words and emphasis of expression, almost rhetorical, to describe the various matters pertaining to his particular occupation Or, suppose he is a domestic man, he will be able to give almost an inventory of the furniture and effects, and a treatise on the best articles of diet and the way to cook them, the terms upon which the house is leased, and all the minutæ of details going to make up the mere substratum of existence.

THE POLITICIAN AND TOWN GOSSIP

Another man, still of the same type, who has simply received the theory of the truth, and is, nominally, one of the truth's friends, but of whose heart it has not taken possession—in whom Christ does not dwell by faith—takes a particular interest in politics or town gossip. He will be able to talk over the last move in the cabinet, or the merits of some local candidate for electoral honours. Or, it may be, he is a devotee of science, too wise to appreciate the truth, or the enthusiast of some social movement, to whom the truth is too sober and abstruse. In either case, the result is the same. The truth has no charm for him. He is not taken up with Christ. The things that are of God he hurries out with monosyllables.

Now what I mean to say is this, that if you yourself are thoroughly engrossed with the truth—if you are one of those strangers and pilgrims who feel, mournfully, that you have here no continuing city, but look for one to come—your love is feebly excited by such an individual. His acceptance of the truth imposes upon you the obligation to recognize him, to help him, to countenance him, to co-operate with him; but you feel you have to put forth an exertion to do it, as a duty to Christ. He does not draw the love out of you, because he lacks the spiritual magnetism which the heart generates in a heart that fully takes it in. Temperance movements, scientific hobbies, and political agitations are of no value to the man who has the truth. They are beneath his notice, as a matter of life service. They are gods of the world, at whose shrine worship is worse than wasted. They will be nowhere when our life is run out, and the times of the Gentiles are past; and yet so imperfectly educated is this class of man we are considering, that he prefers the bubbles of the passing generation to the solid riches of Christ. What a pity for all concerned.

MEN OF GOD AND THE WORD OF GOD

How different to cultivate love in the truth with those who know the truth, and are enamoured of it heartily and thoroughly; whose minds are steeped in it because they steep them; for, be it always borne in mind, that this is not a thing that comes by accident or depends upon temperament. A man's natural capacity may have something to do with the success of his studies, but there is no man that will come at the love of the truth by accident. It is quite a matter of business in one sense—a plain case of cause and effect. Here is the truth; here is the brain. If the one is put into the other, there will be a result; the mind will reflect the divine things contained in the Bible; but I know that if I don't

read this, I shall not come under the power of it; I shall have no idea of it, and think nothing of it. If I apply my brain to mathematics, or devote my faculties to business, there will be a similar expenditure of brain power, but with a very different result—a better result in a temporal point of view it may be, but a very different result as regards tone of mind. The views, motives, tastes, and hopes become very different under the two processes. The man having his eyes opened to what the bible reveals, may be very aptly compared to the man in the parable who discovers there is a pearl hid in a certain field, but he knows he cannot get it without digging. Spiritual-mindedness is in the Bible, but we cannot acquire it except by constant intercourse with the Bible.

THE WAY OF TRUTH AND LOVE THEREIN

We can only hope to get our minds under the influence of the truth, by steeping our minds in it, and this is only to be done by laying it down for ourselves as a rule to read it continually, day by day. If we do that, then we shall get at the result; the mind will become steeped because we steep it. When you get hold of a man who thus steepes his mind in divine things, what a luxury beyond expression! You then experience what it is to love in the truth. There is no love so genial, none so rich, so pure and lasting as that which springs from a unity of interest in spiritual things. The real joys of existence are all connected with the truth; outside the truth, there is nothing but doubt, anxiety, fear, distress, sin, and death. They, therefore, make a great mistake who let the truth slip from any cause, or who give the truth the second place in the economy of their life. There are no circumstances that will justify such a mistake. God will not accept any justification of it.

A LIVING SACRIFICE

Jesus demands to be put first; and when we realise who he is, and what it is he calls us to, we can see the reasonableness of his demand. He is only exacting of us that which will be for our supreme benefit, though it may not appear so now. Joy unspeakable and full of glory is latent in all his commandments. In due season we shall reap the rich harvest of obedience, if we faint not. The man who gives Christ the second place will realize his position when this puny life is gone; and it will go, however filled up and impressed with its concerns we may be at the present moment. The time will come, as sure as the sun tracks his daily course in the heavens, when we shall have to say good-bye to the things of the present life, and when they are cut away, they will be gone for ever, and the man who lives for them, and is part and parcel of them, will vanish with them. Nothing but the truth will remain. “The world passeth away, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” The man who has lived for Christ, has something laid up in store which nothing can touch and no time decay, an inheritance undefiled and that fadeth not away.

In these matters, we must mistrust the sentiments that are current around us. The mind of Christendom, in practical as well as doctrinal matters, is not the mind of Christ in scarcely one particular. Our only safety lies in the close companionship of the Bible. In this we have the whole of God’s written word, bound up in a compendious form, which we can consult at home like one of the ancient oracles. This is so true and yet so difficult to realise, that it becomes necessary to insist continually upon it, line upon line, precept upon precept, as it was in the days of old. People agree with it as a matter of sentiment, and yet when they get into the current of active life, they are traitorous to their convictions—they allow the temporary interests of this passing mortal state to

divert them from what theoretically they admit to be the highest duty of life. They have a Bible, but they cannot find time to read it; they say it is the word of God, but they are not interested in it; they go on from Sunday to Sunday, thinking that in the end it will be all right, whilst they are thoroughly absorbed in the secular affairs of life.

THE END OF FOLLY—AN UNHEEDED LESSON

At last they come to their death-bed, where we shall all certainly have to review our past career, if Christ does not come before that event; then they suddenly open their eyes to their folly, and speak words of warning to the living. But the living take no heed. They are full of life's concerns. They may be momentarily impressed, but they have a strong mental background relating to this life. They go, it may be, into the chamber of the individual who has wasted his life, and they hear him say "Do not as I have done; be wiser than I have been." They heave a solemn sigh, but it is a surface sigh: it only emanates from the side next to the dying man. Behind them is the picture of the great world without, and the sigh doesn't reach this. It is not that they should be frightened. It is a matter of pure common sense. Given, that this life must soon come to an end; given, also, that this life as at present constituted, is not worth the living; given on the other hand, that there is a life to come that will never end, and one that is vastly superior to this life, since in it we shall realise the very object of being, which we catch only faint and casual glimpses of at present; given, also, that the means of getting that is by giving this—and what course would common sense suggest? It is not a matter of fear. A man deliberately makes a choice. A man's religion should never be a Sunday religion, or a death-bed religion. It should not be the kind of sentiment that depends upon tragedy; that is melted by the sun or blown away by the breezes of the mountain top. It should be a matter of wisdom, deep set, logical, real—a something that is continually present, and takes full and calm possession of the mind.

A THOROUGH POLICY—NO HALF MEASURES

I do not mean to say that fear should have no bearing upon it; for all things are of God. By all our fears, and all our hopes, and all our expectations, we ought to give heed to the calling that is in Christ. It is almost derogatory to the matter to call it "important," or apply to it any of those mild commendations which imply a reservation in favour of something more important still. There should be no tinkering with the truth. It should stand at the top. Some make a profession of it, but live for secular objects. They seem to consider the truth very good; but that the really important matters relate to property and family, which with them are of supreme and crowning importance. They stand on the platform of secular life, and patronise the truth. God will accept no man's patronage. Christ will not accord to any man a position in the future, who does not surrender to him the present; for his request is that we leave all things in a mental point of view, for him; that is to say, that we should prefer everything pertaining to the future, vastly before the trifles connected with the present. To use the familiar and oft-repeated words, but which cannot be burnt too deeply into our minds, "It any man come after me, and forsake not all things, he cannot be my disciple; if anyone love father or mother, husband, wife or children, houses or land, more than me, he is not worthy of me." These words ought continually to ring in our ears, for we shall awake some day to the time when they will be applied. We shall find ourselves in the presence of the august personage who spoke these words, and who will compel us to witness the review of our own lives; and although he is meek and lowly, yet when he comes the second time, he

is to take the position of Judge, and to manifest God's anger toward all unrighteous men; and it will be a fearful thing to fall into his hands.

GOODNESS TO ALL MEN

Next to love in the truth, we have to cultivate kindness. We are to do good unto all men, as we have opportunity. Christ says that if we do good only to those who do good to us, we are no better than the Pharisees and the sinners. Patient commiserative benevolence must characterise our dealings with those without. In the world, from the highest politician to the meanest street sweep, retaliation is the order of the day. As soon as anybody shows the cold shoulder, the result is to resent. This must not be so with us. Christ has given commandment how we ought to walk. John says we deceive ourselves if we say we are children of God, and do not His commandments. We are commanded to overcome evil with good, and not return evil for evil. The good deeds of those who are God's will not depend upon external incitement, or attraction, or upon personal benefit, but will bud forth as from an internal sap, and well up as from a spring. Doubtless the good things done for those who are Christ's, will be very thorough, very cordial, very delightful; at the same time, the unthankful and the evil must come in for a share of our beneficence.

A HARD TASK

We see people who are ungrateful, who are inferior, and low and vulgar and unworthy; nevertheless, having Christ in view, we are enabled to do good to them. It is a good discipline: but if we keep Christ out of view, we shall only consider our own feelings, and bestow our benefits where they will be appreciated. We have a good many things to learn, and many of them difficult to learn; but we must ever try to submit to the divine lessons. The children of God are to be like their Father, who sendeth rain upon the just and upon the unjust.

At the same time, that is quite a different thing from love. Though God sends His benefits upon the wicked He does not love them; the very opposite—we are told that He hates them.—(Psalms 11:5.) He is angry with the wicked: "My soul hateth the proud man," He says; and to certain people who brought their sacrifices with uncleanness, He said "These are a smoke in my nostrils: a fire that burneth all the day." Therefore to be like God we are not required to do a moral impossibility; for it is a moral impossibility to love everybody. We can be kind: that is another thing. It is possible to be kind—to take a benevolent interest in people, saying as it were to ourselves, "Well, poor things, there they are, very inferior sort of people, no doubt, but for the moment, they cannot help it, and we must try to be good to them." We can bring ourselves to this; but to arrive at the point of love is impossible. God does not ask us to do what He doesn't do Himself; and He doesn't love the wicked—neither does Jesus; for he is coming to destroy them. But he is kind and patient for the present, and so must we be.

PATIENCE AND THE RESULT

Only have patience, and all things will come right; God doesn't allow us to put them right. We cannot put them right if we would; it is impossible. Christ will do it for us: he will put everybody into his place, by and bye. He will extirpate from the earth those who do iniquity, and exalt the righteous to life and joy for ever.

The earth belongs to Jesus. At present it is in wrong hands, and in consequence there is a great deal of misery. But there is a good time coming, when the Lord of the Earth will take possession. Our meeting this morning has reference to that good time. The truth points us to that good time. We cannot love a person in the truth, who is not in love with that good time and with him who is to bring it about. The gospel is the glad tidings of God's purpose to bless all the world, and make His will done here as it is in heaven; and if we will only be patient and wait, and be like Abraham (who against hope believed in hope), and be faithful in all circumstances, we may hope that when Jesus—who is here represented by the symbols on the table—comes, he may judge us not unworthy of a place in that glorified throng, who shall unite in a song in which there shall be no jar—no cracked voices, and no imperfection. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, who hath redeemed us to God by his blood, and has made us kings and priests, and we shall reign upon the earth."—Editor.

Robert Roberts, The Christadelphian Magazine, 1868

The Sacrifice of Christ

7.—Christadelphians deny the substitutionary character of the death of the Lord Jesus. Yes, that is true. If Christ were a substitute we ought not to die, and Christ could not have risen. Neither can God be said to "forgive" sin through the kindness of His "forbearance" if He exact the utmost penalty. Neither does "Justice" "substitute" the innocent for the guilty. And God is just. God created man, and placed him under law. Man sinned, and brought death. And all mankind, by the weakness of the flesh, sin and die, even if they do not die in babyhood, which a large proportion of the race does. But God had determined to abolish death on His own principles, which comprise, first, the declaration of His righteousness, and then of His grace in the gift (upon conditions) of eternal life. Therefore He "raised up a horn of salvation in the house of David" (Lu. 1:69), of whom, however, He had spoken from the beginning. This was the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, a "Son of Man made strong" for the purpose of declaring in flesh and blood the righteousness of the Father in an absolutely sinless life. Thus "sent forth," the command of the Father (Jno. 10:18) was that he should lay down his life by crucifixion as an exhibition for all time of what was due from God to man for sin. But, at the same time, the Father's purpose was "that he might take it (his life) again," because he was "an holy one." Therefore God raised him from the dead, and gave him "length of days for ever and ever." His name was then preached in Jerusalem for the remission of sins; that is, men and women were invited to believe God's promises concerning him, and to identify themselves with him by baptism into his Name. In this way, by the forbearance and kindness of God (Rom. 3:25–26), his blood cleansed them from sin; for God forgave them (when they believed and obeyed the gospel) for Christ's sake.

This is the Bible doctrine briefly expressed, and largely in the words of Scripture. It is not substitution, but representation—as Aaron was High Priest for Israel. You are not "baptized into the death" of a substitute. If a substitute dies, the survivor lives, because

he escapes his fate, and has no more to do with him. It is not so with Christ. We have to do with his death, so much so that an apostle says, "I am crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20), "buried with him in baptism" (Col. 2:12).

Certainly it is said, "Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8; 1 Thess. 5:10). "Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6). "One died for all" (2 Cor. 5:14). But "for" is not equivalent to "instead of," but rather to "on behalf of," "on account of." So it is said, "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3), "gave himself for our sins" (Gal. 1:4), "offered one sacrifice for sins for ever" (Heb. 10:12), "ever liveth to make intercession for us" (Heb. 7:25). But Mr. Meyer says that, in Matt. 20:28, "his life a ransom for many"; and in 1 Tim. 2:6, "Himself a ransom for all," the Greek is, "instead of"; and, therefore, it must be substitution. But this is not so. *ντι* (Matt. 20:28) may, indeed, mean "instead of"; but it may also mean "on account of." It is so used in Matt. 17:27—"A piece of money, that take and give unto them for me and thee." So also with *ὑπὲρ* (1 Tim. 2:6) it may mean "instead of," but it may also mean "in behalf of," and is so used, Matt. 5:44, "pray for them"; and Mar. 9:40, "he that is not against you is for you"; also, Jno. 17:19, "for their sakes I sanctify myself." These words are, therefore, not to be used to overthrow the Scriptures above quoted. The life of Christ was laid down and taken again (*ὑπὲρ*) "for the sheep" (Jno. 10:17-18); and, therefore, the figure of ransom must be understood in harmony with this fact, and not strained into fancied agreement with the literal payment of a money ransom. Sinners are not ransomed by the blood of Christ unless they believe the truth and obey it. Having done this, they must continue in his word (Jno. 8:32); which, if they do, the Son will make them "free indeed," so that they may with him "abide for ever."

CC Walker, The Christadelphian 1902
page 307-308.

WAS THE DEATH OF CHRIST REPRESENTATIVE, OR SUBSTITUTIONARY?

A correspondent writes: "You say substitution is but a myth of the apostacy, and that God will not accept the death of others in the place of what he has decreed. His law, you say, must be carried out, and the salvation there is to be, is on the strict basis of compliance with the requirements of His law, in the first place, and man must suffer his own penalty. Now, how can all this be true, if man suffers this penalty in Christ, as you state in line 28, page 84, March number? The true believer is in Christ, by faith and obedience, for the obtaining of the blessings promised, but surely not for penalty incurred in Adam. Neither law nor justice would demand twice payment for the debt, nor double punishment for the offence."

Answer.—The true believer is in Christ "for the obtaining of the blessings promised," it is true, but his obtainment thereof is strictly subject to his recognition of the means by which they were "purchased." The first act he is called upon to perform is a participation in those means, viz., the death of Christ. He has to be baptised at the very outset of his candidature; and what is baptism? Paul says "Know ye not that so many of us

as were baptised unto Jesus Christ, were baptised unto his death.”—(Rom. 6:3.) Therefore, in the very act of putting on the name of Christ “for the obtaining of the blessings promised,” he is made to endorse and morally participate in the “condemnation of sin in the flesh,” which Jesus underwent in the “body preared” for the purpose.—(Heb. 10:5.) In this way, we are made to suffer the penalty while “obtaining the blessings promised.” By this arrangement of divine love, God is “just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.” Jesus was a man, partaking of “the same” nature as ourselves.—(Heb. 2:14.) He was, therefore, no substitute in the orthodox sense. He was a representative. He died a man for men, as the divine law required, and, being without sin, “it was impossible that he should be holden” of the death-bonds in which he was, momentarily, held.—(Acts 2:24.) God raised him from the dead, and appointed him the saviour, high priest, and judge of those for whom he had given his life a ransom. Orthodoxy makes him a substitute of one being for another; one nature for another, wherein lies the “myth” to be reprobated.

Robert Roberts, The Christadelphian Magazine, 1870 page 23.

Jonathan, David and Mephibosheth

Our Old Testament reading in 2 Samuel 8 & 9 recounts the establishment of David’s kingdom, following the slaughter of king Saul by the Philistines. Once a system of defence and administration had been implemented, David sought to make good a covenant that he made with Jonathan Saul’s son:

“And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan’ sake?” (2 Sam. 9:1).

In the events that followed, one of Saul’s servants, Ziba, brought the king’s attention to Mephibosheth, Jonathan’s surviving son. For the basis of our exhortation today, we propose to examine the circumstances surrounding Mephibosheth – and the story really begins with the unique relationship between Jonathan and David. As we considered in a recent exhortation, following the shepherd boy’s defeat of Goliath the Philistine giant, Jonathan as a mighty warrior in his own right, found a kindred spirit with David: “the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul” (1 Sam. 18:1). This is the true love that should exist between those of like precious faith: “... that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love ...” (Col. 2:2). Seeing his father’s persecution of David, Jonathan strengthened the future king’s hand in the Lord (1 Sam. 23:16), and recognised his own subservient position before him. Giving his royal robes to David (1 Sam. 18:4), he demonstrated that it was David who would succeed Saul, and not himself (1 Sam. 23:17). Again, this is the spirit of true brethren of Christ: “be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another” (Rom. 12:10).

Jonathan rebuked his father, saying:

“Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to thee-ward very

good: For he put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and Yahweh wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest it, and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?" (1 Sam. 19:4-5).

Through David, Yahweh brought about "a great salvation for all Israel", yet those in authority sought his destruction – and so would have sinned "against innocent blood". In these matters, we have a foreshadowing of the Lord Jesus Christ, the captain of our Salvation. Judas the betrayer "persecuted the poor and needy man" (Psa. 109:16), yet recognised Messiah's innocence once he had done the deed: "Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood ... and he cast down the pieces of silver, and departed, and went and hanged himself" (Mat. 27:4).

Saul also slew himself, but in different circumstances. The Purpose of Yahweh with Saul was "that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines" (1 Sam. 9:16), yet instead the Philistines overcame him - to the extent that he fell upon his own sword. So it was that, as Yahweh said later: "I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath" (Hos. 13:11). Both Saul and three of his sons were killed by the hand of the Philistines, including David's beloved friend, Jonathan, who remained loyal to his father until the end.

As a consequence of Saul's failure, Mephibosheth his Grandson was crippled:

"Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son that was lame of his feet. He was five years old when the tidings came of Saul and Jonathan out of Jezreel, and his nurse took him up and fled: and it came to pass, as she made haste to flee, that he fell and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth" (2 Sam. 4:4)

When news of his grandfather's demise reached the ears of his nurse, she fled to a place of safety, but in her haste, she dropped Mephibosheth, and when he fell, he was injured and became crippled as a result. It would appear that he was taken in by the household of Machir, (2 Sam. 9:4), who evidently cared for him after the death of Jonathan. But this chapter also describes how because of his covenant and relationship with Jonathan, king David gave him an exalted place in the kingdom, eating at the king's own table:

"David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely show thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually" (2 Sam. 9:7, 13, see also verse 1).

Before Mephibosheth was even born, Jonathan had made a covenant with David:

"And thou shalt not only while yet I live shew me the kindness of Yahweh, that I die not: but also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when Yahweh hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth. So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let Yahweh require it at the hand of David's enemies. And

Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul" (1 Sam. 20:14-17).

So it was, that through Saul's lack of faith, Mephibosheth became a cripple, but through Jonathan's love for his successor, he would be blessed by David.

It would appear that Mephibosheth had a wife at some point that we are not told anything about. We read that "Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name was Micha" (2 Sam. 9:12), which shows that he had a small family. But be that as it may, he was granted favour of the king, because of the covenant made with Jonathan: "so Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem: for he did eat continually at the king's table; and was lame on both his feet" (2 Sam. 9:13).

The Master seems to allude back to this position, in his parable:

"When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just" (Lu. 14:12-14).

King David carried out the spirit of this, inviting the lame Mephibosheth to eat at his table. But Mephibosheth also showed a humble spirit, but responding to his blessed position in a humble way:

"And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?" (2 Sam. 9:8).

In referring to himself as "a dead dog", he was quoting the words spoken by David to Saul:

"... after whom is the king of Israel come out? After whom dost thou pursue? After a dead dog, after a flea ..." (1 Sam. 24:14).

The difference, of course, is that David was being persecuted, whereas Mephibosheth was being blessed.

The next event of note with regard to Mephibosheth was his role during Absalom's rebellion. 2 Samuel 15 recounts how David fled when his son Absalom rose up against him, with various individuals that supported his cause. But chapter 16 describes how that Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth also met David with provisions; and he brought up an evil report of his master. Having received his victuals, David asked, "where is thy master's son? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he abideth at Jerusalem: for he said, Today shalt the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father. Then said the king to Ziba, Behold, thine are all that pertained unto Mephibosheth. And Ziba said, I humbly beseech thee that I may find grace in thy sight, my Lord, O king." (2 Sam. 16:1-4).

However, it is evident from the actions of Mephibosheth that Ziba was maligning his master, and was being dishonest. 2 Samuel 19 describes what Mephibosheth did in the king's absence, which demonstrated his desire and expectation for the king to return. When David had returned following the death of Absalom, we read that:

“Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king, and had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed, until the day he came again in peace” (2 Sam. 19:24).

The fact of his personal neglect was a sign to David that his heart was with the king. All the time that David was away, he purposely deprived himself of basic personal attention, even down to not dressing his crippled feet.

Then David asked:

“Wherefore wentest not with me, Mephibosheth? And he answered, My lord, O king, my servant deceived me: for thy servant said, I will saddle me an ass, that I may ride thereon, and go to the king; because thy servant is lame. And he hath slandered thy servant unto the Lord my king; but my Lord the king is as an angel of God: do therefore what is good in thine eyes” (2 Sam. 19:25-27).

Moreover, the fact of David's safe return was a cause of much rejoicing from Mephibosheth, to the extent that he was happy to relinquish all his goods to his deceitful servant:

“and Mephibosheth said unto the king, Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house” (2 Sam. 19:30).

In the example of Mephibosheth then, we have an instance of a lame man – crippled through no fault of his own – being blessed by the anointed king. Elevated to eating and drinking at the King's table, he was willing to lose it all, for his joy at receiving the king again, following a time of departure. We also look forward to the coming again of our King. We look to the future day, when the afflicted, like Mephibosheth shall be healed: “then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing ...” (Isa. 35:5-6). Those are the days that we so earnestly long for, concerning which, the Master promised his disciples: “that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom ...” (Lu. 22:30). May that day come soon, when those who love the appearing of the Master will be rewarded with healing and life when he comes again.

Christopher Maddocks

The Spirit and the Word

In the original online version of his book entitled “James and Other Studies,” Duncan Heaster postulates that at the time of Baptism, believers are endowed with “a gift of heavenly health”, a “once off gift of the Holy Spirit”, and are also given the further opportunity of drawing upon the Spirit as the occasion arises, in order to receive Divine help in their Bible Study. Thus, under the heading, Holy Spirit at Baptism? he writes:

“... this approach to the subject makes more sense of the passages which imply that there is a once off gift of spiritual strength in our lives. Israel’s passage through the Red Sea was a clear type of our baptism and subsequent wilderness journey (1Cor 10:1). Miraculously, “there was not one feeble person among their tribes” (Ps 105:37) – of about four million people. This gift of physical strength after their Baptism surely prefigures our ‘gift of Heavenly health’ after our immersion ... Titus 3:5,6 associates baptism with a once off ‘shedding’ of Holy Spirit: “the washing (‘laver’, Bro Thomas) of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which he shed on us abundantly.” This “renewing” would correspond to the “newness of life” spoken of in Romans 6 as following baptism, and with the statement that God “hath anointed us [2Cor 1:21,22] (and) given unto us the earnest of the Spirit” (2Cor 5:5).

Grammatically this must imply a once off gift of the Spirit to each believer ... Despite having had this Spirit gift at baptism, the utmost personal effort is still required in responding to it”

Again, he writes:

“Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of (i.e. some of) his Spirit” (1Jno 4:13) is referring back to Jn. 15:4-7, which says that if the word dwells in us, then God is in us. Note original text: that being given some “of” God’s Spirit is parallel with our response to the word. Thus the word is only part of God’s total spiritual gift to us”.

And yet again:

“Surely there is no point in praying to understand God’s word if our own unaided intellect is all that is required (Ps 119:18). Such prayers are surely for God’s help to act upon us to assist us in our efforts to understand. Seeing that all God’s work is accomplished through His Spirit, it follows that we are asking from the help of His Spirit to understand the word.”

Here then, is the claim presented – and in terms concerning which there can be no doubt. At Baptism, believers are given “some of” the Spirit of God, as a “once off gift” of “spiritual strength”. And further, that this Spirit may be also drawn upon as required, to give assistance in understanding the Father’s Word. Several passages are cited in support of this proposition –but how does it stand up to closer scrutiny? What does the Word itself plainly teach concerning such a source of help and strength to believers?

We shall examine the ‘supportive’ passages used by DH shortly, but by way of preliminary remarks, it is worth noting that no passage of scripture states that there is a “once off gift

of heavenly health” given to believers. These kinds of terms are just not used. Neither, as we shall see, is there any passage which speaks of Holy Spirit endowment as being a source of “spiritual strength” – that term is not used at all either, let alone in this connection. Nor does any verse specifically state that believers ought to ask the Father to use His Spirit to give them understanding of the Word. As DH himself admits, at best, the proof texts he gives can only ‘imply’ the points he makes. The evidence they provide is both inferential, and is expressed in terms of DH’s own deductions, not the words of those passages themselves – as we shall see in due course.

A GIFT OF SPIRITUAL STRENGTH?

One more obvious example of this, is the parallel drawn between the physical blessing of Israel, and the spiritual blessing of believers today. The Scriptures state: “He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes” (Ps 105:37). From this, it is reasoned that “this gift of physical strength after their baptism surely prefigures our ‘gift of heavenly health’ after our immersion”. But why must it “surely” be so? Scripture itself does not make that point, neither does it speak in the terms DH uses. True, Scripture does describe how “all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition” (1Cor 10:11), but no passage aligns the health benefits given to Israel with the believer being given the Holy Spirit today. Indeed, if that were the case, then there ought to be “not one” spiritually “feeble” person amongst the tribes, or families of Christadelphians today! The facts show otherwise, as DH himself states elsewhere in his writings where he speaks most disparagingly of present day Christadelphians.

THE POWER OF THE WORD

Rather than speaking of some mystical endowment of “heavenly health” at Baptism, the Oracles of the Most High declare that the Word itself gives strength to believers, being a power in its own right:

“the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are (being) saved, it is the power of God” (1Cor 1:18).

“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth” (Rom 1:16).

“wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted (implanted) word, which is able to save your souls” (Jas 1:21).

“when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe” (1Thes 2:13).

DH claims that “the word is only part of God’s total spiritual gift to us”, and that believers also need a mystical ‘once off’ gift of the Spirit to obtain “spiritual strength”. But to say this is to diminish the power of the word – it is to say the strength the word gives by itself is insufficient, and that another source of enlightenment is also needed. And as we have said, there is no passage of Scripture at all which describes the Holy Spirit as being such a “spiritual strength” imparting a moral power, or “heavenly health” to the recipients. On the contrary, the Psalmist prayed, “my soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according

to thy word”(Ps 119:28). That is the prayer of the faithful; to pray for strength to be given in accordance with what the Word teaches – to pray for a strength which the Word does not promise, or to look for power in a different place to where the Creator has provided it, is bound only to leave the petitioner weak and in need of true spiritual strength.

The Master, in his Parable of the Sower clearly described what source of spiritual growth and health is sown in the believer’s heart. “The seed is the word of God” (Luke 8:11). Notice, the seed is sown alone in the heart, the onus being on the individual to allow it to germinate and take root there. The Master describes no additional element being sown with the seed to help the recipient in some other way, it is down to the nature of soil, and disposition of the individual as to whether, and how that seed grows.

This seed so sown is that “implanted word” which “effectually worketh” within the believer, an ‘incorruptible seed’ (1Pet 1:23) which, is the germ of a new Spiritual life – a “new creature” (2Cor 5:17), and is a virile ‘power’ mighty to save. Indeed, it is that seed which is able to strengthen the believer to resist sin (1Jno 3:9), and which is “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.” (2Tim 3:17).

“THAT THE MAN OF GOD MAY BE PERFECT”

This latter passage is most instructive for our present considerations – the Word is a power able to reprove, correct, and instruct “that the man of God may be perfect”. Why then, do some consider there to be a need for an additional influence/strengthening power from elsewhere? Are we to suppose that the man of God may become more perfect than “perfect” by such additional “spiritual strength”? Nay, the word itself, after the pattern of the Manna of old is sufficient for the believer to feed upon, even though it may be but “light bread”, and insufficient for the murmurers.

Contrary to the claims with which we are being presented, possession of the Holy Spirit was not in any case, a source of “heavenly health” strengthening the possessors to be obedient. This we know, for though it gave the 1st Century possessors miraculous powers and abilities, it was still needful for Paul to exhort and warn the spirit-endowed elders at Ephesus that:

“of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (Acts 20:30-32).

The arising of apostate leaders was certain – but what was needed to edify the body to remain faithfully resistant to these? Mystical supplies of “spiritual strength” from above? No – the Word itself. These were men who certainly did possess the Holy spirit, but it was not that Spirit which gave them strength to resist the apostates, but the Word, understood, believed and acted upon. It is a power of construction, able to build a firmly founded edifice which cannot be shaken in the day of evil. The Spirit, whilst it gave miraculous powers, did not in itself impart an moral awareness to the recipients thereof, as witnessed by the manner by which certain at Corinth abused their miraculous ability to speak in tongues (1Cor 14). Only a Divine power impressed upon the fleshly tables of the heart can achieve

moral results, and it has so pleased the eternal Creator to have that power contained within the written word.

THE EVIDENCE CONSIDERED

By way of support of this theoretical “gift of heavenly health”, a number of passages are cited, and alleged to substantiate the claim – by implication:

“Titus 3:5,6 associates baptism with a once off ‘shedding’ of Holy Spirit: “the washing (‘laver’, Bro Thomas) of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which He shed on us abundantly. This “renewing” would correspond to the “newness of life” spoken of in Romans 6 as following baptism, and with the statement that God “hath anointed us [2Cor. 1:21,22] (and) given unto us the earnest of the Spirit” (2 Cor 5:5).”

But what do these passages actually say? Titus 3:5,6 reads as follows: “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour”. DH cites Bro Thomas’ rendering of the word “washing” as “laver”, thus appearing to give his interpretation credibility. But though he gave this rendering, we find Bro Thomas’ exposition varied greatly to that of DH:

“Now, the ‘testimony of God’ came by the Holy Spirit, by which God testified in His prophets; and in the last days spoke through His Son and the Apostles. Hence, the effects of the word believed are attributed to the spirit; and because the word sets men to breathing in God’s moral atmosphere, it is termed “spirit and life”. These remarks will explain the saying of the apostle to Titus, “According to his mercy God saved us through the laver of regeneration, and renewal of the Holy Spirit”. That is parallel to the saying, “Sanctified and cleansed in the laver of the water by the word”; for the reader must not suppose that any man, woman, or child, who is ignorant of the word, can be regenerated, or born again, by being plunged into a bath. The Holy Spirit does not renew the heart of man as he renews the mortal body, when through Jesus he raises it from the dead. In this case, the power is purely physical. But, when the heart is the subject of renewal it is by the knowledge of the written testimony of God, or the word. “God”, says Peter, speaking of the Gentile believers, “purified their hearts by faith”; and Paul prays, “that Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith”. Now, faith comes by hearing the word of God; in other words, it is the belief of God’s testimony concerning things to come, which are not seen; and without which it is impossible to please Him. When a man is renewed by the truth, he is renewed by the spirit, and not before ... The truth is the purifier to those only who understand and obey it; and there is no moral purity, or sanctification of spirit before God, without it. It is only believers of the truth, then, who can be the subjects of a regeneration by being submerged “in the laver of the water”. When they come out of this, they have been “washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, by the spirit of God”. (Elpis Israel, P 52,53).

Bro Thomas’ point here, is that the “washing of regeneration” which Titus speaks of is not Baptism per se, for a cold bath in itself has no intrinsic regenerative virtue. Rather, it is the cleansing effect of the Word written by the Spirit, as shown elsewhere in Scripture (Eph 5:26). It is interesting to note in passing here, that Cornelius, before he was baptised was described to Peter as having been “cleansed” by God. Before his Baptism, he had been

washed with the Word). The same Spirit poured out at Pentecost has produced the Inspired writings so powerful to us today; the renewing of a believers heart by the Word is a work of the Spirit in this sense only.

The abundant shedding of the Spirit referred to in Titus, is a clear reference back to the outpouring at Pentecost, where the same word is used (cp Acts 2:33), and notice there, the bestowal of the Spirit gifts was not circumstantially linked with Baptism. The believers to whom Paul wrote did have the Holy Spirit gifts – a clear difference between their circumstance and ours. But it was the washing of the Word, not a “once off” “gift of heavenly health” which effected the moral cleansing.

THE EARNEST OF THE SPIRIT

Another passage cited by DH by way of support for his case, is 2Cor 1:21,22 which reads as follows:

“now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God;
Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.”

But to whom is the Apostle writing? We must bear in mind the context of what was being spoken in order to correctly discern the meaning. The believers of the First Century had the Holy Spirit gifts – they had been given the Spirit. And Paul was writing to these believers at Corinth, as shown by the words which immediately follow: Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet to Corinth” (2Cor 1:23). The believers at Corinth had received the Holy Spirit, yes. But believers today do not. The “earnest of the spirit” given to the Corinthians enabled them to perform miracles, and to speak in tongues; if we are to say that we possess the same “earnest of the spirit” today, why do we not have the same gifts? The same remarks apply to 1Jno 4:13, also cited as evidence: “Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit”. The “we” here did have the Spirit gifts, which was a powerful testimony to the abiding presence of the Almighty (cp Heb 2:4), something which we, in our generation do not possess. Rather, we have a power those believers did not have – enshrined within the New Testament which had not then been written.

HELP IN UNDERSTANDING

We saw earlier how that DH claims believers can further draw upon the Spirit to assist them in learning of Divine things:

“Surely there is no point in praying to understand God’s word if our own unaided intellect is all that is required (Ps 119:18). Such prayers are surely for God’s help to act upon us to assist us in our efforts to understand ... it follows that we are asking for the help of His Spirit to understand the word”.

Notice again, an assertion is given, but not from the words of Scripture. “Surely” it must be so – but why? No verse of Scripture states that believers should pray for the Holy Spirit to aid their Bible Study – those terms are not used. On the contrary, even prophets to whom the words of the Spirit came direct, had to exert much effort themselves in seeking out their meaning: “Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace which should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the suf-

ferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (1Pet 1:11). These inspired prophets received the Spirit – it operated through them to give us the words of Scripture, yet they did not understand the import of those words, and how they testified of the coming Messiah. The Spirit did not give them understanding of what they themselves wrote. They had to show themselves to be "workmen that needeth not to be ashamed", seeking to rightly divide the Word of Truth – as do we. The way to understand the Word, is to "search diligently", following the example of the worthies of old, not to pray for a source of understanding they did not have, and which the Father has not promised. And why should it be otherwise? "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, but the honour of kings is to search out a matter" (Prov 25:2). True, it may be attractive to the flesh to suppose that though we be workmen, we do not have to work hard! That we are, in some mysterious way, "helped" to understand, so saving us hours of thoughtful meditation, but that is not the revealed way of the Most High.

THE EVIDENCE CONSIDERED

DH refers to one passage of Scripture as a prop to sustain his argument, Psalm 119:18: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy Law". Notice here, the Holy Spirit itself is not directly spoken of. David does not pray for the Holy Spirit to help his understanding – those are not the terms he uses, even if DH asserts that to be his meaning. David simply besought Yahweh to "open his eyes" – to state that this would be by the direct operation of the Holy Spirit giving understanding is an assumption not contained in the text.

Interestingly, the Hebrew for "open" used here by the Spirit literally signifies, to uncover; to reveal. The idea is that of the eyes being covered over, the prayer being that this covering may be removed, so that the "wondrous things" contained within the Mosaic Law might be seen. Hence, Rotherham renders the verse thus: "unveil thou mine eyes that I may discern wondrous things out of thy law". But what are those wondrous things? David certainly knew and understood the Law very well; later in the same Psalm he says: "O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made my wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me" (Ps 119:97,98). Already having been given understanding and wisdom (notice, from the commandments, not Holy Spirit bestowal), there was yet something contained within the Law which was veiled from his sight, and which he sought to "see".

The Apostle speaks similarly of Israel, and their inability to see the wonderful things testified of the Master: "seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which was abolished: But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament ... even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart." (2Cor 3:15). That which is veiled from Israel even today, is an appreciation of how the Law spoke of the Lord Jesus. Their minds are blinded to this; there is a need for them to have their eyes opened, and their hearts unveiled in order for them to recognise the Messiah who came to fulfill the Law. Even so with David; yet he sought to have that vail removed.

This is something which was indeed revealed to David by Divine Revelation, for he was a prophet: "being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ" (Acts 2:31). But DH is not a prophet,

and neither is anyone else today! When we cite a verse, we must pay attention to it's historical context, or we become no better than the Apostasy who pick out verses to wrest to their own destruction.

Here then, we see the prayer and it's fulfillment. David prayed that he might see wondrous things; and being a prophet those things were shown to him, that "seeing this before", he might speak of the resurrection of Christ. The revelation which he sought came both in the "oath" sworn to him through Nathan the prophet, as recorded in 2Sam 7, and also through prophetic vision which he received himself – which things we do not experience today. David, as other men of old had direct communication from the Most High, whereas we do not. He then, was placed in a unique position greatly different to ours, whereby he could pray to have things revealed to him. For our part, we must be content with the Divine injunction to use personal effort, to "search diligently" that we might show ourselves workmen that need not be ashamed.

THE WORD – A SPOKEN THEN WRITTEN REVELATION OF THE SPIRIT

What we have endeavoured to show, is that the power of the word itself imparts understanding to the hearer. As the voice of Wisdom crieth: "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee ... then shalt thou understand the fear of Yahweh, and find the knowledge of elohim. For Yahweh giveth wisdom; out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding ..." (Prov 2:1-6). Out of the mouth of Yahweh, that is, via His Spoken Word, understanding and knowledge was given to his prophets, and they wrote it down for others. We obtain knowledge of the Most High by heeding that revelation, not by seeking another revelation to, in some way clarify the first. But the word itself is a power because it is the product of the breath, or Spirit of Yahweh, as we touched upon earlier. Thus Paul spake to the Corinthians of the formerly concealed mysteries of the Gospel: "God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit ... for what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God" (1Cor 2:10,11).

So then, 'no man' can know the things of God, but by the Spirit of God. But how? By a mystical impartation of understanding? No – by the words taught by the Spirit, for this is how the Apostle spake of the revelations given to him, and committed to paper: "now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth, comparing Spiritual things with Spiritual" (v 12,13). So, true, we can only know of Divine things from the Spirit. That is, through the words which the Spirit teaches in the pages of our Bibles. What we must do therefore, rather than to give petition for additional power from the Father, is to attend to that which He has already imparted by the Spirit, and contained within the word. We must shun the words which man's wisdom teaches, and give ear to the oracles of God, that showing ourselves "workmen" who need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of Truth, we might be given a spirit-nature, being heirs of the promises contained within that word.

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