

“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)

“The Just Shall Live by Faith”

It is one of the fundamental principles of The Truth, that no man can earn a right to Salvation, as if it were deserved as wages for work done. The only wages a man is entitled to is death, for it is written: “the wages of sin is death ...” (Rom. 6:23). But the Apostle does not stop there; he continues to say that: “... the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Master”. Eternal life then, is a “gift” granted to those individuals who eschew every work of sin, and who show faithfulness to the One who redeemed them by the shedding of his blood. As we read elsewhere: “by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: **it is the gift of God**: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship ...” (Eph. 2:8-10).

The transformation of a sinner into a saint is, in fact, entirely a work of the Almighty. As we read above, “we are **his** workmanship.” Again, it is testified that: “it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13; cp. 1 Thes. 2:13). Salvation, then, does not come about by ourselves, and our own works – on the contrary it is a process entirely devised and worked out by the Father who begat us with the Word of Truth. This is not to detract from the other important truth, that a man’s faith must be manifested in righteous works (cp Jas. 2:18). But it is rather that those very works themselves come about by the influence of the Spirit-Word within the believer’s hearts. The faith that a man has, and shows forth in his conduct of life, forms the basis of redemption, and the subsequent transformation into immortality.

These principles are bound up together in the words that came through the prophet Habakkuk, which we have taken as the title of this paper. In chapter two, it is stated: “Behold his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but **the just shall live by his faith**” (Hab. 2:4). Notice the implication in this contrast: a man who is Just is not a man whose soul is elevated in pride, but one who will be given life as a consequence of, and reward for, his faith. King Uzziah provides us with an example of unbelief for us to take heed to: “When he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction ...” (2 Chron. 26:16). Though he began his reign by trusting in Yahweh’s hand to deliver him from his enemies, and make his kingdom prosperous, Uzziah became puffed up in his pride – and fell from his position of Grace. As the Proverb goes: “Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov. 16:18). Seeking to enter into the Divine Presence on his own supposed merits rather than through the appointed High Priest, he was struck with leprosy in his forehead, and remained a leper until the day of his death.

This passage of Habakkuk is cited three times in the New Testament, the context of which bring out further points of exhortation. We shall, therefore, proceed to examine each in turn:

ROMANS CHAPTER 1

The context of Romans chapter 1, is that when understood and obeyed, the Gospel message is a power which forms the basis for our future immortal lives: “for I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). Being the “power of God”, the words of the Gospel can impart life – as in the case of Cornelius in Acts 11. When he found Peter, he was told that Peter would “tell thee **words**, whereby thou

and all thy house shall **be saved**” (Acts 11:14). Again, Paul told the believers at Corinth that “unto us which are being saved, it is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18).

But that power cannot have any effect unless it receives a ready entrance into the minds of those to whom it is being preached. It can only be a power in those who believe in it: those who embrace it, and have their faith imputed as righteousness (see Rom. 4). It is against this background that the Apostle quotes our passage from Habbakuk, speaking of the Gospel:

“for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: **as it is written, The Just shall live by faith**” (Rom. 1:17).

This verse contains an interesting turn of phrase: God’s Righteousness is “revealed from faith to faith as it is written” in Habakkuk. What does this phrase describe? And how does it relate to Habakkuk? The unusual sentence structure of the saying occurs elsewhere in Scripture. Hence, we read of men who “proceed from evil to evil” (Jer. 9:3), and again, of those who are faithful to Yahweh, it is written that “they go from strength to strength” (Psa. 84:7). Here, the sense is evidently describing a process of development: advancing from one position to another. This emphasises our citation from Habakkuk: – the Just shall live by a continually developing and growing faith, not one which stagnates and does not grow and expand.

There is also an emphasis in Romans of the Righteousness of God being declared. As we just saw, in the Gospel, “therein is the righteousness of God revealed ...” See also chapter 4, which is all about men being justified, or accounted righteous by their faith. And as our citation has it, “the just” would live by faith. The point being, that if we are part of the category of the “just”, we will show forth the righteousness of God. Accordingly, in this chapter of Romans, we have each of these three principles expounded: The Just, or Righteous will Live, or be saved, by their developing Faith in the revealed Word of God.

GALATIANS CHAPTER 3

The second citation comes from Galatians chapter 3:

“... But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for the just shall live by faith” (Gal. 3:11).

The emphasis here, is that being considered righteous by God is not upon the basis of works of obedience to a legal code – as we saw earlier. It is rather upon the basis of Faith manifested in action. So we are told:

“... if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe” (Gal. 3:21-22).

The Law could not give life – not because there was anything wrong with it, for it was perfect for the purpose for which it was designed. It was never intended to impart eternal life, rather it was designed to bring a knowledge of sin:

“wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful” (Rom. 7:12-13)

Having a knowledge of one’s own inadequacies, we cannot plead our own righteousness as a basis for blessing. Rather, the promise is *given* “to them that believe,” and so is made sure to all of Abraham’s seed. Those who lived under the Law were not saved by the law, but through the retrospective efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ:

“For this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, ***for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament***, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance” (Heb. 9:15).

So it was, that law was a ministry of condemnation in that it brought a knowledge of sin – but it could not remove it. Only through faith in Messiah could sin be removed, and he, we are told, died for the benefit of those in times past, as well as in our own era of salvation. Hence, “the just shall live *by faith*”, and not by rendering perfect obedience to Law.

There is another allusion to Habakkuk in Galatians 3:

“O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been ***evidently set forth***, crucified among you?” (Gal. 3:1).

This alludes to Habakkuk 2:2, which reads:

“... and Yahweh answered me, and said, Write the vision, and ***make it plain*** upon tables, that he may run that readeth it” (Hab. 2:2-3).

The point is, that the message should not be obscured, but made “plain” to those to whom we speak. Jesus Christ has been “evidently set forth”, by the preaching of the Apostles, who were as messengers running with important news: our preaching should be equally “plain”.

HEBREWS CHAPTER 10

The quotation in Hebrews chapter 10 brings our attention to the immediate context of Habakkuk. Compare this:

“... ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him” (Heb. 10:36-38).

With this:

“... for the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie. Though it tarry, wait for it; because it shall surely come, it will not tarry. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith” (Hab. 2:3-4).

There is, then, a sense of urgency: although it might seem to some that the Lord is delaying his coming again, in actual fact he will come, whether they expect him or not.

There is another Old Testament background to these words in Hebrews 10. 1 Samuel 13 describes how king Saul was to wait for the coming of Samuel. However, he would not wait for any longer than he thought was necessary. So the record informs us: “... and he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed; but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him.” (1 Sam. 13:8).

Samuel had not arrived by the expected time, and Saul therefore took it upon himself to offer his own sacrifice instead of that which would have been offered by Samuel. It was this impatience that cost him the kingdom:

“Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of Yahweh thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would Yahweh have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue ... because thou hast not kept that which Yahweh commanded thee” (1 Sam. 13:13-14).

Saul should have waited for Samuel, even if his coming would come later than he expected. Even so, we must wait for the coming of Messiah: “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb. 9:28).

But Hebrews 10 continues: “if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him ...” (Heb. 10:38). Again, we have an example of this in King Saul. The word of Yahweh came to Samuel regarding Saul:

“It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto Yahweh all night” (1 Sam. 15:11).

The context in this passage is of Yahweh’s command to devote to destruction every vestige of Amalek. Yet Saul “turned back” from following the commandment, and saved the king alive, and took a spoil from their goods (see 1 Sam. 15:9). But are we any different? We are under the command to put to death the old man of the flesh – do we do this? We are commanded: “put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Rom. 13:14), and to be found “bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5). Do we do that?

It is very easy to remove those sins in our lives that we take no pleasure in: but by the same token, it is very difficult to devote to destruction those things that we obtain enjoyment from. But the example of king Saul is a salutary lesson to us all, of the consequence of our failing to do this: it could cost us our place in the kingdom.

Whilst we have considered above the principles of Habakkuk as they are drawn out in the New Testament, we come now to consider our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. The wording in Habakkuk is specific: it is about a particular man:

“... but the just shall live by his faith” (Hab. 2:4).

Whilst we have considered the general principles that must govern our walk towards the kingdom, these words have a very specific application to Messiah. He is the only one who is truly “just” (1 Pet. 3:18) in all his ways. He lived by his faith: he “was faithful to him that appointed him” (Heb. 3:2). He never drew back, but was forward looking in all that he did in obedience to his Father in heaven. He never exalted himself, like Uzziah, but was appointed as High Priest by his Father. We look to him for strength and guidance, and as we patiently wait the day of his coming, we must bear in mind the example of Saul, lest we fall in like manner. The vision pertains to the last days in which we live, and we must follow the Master: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5), 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. 12:2).

Christopher Maddocks

The Benefits of the Word

Our readings for the day bring us to the second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to Timothy, and particularly the benefits of the Word described there in verses 15-17 of chapter 3. To begin with, we have the example of Timothy himself: “... from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:15). It would appear that Paul had an intimate knowledge of Timothy’s circumstances, for in chapter 1 and verse 5, he spoke of how “I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and am persuaded that in thee also” (2 Tim. 1:5). He called to remembrance Timothy’s family affairs, particularly the faith of his mother and grandmother (but his Father was a Greek - Acts 16:1,3), which implies that he had experienced these things first hand. How so? The record in Acts recounts the experiences of Paul at Lystra, Timothy’s hometown, how he preached there, healed a cripple, was stoned, and rose up again only to return to Lystra once more. In practical terms, the apostle would have a need for a roof over his head: could it be that he stayed at Timothy’s family’s house, and saw for himself the faith displayed there? Be that as it may, Timothy was taught “from a child” the ways of the Living God by two faithful sisters of Christ.

HEAVENLY WISDOM

The “holy Scriptures” we are told, “are able to make thee wise unto salvation” (2 Tim. 3:15). But the “wisdom” that the Bible imparts is not like the wisdom of this world. In the preaching of the Gospel, it is written: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent” (1 Cor. 1:19). Again, “God hath chosen the foolish things

of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, hath God chosen, to bring to nought the things that are” (vs. 27-28). The preaching of the cross is foolishness to the wise in this life, yet it is the power of God unto salvation.

James describes this heavenly wisdom as: “the wisdom that is from above” (Jas. 3:17). As the Proverbs have it: “the way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath” (Prov. 15:24). There is a need to seek after heavenly things, as distinct from the natural, earthy way of the flesh. The prophet speaks of the greatness of Israel’s God compared to the natural man:

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Yahweh. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thought as your thoughts” (Isa. 55:8-9).

Being that God’s Ways are above the ways of man, it logically follows that if we seek after heavenly things, we should lift up our minds above their natural carnal instincts, to develop a mind of Spirit. We should make God’s Ways ours – so it is written elsewhere: “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are from above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God” (Col. 3:1). The elevation of our mind to a heavenly, as opposed to a carnal plane, can only develop our thoughts to become more in harmony with those of the God that we serve. This, of course, is a life-long exercise, which will amply reward us at the last.

ALL SCRIPTURE IS INSPIRED

The Apostle declares: “all scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim. 3:16). The word “inspiration” here literally signifies breathed, the statement meaning that all Scripture is God’s word, it is breathed out by God. This is the sense of Isaiah 55:

“so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it” (Isa. 55:11).

The prophets who spoke and penned the words always attributed them to Yahweh. Constantly we read: “thus saith Yahweh”, and similar phrases. Consider also the testimony of David as to where his wise words came from:

“... the Spirit of Yahweh spake by me, and his word was in my tongue” (2 Sam. 23:2).

Again:

“men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas ...” (Acts 1:16).

There can be no doubt therefore, the words that we have before us, which comprise the “Holy Bible” are those words that were breathed out by God. Sometimes, Inspi-

ration is spoken of as a kind of editing process, whereby men collated their sources and wrote their records, and God ensured that what they said was right. But this, by definition, is not “inspiration”. The Bible doctrine of Inspiration is that all (not just some) Scripture is “God-Breathed”. All originated from Him, and were written down for our learning and admonition.

PROFITABLE FOR DOCTRINE

The Apostle continues: “... and is profitable for *doctrine* ...”. In our day, it is doctrine that sets us apart from other religious groups. Our doctrine is different from theirs, as it comes from the inspired word of God, and not human traditions. But in an endeavor to make the Word more pleasing to men of flesh, the doctrinal differences between us are minimized, and differences with “other Christians” over doctrine classed as not important. The Scripture however, teaches otherwise. The Inspired Word is “profitable for doctrine”, as Paul spoke to Timothy elsewhere:

“Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine” (1 Tim.4:13).

Doctrine, therefore, is on of those things we should “give attendance to”. By contrast, those who do not embrace and retain the purity of true doctrine, are described as:

“children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive (Eph. 4:14).

Rather than be persuaded by the wisdom of men, we ought to ensure that all that we believe and practice is derived from the Holy Writ, which is able to keep us firm and stable as we pass through the stormy winds and waters of life.

PROFITABLE FOR REPROOF

One thing that human nature despises is reproof. As the Pharisees said to a certain man who corrected them: “Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they excommunicated him” (Jno. 9:34). Notice the strategy used here: first character assassination (thou wast altogether born in sins), and then indignation that such an one had any authority to teach them. Thirdly, the actual issue in question is left un-addressed. We find that this is also a common tactic used by our adversaries today.

Wise men, however will welcome reproof – especially when it is derived from Scripture. “the ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise” (Prov. 15:31). Again: “Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man and he will love thee” (Prov. 9:8).

In the case of scorners, we do not cast our pearls before swine. But for those with the humility to hear, we give – and receive – correction and reproof, thus strengthening each other in the journey of life.

This is also an aspect of our witnessing, which because it is unpalatable, is minimized by some preachers of our day: “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph. 5:11).

It is difficult to find a voice of reproof in the holding of puppet shows and teddybear's picnics that some organize as a means of bringing folk in. But whilst these activities are pleasing to the masses, they are devoid of the word of reproof that the Word is profitable for. They are also devoid of the Wisdom of God which comprises the True Gospel, reducing it to an empty husk, unable to save anyone.

PROFITABLE FOR CORRECTION

Similar in some respects to "reproof", "correction" is something we must expect as sons and daughters of the living God. It is written:

"My son, despise not the chastening of Yahweh, neither be weary of his correction: for whom Yahweh loveth he correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth" (Prov. 3:11-12).

It is common for men to think that when life passes by easily, and when good things abound, that they are being blessed by the Almighty - but when hard times come, and we are at a loss as to what to do to lift ourselves out of them, that the Almighty is hiding his face from us. But this is a misconception: those very difficulties that we find hard to deal with are part of the method of chastisement from God, and are actually tokens of His Love towards us. As the apostle spake, citing this Proverb:

"if ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons: for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisements, whereof all are partakers, then are ye illegitimate, and not sons" (Heb. 12:8)

We should rejoice in our sufferings therefore, recognizing the Divine Hand in our lives, developing our characters through trial.

There is an instructive aspect of chastisement in the example of Joseph. Despite the difficulties he faced, it was said that "Yahweh was with Joseph," with the end result being that he was elevated to be ruler over all of the land of Egypt. But there is an aspect of his trial that is not commonly considered. Psalm 105 reads:

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

"The word of Yahweh tried him". How so? Because the Word of Yahweh as revealed to him spoke of his future glorification before his family. How could the purpose of God be possibly worked out in such dire circumstances, when he was in irons, in prison? This is a sense in which the Word of Yahweh might try us also. We have been given many great and precious promises, and at times in our lives, we just cannot imagine how we can attain to those things, and how the purpose of God in our lives might be worked out. But we must trust in the Lord, knowing that all things are possible, and that though we might not understand it at the time, all things will be worked out according to His Will and Purpose.

PROFITABLE FOR INSTRUCTION

Psalms 19 demonstrates the importance of being instructed according to the Word:

“the Law of Yahweh is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of Yahweh is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of Yahweh are right, rejoicing the heart, the commandment of Yahweh is pure, enlightening the eyes” (Psa. 19:7-8).

The Testimony of Yahweh will make the simple wise. Some extol the virtue of a “simple faith,” but the word of Scripture instead describes how we must change and progress from simplicity to wisdom. This is a lifelong process of giving heed to the healing effect of the Word, which is “perfect”, “sure”, “right”, and “pure”. Verse 11 of this Psalm returns us to the theme of reproof: “Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward”. The Word therefore, sounds a warning. To strip this aspect out from our preaching is to remove a vital aspect of the Word, that we must warn men and women of the consequence of not obeying the call of the true Gospel.

In approaching the Word of the Most High God, we must seek to learn, understand, and be instructed in Divine things. “Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the word of knowledge” counsels the proverb (Prov. 23:12). We must seek out instruction and understanding more than the treasures of this life. Again the spirit of wisdom in the Proverbs teach:

“I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me ... my fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver” (Prov. 8:17-19).

To diligently search after instruction then, is something that pleases the Almighty, and which will make us “wise unto salvation”, with an inheritance far better than the fine gold that men of the world obsess over, in their endeavor to possess it.

THAT THE MAN OF GOD MAY BE PERFECT

The perfecting of the Man of God is the ultimate aim of the Holy Writ. Hebrews chapter 13 gives the appeal that “the God of peace ... make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (Heb. 13:21).

We are God’s workmanship, and it is through the pressures of life, coupled with an adherence to the ways of Wisdom that we can be developed, and nurtured to become all the better for it.

The Greek word translated “perfect” in 2 Tim. 3:17 carries the sense of being completely fitted, or equipped. The man of God is “completely equipped, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”. The Word itself is able to equip us, to the doing of “good works” in the sight of God.

The reference to “good works” demonstrates that our faith must be seen in action. The Word equips us to do His Will, but we must seek to use the things entrusted to us for good. We must seek to be pure in word and in deed, so that when Christ comes, he might find in us an image of himself, and bring us into his kingdom.

THE NEED FOR STUDY

There is in some quarters a spirit of antipathy towards the Word. Bible study is seen as something for the academics to do, with deep things being best left as uncertain details that we are not meant to understand. But when we think of all the benefits of the Word, as described above, there can surely be no sound reason why not to study it with all of our might. Again, Paul expressed the importance of Bible Study to Timothy thus:

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

Bible Study is a work that God has set before us. If we do not engage in that work, we will need to be ashamed before our Master, and will not be approved in his sight. To the spiritually minded, there is much benefit in Bible Study, and there is no reason why it should be avoided. How can we be filled with the spirit of God, without attending to the Spirit-Word? How can we know what the will of the Lord is, unless we read it? But as we have shown, Bible Study is only effective if it brings forth the fruit of Wisdom, and is translated into “good works” before God our heavenly Father. Let us therefore earnestly study the word, that we gain the benefits, and become so developed in our character, to bear a likeness of our Lord, prepared for his Coming again.

Christopher Maddocks

The Rising of The Sun of Righteousness

One of the major themes which run throughout Scripture is that of Light and Darkness, and the relationship that exists between the two. So, on the first day of Creation, we have the first spoken words that are recorded in Scripture:

“And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness” (Gen. 1:3-5).

In these words, we have a number of principles that are fundamental to the rest of Bible teaching. Firstly, we find that it is Light which is “good”, and not Darkness. And secondly, the Creator Himself placed a division between light and darkness.

These things are again picked up by the inspired Apostle in 2 Corinthians 4, in speaking of the way in which the Gospel was preached, and received:

“God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6).

So then, there is a parallel between the way in which in Creation the Word spoken by God provided light, and the way in which in the New Creation, the preaching of the Gospel is also a source of light, even a light which illuminates the darkest recesses of the hearts of men who receive it. The “good” light is “the light of the glorious gospel (i.e. “Good News”) of Christ that shines unto us (2 Cor. 4:4). And just as in Creation, there was a Divinely Ordained division between light and darkness, even so there ought to be a division between those who receive the Light of the Gospel, and those who choose to remain in the shadowy camouflage of a spiritual darkness. So the Apostle was caused to write elsewhere:

“be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?” (2 Cor. 6:14)

And again:

“... have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph. 5:11)

In the natural order of things, plants cannot flower and bring forth fruit in darkness. Light is needed for the fruition of all plants, and so it is in things Divine. Left to its own devices, the flesh, containing “no good thing” (Rom. 7:18), can produce no good thing, being totally in the dark. It is utterly impotent as regards to the formation of the Fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22), and in their natural state, it is said of men of the flesh, that they “cometh in with vanity, and departeth in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness. Moreover he hath not seen the sun, nor known anything ...” (Eccl. 6:4-5).

For believers in Christ, however, the situation is very different. Yahweh is described in the Holy Writ as being “the Father of Lights, with whom is no variableness or shadow of turning” (Jas. 1:17). And it logically follows therefore, that those who become adopted as His Children must be the “Children of Light”. So we read in the Apostle’s first Epistle to the Thessalonians:

“Ye are all the Children of Light, and the Children of the Day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation” (2 Thes. 5:5-8).

Under the cover of darkness, many unseen sins can be committed: “every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds be reprov’d” (Jno. 3:20). But for a lover of the Truth, he “cometh to the light, that his deeds might be made manifest, that they are wrought in God”. Light then, becomes the means by which men’s works may be revealed for what they really are. Under the scrutiny of the Light of the Word, those who sow to the Spirit have their deeds commended as being “wrought in God”. But for those who hide in the shade and cover of darkness,

they hate the Light, and all who set it before them. Truly their minds are blinded by the god of this world, that they cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God – or as the Spirit writes: “the Light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not” (Jno. 1:5).

The above passage from 2 Thessalonians chapter 5 brings our minds back to the events which took place at Belshazzar’s drunken feast, as recorded in Daniel chapter 5. Being “of the night” and “of darkness”, Belshazzar the king “made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand.” He saw a vision of a hand writing undecipherable words upon the plaster of the wall, which terrified him to the extent that “his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another” (Dan. 5:6). In these things, we see how a work of darkness (the drunken feast) was about to be revealed for what it really was, by the Light of the Word. Belshazzar recognised that in Daniel could be found “light and understanding and excellent wisdom” (Dan. 5:14). The prophet Daniel had no part with this feast: he was not present, did not fellowship those who were drunk with the wine of Babylon, and had to be called for. Being a child of the Light, he did not drink wine with (cp Dan. 1), or fellowship those who dwelt in Babylonian darkness. Rather, he was under a Divine Commission to “reprove” them. This was the interpretation of that which was written: “God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it . . . Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting . . . Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians” (Dan. 5:25-28). Here was a reproof indeed. Being drunken in the night, Belshazzar was found wanting, and unprepared for the coming judgements of Israel’s Deity.

We read in 2 Thessalonians chapter 5, that obedient believers are “of the day”. That is, their hearts and aspirations belong to the New Day that will commence with the rising up of the Sun of Righteousness. They “seek first the Kingdom of God, and His Righteousness”, and like Lot of old, their souls are sore vexed for the deeds of the wicked. Our Master described the manner by which his disciples must themselves shine forth with the Light of the Gospel:

“Ye are the Light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under a bushel, but on a lampstand; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Mat. 5: 14-16).

The comparison being made here is twofold. Firstly, the believers are like a City built upon a high hill, whose lights can be seen for miles around. And secondly, they are like a lamp used to illuminate the House that those who dwell there can see what they are doing. There is, as one would expect, a twofold application: not only should the “children of light” illuminate the otherwise darkened world, they should also cause their light to shine before the Household of Faith also. The Apocalyptic symbol used to describe 7 ecclesias is that of a Lampstand (Rev. 1:20). Shining with the glorious light of the Word, the collective members of the ecclesia all contribute to the glow. Before the World at large, and in the Household also, there can be found a minority who hold forth the Word of Life (Phil. 2:16), and whose delight is to know and do the

Will of their Father. They are the salt of the earth, being the only preserving element within the corrupting mass of society - despite being despised and rejected of men, as was their Master.

This aspect of a city shining with light upon a hill is something which finds its roots back in the Old Testament prophecy of Isaiah. In Chapter 60, we have a description of Jerusalem to come, as the City of the Great King:

“Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of Yahweh is risen upon thee. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but Yahweh shall arise upon thee, and His Glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising” (Isa. 60:1-3).

Notice the terms used, being reminiscent of the rising of the Sun: “Arise”; the Glory is “risen”; Yahweh “shall arise”; “the brightness of thy rising”. Clearly, it is the Sun of Righteousness being described here. But when we look at the passage a little closer, we find that there are actually two shinings. There is “the Glory of Yahweh” which is said to have arisen over Jerusalem, but there is also the direct command for the City to “arise, shine” herself. That is to say, Messiah will come as the Sun of Righteousness to illuminate the earth but Jerusalem being filled with glory as the capital city of the earth (Isa. 2), shall itself be a city set on a hill, which cannot be hid. She also shall shine forth with the brilliance of Yahweh’s Glory throughout the Age to Come – and that, according to Messiah, is the way in which his disciples ought to shine with the glorious Gospel of Christ today.

The prophet Malachi speaks explicitly of the dawning of a New Day – the Day in which Messiah’s brethren live for, as the Children of Light:

“... unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his beams; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall” (Mal. 4:2).

In these words, we have our Messiah depicted, as the Sun of Righteousness. Interestingly, at the time when Peter and others “were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Pet. 1:16) upon the mount of Transfiguration, it is said of the Master that “his face did shine as the Sun” (Mat. 17:2). Not like Moses’ face, which the people of Israel were afraid to look upon, and which had to be veiled from their sight until the reflected glory faded (see 2 Cor. 3). Rather, being a foretaste of the blessings of his Kingdom, the glory of Yahweh was seen shining through Him with unrivalled brilliance, like that of the Sun. He is the Sun of the political Heavens of the Coming Age – and his brethren will become like unto him, for it is testified that at that time: “then shall the righteous shine forth as the Sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Mat. 13:43). Whereas the duty of the disciple is to hold forth the Word of Life in the earthen vessels of their mortal weakness; in the coming Kingdom, they shall shine brilliantly with immortal splendour, and, with their Redeemer, shall constitute the luminary orb pertaining to that Age. Such is the hope and desire of all the saints.

Psalm 19 also describes that time to come, and the preaching of the Gospel that will pertain to it:

“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their circuit is gone out throughout all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the Sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of heaven, and his circuit to the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof” (Psa. 19:1-6).

Whilst these words are often supposed to be descriptive of the natural heavens and earth, there are a number of features which indicate that something more is intended. The heavens being described here speak words: “...uttereth speech ...” “there is no speech nor language ...”; and have a “voice”. Paul, writing under inspiration, applied this Psalm to the preaching of the Apostles in the First Century:

“... So then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. But I say, have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world” (Rom. 10:18).

The comparison being made here, is that just as the Sun illuminates all parts of the earth, the shining forth of the Gospel-Light extended to all peoples of the then “world”. There was “no speech or language” that formed a barrier to the spread of the Word, for at Pentecost it was given to the Apostles to speak in other tongues. Truly their teaching went unto the ends of the then known world, or as the Apostle expressed it: “to every creature which is under heaven” (Col. 1:23).

THE KINGDOM AGE

Similarly, the Gospel shall be caused to shine forth in the Age to Come. So John describes:

“... I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the Gospel of the Age to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people ...” (Rev. 14:6).

Notice, the preaching messenger is said to “fly in the midst of heaven” – the place where the Sun is ordinarily seen. And the preaching, like that of the Apostles of old, will extend to all the earth, irrespective of any language barrier. The Gospel of the Age shall go out to all the earth via this mid-heaven proclamation of the Word.

This is what Psalm 19 is really speaking of: not merely the natural state of affairs, but more importantly, the spread of the Gospel in the Dawn of a New Age. It refers to what Malachi describes as being the Rising of the Sun of Righteousness who shall arise with healing in his beams. Speaking of the Sun as being like a “bridegroom” going forth from his wedding chamber, our minds are brought to the idea of a Marriage

taking place. Clearly, this is a shift from the natural plane to the spiritual. Revelation chapter 19 describes the marriage between the Lamb of God, and those who are constituted his Bride. And again, associated with this idea, is that of Light, and having sufficient oil in our lamps to diffuse that Light to all around us. Our Master speaks of this, in his parable of the 10 virgins:

“Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them. But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps” (Mat. 25:1-4).

The parable is well known to us. Those who took no oil were not ready and waiting for the Bridegroom to come. They were found to be in darkness when he came – whereas those wise virgins who took oil in their vessels were taken in to the marriage “and the door was shut”. And the lessons are plain: if we wish to shine with immortal splendour in the coming New Age, we must show forth the light of the Word in the days of our mortal weakness. Bearing oil in our vessels, that is, the fuel of The Word, we must be ever shining with light, and longing for that time to come when every shadow and work of darkness shall be dispelled at the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, whose warmth and glory shall be felt all over the earth.

Christopher Maddocks

The Duties of a Watchman

*“have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness,
but rather reprove them” (Eph. 5:11)*

There is a particular feature common to both our Old and New Testament readings for the day, following the Bible Companion. It is a feature of the Gospel that would sit very uncomfortably with many of our contemporaries, who choose either to ignore it, or to regard it as being outdated, and no longer relevant to a multi ethnic civilisation whose overriding doctrine is toleration for all – all that is, just so long as they do not attempt to foist their beliefs upon others. This aspect of the Gospel is to do with its exclusiveness - that being Yahweh’s word, it is therefore Truth (Jno. 17:17) – and by definition therefore, those notions and philosophies that are not in accord with it’s principles are not Truth, or, False. The aspect to which we refer, as indicated in our opening citation, is that of Reproof. Though it be considered to be politically incorrect by the Humanistic civilisation in which we sojourn, if we are to be like Paul, standing with all good conscience in declaring the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27) before men, it is an aspect of our preaching that reproof must be given. It is part of the gospel that “God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ” (Rom. 2:16), and it is therefore part of the disciples’ duty to inform men of their true standing in the sight of God, that they might therefore repent before that day comes.

Ephesians 5:11, cited above indicates that the true believer in Christ, being a child of light (1 Thes. 5:5), cannot mix with a world of darkness. Separation is called for, but

not only separation: a form of reproof is also needed, so that those who walk in darkness might have the opportunity to turn to the Light by way of repentance and baptism. And our reading in Ezekiel 33 likewise describes and emphasizes this responsibility of the Watchman:- the issuing of a warning of impending destruction upon the godless. Ezekiel was told concerning the Watchman's responsibilities:

“If the Watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand. So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a Watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me” (Eze. 33:6-7).

Here we see the principle lying behind the required “reproof”. It is not so much for the condemnation of the wicked - although that be an involved element - for in this same chapter Yahweh states: “As I live ... I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live” (verse 11). The purpose of reproof then, is to enable the wicked to perceive their true standing, and by so doing, bring them to repentance.

Again, Ezekiel chapter 3 provides the same instruction:

“Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me” (Ezek. 3:17).

For Ezekiel – as with all the prophets of Old, his duty was to declare the whole counsel of God, however unpalatable it may have been, but with the prime objective being that individuals might repent before the day of judgment come.

Although in the present dispensation, there are no divinely appointed Watchmen, we can be sure that the principles hold true in our situation as with theirs. There is a vital need in the benighted age in which we live to “hold forth the word of life” (Phil. 2:16), shining as a lampstand to enlighten any who may yet open their eyes to the things of the Spirit. There is a need, as our reading from Ephesians indicates, to give reproof to an evil and adulterous generation – and if the Truth-holders do not fulfil that task, who will? It is not enough then, to say that we believe the principles of the Gospel, and let the matter rest like that. We have a duty to fellow man to show them the way of salvation, and thereby reprove them of their sin, that they might find their way to repentance, and join us on our journey down the narrow way that leads to everlasting life. And if the duties of the Watchman are anything to go by, should we not fulfil this task, the consequences of such neglect shall be required of us.

But involved with this, is the need to give a clear and unequivocal trumpet-blast of a warning that no man can mistake: “for if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?” (1 Cor. 14:8). To speak frankly in such a manner is most frowned upon in today's generation, yet it is deemed by our Master to be a necessary work in His Service.

The aspect of watching is something that the Master refers to on a number of occasions. Matthew chapter 24 records his words:

“Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the Goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh” (Mat. 24:42-44; see also Mark 13:34-35).

Again, the context is to do with a coming day of judgment, and the need to remain alert and ready for that time to come. But there is another sense in which Christ’s brethren need to “watch”. Not only is it to sound a warning before the coming Day of Yahweh upon all the nations – it is also to watch over the wellbeing of the flock. So the Apostle exhorted the believers at Ephesus:

“also 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” (Acts 20:30-31).

Here, the idea is that of watching over the ecclesia like a shepherd caring for the flock under his charge. Again, we do not have divinely ordained shepherds in the way that the 1st Century believers did, but the principles remain the same. There is a need to watch over, and care for the affairs of the flock of God. There is a need to stand against the wolves, whether they arise from within, or without, for the ultimate wellbeing of the flock. The task is a thankless one so far as men are concerned, for to dare to wield the Spirit’s Sword against the imaginations and vanities of the flesh will invariably attract the wrath and reprobation of many who hold such things dear to their hearts. Even undiscerning elements of the flock may criticise the actions of those who withstand the inroads of apostasy – yet such a work is necessary to preserve a people ready and waiting for the appearance of their Master, the Great Shepherd. Those who refuse to withstand the wolves are but “hirelings” according to our Master (Jno. 10:12-13), who do not care for the flock, but who are solely concerned with their own self-interest.

Again, the Apostle writes

“Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet the hope of salvation” (2 Thes. 5:5-8).

The exhortation is clear and plain: the world around us slumbers in spiritual indolence and slothfulness, and there is a real danger that members of the household of faith fall into the same position of apathy. Those who are not alert and watching, by definition, are those who sleep and are drunken, having their senses obscured by the wine of the Romish harlot. We must therefore consider our own standing in the light of these testimonies, and take any remedial action necessary.

Returning to the days of Ezekiel and other prophets, we find that though the Watchman's trumpet sounded loud and long, it went largely unheeded by the general populace:

“Thus saith Yahweh, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein. Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, we will not hearken” (Jer. 6:16-17).

Notice the parallelism here: the sounding of the Trumpet is equated with the exhortation to seek out the “good way”, to walk therein. The ways to be sought after are “the old paths”, not the new innovations devised by man. In an age which has seen ever so many so-called “advancements” in many areas of life, there are (so it appears), a dying few who long after the “old” ways. Men are constantly striving to ‘advance’ further, both in terms of new technologies and innovations, and also in new interpretations of religious texts and their relevance or otherwise to daily living in the 21st Century. The Way of Life however, does not change either in its destination or its width. Not being designed for the hoards who seek after their own affairs and the fulfilment of their own desires, “the good way”, according to our Master is a “strait,” or “narrow” way (Mat. 7:14). It is so by design, and though men may speak evil of us for upholding the principles that define it, the narrowness is not of our making, but God's – and His Wisdom is greater than man's.

In Israel, as in our generation of today, there were few who hearkened to the voice of the prophets. “They said” concerning “the good way”, “we will not walk therein,” and so they remained on the broad way that led them to certain destruction. So it was written of the cry of the Watchmen:

“They have blown the Trumpet, even to make all ready; but none goeth to the battle; for my wrath is upon all the multitude thereof” (Eze. 7:14).

Yahweh's wrath rested upon the entire multitude that refused to hear – and how much more will it rest upon the indolence of our day? Notice also, the trumpet call of the prophets were designed to prepare the people for “the battle”. We saw this earlier in 1 Corinthians 14:8. We also are called upon to engage in the warfare of faith (1 Tim. 6:12). But how many are there amongst us who would willingly contend against the spiritual wickedness in high places, a contention which will only bring the reprobation from man?

But it was not only the people at large who refused to be moved; those who had the dominion over them also failed in their duty as watchmen:

“His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber” (Isa. 56:10)

We would ask the question: What of the Watchmen of today's generation? As we have said, though it be true that there are no divinely appointed Shepherds or Watchmen in

our day, the duties remain to be fulfilled. From whence comes the trumpet-soundings of our day? Where are the contenders for the faith, girded with the armour of light going forth and wielding the Spirit's Sword against the high pretensions of men? In previous ages, such men were moved by the Word into action, by way of "reproof" and exhortation to repentance. Can this be said of the days in which we live? It behoves us all to consider our own individual circumstances by way of comparison to the pattern revealed to us in the holy writ. We can either be the children of light, or the children of darkness – there is no supposed "middle ground". We are either engaged in the warfare in which our Master and Redeemer was engaged, or we are amongst those who sit on the sidelines sniping at those who contend against the wolves. The choice is ours, for only we can decide for ourselves where we stand on such matters.

Christopher Maddocks

Two Masters

The Gospel as recorded by the Spirit through Luke narrates the words of Messiah concerning service:

“No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon” (Luke 16:13).

The situation is clear therefore: being unable to satisfactorily serve two masters, we must decide in our own minds who it is that we pledge our allegiance to – whether to Yahweh, or to the god of this world. The apostle Paul spoke of this:

“know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? ... being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.” (Rom. 6:16,18).

In this place, we learn that who we choose to serve will influence our ultimate destiny. Later in the same chapter we read: “the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ though Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). If we choose to serve sin, then we will be granted the wages that sin pays it's workers – death. But contriwise, if we choose to serve Yahweh, we shall be given the gift that comes by His grace – eternal life. The choice is entirely ours.

This aspect of service, comes out very strongly in the matters pertaining to the children of Israel, and their deliverance from Egypt. We read of the burdens imposed by the Egyptians:

“the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour. And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service wherein they made them serve was with rigour” (Ex. 1:13-14).

So it was that Yahweh visited his people in their affliction, and raised up a deliverer for them in the form of Moses. But the deliverance of the people was not to be an end in itself; rather it was so that they could forsake the things of Egypt, and serve Yahweh: “Ye shall serve God upon this mountain” (Ex. 3:12) was the command to Moses. Similarly the words of Yahweh through Moses to Pharaoh:

“I say unto thee. Let my son go that he may serve me” (Ex. 4:23; see also 7:16; 8:1; 8:22, 9:1; 9:13; 10:3;).

The issue then is: which of the two masters would be served: Egypt, who sought to kill the babies of Israel? Or Yahweh, who brought salvation from the Egyptian bondage. Death or Life – the circumstance are different to our own day, but the question remains the same. King Sin demands more and more from us, in terms of both time and energy as we must go out to work for a living, and if we are not careful, to the expense of the things of the spirit.

Whilst in Egypt, Israel sought after the Egyptian idols and worshipped them, - hence the words of Yahweh came through Ezekiel:

“Then said I unto them, Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt: I am Yahweh your Elohim. But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me: They did not every every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt” (Eze. 20:7-8).

There was a need then, to demonstrate the power of Yahweh before Israel, as well as the Egyptians in order that all would see His Greatness by contrast to the vain idols of Egypt. So the Ten Plagues followed, with the death of the firstborn being the means of Israel's deliverance.

Many years later, Joshua called upon all Israel to choose their Master – whether it be Yahweh, or the idols:

“... the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake Yahweh, to serve other gods” (Josh. 24:16)

And again:

“the people said unto Joshua Nay, but we will serve Yahweh (Josh. 24:21)

So Joshua commanded:

“Now therefore fear ye Yahweh, and serve Him in sincerity and truth, and put away the gods whom your fathers served ...” (Josh 24:14)

And again:

“put away the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto Yahweh Elohim of Israel” (Josh. 24:23).

So it is, that in order to serve Yahweh “in sincerity and in truth”, men must forsake the god of this world, and all those carnal things involved in it's worship. Rather than to be like Israel, who pledged obedience, yet gave rebellion, we should rather be like Joshua who declared: “As for me and my house, we will serve Yahweh” (Josh. 24:15) Irrespective of what the multitude may do, we ought to stand fast, and serve Yahweh. Though many men may betray their pledge to serve Him, individually as members of the house of the Greater Joshua/Jesus we must seek to emulate his spirit in our resolve to remain steadfast in the Truth.

This expression “in sincerity and truth” occurs in one other place:

“purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened . For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Cor. 5:7-8).

Notice, the principles are similar: in order to offer acceptable worship, we must cast out all malice and wickedness first. We keep the Memorial feast as a memorial of Messiah's offering – and interestingly, it was during the passover feast that he ordained the Breaking of Bread to be kept by his brethren. And notice here, the “old leaven” is to be found not outside, but within ourselves, hence the need for personal examination prior to partaking the memorial feast (1 Cor 11:28). Having removed the old leaven, we become a “new lump” as it were. Or to change the allegory, seeking to put “old man” of the flesh to death, the “new man” lives, formed by the growing seed of the Word.

Another instance of this principle of which Master ought to be served, is seen in the circumstances of Elijah in opposition to the Baal worshippers. The people having been gathered together, “Elijah came unto all the people and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If Yahweh be Elohim, follow him: but Baal, then follow him” (1 Kings 18:21).

A double-minded man being unstable in all his ways (Jas. 1:8), finds it difficult to choose, and hovers between the two. Elijah called upon the people to decide, and instigated a means to demonstrate the power of Yahweh, so that the prophets of Baal would be exposed as being utterly impotent.

The expression: “how long halt ye between two opinions” is translated by Young as: “till when are ye leaping on the two branches”. The idea appears to be that of a bird hopping from branch to branch, now knowing upon which to settle. Elijah, through the means thus described took away the branch of apostasy, and sought to cause the people to remain strong in the faith looking to the Branch of Yahweh's providing.

This challenge to the false deities is most instructive for us to consider. Two bullocks were taken, one for Elijah, the other for the prophets of Baal. The challenge was to determine which bullock would be accepted as an offering by Yahweh. No fire was to be placed under the offerings, and the God that answered by Fire, thus consuming the bullock, would be declared to be the true god.

So the Baal worshippers arranged their bullock as required:

“they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made ... and they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them” (1 Kings 18:26,28)

Baal having been proved to be utterly impotent, attention turned to Elijah. The first thing that he did was to “repair the altar of Yahweh that was broken down” (verse 30). And so the principle is shown that worship must take place on Yahweh's terms, and not ours. By repairing the Altar, Elijah was declaring that the old paths must be sought for, and not a new system to be established. The next thing he did was to take “twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob ...”. With these stones, he built another altar – demonstrating that the basis of acceptable worship was to be based upon the Jewish hope: as the Master himself said: “salvation is of the Jews”.

Around this altar, Elijah dug a trench “as great as would contain two measures of seed” (1 Kings 18:32). Seed in Scripture represents the Word – as evidenced by the parable of the sower (Luke 8:11). But the basis of Elijah's worship had to be capable of containing “two measures” of Seed and so it is that there are two parts to the Word – Old and New Testaments.

Next, we read that Elijah:

“put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid it on the wood, and said, fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burn sacrifice, and on the wood” (1 Kings 18:33)

This procedure with the water was repeated three times, meaning that there were 12 barrels full of water poured upon the sacrifice. Again, this emphasises the Jewishness of our Hope – the Hope of Israel is contained within 4 gospel records. The trench was also filled with water, water itself being representative of the cleansing effect of the Word (Eph 5:26). Pouring water over the sacrifice would naturally ensure that it could never be burned up with fire – but the power of Yahweh is far greater than the laws of nature He has set in place.

Then we read that “it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice” that Elijah prayed to Yahweh. “Then the fire of Yahweh fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench” (1 Kings 18:36). As well as showing acceptance of Elijah's worship, this contrasted with the false Baal-gods, and Baal's inability to do a thing. So, witnessing these things, “all the people saw it, and they fell on their faces: and they said, Yahweh, he is the Elohim; Yahweh, he is the Elohim” (1 Kings 18:39). And so the decision was made, as the power of Israel's God was demonstrated: the people were to serve Yahweh, and chew Baal, as Elijah slew the prophets of Baal at the brook Kishon.

Having turned to God from idols to serve the Living and True God (cp 1 Thes. 1:9), Israel showed a rare desire to seek after Yahweh – but sadly even that was shortlived, with Elijah becoming convinced that he alone remained of the prophets of Yahweh.

In these two examples (i.e. Israel leaving Egypt, and Elijah upon mount Carmel), we have many instructive principles for our learning. Israel were taken from being sold under sin to Pharaoh, and given liberty that they might serve Yahweh instead of the idols of Egypt. All that Egypt obtained was death and destruction through Pharaohs hard-heartedness, but for the faithful in Israel this was a glorious time of deliverance. Elijah later sought to demonstrate the power of Yahweh before the people in particular means which could never naturally occur – the burning of an offering doused with water. But in both of these instances, the reformation was only short lived. The wiles of the flesh being strong within man, it was not long before they compromised themselves in the worship of Idols, and the corruption of their way. Not all, however, turned aside. There were seven thousand in the days of Elijah, who held fast to the worship of Yahweh, and who received the Word that came through the prophets.

A final point in this consideration is the behaviour of the people in the absence of Moses, as they awaited his return from his ascent to Mount Sinai. They should have patiently waited for him to return – even as we ought to patiently wait for the coming of our Lord. Yet they instead turned aside to worship the gods of Egypt, having become tired of waiting. As Moses and Joshua returned to the camp, they heard the sound of drunken revelry:

“When Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, there is a noise of war in the camp. And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear” (Ex. 32:17-18)

Here, Israel should have waited patiently for the appearance of Moses – yet instead they enjoyed the pleasures of sin for a season. When Moses returned and saw what had happened, he “stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on Yahweh's side? Let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him” (Ex. 32:26). From this, it would appear that the Levites did not themselves engage in the idolatry, but were instead “on Yahweh's side”. Here is the real issue - whose side are we on? We cannot serve God and Mammon – we cannot be over concerned with the cares of this life, and acceptably serve our God. Where do our sympathies lie – with those who seek after the Truth, or those who desire to cast aside the constraints of Yahweh's providing, promising liberty, yet being the servants of corruption? We can ask the question, but only individually can we provide the answer.

Christopher Maddocks

The Number Five

Bible Students have long recognised the importance of numbers in Scripture. Each number seems to carry a particular significance, and the importance of this is illustrated in the naming of a particular Angel “Palmoni” or “wonderful Number” (see Daniel 8:13, marginal rendering). It would appear that this Angel is in some way involved with this numbering aspect of Scripture. Sometimes however, the difficulty in defining which number speaks of which aspect is not easy, leading some to conclude that numerology is by no means certain, and the meanings are arbitrarily decided with little

evidence. The number 5 is an example of this: traditionally the number 5 is said to represent Grace. We believe however, that there are 2 independent lines of reasoning that support that position.

INCENSE AND SALT

Exodus chapter 30 describes the various components of Incense:

“Take unto thee sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanium: these sweet spices with pure frankincense: of each there shall be a like weight” (Exod. 30:34).

Notice in this description, there are four ingredients:

- 1 Stacte
- 2 Onycha
- 3 Galbanium
- 4 Pure frankincense

However, there was an additional fifth ingredient, alluded to in the marginal rendering of the AV:

“thou shalt make it a perfume, a confection after the art of the apothecary **salted together**, pure and holy” (Exod. 30:25).

Salt then, was used in mixing the ingredients together, and was therefore a fifth ingredient. Under the symbolism of the Mosaic Law, Incense is representative of prayer—hence the Psalmist wrote: “Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense” (Psa. 141:2). These things come together in Colossians chapter 4:

“let your speech be always **with Grace, seasoned with salt**, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man” (Col. 4:6).

Notice these things: to speak with grace is to be seasoned with salt. Salt therefore, as the 5th ingredient represents grace in speech. Just as under the Law of Moses Incense ascended before the Father as representing the prayers of the nation, so in the New Covenant, all of our speech, not only those directed to Yahweh, must be seasoned with the salt of Grace.

THE LAMPSTANDS OF THE TEMPLE

Under the Temple arrangement of things, there were 10 lampstands that gave light for the ministering for the holy things. But the Spirit is careful to note a particular aspect of their arrangement:

“... he made ten lampstands of gold, according to their form, and set them in the temple, five on the right hand and five on the left” (2 Chron. 4:7).

Notice this, it is not simply the case that there were 10 lampstands, it is specifically stated that there were 5 on each side. This meant that when the priest entered into the Holy of Holies (each year), he would pass through the lampstands on each side of

him, looking forward to entering into the place of Glory, and Yahweh's dwelling among men.

This arrangement seems to be alluded to in the Apostle's Epistle to the Romans:

“... therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Rom. 5:2).

Notice this: whereas the High Priest stood with 5 lampstands on each side, even so we have access into the Holy of Holies by faith, “into this grace wherein we stand”. And whereas the High Priest looked forward to entering into the effulgence of Divine Glory, even so we rejoice in the hope of beholding the glory of God, as manifested in the age to come.

From the parallelisms described above where Grace and the number 5 are linked together, we can see that assigning meanings to numbers in Scripture need not be an arbitrary affair. Rather, in this case at least, it would seem that there are good Scriptural reasons why certain meanings can be ascribed to certain numbers.

Christopher Maddocks

“Blessed is He that Watcheth”

“Blessed,” says Jesus, “is he that watcheth.” Now no one can watch without light. If the heavens be dark, the watchman must be provided with a light, or he cannot watch. By gazing at the natural luminaries as some professors are accustomed to do, no light can be derived, nor signs observed premonitory of the coming of the Lord. This is “the way of the heathen,” and “a custom which is vain” (Jer. 10:2-3). The natural heavens are impenetrably dark in relation to his appearing. The believer, or spiritual watchman, must take “the sure word of prophecy,” which is the only “light” capable of enlightening him in the surrounding gloom. This world is “a dark place” and its cosmopolites who understand not the prophetic word mere embodiments of fog. If we understand “the word of the kingdom” we shall “shine as lights in the world,” and be enabled to rejoice in the approach of “the day of Christ.” By the “shining light of prophecy” we shall be able to interpret the signs which God has revealed as appearing in the political heavens and earth. Events among the nations of the Roman habitable, and not atmospheric phenomena, are the signs of the coming of the Lord as a thief; whose nature, whether signs or not, can only be determined by “the testimony of God.””

(John Thomas, Elpis Israel)

The Old Lesson

Everyone admits that human life under the conditions now prevailing on the earth, is a vanity—uncertain as to the time it may last, and certain as to its at last collapsing like a bubble. The difficulty is to get people to give practical effect to their knowledge on the point. Nearly every one lives as if he would live for ever, and admits in his calmer moments he is not living wisely. If there were no purpose of God and no revelation from Him as to how He would have us walk, the general folly would be excusable. If it were certain that nothing but death was before us, nothing could be wiser than the motto “Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die;” but with the certainty that Christ lives and that “it is he whom God hath appointed to be the judge of the living and the dead,” it is sheer madness for men to act in this way. It appears so at the last in every case. As men drop off one by one, survivors realise the lesson as applicable to the man that is gone, if they never realize it in their own case; particularly is this the case in an instance where a man has known and professed the truth, and abandoned it for the present world. Such an instance as this transpired not very long ago. We mention no names, but the instance itself is too pregnant with the lessons of wisdom to let it slip. He now rots in the ground. Is the record of his life such as will be of any lustre in the presence and judgment of Christ, when he comes forth at the resurrection? What is it? The newspaper tells us. “He was anxious to build up a reputation and a position in the town,” and at the time of his death, we are told “the attainment of the object of his early aspirations was fairly within view. In religious and social movements he took a lively interest: in politics he was a Liberal. He was mentioned as a probable candidate for — ward. And we believe was prepared to enter into the contest at the present election.” But now, saith the newspaper scribe, he has “passed away—his life’s work ended.” And the only consolation offered to bereaved friends is “the genuine sympathy of a very large number of the inhabitants”—people who in a hundred years will themselves be mouldering in the land of forgetfulness.

In what a ghastly light, as you stand by the side of the dead, appears the glory which they have sought for themselves in the land of the living? “A reputation and position in the town!” What is that to a dead man for whom only Christ remains—a friend or foe as the “account” may stand. Ah! what is it even for a living man? A thing that no faithful brother of Christ could obtain, for a man must speak well of the world to be a friend of the world: and to have the friendship of the world is a sign we are cloaking the truth which testifies of the world that its works are evil. No wonder “the friendship of the world is enmity with God.” No wonder Jesus said “Woe unto you when all men speak well of you.” Those who know what human nature is and what the divine requirements are, have no difficulty in fully comprehending those sayings of Christ which are so unintelligible to carnal men.

And the “religious and social movements,” and the “politics:” “What concord hath Christ with Belial?” These things are elements of the present evil world with which the saints of God have nothing to do. The saints are strangers and pilgrims like Abraham, like Christ, like Paul, waiting for the promise. Did these take part in the movements of the ungodly generation around them? Did Christ or Paul mix themselves with the politics of the Roman State? None but those who love the praise and desire the honour of men could be found (knowing the truth) to take part in the politics, and re-

ligious and social movements of Gentilism. And as for being “a candidate” and contesting an “election,” such a thing is a simple matter of impossibility for a son of God. “He that saith I know Him, and walketh in darkness, is a liar.” The officials of the present system are by Paul styled “the rulers of the darkness of this aion!” and for a man saying “I know God,” to walk into the rulership of darkness, is to walk into the very midst of the darkness.

But the grave opens her mouth and cuts short the aspirant’s career, and takes away the opportunity of retrieving the day that might have been unto honour. What brightness is there in the prospect of meeting Christ, after putting the hand to the plough and looking back? The grave is a short cut to judgment; for the “dead know not anything.” A man is hurried, as by a side door, out of scenes of self-glorification to meet Him who will be terrible to all who say “Lord, Lord, and do not the things that he says.” How different a place is the grave to those who have taken upon themselves the toil and dishonour of Christ in the days of their vanity. Death to them is a brief repose; a sweet rest, from which they seem to instantly wake refreshed, to find Christ on the earth returned from heaven to give to every man according to his work, the sweet reward of friendship, joy, honour, and everlasting strength to those who have accepted the sorrows and dishonours of Christ, in the days of Gentile greatness.

Robert Roberts, The Christadelphian 1875

The Coming Peace of Jerusalem

The encouragement is given in the Psalm for the believers to “pray for the peace of Jerusalem: They shall prosper that love thee” (Psa. 122:6). When we consider the current situation over the last few weeks, there is great turmoil and distress in the Israel-Hamas conflict. But the Scriptures show that there is worse to come for Israel. Consider the following prophecies:

“Alas for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even *the time of Jacob’s trouble*; but he shall be saved out of it” (Jer. 30:70).

“And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith Yahweh, *two parts therein shall be cut off and die*; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried; They shall call on my name and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say Yahweh is my God” (Zech. 13:9).

“I will gather all nations *against Jerusalem to battle*; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished, and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall Yahweh go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle” (Zech. 14:2-3).

“Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion ...” (Mic. 4:11).

“I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land ...” (Joel 3:1-2).

It is clear from these testimonies that true peace will not come to Israel, until the final warfare involving a Divine deliverance from their enemies. Regarding the current conflict, it is being said by some that we should pray for peace to Israel, and for their adversaries to be defeated, and our opening verse is used to support this position. However, there is no point in praying for something that is not going to happen - the time is not yet for Jerusalem to become a city of peace, and for the Israelitish nation to be victorious over their enemies. There will be a semblance of peace as Gog shall say:

“I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates” (Ezek. 38:11).

And again, Israel is spoken of thus:

“... it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them” (Eze. 38:8).

But that peace will be short lived, for the subsequent events of Ezekiel 38 will be fulfilled, and the prophecies cited above will take place.

FUTURE PEACE

It is clear then, that whilst we should pray for the peace of Jerusalem (cp. Isa. 62:6), that peace is not a cessation of the current spate of violence - as terrible though it may be. Rather, it is the future peace, when Messiah shall come to turn away ungodliness out of Jacob (Rom. 11:26), and the nations shall be judged with omnipotent power. In that day shall it be said:

“ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of Yahweh your God, that hath dealt wonderously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed. And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am Yahweh your God, and none else; and my people shall never be ashamed” (Joel 2:26-27).

Whilst some commenators are questioning whether or not Israel can survive the current onslaught, the Scriptures teach that they certainly will. We have such prophecies as those cited above, and also:

“Israel shall be saved in Yahweh ***with an everlasting salvation***: ye shall not be counfounded world without end” (Isa. 45:18).

“For I am with thee, saith Yahweh, *to save thee*: though I make a full end of all nations wither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee ...” (Jer. 30:11).

These passages prove beyond doubt that Israel will survive, and not only so, but prosper in a state of blessedness:

“Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King” (Psa. 48:2)

And again, concerning Jerusalem:

“it shall be unto me a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them ...” (Jer. 33:9).

This restoration of the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6), is actually a vital part of the Gospel message. Hence it is written:

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings (ie. the Gospel/Good News), of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth” (Isa. 52:7).

Part of the good tidings of the Age to come then, is that Zion’s God will reign. And this, we know, will be through the personage of the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom it was promised:

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

ISRAEL - THE COMING KINGDOM

There does seem to be some confusion regarding the coming kingdom. It is sometimes thought that the kingdom will be worldwide, a global kingdom, with Israel being “allowed” to exist in their land, and the king of the world reigning from Jerusalem. And there is some truth in this - but there is also a lack of clarity and wooly thinking. The Christadelphian Statement of Faith reads thus:

XXI. - That the kingdom which he will establish will be the kingdom of Israel restored, in the territory it formerly occupied, viz., the land bequeathed for an everlasting possession to Abraham and his seed (the Christ) by covenant” (BASF)

According to the BASF then, the kingdom proper will not be worldwide, but will constitute Israel restored to “the territory it formerly occupied.” Brother John Thomas expounded the subject by referring a kingdom and an empire - the kingdom is Israel, but the empire is global:

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

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

(John Thomas *Elpis Israel*. p. 221)

The important point here, is that whilst the kingdom will be within the confines of the promised land of Israel, the empire of Messiah shall extend globally. There will be other nations and kingdoms in the earth as well as Israel, but they, being part of Christ’s empire, shall be subject to him. These are referred to in a number of places:

“... as concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away; **yet their lives were prolonged** for a season and time” (Dan. 7:12).

“The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and **the kings** to the brightness of thy rising” (Isa. 60:3)

“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).

“**the nation and kingdom** that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted” (Isa. 60:12).

“O let **the nations** be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern **the nations upon the earth**” (Psa. 67:4)

These references describe that within the empire of Christ, there will be “nations”, “kingdoms” and “kings” co-existent with Israel. Israel will not be the only nation or kingdom in existence during the thousand year reign, but the existing nations and kingdoms - with their kings - will be subject to the Lord’s Anointed.

These principles can be seen by considering the promised restoration of the Edenic Paradise. Isaiah spoke of the days to come:

“For Yahweh shall comfort Zion: He will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of Yahweh; Joy and gladness shall be found therein, Thanksgiving, and the voice of melody” (Isa. 51:3).

From the creation of the earth, there was a garden planted by Yahweh in Eden. Eden was the territory, of which the garden was only a part. Even so, in the age to come, Israel shall become like the garden of Yahweh, with the nations like the land around that garden. In his book *Elpis Israel*, Brother John Thomas writes thus:

“When the marriage, or union takes place between the sons of Zion, and their king, with the Land of Promise in Eden, it will again become the garden of the Lord, or Paradise, which His own right hand hath planted. For “the Lord shall comfort Zion: He will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody” (Isa. 51:3). Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off” (Isa. 55:13). At that time, “I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle tree, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box together: that they (Israel) may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it” (Isa. 41:18-20).

These testimonies reveal a future state in regard to Eden, of which it’s primitive garden is a beautiful and appropriate representation. Once the seat of a paradise on a small scale, it is destined to be transformed from its present desolation into “The paradise of God”. The country of the four rivers, even to the west from sea to sea is predetermined to shine forth as “the glory of all lands”. Paradise hath no other locality.

(John Thomas, Elpis Israel)

BLESSINGS OF THE KINGDOM

The benefits of walking according to the commands of Christ will be readily manifest. Having being instructed His way, and the natural rebelliousness of man being under firm suppression, there will be no scope for man to lift him self up in conflict with another. So Isaiah prophesied that as a consequence of the subjection of nations under the Great King, by his rebuke and instruction:

“they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Is 2:4).

This is the ultimate United Nations - all peoples being united in their worship of Israel's God, being instructed out of His Law, and taking up the more peaceful occupation of constructing agricultural implements out of the remains of war machinery. Rather than Jerusalem being a constant stumbling block, and arena of world conflict, it shall become the centre of blessing, and longevity of life:

“Thus saith Yahweh of Hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof” (Zech 8:5 cp. Is 65:20).

What a glorious picture of tranquillity this is - a picture which so many long for, where children can safely play in the streets, without fear of abduction or abuse. Where the elderly can live without fear of assault, or ridicule for their infirmities. This is the vision many people desire in these days of degeneracy, violence and wickedness - yet it is a picture which can only become reality when all peoples are subject to the Laws of God, and walk in His Ways of Righteousness. This is the age that we yearn for, and earnestly seek “first”, above all other things (Mat 6:33).

Righteousness and harmony having been established among men, the conflicts amongst even creation itself shall cease.

“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: ***for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Yahweh as the waters cover the sea***” (Isa 11:6-9).

Notice this point - all the glorious blessings promised are things to come as a consequence of righteousness being established in the earth. Firstly, “the knowledge of Yahweh” fills the earth, through judgements and teaching, secondly the blessings are given. This is the pattern taught by the Lord - righteousness first, then blessing: “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you” (Mat 6:33). In that day to come, “the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever” (Isa. 32:17). This is the peace of Jerusalem which Messiah's brethren should pray for: when the kingdom is restored to Israel under the Great King, and the nations shall be at rest, ceasing from violence, and learning God's laws. May that day come soon!

Christopher Maddocks