

“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 Destruction of Jericho

Speaking of the coming day of Judgment, Yahweh spake through his prophet:

“a noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for Yahweh hath a controversy with the nations, he will plead with all flesh; he will give them that are wicked to the sword, saith Yahweh” (Jer. 25:31).

At this time of the “noise”, we are told of the European political and religious system falling:

“there were **voices, and thunders** and lightenings, and there was a great earthquake such as was not since men were upon the face of the earth, so mighty and earthquake and so great: and the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell” (Rev. 16:18-19)

This day is characterized by the “noise” and “voices” that vocalize the wrath of the Almighty, with “the cities of the nations” – specifically the latter day city of Babylon the Great – falling under His Judgments. In our readings for the day, we are taken to Jericho, and the fall of this city under Divine judgments as Israel went forth to take up the inheritance promised to them. As we yearn for the time when we shall be given our inheritance, we can learn much from Israel of old, and the circumstances surrounding the destruction of Jericho under the “voice” of the people. As we prepare ourselves for the coming day of judgment, we, like the Gentile Rahab, can rest assured that we will be delivered from the “wrath to come” (1 Thes. 1:10), and be granted a place in the Kingdom to come.

Exodus chapter 23 contains an assurance that when the people were to contend against the nations, they would not do so alone. An Angel was appointed to go before them, and bring them into the land:

“Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared … for mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off” (Exo. 23:20, 23).

There is a principle here: we cannot successfully war against the flesh with our own power: we need a deliverer to help us, and obtain the victory for us. So, it is that in the passage that forms part of our readings for the day, Joshua – the captain of Yahweh’s Host on earth – is brought face to face with the Angel - the captain of Yahweh’s Host in heaven, who identified himself thus:

“as the captain of the host of Yahweh am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant” (Josh 5:14).

So it was that Joshua humbled himself before the Angel, and would come against the nations under his command.

In a similar way, we shall also obtain our inheritance by obeying the voice of our Captain. For the believers, the Lord Jesus Christ is “the captain of their salvation” (Heb. 2:10), and he has gone before to prepare a place for us:

“... I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself ...” (Jno. 14:3)

The Angel, we are told, would not speak of himself, but would speak the words of the Almighty:

“... my name is in him ... if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries” (Exo. 23:21,22)

Even so, Messiah declared:

“... the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works” (Jno. 14:10).

A CITY DESTINED FOR DESTRUCTION

Returning to the example of Jericho as a city destined for destruction, we are told that the city “was straitly shut up because of the Children of Israel: none went out, and none went in” (Josh. 6:1). The city was “shut up” for seven days, before the walls fell, and the people of Israel would destroy it. Interestingly, under the Law of Moses, a leprous house was likewise shut up for 7 days. After inspecting the house, it is written that “then the priest shall go out of the house to the door of the house, and shut up the house seven days: And the priest shall come again the seventh day, and shall look ...” (Lev. 14:38-39), and if the plague had spread, the diseased stones would be removed. Then, if the plague continued, the entire edifice would be utterly destroyed. Jericho was, as it were, a diseased house, with all of the stones affected – except the house of a certain harlot. But whereas in the case of a diseased house, the diseased stones were removed for the rest of the house to be kept whole, in the case of Rahab, her family were removed from the city devoted to destruction, that they would be spared. The entire city was spiritually leprous, and so the clean stones were taken, and brought without the camp, to be spared in that day.

For six days, the priests and the mighty men of war were to march around the city in silence:

“Joshua commanded the people, saying, ye shall not shout, nor make any noise with your voice, neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth, until the day that I bid you shout; then shall ye shout” (Josh. 6:10).

The first six days were days of silence. Interestingly, the prophet Ezekiel was also to keep silence, until commanded to speak God’s words. The days in which we live are days of silence: where the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer. “these things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself” (Psa. 50:21).

But the days are coming when the voice of God shall sound out in judgment, to vindicate His People: “Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him” (Psa. 50:3).

In that day, it is written that:

“the Lord himself shall descend from heaven **with a shout**, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the Trump of God. And the dead in Christ shall rise first ...” (1 Thes. 4:16).

Notice these three points: a shout and a voice – like the people’s shout against Jericho, the Archangel – like the Captain of Yahweh’s Host that would give thee victory, and the sounding of the Trumpet – like the priest’s sounding the trumpet 7 times before the walls collapsed. So, the overthrow of Jericho foreshadows the judgment to come upon the nations.

Joshua chapter 6 describes the way in which the walls of the city would fall – and in a very interesting way:

“when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat ...” (Josh. 6:5, see also vs 20).

Notice, the marginal rendering of the words “shall fall down flat”: as “fall down under it”. Under what? Under the shout of Israel against the city!

Here we have the principle established, that “... we do not war after the flesh: for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds” (2 Cor. 10:4). Notice the allusion: the pulling down of the stronghold of sin – Jericho – was not accomplished through the use of carnal weapons. It was the Word spoken, the cry of Israel against that city, that effected it’s destruction.

RAHAB THE HARLOT

In the days to come, the city to be destroyed is described as: “the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth” (Rev. 17:5). But ironically, in the case of Jericho, it was a harlot that was saved in the day of destruction. It is written:

“the wicked are overthrown, and are not: but the house of the righteous shall stand” (Prov. 12:7).

So it was that the house of a repentant harlot stood tall, whilst the rest of the walls fell down. The record in Hebrews recounts how that the walls of Jericho collapsed through the faith of those who shouted:

“**by faith** the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days. By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she received the spies with peace” (Heb. 11:30-31).

The expression “them that believed not” implies that they had the opportunity to believe, but did not. Rahab herself demonstrates that the inhabitants of Jericho had heard of the God of Israel, and His mighty power:

“we have heard how Yahweh dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed” (Josh. 2:10).

Beholding the power of Israel’s God, the people of Jericho should have believed, and submitted themselves to Him, yet the only ones who had faith were Rahab the harlot – of the vilest kind of woman - and her household.

James chapter 2 speaks of the faith of Rahab, along with the example of Abraham, the father of the faithful. Here we see both extremities of humankind, a supremely faithful and rich man, and a common prostitute - illustrating the point that Yahweh is no respecter of persons. Verse 25 reads:

“Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works when she had receive the messengers, and had sent them out another way?” (Jas. 2:25).

Rahab was justified through manifesting faith in works. She believed in Israel’s God, and so when the “messengers” came, she hid them in faith, rather than to turn them over to the authorities of Jericho. In human terms, what she did was treason: to sympathize with the enemy, and the power of the enemy’s Deity to destroy the city. But in Divine terms, she showed no allegiance to the kingdom of sin, and instead trusted that she would have an inheritance with Israel – and how interesting it is then, that she became a mother of Jesus Christ, marrying into the nation! Also interesting are the words of Messiah to the leaders of his day: “Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you” (Mat. 21:31) – and here, Christ was going from Jericho to Jerusalem!

ACHAN THE THIEF

By contrast to the faithful harlot, Achan was a man of Israel and one who was covetous. Yahweh through Moses had given the command concerning Israel as they went into the land:

“He shall deliver their king into thine hand, and thou shalt destroy their name from under heaven … the graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire: thou shalt not desire the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snare therein: for it is an abomination to Yahweh thy God. Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house; lest thou be a cursed thing like it: but thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it is a cursed thing” (Deut. 7:24-26).

These proscribed things match the example of Achan. He stole from that which was to be used in the service of Yahweh. Purified by passing through the fire, the silver and gold were to be used in the Tabernacle service, as described in Joshua 6:24. But he “desired” it for himself. Giving a confession before Joshua, he said:

“When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it” (Jos. 9:21).

The spoils of war were given to Israel later, but the principle to be observed in the overthrow of Jericho is similar to that of the firstfruits. The overthrow of Jericho marked the beginning of their possession of the land, and so the spoils of war went to Yahweh first – so it was that Achan stole from Yahweh. The punishment is described in verses 24 & 25:

“Joshua and all Israel with him, took Achan, the son of Zerah, and the silver and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons and his daughters, and his oxen and his asses, and his sheep and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them into the valley of Achor” (Josh. 7:24).

The valley of Achor became the place of execution for Achan, who was stoned with his family, and all that appertained to him. Interestingly however, this verse does not mention Achan’s wife, although he had sons and daughters. Could it be that she separated herself from his crime, and so was spared?

The valley of Achor is a subject of prophecy elsewhere, speaking of the future blessing of the land:

“and I will give her her vineyards from thence, and ***the valley of Achor for a door of hope:*** and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up put of the land of Egypt” (Hos. 2:15).

The place of Achan’s theft will no longer be a place of cursing, but of blessing. Achan confessed his sin, and so gave glory to God (see Josh. 7:19), and whatever may come of Achan in terms of his ultimate salvation, Israel as a nation were in a similar state. They sought the things that they lusted after, and not the glorification of their God. Yet they shall be brought to repentance and confession, and it is written of that day that “then shall Yahweh go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle” (Zech. 14:3). When Israel repents, then Yahweh will fight for his people as at the first, and the valley of Achor shall be the scene of national blessing, rather than the place of execution for the troubler.

As we have already seen, the time of judgment was also a time of faith, salvation, and inheritance to a certain one who had committed herself to Israel’s God. We find then, that:

“Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her fathers’ household, and all that she had, and she dwelleth in Israel even unto this day; because she hid the messengers, which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho”

The book of Hebrews speaks of our salvation in terms reminiscent of that of Rahab:

“for here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come” (Heb. 13:14).

Rahab recognized that her city was not to “continue”, but would be destroyed, and she trusted in Israel’s God for her salvation, and married into the nation of Israel.

There are many points of exhortation we can learn from these things. As we began by saying, we are living in the days when Yahweh shall have a controversy with the nations, and with a particular symbolic city – latter day Babylon the Great. The walls of that city, and all of the cities of the earth shall fall at the command/shout of the Lord, the captain of our salvation. We are, as it were, in Rahab’s situation. We have no continuing city in this dispensation, and we long for the heavenly Jerusalem to come. As Gentiles, we have no natural inheritance of Israel, yet we become joined to Israel’s hope, by becoming a bride, to share the inheritance of her lord and husband. We long for the time when the kingdoms of this world shall fall, commencing with the destruction of the catholic harlot-city and look forward to the days that lie beyond the judgments, to the blessings of the kingdom age. In that day, our voices will sound out loudly, and joyfully with great joy that the walls of the latter day Jericho shall fall. We ought not to be like Achan who sought after the prosperity of this life, but we should serve Yahweh, and devote our entire selves to the glorification of His Name. Then, when Messiah comes, he shall lead us to take up our inheritance with him in glory, in Jerusalem.

Christopher Maddocks

Love - and It’s Implications

Ephesians 5.—The most important thing for us to know after we have come to a knowledge of the truth, and taken up that attitude which the truth requires of everyone who believes it, is, how we ought to walk in the new position to which we have been introduced. This information is abundantly spread before us in the letters which, in the providence of God, Paul wrote to the various Ecclesiastes existing in his time, and which, in the providence of God, have been preserved down to this late age. The chapter that has been read is one very important contribution. It begins by a very comprehensive exhortation: “Be, therefore, followers of God as dear children.” This is in substance the exhortation which Jesus himself uttered while in the flesh. He said “Be ye holy, as your Father in heaven is holy; be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect.” To follow God is to be like him. We know what God is, because He has revealed Himself. Those by whom He spoke inform us, in varied forms of speech, of what some call the attributes or mental qualities that belong to God; therefore, we have only to look these in the face to see—faintly, it may be, but nevertheless, to see—what sort of people we ought to be; nay, what sort of people we must be if the truth is to be of any benefit to us. We are told, for instance, that God is love, and, accordingly, you find, in the very next verse of the exhortation under our notice, we are told to “walk in love.” The persons that do not walk in love are not of God, however clearly they may understand the truth, and however zealous and contentious they may be for it.

If their mental operations, and, therefore, their acts and words, are not centred in love, they have not yet known the truth as they ought to know it. They are mere clouds without water, giving promise of rain, but mocking the thirsty ground beneath. Love was from eternity; love gave birth to creation. Love exiled Adam and Eve from Eden, that woe

might not be everlasting. Love laid the foundations of the truth. Love gave us the child of Bethlehem, by the power of the Highest; love made him a sufferer, and gave him into the hands of men, to be cruelly mocked and spat upon. Love brought him out of the grave. Love exalted him to the priestly office in the heavens; eternal love will send him to earth again, and, by his hand, will drive all rulers from their thrones, wreck all their governments, and give the way of God to the sorrowing nations. Love will bring all to the bosom of God, remove sin, banish death, and fill the earth with glory and love eternal. Love is the beginning—love is the end.

What then is the position of the man who, having the truth, is destitute of the principle in which it had its origin, and in which it will have its end? What sort of relation has he to that perfect assembly of the future which will live—physically and mentally—in the very atmosphere of love? He is a bastard and not a son; an ugly abortion in the family of God; a swine whose prying snout has unearthed the jewels of the sanctuary, and profaned them by unholy appropriation. We can well understand why John should say that a man who loves not is not of God. The man who says he loves God and loves not his neighbour, is a liar; for real love shews itself in good deeds towards the unthankful and the evil, as well as towards the good. Therefore, let us have this fact emblazoned, as it were, in visible letters, continually before our eyes, that the first lesson of our high calling is that we ought to walk in love.

READING WITH DISCRIMINATION

At the same time, let us read that lesson with discrimination; let us not put up that motto and tear down other mottoes that ought to be kept up as well. The man who says that because we are to live in love, therefore, we are not to find fault with other people's opinions, and must not separate ourselves from sincere and pious people, who may, in our judgment, deny the truth, is a destroyer of the word. He handles the word of God deceitfully, it may be without intending it. He would have us obey one part of it and not another. We must avoid such a man, and go from his counsel, as we would from the music of the seductive serpent. There is death in his words, though they are kindly words, and well meant. We must hold love as God does. Does the love of God prevent him from being angry? Does the love of God prevent him from being jealous? Does the love of God prevent him from cleaving the earth sometimes, and letting a Korah, Dathan, and Abiram into the abyss? Does the love of God prevent him from drowning millions of people, and burning thousands of others in the fires of Sodom? No, no. The love of God never interferes with anything else; nor will it in his children. Our duty to love must never interfere with our duty to declare the truth, and that truth is, that all men are mortal, and have no prospect whatever of gaining the favour of God, except in the way He has appointed—the belief and obedience of the gospel. What an irrational proposition, that because we are to walk in love, we are to hold our tongues on these things!—that because we are to obey the exhortation to walk in love, we are to disobey the exhortation to “contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints!” This is the way men around us wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction. Foolish, brainless orthodoxy puts on a smiling oily face, and pretends to be very “charitable.” It would not say a disagreeable word to anybody. It thinks it highly uncharitable to say to people that they are wrong? What is true charity?—real kindness; and is it kind or unkind if you see a person going the wrong road, to tell him that is not the way? The pious people of orthodoxy exclude this kindness by laying down a false rule of charity. They say “Keep

your opinions to yourself; other people have as much right to their opinions as you have." It is true that as between man and man, everyone has a right to his own opinion; but is this a reason why a man should keep his convictions to himself? If his convictions are of any moment—that is, if they relate to anything affecting the interests of those around him, it is the very reason why he should speak, because every man having a right to his own opinion, there is hope, that by ventilation, others may be brought to embrace "opinions" that are true.

If the Christadelphians proposed to take a man's opinion from him by force—as the Pope used to do—there might be some force in the complaint; but it is an exceedingly absurd complaint to urge against the bare proposition of the truth. If a man has a right to his convictions, he has also a right to declare them. Others may exercise their right of refusing to hear, but they ought not to impugn liberty of speech. If a man know the way of life and is in earnest; it is impossible he can hold his tongue; for both duty and impulse will drive him to speak. The man who can hold his tongue out of deference to other people's feelings, gives evidence that he is not in earnest, but that, as a mere not in earnest, but that, as a mere formalist, he has a creed as worldly people have their creeds, and, like them, is not going to allow his "creed" to interfere with his business or spoil his neighbourliness.

THE SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF GOD

The sons and daughters of God are not of this type. The things of this life are, with them, entirely secondary. The first thing is the truth; the will of God in all things. They "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," and, seeking it first for themselves, they are not likely to make it secondary in their relations with others. There is, therefore, a broad distinction between those who are of God, and those who are of the world. The distinction is to be seen even among those who profess the truth, for there are those who profess the truth of whom the truth has not taken possession, and with whom the truth is not a power. Let us take heed that we belong not to this class. If we are to be like Christ, we must resemble him; and he declared of himself that his meat and his drink was to do the will of Him who sent him. Is this not our part likewise?

This, indeed, is our mission. In the truth we have a mission. Before we knew the truth, we had no mission; we belonged to the dogs outside. We were of that outcast race who are no more inhabitants of the earth, in the real sense, than the beasts of the field—who happen to be here just now, but are not fixtures, and will be gone shortly. We were amongst them once, without hope—without God—without a mission; but when the truth comes, it puts a mission in our hands, and the mission ought to be our meat and drink. With those who are of God, it will be so; with others, not. In the very days of Christ, a great many followed him, but only a very few of them were his true disciples; and, on one occasion, when he brought the truth very hard to bear, the majority said "This is a hard saying, who can hear it?" and they walked no more with him." Another time, the crowds were following him, as much as to say "We will honour this man; we will give him our support, which is a great thing for him." Jesus turned round and said "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, his brothers and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." That was cold water to the zeal of the crowd, for they were following him exactly with reference to father and mother, and houses and land. They thought it would be a good thing for themselves and their friends

to espouse the cause of a man who would shortly be on the throne. They followed him with fleshly objects, and, therefore, Jesus chided them. It that were the case among the personal followers of Christ; if when he himself was here, who spake as never man spake, large numbers crowded round him who were afterwards blown away as chaff, need we wonder if in the day in which we live, when there is no voice of authority, when the voice of God does not speak to us, except in the silent words of His book, many should be drawn by this and that to make a profession of the truth, whose meat and drink it is—not to serve God; but whose meat and drink it is (while they like the truth), to make themselves comfortable — who think it a pleasant thing to be among friendly people; a nice thing to go to meetings; delightful to get rid of the horrid doctrines, and grim, long-faced bondage of orthodoxy, and to get among people where there is intelligence, love, and freedom; but whose hearts walk after the world for all that. There are many things to draw people to the truth in the present day; and what I wish to say is, that no one should feel discouraged if they fail to see in all who profess the truth, that allegiance to it—that burning love of it—that thoroughgoing consecration to it, which in their own hearts they may be yearning after.

All Christ's people will hear his voice. God's work will be done; God's people will be brought out; God's people will be of the right sort; therefore let us give ourselves no anxiety of a grievous sort. Our anxiety should be this, to take care lest we fail in doing our duty. In doing our duty, let us not be anxious, for the kingdom will come, and there will be those to enter it, who in the present state, have shown the characteristics of the true sheep, in hearing the voice of the shepherd with attentive and loving ear, and following him. Such will now answer to the description here given. They walk in love, but they will not be all milk and honey. Christ was not so. He was a very disagreeable man to those who were not on the same side as himself. He was always railing against the clergy of his day—the Scribes and Pharisees, whom he denounced as those who had taken away the key of knowledge from the people.

He sometimes looked upon them with anger, when they tried to entrap him in his words. He was a man whom they hated. Jesus described the source of this hatred in words addressed to his brethren according to the flesh, at a time when they were unbelievers. He said “The world cannot hate you, but me it hateth, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil.” This is precisely the basis of the world's hatred towards the people of Christ. If the latter would admit that the world was right, they might hold anything they liked, so far as the world was concerned. The world would like them. The cry of charity is really a plea for smoothing things over. People don't want it to be said they are wrong whatever may be thought, and because we say it, we are hated. If we run in the groove of silence, and seem to countenance the world's fables and frivolities—rather display a weakness to be like the world, we should be thought well of. If this is true with regard to words, much more is it true with regard to acts. The world is made uncomfortable by the implied protest of non-conformity. If we would only do as they do, they would forgive our doctrines. There are many inducements to give in to them. It wants courage to act the part of the high calling. We are in danger of playing the coward, and bowing as it were in the world's great presence. As an example, look at dress in which the world is at present running riot. This extravagance of personal adornment is a folly in the sinner, and a snare to the righteous. Who are the world's greatest fools? Those who dress the highest. The empty snob is known by his superb and ostentatious appurtenances. You find him got up in the latest style of Vanity Fair, with all noisiness of colour, flash

and fumigation; loud voice and impudent swagger, disporting himself in the widest ways of the city. His sister, if possible, more empty-headed than he, is also in the foremost ranks of fashion. What is fashion? It is the mere ingenuity of the world to vary its pleasures; and to deliver itself from what—to its foolish heart—would be the dull monotony of existence. Its enjoyments are of a kind that soon grow stale. It requires “change;” and in the matter of dress, it issues fresh decrees with every moon; and with what alacrity its decrees are obeyed. At once the millions bow the knee! The people—vanity are they!—recognize fashion as their king. As soon as he comes forth, they go and dance like fools round his throne. The greatest fools are nearest the throne. The little wisdom there is in the throng, is found in the outer circle.

You can always tell when there is not much in the head: there is plenty of show outside. Everything is as neat, and precise, and superfine as if the man had just emerged from a bandbox. There is no necessity for being tawdry or Quakerish; nevertheless, there is a very broad margin between the high dresser and the slut. You may be well up to fashion, or you may be afar off, and you will take your place according to your moral status.

THE WAY OF THE WORLD

This margin, and the working of this rule, you will see in the world. Whom do you find in the inner court of fashion? The empty heads, the triflers, the people who are not governed by principle; those who have no sense of the gravity of existence; to whom God is nothing, Christ a myth, and the future a blank. Come out of the inner court, and go to the outer circle of dress, where people attire themselves for convenience and decency, and as you go, you find people becoming more and more sensible, sober, and unobtrusive, until, by and by, you come upon men of judgment and capacity, and mind. If this is the case with regard to the world, how little excuse there is for those who profess the name of Christ indulging in the vice of “costly array.” Let them obey the apostle, and “adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety.”—(1 Tim. 2:9.) There is no necessity for being odd, but there is need for eschewing the excesses into which the world is running in the matter, and this can be done without any offence to a pure taste. There is nothing more beautiful than to see men and women of judgment attired in a plain unobtrusive manner. High dressing takes a considerable percentage off the moral dignity of such. It implies a lingering affinity with the low class of intelligence that thinks to create appreciation by the display of stuff that can be purchased over a counter. Men and women, who walk in the knowledge and love of God, can dispense with such meretricious attractions, even if in the doing of it, they have to dispense with the favourable opinions of foolish neighbours.

The point I was driving at was this: that those who walk in love are not necessarily liked. The wrong sort of people did not love Christ. Those who loved the truth loved him, but he was hated of the others, though he walked in love; and so were the prophets and all the righteous men whose approval is recorded in the Scriptures. We are, therefore, in good company if we are disliked because of our faith and testimony. Yet let us beware of making it a cloak of evil. To be valiant for the truth is good, but to delight in ravening upon the easy prey of orthodoxy—to glory in mere doctrinarian pugilism—to find gleeful sport in tearing, with bark and bite, the rotten rags of a superstitious faith, is abomination of the most odious kind. It is a pitiable sight to see the truth in such unholy hands. It is a jewel of gold in a swine’s snout. Such is the unfortunate alliance where the truth

is held without those moral effects which it is the very design of it to produce. In all things, let love be the centre of operation—the guiding motive. Be kindly affectionate one toward another, and toward all men. Let the love of God fill the hearts and minds of everyone who has obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine delivered by the apostles.

Robert Roberts

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The Ecclesia in The Wilderness

Hebrews chapter 13 describes how that the Salvation which comes through the name of Christ is outside of the established order of things:

“Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come” (Heb. 13:12-13).

In these words, we have a principle being established: both Messiah and his brethren bear the reproach of men, in a time when they forsake the temporal things of this world in order to achieve life in the world to come. Like those who followed king David into the wilderness, and the cave of Adullam we are dissatisfied with what the present world has to offer, and seek no continuance therein. We follow Messiah’s lead to go outside the camp, and throw in our lot with him, so to speak, awaiting the time when he will be king over Israel, and his dominion will be global.

In this regard, we find ourselves wandering in a spiritual wilderness on our journey through life towards the promised inheritance. We are in a similar position as Israel of old: we have left spiritual Egypt behind, and press on towards the land of promise. We, as Israel, are mere sojourners and travellers through the wilderness, seeking no continuance until we are invited to enter the land promised to the Fathers of old. Israel are described as being “the ecclesia in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38) in our New Testament reading for today, and it is this aspect that we shall examine for our exhortation this morning.

Genesis 28 describes Isaac’s blessing to his son Jacob, when he sent him away to obtain a wife and family in Padan-aram:

“... God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people; And give thee the blessing of Abraham; to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave to Abraham” (Gen. 28:3-4).

What is of particular interest for our present consideration, is the word rendered “a multitude of people”. The same word is used in Psalm 22 thus: “I will declare thy name unto

my brethren: in the midst of ***the congregation*** will I praise thee" (Psa. 22:22). Here, the word "congregation" is the same Hebrew word. This Psalm is quoted in Hebrews, and applied to our Lord Jesus Christ: "both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the ecclesia will I sing praise unto thee" (Heb. 2:11-12). The point here, is that the Spirit translates this word into the Greek word "ekklesia" – which indicates that Isaac was desiring that God Almighty would make Jacob into a congregation, or ecclesia of people!

Also of interest, is that in Genesis 28, Isaac desires that Yahweh would "give thee the blessing of Abraham" (vs 4), which phrase is again picked up by the Spirit in Galatians 3, which describes the Gospel in terms of the promised made to Abraham through to Isaac:

"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us ... that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." (Gal. 3:13-14).

Just as "the blessing of Abraham" would come upon Jacob and his family ecclesia, even so it comes to the Gentiles through faith in Abraham's greater Seed, through whom all of the promises would be fulfilled.

THE ECCLESIA IN THE WILDERNESS

The family of Abraham through Isaac developed into an ecclesia in the wilderness, after being brought out of Egypt by a mighty display of the power of the Almighty. So it is recorded that "God assayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders and by war, and by a stretched out arm, and by great terrors ..." (Deut. 4:34). Never before had the Almighty chosen Him a nation, calling them out of the midst of another nation, to shape them into a people suitable for the glory of His Name. But the same principle of divine selection operates in our day also. Describing how Gentiles are drawn out of the kingdoms of men, to be a holy people in the sight of Yahweh, Simon "declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name" (Acts 15:14). There is an important point to consider here regarding our separation from those nations from which we are called out. Just as Israel were totally severed from Egypt, so we must be severed from spiritual Egypt. Our separation, like as in Israel of old, is a complete departure from the ways of the world – the established order of things, as we pass through the wilderness. Yet how regrettable it is, that like the Israelites of old, there are those whose heart remains in Egypt, and their sympathies lie with the world and all the pleasures thereof. Following their departure from Egypt, Israel underwent a symbolic baptism:

"Moreover brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Cor. 10:1-2).

The passing through the baptismal waters of the Sea marked the final severance of Yahweh's holy nation from Egypt. The waters parted to allow them safe passage through, as on dry land – yet those waters resumed their course and swept away the Egyptian army, that they would be seen no more. Even so, when we pass through our baptismal waters, we are given an escape from the corruption that is in the world through lust, to

begin our journey to the Promised Land. We are baptised into Christ, the One who saves us from sin and death, and who is able to lead us through death to eternal life.

Isaiah 63 describes the passing of Moses and the people through the red sea, in terms which remind us of our position through faith in Christ. Speaking of Israel we read:

“... but they rebelled and vexed his holy Spirit: therefor he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them. Then he remembered the days of old, Moses and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of the flock?” (Isa. 63:10-12).

Moses then, as the shepherd of the flock, led Israel through the baptismal waters of the Red Sea, to emerge the other side as a holy people devoted to their Lord. Yet it didn’t take long for them to rebel, and vex His holy Spirit. The same idea is developed in Hebrews chapter 13:

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will” (Heb. 13:20-21).

MOSES - A TYPE OF CHRIST

Just as Moses led his people through the waters, so Messiah leads his people through death. He was brought again from the dead upon the basis of the principles that lay behind the shedding of his blood, and he, like Moses is a shepherd of the flock, leading his people into glory. They, like he, will be brought again from the dead by the blood of the everlasting covenant, which is far superior than the old Covenant that came through Moses. The Old covenant was a ministration of condemnation and death, whereas the blood of the everlasting covenant is able to give life to those who have faith in it. We are therefore, led through death into life, in order that we be doers of His Will, even as our Lord and Master.

The passing of Israel through the waters illustrates another principle that helps us to understand a saying of the inspired Apostle Paul. He wrote:

“There hath no trial taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tried above that ye are able; but will with the trial also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. “(1 Cor. 10:13).

After Israel left Egypt, they were led to the brink of the Red Sea. They had the Egyptian army behind them, and the barrier of waters in front of them. Humanly speaking, there was no escape from the advancing army. Yet Yahweh would not leave them with no escape: He parted the sea to provide an escape, the nature of which provided salvation from the people, and death to the Egyptians. They were delivered from the mightiest men of the Egyptian army, to be led into future glory, if they would remain faithful on their journey.

Interestingly, there is a subtle point made in Hebrews 11, which gives us some insight as to the mind of the people as they passed through the sea. Speaking of Moses, we read:

“by faith he forsook Egypt … through faith he kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them. By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land; which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.” (Heb. 11:27-29).

Notice here: it was by faith that HE forsook Egypt and kept the Passover, but it was by faith that THEY passed through the Red sea. In other words, Moses alone understood and had faith in the Passover and the significance of what it represented, but all of the people together had faith in the parting of the Red sea, as they passed through it under the leadership of Moses. Even so, Messiah first had faith in being the Passover Lamb, and all that it represented, but we all who pass through the waters of Baptism trust in his power to save, and the principles which mark out our departure from Egypt. Subsequent to their deliverance thus described, Moses led the people to mount Horeb, where a covenant was made with the people. And in this, he again foreshadowed Messiah, and the making of a covenant with Yahweh through him. He was a mediator, bringing the Word of Yahweh to the people:

“Yahweh talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire. I stood between Yahweh and you at that time, to shew you the word of Yahweh …” (Deut. 5:4-5).

So also Christ is a mediator between God and the men that would come to him in faith:

“… for there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus …” (1 Tim. 2:5).

PRIESTHOOD AND MEDIATORSHIP

Under the Law, there was a difference between a Mediator and a High Priest. The two offices were held by different people: Moses was the Mediator, and Aaron was the High Priest. But both come together in Messiah, who was a priestly mediator. The Mediator represented God before man, and the High Priest represented man before God. But our Lord fulfilled both roles. Our statement of faith expresses the matter very succinctly thus:

“ XIII. That on the third day, God raised him from the dead, and exalted him to the heavens as priestly mediator between God and man, in the process of gathering from among them a people who should be saved by the belief and obedience of the Truth.- 1 Cor. 15:4; Acts 10:40; 13:30-37; 2:24-27.”

Returning back to 1 Corinthians chapter 10, we find that whilst all Israel partook of the benefits, not all remained faithful:

“… they did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink … but with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness … neither be ye idolaters as were some of them … neither let us commit fornication as some of them committed … Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them tempted … Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured … Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come …” (1 Cor. 10:3-11).

It was not all of people who were overthrown in the wilderness because of idolatry, fornication, tempting and murmuring. But the faithful were very much in the minority: there were only two named in the record: Joshua and Caleb, a Jew and a Gentile. These men were strong in faith, when all around them, the people were rebelling against Yahweh, who had delivered them from the power of Egypt. Interestingly, the writer to the Hebrews also describes their failings in most instructive terms:

“... for some, when they had heard did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. ... for unto us was the Gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, but they were not united by faith to those who listened” (Hebrews 3:16, 4:2).

The italicised words follow the ESV rendering, which on this occasion gives the sense better. Although there were only two men who believed, Israel ought to have been united by faith with them, yet they were not. The admonition is there for us: we need to be united by faith to those who listen to the Word, and seek to show it to others. There is much to be said for a union with those of like precious faith, by contrast to the majority who go their own way into perdition and destruction.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITH

The other point that comes out from a consideration of Hebrews chapter 3, is that it was not sin that kept them out of their inheritance, but lack of faith, or belief:

“and to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.” (Heb. 3:18-19).

So it is, that sin will not keep us out of the kingdom to come, but lack of faith. If we have faith, sin is not imputed to us (see Romans chapter 4). Faith is counted for righteousness; our sins are blotted out for His Name’s sake. But without faith, we are dead in our trespasses and sins, and we will be excluded from the promised land.

We read in Acts chapter 7, that the “ecclesia in the wilderness” had the ordinances regarding the Tabernacle system, to instruct and guide them:

“Our Fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen ...” (Acts 7:44).

It is significant that the Tabernacle is described as the tabernacle of witness. It was designed to bear witness of certain things, and it is because of this that the Apostle describes its ordinances as “a shadow of good things to come” (Heb. 10:1). All of it’s construction and sacrificial system foreshadowed the work of our Redeemer, the prophet like unto Moses. Twice in the Apocalypse, he is described as a “witness”:

“... the faithful **witness**, and the first begotten of the dead” (Rev. 1:5)

“... these things saith the Amen, the faithful and true **witness**, the beginning of the creation of God” (Rev. 3:14).

Jesus the Christ is the faithful and true Witness, who testified concerning His Father's purpose to form an ecclesia, or assembly of called-out ones for the glory of His Name. Israel were an ecclesia – called out from Egypt – and we likewise have been called to separation from the things of the world, all of which shall pass away with the appearing of the Son of the Most High. In that day, when the kingdoms of this world shall become kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, the faithful will no longer be a despised minority. Our Master is supremely the One who heard his Father's voice, and it is he that we need to be joined to in faith, after the pattern of Joshua and Caleb. We have before us such a glorious hope, that we shall be brought to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, and we therefore, must hold fast our faith during our wilderness journey, that we might be granted our promised inheritance when our Master returns again.

Christopher Maddocks

The Nazarite Vow

In the first chapter of the Epistle that bears his name, Peter describes the position of Christ's ecclesia thus:

“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2:5).

Here, the word “holy” literally means “set apart” and describes how the believers are set apart from the present evil world, to be priests, devoted to the doing of the Divine Will. Again, he further writes under Spirit influence:

“ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a purchased people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Pet. 2:9).

We are then, in the privileged position of being a “holy”, or set apart “nation”, “chosen” by the Lord to be vessels to honour. And as such, we must be found holding forth the word of life before those who would turn in from the darkness to the glorious light of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Under the Old Testament arrangement of things, the “holy nation” was Israel. We learn this from Exodus Chapter 19, to which the Apostle is alluding:

“Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a purchased treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel” (Exo. 19:5-6).

Notice, we have these three things coming together again: a national treasure, a priesthood, and a set-apart nation. Under the Mosaic Law, only certain who were of the tribe

of Levi were permitted to be priests, yet here we read that in a certain sense, they were all a “kingdom of priests”. And when we consider the Nazarite vow, it has truly been said that this was the closest that the average man or woman in the camp could get to being a priest. Its rules and ordinances echoed those principles exhibited by the priesthood as we shall shortly see, and it is those principles that marked out the nation as being “holy”. And it is only logical that if we would also be part of a holy nation, and a royal priesthood, that we also must give attention to those principles, and learn to enact the spirit of them in our daily lives.

Numbers chapter 6 describes the commandment to Moses:

“Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, when either a man or a woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate themselves unto Yahweh ...” (Num. 6:2).

There are several principles being established here: either a man or a woman could choose to “separate themselves unto Yahweh” for a period of time of their own choosing. It was a vow that they made to be “separate” and to be devoted to holy things. And we also are under a vow of separation: we voluntarily choose to be holy to our Lord for a period of time – the rest of our lives. When we were baptised, we made that decision and vow, and are under the commandment to be separate: “wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you” (2 Cor. 6:17). Interestingly, Samson was to live a life long service as a Nazarite, as his mother was told before his birth: “... lo, thou shalt conceive and bear a son; and no razor shall come upon his head; for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb ...” (Jug. 13:5). In Samson’s case, his position as a Nazarite was imposed upon him from the day of his birth. It became a life-long commitment, and so foreshadows our life-long commitment to be holy to our Lord.

There were various responsibilities to be followed, each one of which was designed to be a token of separateness. The first was that he/she was to abstain from alcoholic beverages, and even the ingredients used for their production:

“he shall separate himself from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes or dried. All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk” (Num. 6:3-4).

In his/her separation therefore, they were to separate themselves from alcoholic drink: this is also a requirement of the Priests. Following the sad occasion of Nadab and Abihu’s presumptuous offering of uncommanded fire, and their subsequent judgment, it was written concerning the priests: “do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations” (Lev. 10:9). Given that this commandment was made immediately after Nadab and Abihu’s trespass, some have concluded that wine or strong drink was a factor in their behaviour. Wine dulls the senses and releases the inhibitions of a man, and it may well be so that these two were under the influence of alcohol when they took it upon themselves to offer incense other than what was required of them.

Interestingly, the Rechabites were also commanded by their Father to avoid wine. In obedience to the word of Yahweh, Jeremiah “set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites pots full of wine, and cups, and I said unto them, Drink ye wine. But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye nor your sons for ever … nor plant vineyards, nor have any; but all your days ye shall dwell in tents, that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers …” (Jer. 35:5-7). Not only were they to abstain from wine, but they also could not even plant or possess vineyards: also as a token of their separation.

During the days of their separation, however long it was to be, the Nazarites were not to shave, nor cut their hair:

“all the days of the vow of his separation, there shall no razor come upon his head, until the days be fulfilled, in the which he separateth himself unto Yahweh, he shall be holy, and shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow”

This was also a requirement of the priest:

“… and they shall not make baldness upon their head, neither shall they shave off the corner of their beard, not make any cuttings in their flesh. They shall be holy unto their God …” (Lev. 21:5-6).

In Scripture, the shaving of the head is associated with mourning and lamentation. So Israel were told: “Cut off thy hair and cast it away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for Yahweh hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath” (Jer. 7:29). As evidenced by Aaron not being able to mourn for his two sons, the priests were not to mourn nor lament their circumstances, but were to continue their service with joy and gladness. Similar to Aaron’s example, the Nazarites were under the commandment: “he shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, or for his sister, when they die: because the consecration of God is upon his head” (Num. 6:7).

However, for the Nazarites, at the end of the appointed days, they were to shave off all their hair from their head, and offer it with the peace offerings:

“… and the Nazarite shall shave the head of his separation at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall take the hair of the head of his separation, and put it in the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace offerings” (Num. 6:18).

The growth of hair during the period of separation represented the number of days for the vow to be accomplished. This is also seen in that if the vow was interrupted, the hair had to be cut, and the vow would start again: “… if any man die suddenly by him, and hath defiled the head of his consecration; then he shall shave his head in the day of his cleansing, on the seventh day shall he shave it” (Num. 6:9). The growing of the hair was the only outward sign that the vow was being enacted, and each day’s growth represented a further day in the service and separation to Yahweh.

Back in Numbers chapter 6, the next ordinance was stated thus:

“all the days that he separateth himself unto Yahweh, he shall come at no dead body ...” (Num. 6:6).

Again, this reflected the duties for the priests to observe: “he that is the High Priest among his brethren ... shall not uncover his head, nor rent his clothes; Neither shall he go in to any dead body, nor defile himself for his father, or for his mother” (Lev. 21:10-11). As we have already seen, the priest were not permitted to engage in the usual fashion of morning for the loss of even a close relative. They were not to have any physical contact with the dead at all: one reason for that, is that the Nazarite was to be holy, but death is the condemnation of sin. Death is evidence that sin has taken place, and that the person who had died was a sinner, worthy of death. Whereas the Nazarite was to be separate from sinners in his/her desire to be holy to Yahweh.

Again, there is a principle for Messiah’s sanctified ones to observe. Jesus asked a certain man to “follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God” (Lu. 9:59-60). We must not be joined to those who are dead in their sins, as we saw earlier, the commandment is to “come out from among them and be ye separate”. Not that we are arrogant with a “holier than thou” attitude of mind, but rather we recognise the highly exalted position that we have in Christ – a position which requires the utmost humility and meekness to maintain. We are called upon to be holy, and we ought take care as to what kind of men we mingle and associate with: leaving the dead to bury the dead, we are called upon to give first priority to the things of the Kingdom: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness”, and all other things shall be added to us (Mat. 6:33).

We already saw that upon completion of the Vow, the Nazarite man or woman would shave their head, and burn the hair upon the altar, beneath the fat of the Peace offering. The Peace offering, spoke of fellowship: it was essentially a meal with Yahweh. He consumed the sacrificed elements upon the altar first, and then the offeror could partake of his portion afterwards. Burning the hair represented how that there was a voluntary submission to Yahweh for a set period of time: each day’s growth represented a further day in which the vow was being kept. How appropriate then, for it to be associated with the Peace offering: our voluntary separateness to Yahweh brings us to the Altar, where we present our lives of service in fellowship before the Almighty!

There were other sacrifices to be made upon completion of the Vow, which are described as follows:

“... he shall offer his offering unto Yahweh, one he lamb of the first year without blemish for a burnt offering, and one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish for a sin offering, and one ram without blemish for peace offerings. And a basket of unleavened bread, cakes of fine flour mingled with oil, and wafers of unleavened bread anointed with oil and their meat offerings, and their drink offerings” (Num. 6:14-15).

The Burnt offering involved the consumption with fire of the entire animal, and denotes the entire life being offered up in service to Yahweh. Hence, the apostle gives the appeal: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom.

12:1). Our reasonable service is that our bodies are presented in use to the doing of the Divine command, as we lay down our lives in service before Him. The Lord does not require a dead sacrifice, but a living one, made up of the individual lives of those who love Him, and look for the appearing of His Son. We offer up our entire being, as Messiah commanded: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Mat. 22:37).

THE SIN OFFERING

The Sin offering was more than the acknowledgment of personal transgressions and moral failures. The fact that a Sin offering was offered to conclude a period of devotion to Yahweh demonstrates several things. Firstly, the offeror was still a sinner. Despite his/her very best endeavours, they were still sinful; they could not save themselves. If the vow was broken due to touching death, both a burnt offering and a sin offering had to be made, to “make an atonement for him, for that he sinned by the dead ...” (Num. 6:11). There was not necessarily a personal shortfall if a person died next to him, and he inadvertently touched the dead, but the principle as we saw earlier, was that the vow to Yahweh had been broken, and needed to begin again. Indeed, we find that in our own lives we constantly need to restart our devotion to Yahweh, with the dawning of every new day. Defilement by the law of sin brings us down into trespass, despite the very best of our endeavours. But though the renewal of our baptismal vow, we resolve to put to death the old man of the flesh upon the principle of the Christ-Altar. As Paul expresses it: “... our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin ...” (Rom. 6:6). The destruction of the body of the animal that comprised the sin offering demonstrated this same principle.

The Meal offering and the Drink offering both spoke of the dedication of labour. Man had to take that which Yahweh had provided (i.e. the grapes of the vine, and the grain from the ground), and make it into something which could represent them before the Almighty. The grapes had to be pressed and fermented, the grain had to be harvested and beaten very small – both involved a labour-intensive process. The Apostle described his forthcoming death as being a Drink Offering: “Yea, and if I be poured forth (Greek) upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy and rejoice with me” (Phil. 2:17-18). Here, the provision of the Philippians to meet the Apostle’s needs was like the sacrifice of the Peace offering (Phil. 4:18), and Pauls work and the dedication of his labours was like the drink offering that was poured out upon that sacrifice.

The key aspect to the Nazarite vow for both men and women, was separation. That separation was manifest in various ways, each of which echoed the responsibilities of the Priests – and if we wish to be a set-apart nation, we must demonstrate those principles in our lives. They were to abstain from wine and strong drink: even so we must abstain from the wine of wrong doctrine and all of it’s influence. We must have our spiritual senses at all time, to successfully war against sin. They were to devote the very hairs of their head as a representative of the number of days that their vow included. We, like Samson must strive to give a life-long service to Yahweh. They were to avoid contact with death: even so we must strive to be separate from those who are dead in their sins and trespasses. And various offerings had to be made upon completion of the vow: Burnt offering = devotion and full service. Sin offering, a recognition of personal unworthiness, and the need for sacrifice for the days of their vow to be accepted. The

peace offering, signified fellowship with the Almighty on the basis of a voluntary separation in holiness, and the meal and drink offering both spoke of the produce of labour devoted to the Lord.

We come to consider our Master in the emblems of bread and wine – not dissimilar to the wine and meal offering in Old Testament times. In him, we see one who lay down his life as a sacrifice, which marked a whole hearted devotion to divine things. He laboured during the days of his separation. So it is written: “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied” (Isa. 53:11). Under the Law, the Nazarite Vow could only be accepted by sacrifices being offered when the specified time came to an end. Even so, our Master is the sacrifice through which our vow of allegiance and sacrifice will be accepted. So might we proclaim with the Apostle: “... who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 7:24-26).

Christopher Maddocks

The Need for a Vision

In speaking of the Acts of the Lord’s Apostles, the Spirit records how that Philip was engaged in “preaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ” - and that those who heard and believed his sayings “were baptised, both men and women” (Acts 8:12). This illustrates the vital importance of “the things concerning the Kingdom of God” - they are principles that formed half of what the Apostles taught as the Gospel! And in the case of Philip’s preaching, they were “things” to be accepted and believed as a prerequisite to Baptism - by implication therefore, they are “things” to be the object of faith, in order that Forgiveness and Salvation might be received. But those “things” are not simply doctrines to be believed; they are fundamental principles for daily life. Our Lord Jesus taught that the primary things to be sought after in this life, are those “things” pertaining to the Righteousness of God, and His Coming Kingdom: “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness ...” (Mat 6:33). The Kingdom of God then, must feature predominantly in our daily prayers, thoughts and meditations. No matter what evils the day brings - and they may be many - they are but the transient affairs of this life of mortal travail and sorrow. But “the things” of the Kingdom are eternal, and whilst being hidden from the natural eye, they present themselves to those that believe in bold relief - a glorious picture of coming reality. So it is, that with the Apostle Paul, “we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2Cor 4:18).

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

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

These brethren had not yet “received the promises”, yet had “seen them”, which means they visualized the fulfillment of them in their minds. And having been “persuaded” of

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

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

“truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city” (Heb 11:15-16).

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

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

THE EXAMPLE OF ABRAHAM

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

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went: (Heb. 11:8).

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

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

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

There is another point in the Genesis record, which Hebrews 11 brings out. After Abraham and Lot parted company, we are told: "Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent towards Sodom" (Gen. 13:12). Later on, we find that whilst he initially pitched his tent "towards" the iniquitous city, he further moved to live in that city. And no longer living in a tent as a stranger and sojourner, he had made it his home: he lived in a house (see Genesis 19). Abraham however, in the land of Canaan, lived away from the cities, and dwelt in a tent. Hence Hebrews 11 points out in its second reference to Abraham:

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

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

In our own circumstance, away from the hot climate of the Middle East, it would not be practical to live in tents: we need 'permanent' housing to last us as many years as we live, or till the Lord come. But we can try to live out the spirit of Abraham: King David had the need for a house, and he lived in the city of Jerusalem. But he did so as one living in a foreign country: "hear my prayer, O Yahweh, and give ear at my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears: for I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were" (Psa. 38:12). We must also live in that spirit. Like Abraham, in the places where we sojourn, we find no permanent abiding place, but look forward with the vision of true faith towards our future residence in "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10).

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

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

Notice that again, Abraham went out without knowing where he was to go: to “one of the mountains” that Yahweh would reveal to him. So it was that he went in faith – but notice the words of verse 4:

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

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

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

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

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

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

STRENGTH IN TRIBULATION

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

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

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

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

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

And for an example of One whose thoughts were always directed towards the world to come, we look to the Lord Jesus Christ, who, “though he were a Son”, we are informed “yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered” (Heb 5:8). The Lord Jesus certainly bore a weight; the weight of the cross upon which he was crucified. But his is the supreme example of endurance, for he looked beyond his present suffering to the greater eternal weight of glory laid up for him at his Father’s Right Hand. He, “for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down on the right hand of God” (Heb 12:2). It was this joyous vision of the future that was ever set before his mind that ensured his separation from the world, and enabled him to remain faithful even unto death. We then, must be "looking unto Jesus" as an example. Like him, we must have a vision of the future in order for us to maintain our separation, and endure trials faithfully.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A VISION

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

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

Here, those who have no vision, are contrasted with those who keep the Law of God - the clear implication being, as we have seen, that it is by maintaining a clear focus on the Kingdom that we might be able to remain obedient (i.e. keeping the Law) in times of adversity. But here, the Hebrew word rendered “perish”, literally, is “to be loosed”, and can have the sense of the removal of a garment. Hence, an alternative rendering is, “where there is no vision, the people is made naked” as in the AV margin. Being the brethren of Christ, we must seek to be clothed with righteousness, as with a garment. And rather than to allow ourselves to be drawn into the world around us, allowing our fine white linen garments to be “spotted by the flesh” (Jude 23) the exhortation is given “Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame” (Rev 16:15). We must therefore remain fully clothed with the purity of righteousness; we must use that vision Scripture presents us with to remain faithful, and sep-

arate, to “keep” our garments, that we might not walk naked and shamed before the Son and his Angels at his appearing. Let us therefore, rather than being mindful of the world from which we have come out (Heb 11:15), be as the faithful of all ages, “forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before” (Phil 3:13). The value of maintaining such a vision of those promises that are “before” us is self-evident - for without it, we cannot remain a holy people prepared for the coming of our Lord. We have Christ Himself to look to as the supreme example, and so let us share his joy that we also might learn to endure, that we might reign with him.

Christopher Maddocks

Sacrifice in the Kingdom to Come

For some, the suggestion that there will be a re-institution of Animal offerings in the coming Kingdom, undermines the sacrifice of Christ, for it is felt that his offering should be sufficient for all things, there no longer being a need for other sacrifices after his one great sacrifice. Indeed, there is much truth in this feeling, for the offering up of Messiah is the greatest offering that ever has been—or ever will be—made. His sacrifice was far superior to any of the sacrifices under the law, for the Mosaic system required the repeated offering up of many sacrifices, whereas Messiah accomplished all effects in his one great offering: “... nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with the blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Heb 9:25-26). And again, “For such an high priest became us ... who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself” (Heb 7:27).

THE PUTTING AWAY OF SIN

According to the Apostle, cited above, the Master “put away sin by the sacrifice of himself”. In actual fact, his offering is the only sacrifice by which sin could be put away. Under the Law of Moses, no offering could put away sin: “it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins” (Heb 10:4). The shed blood of animals could not take away sins. What that effectively means, is that under the law, when a man offered his animal for a Trespass offering, or a Sin offering, that animal was in itself utterly incapable of removing his sin. It was just “not possible” for the blood of that animal to take away his sins.

But how then, did those who lived under the first covenant find forgiveness? Why were sin-offerings and trespass offerings required of men, if they were powerless to make provision for the covering of their iniquities? The apostle is clear in teaching that the putting away of sins committed under the Mosaic Law was effected by 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). The Master then, died “for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament”. It is by his sacrifice that those who transgressed under the law, can find forgiveness. The offerings they made were powerless to save them, but they could find redemption through the work of Jesus Christ.

But what point was there then, in the sacrifices they were commanded to offer, if it was “not possible” for them to take away sin? The answer becomes clear, when we appreciate that the Law was a Schoolmaster, to lead the people to Christ. It was to teach them the principles of atonement, as a divinely-ordained instructor, that they might be led to the greater Prophet like unto Moses. That is the Apostle’s testimony: “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, **that** we might be justified by faith …” (Gal 3:24).

Now here is an aspect of the Law not often thought about. It was to bring people into a position whereby they might be justified by faith—in Christ. The Law itself witnessed to the principle of justification by faith (Rom 3:21,22), for those who desired to find forgiveness under it had to look forward in faith to the coming of Messiah, as the lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world. A man would offer his sin offering, or his trespass offering in faith that through a greater sacrifice of Yahweh’s providing, forgiveness might be found. Not that they understood all the details—they could not, for the mystery of the Gospel had not yet been revealed (cp 1 Cor 2:7-10), as it was later made known through the apostles and New Testament prophets (Eph 3:5). But nevertheless, through the promises made to Abraham, and the principles of the Law, men would be able to look forward in faith, to the coming of Messiah, who would take away their sins by the offering up of himself.

This is a fundamentally important point to recognise then, when we consider sacrifice in Scripture. No other offering, save that of Messiah, was efficacious for the putting away of sin. All the sacrifices under the Law were but shadows (Heb 10:1), giving a basic outline of the sacrifice of Christ. Their virtue was not in any ability to save, but in their ability to instruct the offerer that there would be a future sacrifice of Yahweh’s providing, who would take away the sin of the world. The vital point to understand, is that it is by Messiah’s offering alone, that forgiveness ever has been, or ever will be obtained, and not through any animal offerings.

SACRIFICES TO COME

What then, do the oracles of God teach us concerning sacrifices to come? Scripture is explicit in stating that sacrifices will be re-instituted in the kingdom. Consider the following testimony of Jeremiah concerning the future:

“Behold, the days come, saith Yahweh, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. In those days, and at that time will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David, and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, YAHWEH-TSIDKENU (Yahweh our righteousness)’.

So much is familiar to us; we readily and often use this passage in our preaching to describe the Age to Come. But the passage continues:

“For thus saith Yahweh; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel; **neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before me to offer burnt offerings, and to kindle meat offerings, and to do sacrifice continually** ... Thus saith Yahweh; If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the

night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers” (Jer 33:14-21).

So then, Yahweh has made a covenant concerning the kings and priests of the Age to come. A covenant which is as certain as Yahweh’s covenant with day and night—a covenant which can only be broken if man can prevent day and night from occurring. This is a certain covenant, which states that the priests, the Levites shall never want a man to offer burnt offerings, and to kindle meat offerings, and to do sacrifice continually. There can be no doubt therefore; sacrifices will be made by Yahweh’s priests in the Age to come – Yahweh has made a covenant that it will be so, a covenant which cannot be broken so long as there remains a day and a night in their appointed seasons.

Another familiar passage that we often use to describe the coming Kingdom of glory is Isaiah chapter 56, which describes what form of worship will be accepted at that time:

“... the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to Yahweh, to serve him, and to love the name of Yahweh, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and ***their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar;*** for mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people” (Is 56:6-7).

Here, we find that the sons of the stranger who join themselves to the Yahweh will offer acceptable sacrifice upon His altar. Notice this, the sons of the stranger—Gentiles—offering up acceptable sacrifice before Him. Burnt offerings, and sacrifices will be a feature of Divine Worship, in that day when Yahweh’s house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.

Again, Isaiah chapter 60 provides a further prophecy of the offering of Gentile Sacrifices in the Age when Christ will bear rule over all nations:

“all the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: ***they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar,*** and I will glorify the house of my glory” (Is 60:7).

Here, Arab territories are referred to; their offerings shall come up with acceptance upon Yahweh’s altar. There can be no doubt that the offering up of animal sacrifices will be a prominent feature of worship in the Age to Come.

YAHWEH’S ALTAR

The last few passages we have considered, make reference to Yahweh’s Altar. This altar is described in considerable detail, in the 43rd chapter of Ezekiel’s prophecy. Again, this is a chapter which is familiar to us, as being something that relates to the future, with verses 4 –5 describing the return of Yahweh’s glory into the house of prayer for all nations, and verse 7 describing, “the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever”. This chapter gives the dimensions of the altar in verses 13-17, commencing: “and these are the measures of the altar after the cubits: the cubit is a cubit and an hand breadth; even the bottom shall be a cubit, and the breadth a cubit, and the border

thereof by the edge thereof round about shall be a span: and this shall be the higher place of the altar ...”.

But the presence of an altar generally implies the presence of sacrifice (Josh 22:10 excepted), and we have already considered some of the offerings that will be made. The chapter continues to describe other sacrifices, used in the purification of the Altar:

“and he said unto me, Son of man, thus saith Adonai Yahweh; These are the ordinances of the altar in the day when they shall make it, to offer **burnt offerings** thereon, and to sprinkle **blood** thereon. And thou shalt give to the priests the Levites that be of the seed of Zadok, which approach unto me, to minister unto me, saith Adonai Yahweh, a young bullock for **a sin offering**. And thou shalt take of the **blood** thereof, and put it on the four horns of it, and on the four corners of the settle, and upon the border round about; thus shalt thou cleanse and purge it. Thou shalt take the bullock also of the **sin offering**, and he shall burn it in the appointed place of the house, without the sanctuary” (Eze 43:15-21).

LITERAL ANIMAL OFFERINGS

These verses plainly show that there will be literal animal sacrifices offered in that day. Regarding the other references we have cited, it might be argued (and has been argued) that the sacrifices are spiritual sacrifices, not literal animals. The New Testament tells us to offer ourselves as living sacrifices (Rom 12:1), so it is sometimes thought that is what is being referred to here; not the offering up of animals, but people dedicating themselves to the Lord.

However, Ezekiel 43 precludes any such application, for this chapter even tells us what will happen to the blood of the animal; it being placed upon the four horns and settle of the altar. The type of animal is named: a bullock, for a sin offering. And that bullock is to be burned in an appointed place, without the sanctuary. There can be no doubt, that what we are reading of here is the slaying and offering up of literal animals, in Sacrifice to the Deity in the Age to Come.

There are those who dispute the application of these prophecies to the coming age, on the basis of Ezekiel 43:11. They argue that the prophecy is a conditional one, that it's fulfilment was predicated upon the children of Israel repenting of their iniquities. They say that Israel did not repent, and that therefore these verses will not be fulfilled. Let us therefore, take a look at the passage in question:

“Thou, son of man, shew the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities: and let them measure the pattern. And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, shew them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the goings out thereof, and the coming in thereof and all the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof: and write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them” (Eze 43:10-11).

Now, notice first what these verses do not say. They do not state that the fulfilment of this prophecy would only come if the people repented. Those words just are not there. Such a statement is not made to Ezekiel. What the verses do say, is “If they be ashamed of all that they have done, shew them the form of the house ...”. The verse is not about whether or not the things described will happen, rather it is about whether or not Israel would be shown those things in the first place. The distinction is important; we do not know how many of the people repented, and were ashamed of their sins; some of them may have been, and may have been

shown the vision. Certainly for the most part they were not, and they therefore would not have been shown the vision—but that does not preclude the vision from being written down for later generations to see and consider. The objection cannot stand; the verse does not state what it is claimed to.

But in any case, we have proven (irrefutably, we believe), that sacrifices will be an integral part of acceptable worship in the Age to Come from passages outside of this prophecy of Ezekiel. This means that even if the objection was a valid one, it would in itself have little bearing on our main argument, for we can prove our case without reference to Ezekiel.

The argument, however, does not stand, and so we can look to Ezekiel for more details concerning the subject. There will be sacrifices in the Age to Come, and Ezekiel describes them for us; Burnt offerings (43:8, 27; 44:11; 45:17, 25; 46:4), Sin offerings (43:19, 21, 22, 25; 44:27, 29; 45:17, 19, 21-25), Peace offerings (43:27; 45:17), Meat offerings (44:29; 45:17, 25; 46:5, 7), Trespass offerings (44:29) and Drink offerings (45:17), are all referred to as being re-instituted in the age to come.

The existence of animal offerings in the kingdom can also be seen from two of the feasts which will be kept at that time; the Passover, and the Feast of Tabernacles.

THE PASSOVER

We read of the Millennial Passover in Ezekiel 45:21-25:

“In the first month, in the fourteenth day of the month, ye shall have the Passover, a feast of seven days, unleavened bread shall be eaten. And upon that day shall the prince prepare for himself and for all the people of the land a bullock for a sin offering ...”.

Here, the Passover differs from that kept under the Mosaic institution, for it also combines principles from the Day of Atonement. Instead of a Passover Lamb, there is a bullock for a sin offering, which is offered for the Prince himself, and for “all the people of the land”. Notice this, the Passover in the kingdom age is not kept by all nations, but only by the Prince and all the people of the land. The Passover, being originally designed to memorialise the redemption of the children of Israel from the oppression of Egypt (Ex 12), will be a most fitting mode of celebration to memorialise Israel’s redemption from the Gogian oppressor, and their return to the land from captivity at that time. So it will be a great day of national rejoicing, as a great deliverance will be brought to mind from year to year. Truly in that day, “it shall no more be said, Yahweh liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but Yahweh liveth that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them” (Jer 16:14-15).

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

Although it appears that the nations of the world as a whole will be exempt from the Passover celebrations, it will be a requirement that they attend Jerusalem annually to keep the Feast of Tabernacles: “it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, Yahweh of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles” (Zech 14:16). The verses which follow describe the punishment upon those who refuse to comply: “they shall have no rain”, or in the case of Egypt, “there shall be the plague”. This threatened withholding of rain gives an indication to the pur-

pose of the feast, which is essentially to demonstrate utter dependence upon the God of Israel for all things.

It is not possible to keep the Feast of Tabernacles without the offering of Animal Sacrifice, for this was an integral part of the feast (Lev 23:36).

But there is another significant point; the feast of Tabernacles coincided with the final ingathering of the harvest: “Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto Yahweh seven days …” (Lev 23:39). And as such, it typifies the final ingathering of peoples at the end of the Millennium, the final resurrection and judgement, when the harvest of the world will be complete, and the situation prepared for the final stage, when Yahweh will be “all in all” (cp 1Cor 15:20-25). How appropriate then, that in earnest of this, all nations shall be gathered in to Jerusalem at the time of this annual event, to present themselves before the Great King, keep this feast, and so be taught in word and practice, of the time of their ultimate ingathering, and acceptance before Yahweh at the close of the thousand years.

SOME OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED

We have seen then, that there are clear and unequivocal prophecies in Scripture, which state that the offering of animal Sacrifices will be an indispensable part of worship in the Age to Come. However, some do raise objection to these, and we bring our considerations to a conclusion by answering some of these objections:

There are no New Testament passages which state that animal sacrifices will be reinstated, and by contrast, there are New Testament passages which speak of the elements of the Law passing away.

It is true that the New Testament does not contain such prophecies as we have considered in the Old. However, both Old and New Testaments form the complete Inspired Word, and we would be wrong to reject the plain teaching of the Old Testament purely on the grounds that the same teaching is not repeated in the New Testament. To reject future Animal Sacrifices on these grounds is not wise, for it would leave us with many passages of the Old Testament which would otherwise be inexplicable—we have considered some passages which cannot be explained in any other way than to be plainly stating that sacrifices will be offered.

In actual fact, the New Testament does not contradict the Old Testament; there is no passage in the New Testament which states that there will **not** be animal offerings in the Kingdom. When pressed, those who present this objection will be unable to produce a single such passage. However, it is true that there are plenty of passages which show that the Law of Moses was to pass away, being fulfilled in Christ, such as 2 Peter 3:7,10, a verse often used to show the point:

“the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up”

This is certainly depicting the dissolution of the Mosaic heavens and earth around the time of AD 70—however it does not preclude the coming of a new age, when certain aspects of the old will be reintroduced, in a modified form. Indeed, Isaiah predicts that this will happen, “I will create a new heavens and a new earth …” (Is 65:17). The Mosaic heavens and earth were to depart, but a new heavens and earth are to be re-instituted, with, as we have seen, animal

sacrifices being a part of worship there. Finally, the above argument provides us with no answers as to what Jeremiah 33, Isaiah 56 & 60, and Ezekiel 43 actually do refer to, if not animal offerings.

The Sacrifice of Christ was a putting away of sin once for all, there is no need for any further offering up of animal sacrifices. To think of innocent animals having to suffer in the kingdom is not at all in harmony with what we imagine the kingdom to be like.

To address the second part of this objection first; what we may imagine the kingdom to be like may be different to what it will actually turn out to be. Our picture of the Kingdom must be founded upon the descriptions that Scripture furnishes us with; we have proved irrefutably that animal sacrifices will be a part of the kingdom, and so that should form part of our vision of the future. Part of the problem is that we live in a way that is so detached from the death of animals in an age when we purchase meat shrink wrapped from the supermarket. To speak of “innocent animals suffering” is a loaded, emotive term —animals have to die to provide us with the food which we eat (unless we are vegetarian). We don’t see that aspect, and so conveniently forget it when we enjoy our Sunday roast. But in the kingdom, animals will be slain for a far more noble purpose than to provide man with tasty food—it will be to glorify Yahweh, and provide a graphic picture of how the sacrifice of Christ is able to bring us forgiveness and life.

It is true that the Sacrifice of Christ was a putting away of sin—indeed as we have shown, it was the only sacrifice by which sin could be put away. But that does not mean there will be no need for animal offerings in the future; we have seen that under the Law of Moses, the blood of bulls and goats was not designed to take away sin, but rather to teach about the atoning principles of the sacrifice of Christ. The Law of Moses was a divine institution devised to teach a nation; in the kingdom, there will be many nations who will all need to be taught. What better way then, to revive the old Schoolmaster—which was perfect for the job it was designed to do—on a global scale, to instruct the multitudes?

Animal offerings have not had to be made for two thousand years since the death of Christ—if they are so important, why don’t we have to offer them today?

The Law of Moses was designed to teach a nation; the laws of Christ are for individuals scattered amongst many nations. Here is the difference; the sacrifices were part of a national code, the laws of Christ are for individuals. It has pleased the Lord to command that his brethren memorialise his death through the acts of baptism, and breaking bread together in the period before his return. Of this simple feast of remembrance, the apostle wrote “for as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come” (1Cor 11:26), which implies that when he come, the memorial feast will have fulfilled its function, and will no longer be kept. A different memorial will be needed for national remembrance, and we have considered passages which do plainly state that sacrifices will be offered in that age. The above objection does not even attempt to offer an alternative explanation of those passages.

Such is the matter as it appears to us. We invite further comment from our readers!

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