

“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)**

Crucified Through Weakness	2
“... now is Christ Risen ...”.	6
Being Washed, Sanctified and Justified	10
Haggai – Consider Your Ways (4)	15
The Changeable and the Unchangeable	19
Daniel 5 – Belshazzar’s Feast	22
John 13 – Love, Washing and Darkness	28
The Extent of the Coming Kingdom of God.	33



“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)

“Crucified Through Weakness ...”

“... for though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you” (2 Corinthians 13:4).

Our opening verse makes the statement that Christ was “crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God”. This would be surprising if he were “God the Son”, as the trinitarian idolaters would claim. How can an Almighty God possibly experience “weakness”, to the extent that though He be immortal, he died through that weakness?

But leaving that aside, we need to consider what the expression actually means: how was the Lord “crucified through weakness”?

A parallel expression is used by Peter:

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, **being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit**” (1 Pet 3:18).

We might conclude therefore, that the “weakness” was that which pertained to the flesh, in which he was “put to death”, as contrasted with the Holy Spirit power that raised him up from the dead and transformed his body to become immortal. That this is so is confirmed by other usages of the Greek word for “weakness”. Consider the following two passages:

“ ... that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our **infirmities**, and bare our sicknesses” (Mat. 8:17, cp Isa. 53:4).

“For we have not such an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our **infirmities**; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15).

It is a matter of fundamental importance that although he was the Son of God, the Lord was also the Son of Man. He physically had the same weak flesh and blood nature as we ourselves, in order that he could overcome it: “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the *diabolos*” (Heb. 2:14). He could not partake of death, unless he bare the “mortal flesh” (2 Cor. 4:11) common to those whom he came to save.

Again, it is a matter of Divine testimony that he wrestled with the wiles of his own human nature, being tempted “in all points” like as we are. Hence in the great trial of his faith at Gethsemane, he cried with tears, and sweated “as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Lu. 22:44). The Apostle commented on this:

“... who, in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him out of death, and was heard in that he feared ...” (Heb. 5:7).

It is interesting to see the response of the Master to his disciples who couldn’t remain awake to watch with him: “... the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak ...” (Mat. 26:41). Indeed, the weakness of the flesh is seen also in the way in which an angel ministered to him at this hour: “there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him” (Lu. 22:43). Again, we see that the flesh was weak – Messiah needed to be strengthened, which means he was suffering under weakness.

As we stated above, it was necessary for the Lord to bear our weak and frail mortal frame in order that he could bring it to the grave:

He “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:7-8).

But although the flesh was weak, it took great strength of character for the Master to prevail against it. We could not do so, for it is written that: “when we were *yet without strength*, in due time Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom. 5:6). Christ accomplished what we are “without strength” to do, as he is described as the “*son of man*, whom thou *madest strong* for thyself” (Psa. 80:17). Here is the apparent paradox: the Lord was God “manifest in the flesh” of mortal humankind (1 Tim. 3:16), and yet had the strength to overcome the weakness of that flesh.

LIVING BY THE POWER OF GOD

The resurrection is spoken of in terms relevant to our present considerations:

“So also is the resurrection from the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption; It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: *it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power ...*” (1 Cor. 15:42-43).

The Lord himself died due to the weakness of mortal flesh, yet was raised by the power of God – as we read earlier: “though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth

by the power of God" (2 Cor. 13:4). Again, the resurrection is the hope for all true believers: "God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by **his own power**" (1 Cor. 6:14). The same power that raised up Jesus, will also raise up his brethren.

It is interesting to consider this expression that he lives "by the power of God". To those who did not believe in the resurrection, "Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, **nor the power of God**" (Mat. 22:29). Nothing is too hard for the Almighty, so to doubt the resurrection would take place limits and denies the power of God.

Again, the apostle's doctrine which we endeavour to adhere to, is folly in the sight of man – even a weakness:

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

So it is that

"God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen **the weak things** of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are ..." (1 Cor. 1:27-28).

The power of Divine selection, is that those who are weak and despised by men are those to whom the Gospel message is primarily directed. God chooses the weak to confound the mighty – and it is His Purpose to manifest His Power by doing so.

The theme of the Power of God is used in Paul's epistle to the Romans, chapter 1, thus:

"... Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be **the Son of God with power**, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:3-4).

"... for I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is **the power of God** unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16).

"... for the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even **his eternal power** and Godhead ..." (Rom. 1:20)

The power of God is seen in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and will be seen again when his brethren are made to conform to his immortal image. Hence Paul

referred to he:

“who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, **according to the working** whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself” (Phil. 3:21, also Rom. 8:29).

The same power, the “working” by which all things will be subdued under the feet of Messiah, is that which will be demonstrated in the changing of our weak and mortal bodies, to become like that of our Lord.

This is the point demonstrated in 2 Corinthians 13. The full verse is as follows:

“... For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. **For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God** toward you” (2 Cor. 13:4).

But though we be weak in possessing the frailty of human mortality, we need to be strong in faith, like Abraham of old. Of him it is written that:

“... being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but **was strong in faith**, giving glory to God” (Rom. 4:19-20).

Naturally speaking, Abraham’s body was impotent, and Sarah’s womb was dead. Abraham and Sarah both knew what the weakness of the flesh was – yet they were strong in faith, and so gave glory to their God. Their belief was essentially life out of death – and thus provides an example to follow:

“Being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, **if we believe on him that raised up** Jesus our Lord from the dead ...” (Rom. 4:21-24).

This has been the faith of the saints down through the ages: they “out of weakness were made strong” (Heb. 11:34). Though we be beset with all the infirmities of the flesh, and recognise the weakness thereof, if we truly believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord, we will be made strong with the gift of an immortal nature. Then, “they that wait upon Yahweh shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isa. 40:31). And what a glorious prospect that is to look forward to!

Christopher Maddocks

“Now is Christ Risen”

“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept”
(1 Corinthians 15:19-20)

In his Epistle to the Romans, the Apostle Paul identified certain particulars which pertain to our salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ:

“... for if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, ***we shall be saved by his life***”
(Rom. 5:10).

But what is the saving “life” being referred to here? It is sometimes thought that it must be the mortal life of Christ, when he condemned sin by not yielding to it’s influences. But Scripturally, the “life” is the resurrected life of Messiah, as seen in 1 Corinthians 15, our New Testament reading for the day. Sin in the flesh (Rom. 8:3) was not condemned in Messiah’s mortal life: it was not yielded to, which is a different thing again. Rather, it was condemned (or “judged against”) in the death of our Redeemer, and finally destroyed through his victorious resurrection (cp 1 Cor. 15:54-57).

“if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” says Paul. But he continues to say “but now is Christ risen from the dead” – which is the foundation and hope of the believer’s faith. We must associate ourselves with the sacrificial death of the Lord, through submitting to Baptism, symbolically dying and rising again with Christ (Rom. 6:1-8). Those who rise up from the symbolic grave seek after heavenly, not carnal things:

“if ye then be risen with Christ, ***seek those things which are above***, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection ***on things above***, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (Col. 3:1-3).

So it is, that “the way of life is above to the wise, that he might depart from the grave beneath” (Prov. 15:24). Our life is bound up in Christ, upon the basis of his reviving again, and his resurrection to an unending life: we must therefore set our hearts and desires on heavenly things, so that when the Lord comes again, he will lead us into the glories of the Kingdom to come.

1 Corinthians 15 demonstrates the privileged position of Messiah's brethren and sisters, upon the basis of his resurrection:

“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Cor. 15:20).

The plain teaching then, is that others will also be raised, upon the basis of his resurrection:

“But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; *afterward* they that are Christ's **at his coming**” (1 Cor. 15:23).

This theme also continues in Paul's inspired letter to the Colossians:

“... he is the head of the body, the ecclesia: who is the beginning, **the firstborn from the dead**; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should **all fulness dwell**” (Col. 1:18-19).

So it is, that the assembly of believers is “the general assembly and ecclesia of the firstborn, which are written in heaven ...” (Heb. 12:23) – and their ultimate purpose being, that in the Christ-body, all the fulness of God will dwell – which we shall refer to again later in our remarks.

In 1 Corinthians 15, the Apostle continues to describe the principles by which salvation can come through Christ:

“... since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:21-22).

It is a consequence of Adam's sin, that we inherit a nature from him, which is both sinful and dying. That is:

“by one offence (AV margin) death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore, **as by one offence** judgment came upon all men to condemnation: even so, **by one righteousness** the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life” (Rom. 5:17-18).

Through being of physical descent from Adam, we inherit what the Apostle calls “our mortal flesh” (2 Cor. 4:11), or a “mortal body” (Rom. 6:12, 8:11). This is a misfortune that we bare blamelessly: we are not guilty for what Adam did, but we do inherit the consequences of it:

“... by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; **and so** death passed upon all men ...” (Rom. 5:12).

Death then, is a principle which passed upon all men. That which has the power of death (Heb. 2:14) is the *diabolos*, also known as “sin in the flesh” (Rom. 8:3). It is the resident evil within the body that brings it to the grave.

But just as we inherit death from Adam, we can also inherit life from Jesus. In his sacrificial death it was demonstrated that God is righteous to require the condemnation of sin in the flesh, and in Baptism (see Romans 6), we align ourselves with that declaration, by associating ourselves with his death: “whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past ... to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom. 3:25-26).

By spiritually identifying ourselves with the sacrifice of Christ, we submit to him as a second Adam. We voluntarily change our allegiances, and seek to put to death, or “crucify” the flesh (Rom. 6:6). Hence Paul declared: “I am crucified with Christ” (Gal. 2:20). We walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4, 11), wholly devoted to the doing of our Father’s Will. Even so, because it so pleased our Father to deal representatively with us, whereas we involuntarily inherit death from Adam, we can voluntarily cross over into a new family, and inherit life from Jesus, the second Adam.

But the salvation of men is not an end in itself. The work of God in Christ was not solely to save sinners: rather it was the means whereby the greater purpose of God might be accomplished in the earth – which is to fill it with His Glory

Psalm 85 expresses this point:

“surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; **that glory may dwell in our land**” (Psa. 85:9).

So the purpose of Salvation then, is the facilitation of God’s glory dwelling in the land. That is, He will manifest Himself in a multitude of immortal men and women who display his glorious array of righteous attributes. This can only be accomplished by the salvation of sinners, lifting them out of the mire of humanity, and setting them on high in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:6).

Proverbs 10:30 describes the same thing: “The righteous shall never be moved: but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth”. Hence the earth will ultimately only be populated by “the righteous”, with the wicked being found no more.

Speaking of the way of salvation, the prophet Isaiah links it with Israel:

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

Proverbs has it that “the righteous” will inhabit the earth, whereas Isaiah informs us that those inhabitants will be “Israel” who are saved with “an everlasting salvation”, “world without end”. These themes are brought together in Isaiah 60:

“thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified” (Isa. 60:21).

Notice, the righteous people are Israel, who “inherit the land for ever” in order that God be “glorified”.

ALL IN ALL

1 Corinthians 15 also speaks of the mission of the Kingdom:

“Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet … and when all things shall be subdued under him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, ***that God may be all in all***” (1 Cor. 15:24-28).

The end result, when the kingdom is delivered up to God, is that “God may be all in all”. This is often regarded as an enigmatic statement, beyond comprehension. But it ought not to be so: its meaning becomes apparent when we consider its use elsewhere.

We saw above that it is Israel that will be granted “everlasting salvation”. It logically follows therefore, that if we desire such salvation, we must become joined to Israel!

All these threads are pulled together in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. Those who are without God in the world are “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope” (Eph. 2:12). But those who are baptised into Christ – who are thus “in Christ” – are not so: “ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ” (vs 13). They are brought into the covenants of promise, and thus become part of Israel. But chapter 3 gives the purpose.

Verse 19 speaks of those “who know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, ***that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God***”. And a few verses later, we read: “unto him be glory in the ecclesia by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, ***world without end***. Amen” (Eph. 3:21).

How are the believers to become “filled with all the fulness of God?” By declaring and demonstrating His Glory – His Glorious array of Attributes. And he will do this “world without end”! This is what it means for God to be “all in all:” Jesus is “to be the head over all things to the ecclesia, which is his body, the fulness of him ***that filleth all in all***” (Eph. 1:22-23). In other words, all of God will be in all of man – a glorious, immortal multitude. This will comprise the “Israel of God” who display the Glory of their Maker. Culled out from the kingdoms of men, by embracing the Hope of Israel, these will collectively comprise the glory that will eventually fill the entire earth.

Brother John Thomas wrote of this very succinctly, back in 1858:

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

This is the ultimate end, which our Statement of Faith describes: “That the government will then be delivered up by Jesus to the Father, who will manifest Himself as the “all-in-all”; sin and death having been taken out of the way, and the race completely restored to the friendship of the Deity” (BASF, Clause XXX).

Christopher Maddocks

Being Washed, Sanctified and Justified

In 1 Corinthians 6, the Apostle Paul outlines 10 forms of behaviour, which will exclude from the kingdom of God:

“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, not extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9-10).

It is part of the perversity of human nature, that each of these behaviours are currently accepted and even promoted in the world around us. But for those who desire to escape the corruption that is in the world through lust (2 Pet. 1:4), these are things to lay aside:

“Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us” (Heb. 12:1).

This is what the Corinthians did. They were once dead in their trespasses and sins, but they turned away from those things, to serve the Living God:

“and **such were some of you**: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11).

Notice the threefold honour granted to those who turn from their sins: they become:

1. Washed
2. Sanctified
3. Justified

We shall consider each of these aspects in turn.

WASHED

Having forsaken the way of death and destruction, the hearts of the believers become purified by faith (Acts 15:9). Desiring to cleanse their way (Psa. 119:9), they take heed to the word of God, which is a purifying influence upon them. So, the Apostle exhorts elsewhere concerning the ecclesial bride of Christ:

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the ecclesia, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it **by the washing of water by the word**, That he might present it to himself a glorious ecclesia, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:25-27).

Indeed, this is a theme of our chapter, 1 Corinthians 6: “... for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit” (1 Cor. 6: – see verses 16-17). Being washed by the cleansing influence of the Word, we can become joined to the Lord as “one spirit” – that is, united in purpose, desire, and eventually nature (1 Pet. 1:4), like a bride perfectly suited for her husband.

Hebrews chapter 10 similarly speaks of this washing:

“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb. 10:22).

The washing described here, is not to do with the cleanliness of the water into which believers are baptised – rather it is a comparison with the sacrifices under the Mosaic Law: the bodies of the animals offered had to be washed first. Notice the language of Sacrifice in Ephesians 5, cited above: “not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing” – like the offerings under the law.

The priests also had to be washed into their ministry. So Moses was commanded:

“... And Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shalt wash them with water” (Exo. 29:4).

Even so, as we saw in the last issue, Jesus as the Antitypical Aaron commenced his ministry with a washing – a baptism. His brethren must also be baptised to wash away their sins (Acts 22:16). But baptism alone cannot save: the Lord taught: “He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mrk 16:16). Belief is important also – and it is necessary to understand the principles of the Gospel in order to believe them. And that belief must be demonstrated in works, for “faith without works is dead: (Jas. 2:20).

The great company of the faithful are “they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 7:14). But though they have exchanged their filthy rags (Isa. 64:6) for white robes, they must not be self-righteous:

“there is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness” (Prov. 30:12).

It is quite possible then, to be proud of being pure and righteous, yet remain in a state of filthiness. As the Lord taught:

“ye are like unto whitened sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead mens’ bones, and of all uncleanness” (Mat. 23:27).

SANCTIFIED

In his prayer to his Father, the Lord prayed for his disciples: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (Jno. 17:17). And again, “for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth” (Jno. 17:19). The Word of Truth then, is the means whereby we can become sanctified. But the Lord also required sanctification! After the pattern of the Altar under the Mosaic law (Exo. 29:36-37), Jesus had to be sanctified first, in order that he could then sanctify those who would believe his word. In this way, “both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are

all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren ..." (Heb. 2:11).

As we demonstrated above, we can be sanctified by the Word of Truth. But only inasmuch as it is a record of the atoning principles by which we can become clean and holy in the sight of our God. The Lord Jesus Christ came to do the Will of his Father:

"by which Will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:10).

The Lord laid down his life, so "that he might sanctify the people with his own blood" (Heb. 13:12). But such can only be so, if we have the required faith in the work of God in Christ. Hence, when the Lord gave a commission to the Apostle Paul, he sent him "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts 26:18).

Notice again, that sanctification is associated with having eyes opened to behold the principles of the Gospel message (cp Psa. 119:18), and the turning away from darkness to light. Only then can the believer "receive forgiveness of sins," and be granted an "inheritance" in due course. For the unenlightened, they are blinded by the god of this world to the shining brilliance of the Light shining forth from Messiah, and will so remain unholy, defiled, and dead in their trespasses and sins.

JUSTIFIED

Galatians chapter 2 demonstrates a fundamental principle that lies behind the system of salvation established by the great Deity:

"... a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, **that we might be justified by the faith of Christ**, and not of the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Gal. 2:16).

The word "justified" signifies, *being counted righteous*, and in these words we have the principle being established that a man cannot be made righteous in the sight of Yahweh by obedience to Law. Rather, it is through faith, or belief in Jesus Christ, that righteousness is imputed. In this article, we shall consider this vital aspect of our salvation, and follow the theme through both Old and New Testaments.

In Romans chapter 3 and 4, the principle of Justification by Faith is dealt with in considerable detail – particularly chapter 4. Here the cases of Abraham and David are considered as examples of men who were considered righteous (i.e. justified) through

faith, despite having been sinners and not being justified by works:

“If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (Rom. 4:2-3).

The “Scripture” being cited here, comes from Genesis chapter 15:

“He [i.e. Yahweh] brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy Seed be. And he believed in Yahweh; and he counted it to him for righteousness …” (Gen. 15:5-6).

Abraham’s faith then, was not merely a nebulous feeling that exists in some today, it was a firm conviction regarding a specific promise. The Apostle comments concerning Abraham thus:

“Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform” (Rom. 4:18-21).

Notice the terms employed here: “being not weak in faith”, “He staggered not”, “being fully persuaded”. There was no shadow of doubt in Abraham’s mind: that the promises that God had made would indeed come to pass exactly as described. He trusted in the principle of life out of the dead: both the natural impotence of his own body, and that of his elderly wife – and these things were “not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead …” (Rom. 4:23-24). We therefore, must share Abraham’s faith if we are to be blessed in the same way as he – being counted as righteous.

In the above, we have demonstrated what it means to be washed, sanctified, and justified in the sight of our Creator. Salvation is not a passive thing: sometimes it is taught that all we need to do to be saved, is to recite a short prayer inviting Jesus to come into our lives – and then we will be irrevocably saved. But the reality is different: “without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” (Heb. 11:6). We must therefore “diligently” seek God, and we must be proactive in seeking His Ways.

The only source of knowledge about the way of salvation, is the Bible, the Inspired Word of the Living God. We must therefore give all due diligence to it's pages, that we can become wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Christopher Maddocks

Haggai – Consider Your Ways (4)

CHAPTER 2 – CONTINUED

From presenting a vision of glory, to those who were being discouraged by their elders, the prophet now turned back to their current situation. Addressing the priests, he used a principle of the Law to illustrate their current spiritual condition. He asked, “If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt, do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy?” And the answer came accordingly, “No” (Hag 2:12).

THE SIN OFFERING

With regard to the Sin offering, which was “most holy” (Lev 6:29), the Lord had said, “Whatsoever shall touch the flesh thereof shall be holy, and when there is sprinkled of the blood thereof upon any garment, thou shalt wash that whereon it was sprinkled in the holy place” (Lev 6:27). So, if someone was to carry this “holy flesh” in his garment, the garment would also become “holy.” However, if that garment then touched something else, for example, the foods listed, these did not become holy, and neither did anyone who ate those foods.

The Sin Offering, represented the Master, Jesus Christ. And so, this principle taught that becoming holy depends upon our personal association with him. We cannot pass our “holiness” or “separateness” as the word means, on to another. We cannot become holy by eating so-called “sanctified” foods. As the apostle said, “meat commendeth us not to God, for neither if we eat, are we the better; neither if we eat not, are we the worse” (1 Cor 8:8).

THE UNCLEANNESS OF DEATH

The prophet continued his questioning: “If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean” (v13).

The prophet, as the true messenger of the Lord, taught the priests in making this application: “So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith Yahweh, and so is every work of their hands: and that which they offer there, is unclean” (v 14).

Notice here, there are 3 things which are regarded as being unclean, the people, their work, and the sacrifices they offered. Israel were as one defiled by a dead body. Under the Law, this spoke of the defiling influence of sin, as death comes by sin (cp Lam 4:13-

15). And being unclean, the people could not be made holy by touching the sacrifice. The holiness thereof was overridden, as it were, by their uncleanness. The hearts of the people were unclean, and so their work (of building), and their sacrifices were all unacceptable to God.

These things are most instructive for ourselves to consider. We might despise the imperfections of another's small work in the Truth. We might consider that we are diligently labouring, and doing everything which the Lord requires (cp Luke 18:9-14). But if this is so, our hearts are not right with God, but unclean. And all of our efforts, however great they may be, will be considered abominable by Him (cp Jer 6:20; Hos 8:13; Mal 1:10).

Let us rather "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water (Heb 10:22). Let us cleanse our hearts (Eph 5:26) and our ways (Ps 119:9) with a continual washing by the Word of God. For then, all our works, however imperfect they may be, will give pleasure to Almighty God.

"CONSIDER"

After calling upon the people to consider their uncleanness, Haggai once more invited them to consider the hardships they were enduring. He called upon them to "*consider* from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of Yahweh". And again, "*consider* ... from the day that the foundation of Yahweh's temple was laid, *consider it*" (Hag 2:15,18).

Even before the work had begun, the people had not fully turned to God. They did not realise that the call to return, was not simply a call to enter the land, but a call to labour in His house. If they did not work, why should they be rewarded?

Likewise, our call to the Truth, is not just a call to enjoy the blessing, and forgiveness of Yahweh. It is a call *to work*. As the apostle himself exhorted the House of God (Heb 3:6), "Let us labour therefore to enter into that Rest" (Heb 4:11). But they were too busy with labouring in their own affairs to give attention to the things of God.

Yet even when they did begin to build, their hearts were not right, as we have seen. And so, Haggai reminded them: "I smote you with blasting and mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands, *yet ye turned not to me*, saith Yahweh (Hag 2:17, see Amos 4:9).

BLASTING AND MILDEW

"Blasting" and "Mildew" were diseases to come upon Israel for their sins, being referred to in Deuteronomy 28:21-22):

"Yahweh shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee, until he have consumed thee from off the land, whither ye go to possess it. Yahweh shall

smite thee ... *with blasting and mildew*; and they shall persue thee until thou perish".

Yet despite this, the people did not turn back to Yahweh. It was also said to Israel:

"moreover, he will bring upon thee all the diseases of Egypt, which thou was afraid of; and they shall cleave unto thee" (Deut 28:60). One of these was the plague of hail. As Psalm 78 tells us, "He destroyed their vines *with hail*, and their sycamore trees with frost" (Verse 47).

These smote "the labours" of their "hands," which were "unclean" (v 14), causing famine, poverty, and general lack of well being.

In Deuteronomy 8, the Lord also promised blessings for obedience. They would be brought into a "good land ... a land of wheat and barley, and vines and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey" (v 7-8). But during the restoration, in disobedience, these promises were not realised.

A PROMISE OF BLESSING

But this description of poverty and hunger concluded with a gracious promise: "From this day will I bless you" (Hag 2:19). Not next month, or next year, but "this day". From that very day, the blessing would be given and they would no longer hunger or thirst.

This is typical of the great day to come, when the restored house will have a greater glory, when "the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them into living fountains of waters". "There shall be handfuls of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains", which mountains shall also "drop down new wine" (Rev 7:17; Ps 72:16; Joel 3:18).

This section of the prophecy is directed at the priests, and begins with the condemnation under the principles of the Law. Yet it ends with a promise of Divine mercy. Although the people were unclean, there were those who were striving to be faithful, in giving heed to the words of Haggai. And so the Lord would be gracious, acting outside the scope of the Law of Moses which only condemned them, in providing His blessings from the very "day" of His choosing.

Likewise, if we were to be judged by the level of our natural uncleanness; if Yahweh were to mark our iniquities, then none should stand before him (Ps 130:3,4). But there is forgiveness with Yahweh, that He might be revered, and as we labour in these last days, we can lift up our heads in faith. For we know that the days are coming when the

blessings shall abound throughout an undeserving earth, and by Yahweh's Grace, we shall share them.

A PROPHECY TO ZERUBBABEL

The final part of the prophecy forms a promise which God made to Zerubbabel. He was the leader of the people, being the governor in Jerusalem. Being called "out of Babylon", as his name means, he witnessed the overthrow of Babylon to be replaced by the Medo-Persian administration. As such, he represents the Lord Jesus Christ, before whom the kingdoms of men shall be destroyed, that he might lead his people into the Kingdom which will replace it. And in that great day, a new restoration will begin, and a new temple will be built.

And so, Zerubbabel is firstly given a promise of the judgments to come, followed by a merciful promise of life in the Kingdom. "I will shake the heavens and the earth; and I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the heathen" (Hag 2:21-22)

THE THRONE OF KINGDOMS

The phrase, "Throne of kingdoms" implies one king reigning over many people. This shows the extent of Gog's dominion (Ezek 38) as he leads his forces against Israel. However, he shall be overthrown, and shall come to his end. As Ezekiel describes, "There shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel ... and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground ... thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou and all thy bands, and the people which is with thee" (Ezek 38:19,20: 39:4).

Zechariah also saw the destruction of the Mountain of opposition Israel will yet face: "Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain; and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying Grace, Grace unto it" (Zech 4:7). This speaks of the judgments of God upon the kingdom of Man. But here, Zerubbabel is portrayed as bringing forth a headstone in victory. The word for "head" in "headstone" is *feminine* in the Hebrew. Thus, we have a description of the Lord Jesus Christ (typified by Zerubbabel), bringing forth his Bride in victory, those who have been cut out of the mountain (Dan 2:45) prior to it's destruction.

ZERUBBABEL THE SIGNET

Haggai then gave a promise to Zerubbabel: "In that day, saith Yahweh of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel my servant ... and will make thee as a signet, for I have chosen thee, saith Yahweh of hosts." (Hag 2:23 see Supplementary Study: *Zerubbabel the Signet*). A signet, or *seal* was a device which had engravings upon it, which left a mark, or likeness of the engravings on suitable material (i.e. wax, or clay – cp 1Kings 21:28). This would then show the identity of its bearer.

Thus a promise for Zerubbabel to become a chosen signet, was for him to be chosen to bear the Divine Impress. He was promised that he would bear the likeness of God. But, he was promised to be the seal itself, not just the mark it would make. And so, in this way, Zerubbabel again stands as a *Type* of Christ. Not only was the Master in the image and likeness of Yahweh (Heb 1:3), but he also provided the means whereby we also might become partakers of Divine Nature (2 Pet 1:4). In his victory over Sin, he has provided the means of salvation. This is the ultimate promise: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, *we shall be like him*; for we shall see him as he is” (1 Jno 3:2).

Let us, therefore, take heed to the example of Zerubbabel. Let us hearken to the words of Haggai. Let us labour diligently in building up the house of God in these last days, for although the Day of Yahweh has not yet come, it is near, and the Master shall come, to complete his house. And in that day, those who have endured faithfully to the end will be given immortality to joyfully serve the Lord in the Temple of the Age to Come.

(To be continued)

Christopher Maddocks

The Changeable and Unchangeable

We stand related to the changeable and unchangeable, but in different ways. We know by experience what the changeable is, every day is giving us a taste of that. We do not require to look very far back to see that we live in a world of perpetual change. Our own individual cases are the best illustration perhaps, that is, when we can disengage our experience from the fevered stream of present preoccupation. We look back and see a baby, dimly conscious of existence, slowly developing with the growth of the months into the various stages of childhood. We began to discover that there was a world outside of ourselves. Our own sensations were necessarily the largest and most urgent things for the time being; but before long we discovered how small and weak we were, and by-and-bye, how small a thing our house was, which seemed so great, and by-and-bye still, how small a town the place in which we lived. As time went on, we became boys and girls, and went through the horrors of education, thinking that when we were done with school days we should get into bliss. By-and-bye, we were done with those days, and for a time it seemed it was bliss. Everybody does think the next stage is bliss, especially when they come to the matrimonial stage, which seems so sweet that people speak of it as “honey,” but they suggestively add the word “moon,” that is, 28 days. I won’t say the honey need be exhausted in that time; but life, as it goes on, wears a more somber complexion than we dream of. The noonday is not so sweet as the morning, and the evening comes, when the shadows lengthen, and between one thing and another, in endless variety, we are brought to endorse Solomon’s declaration that “All is vanity and vexation of spirit.” There are always some people ready to

dispute this verdict, but they only require time enough to accept it at the last, perhaps with the admitted bitterness of hopelessness concerning a future, which can only be redeemed through connection with, and submission to, the word of God.

Change is our portion now, and it as well to face the fact squarely and thoroughly. It is possible to shut our eyes to it, like the drunken man on board the City of London, who gambolled on the deck of the steamer as she went down, but this is the act of folly. It is a folly of which the vast majority are guilty; they blind their senses to the perception of truth by various pre-occupations. If there were no Bible and no future, they might be excused. But what should they do? Wear sackcloth and ashes? Be demure and ascetic and miserable? No: that is not the part of wisdom, any more than cracking jokes and having a rollicking time. There is a middle course, in which there is both satisfaction and cheerfulness. Look the facts in the face, and act in harmony with them. There is something besides the changeable. We do not require to indulge in metaphysics to see this. Our very experience of the changeable is proof of the existence of the unchangeable. The changeable has been made, the unchangeable has not; and the changeable has been made by the unchangeable. Creation is the power of the Creator incorporate. So far as our experience as mortals is concerned, it does not appear to have been made to much purpose, but we must take a wider than a mortal view. We must take the view the Bible gives us: in this we see God and a future towards which the earth is struggling; in which His wisdom in permitting even the imperfections of the present will be perfectly justified. God has spoken, and the Bible is the central proof of that fact. If there were even any doubt of the fact, it would be more wise to spend the present in pleasures within our reach, which the Bible forbids. But the matter is not in doubt; God has not only spoken, He has acted.

The Psalms speak of His "wondrous works." Some people think this means the mountains, the ocean, the sky, and such things. These are part of His works, but they are not the works the Bible refers to. If we had no other works to go by than His works in nature, we should have very slender ground for hope, for these speak with very indefinite and doubtful voice on the question of the upshot of things; but there are other works, works wrought for this express and alleged purpose, "That all the earth may know that I am God." With this avowed purpose He smote the power of Egypt by the hand of Moses, when He opened the Red Sea to let Israel through; He sustained a nation in the desert 40 years, where it could not have lived for a month; He gave them a law which is unapproached for wisdom, and has lasted unchanged for a hundred generations. For a thousand years He did many other marvellous things with the race of Israel under their judges and kings, and last of all He spoke with the voice, and worked with the power that have left its mark in all the the earth to the present day. There is no dimness in the case of Christ. His whole case from birth to ascension is before us with the brilliant and detailed clearness of noonday light. Born in Bethlehem, cradled in a manager, reared at Nazareth, subject to his parents for 30 years, and then manifest before Israel for three years and a half, as the great and unmistakeable power of God. His fame went through all the land.

There is no doubt about this, brethren and sisters; we have the evidence before us at this moment. His fame is in all the earth at this day. Such public and universal fame must have had a beginning, and it must have been something very famous that created

such a fame. The record of what it was has been in the hands of the world from the very day of its commencement. God has given us a testimony that comes straight from the very presence of His Son upon the earth 1800 years ago. The gospels are the narratives of his companions and apostles, whose very style is the pledge of their truth, even if we did not know that the writers were righteous men, and sealed their testimony with death. When we ask what it was that created the fame, Peter gives us the cause in brief, in telling us in his speech to the Jews two months after the crucifixion, "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by signs and wonders which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know." In these signs and wonders narrated with such minuteness by the four evangelists, the unchangeable is brought very nigh to us. Who but God can heal crowds with a word? Who but God can walk on a tempestuous sea? Who but God can raise the dead? God has not only spoken, He has confirmed His word by action of the most unmistakeable kind. This was the point of Paul's declaration to the Athenians, that God had not only appointed a day for Christ's intervention in earth's affairs, but had given assurance of His purpose unto all men, in that He had raised Christ from the dead. His resurrection is not the only assurance that God gave, as you know; for after an intercourse of six weeks, he was withdrawn from his disciples in an open manner, and in ten days thereafter, he fulfilled the promise which he had left them.

The Spirit came upon them in fulness of power, by which they were qualified to give effectual witness of the resurrection of Christ. He left his word in the hands of the apostles, to do the work necessary to be done in his absence. The work has been a successful work in the true sense, though men who do not understand, represent it as a failure. It has not been a great work numerically; it never was intended to save the world, but only to take out a class from the world suitable for the use required at Christ's return. In the words of the parable, the wedding must be furnished with guests. These guests are procured here and there in various countries and in various generations. Their number, never great at one time, will be sufficient when they are all brought together. They are scarcely discernible at any time in the mass of the world's life. Three thousand were gathered in on the day of Pentecost, and a stir was made at that time. Why did not the work continue on that scale? Because God's purpose did not require it. Even those who were brought to Christ at that time did not all continue faithful, the majority turned aside; and ever since then the field has been monopolised by a false church, and then by Mahometanism, and largely by pure heathenism; but this is no failure when the object is considered.

Success is to be considered with reference to the object aimed at. God succeeds in the work in getting the men who are to be His jewels, whatever amount of rubbish has to be acted upon in the procuring of them. His work in this sense has succeeded in the worst of times. It is succeeding now, and we are certainly living in one of the worst of times for the truth. It is a bad time for this work, because of scientific infidelity, ecclesiastical darkness, and superstitious extravagances of the Salvation Army type. It is, in fact, a wonder that the truth exists at all in our age. It would never have done so if God had not sent a man specially qualified for the work of bringing it to light at such a time. People are apt to say we build on Dr. Thomas; this is not true. He did not come with any new revelation or new interpretation, but only pointed sternly to the Scriptures. The device on his banner consisted of that passage in Isaiah with which we

have all become so familiar, “To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” He put the Bible in the foreground, and asked us to look at it. We looked at it, and we found in it nothing of what we understood as religion. We found in it the hope of Israel, and of His Son, by whom he was manifest. In a word, we found the truth, and embraced it, and have not sold it to this day. Dr. Thomas having done his work was laid aside, and we have had to stumble through the confusions of 25 years since his death, never dreaming at any time that there could be so long a tail to the work he began. He died at the end of the “time, times and a half” allotted for the papal persecuting power. He lived to see the French empire vanish like a meteor, as he always said it would. When he wakes, as he presently will, this will be his first memory, and it will seem to him as if the Lord came in upon him at that time. Individually, none of us may have to wait any length of time at all; for we are always liable to be released as Dr. Thomas was, and that means to us the instantaneous vanishing of the rest of the time, and our instantaneous introduction to the presence of Christ. The great solicitude relates to our reception by him. Shall we, when the Gospel net is pulled ashore, be among the fishes that are thrown aside as useless, or among those who are carried off in baskets for use at the King’s table? It does not follow because we have attained to a knowledge of the Gospel that we shall be included amongst the chosen.

Everything depends upon our conformity to his will as expressed in the word of the apostles. This conformity is an affair of educational assimilation: the Christ-word will produce the Christ-type, if we bring it to bear. This is why we have our meetings and our readings, and this is why it is so foolish to neglect these. There are, of course, degrees of conformity. Jesus indicates this in the parable of the sower, some thirty-fold, some sixty, some an hundred; but all chosen because they have loved God and kept His commandments. These commandments preclude the behaviour common to men, who almost everywhere return evil for evil, and often before evil is inflicted. It is our part to be as he was; “He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,” and sat before his shearers dumb. It is difficult and often painful for the time, but the end will pay for all. There is still an interval between us and the judgment-seat; let us make the most of it, that perchance God may be I leased to forgive us our sins, and accept of our feeble endeavours to do His will, and admit us to His glorious kingdom.

Robert Roberts
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Daniel 5 – Belshazzar’s Feast

The record in Daniel chapter 2 recounts how the God of heaven revealed a certain thing to Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon. In the vision that was shown to him, the king saw a great metal man, which represented the successive kingdoms of men, from Babylon onwards, leading up to the final stage, where the God of Heaven would intervene and establish His kingdom, which would not be replaced, but endure for ever:

“in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever” (Dan. 2:44).

So in this vision, the king was being taught that the kingdoms of men were but temporary – including his own – and eventually the only permanent kingdom would overthrow them, the kingdom established by the God of Heaven Himself.

But in the record of Daniel chapter 3, we read of an act of defiance on the part of the Babylonian king. Whereas the Image of chapter 2 foretold how the Babylonian empire would be replaced by another (the Silver Medo-Persian dominion), Nebuchadnezzar set up his own image – all of gold. In this, he was declaring that his golden kingdom, not the kingdom of God, would last for ever. Moreover, he called upon his subjects to bow and worship before that image that he had set up. And the record shows the brave faith of three Jewish captives, who refused to do obeisance to the image.

In chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar was taught the principle that “Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish” (Psa. 49:20). He experienced a bout of insanity, for 7 years, until he came to recognise the God of Heaven. So the chapter concludes with his words: “Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase” (Dan. 4:37).

BELSHAZZAR

Chapter 5, which forms part of our readings for today, brings us to consider Belshazzar, a later king descended from Nebuchadnezzar. He made “a great feast” and called upon all the lord of his kingdom to indulge themselves in revelry. But in his drunkenness, he also set himself against the God of Israel:

“Belshazzar, whiles he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein ... They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone” (Dan. 5:2-4).

In dedicating this feast to the gods of gold etc, Belshazzar was making the same error as Nebuchadnezzar. In fact, Daniel remonstrated with him, and after recounting what had happened to the former king, he said: “And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not

humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of Heaven ..." (Dan. 5:22-23). So it was that the king of Babylon became lifted up in pride, against the Lord of Heaven.

It would appear that Belshazzar was the king of Babylon spoken of by Isaiah (Isa. 14:4):

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit" (Isa. 14:12-15).

This was the problem with the Babylonian kings - both Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar were lifted up in pride: "therefore hear now this, thou that are given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, That saith in thine heart, I am, and there is none else beside me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children ..." (Isa. 47:8, see also verse 10). They were both "given to pleasures", and vaunted themselves against the God of Heaven in their idolatrous feasting.

We see a similar attitude of mind in Israel of old. The record of Exodus 32 describes how that they also made themselves a golden image to worship. Even Aaron was involved, making the calf by his own hand. He sought to appease the people by compromise:

"... when Aaron saw it he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, Tomorrow is a feast unto Yahweh" (Ex. 32:5).

Here is a characteristic of apostasy: the combining of idolatrous principles with Divine Worship. But in the event, that is not what took place: the feasting was devoted to the idol of gold, and not to Yahweh:

"... and they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play" (Ex. 32:6)]

Notice the main characteristic of this idolatry was the indulgence of the flesh – a feast of eating and drinking. This is the point brought out by Paul in alluding back to this event:

"neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people

sat down **to eat and drink**, and rose up to play" (1 Cor. 10:7).

But notice it was only "some of them" who indulged themselves, not all. Even so in the case of Belshazzar's idolatrous feasting, Daniel was nowhere to be found – he was not present at the party, and had to be sent for when his services as a prophet of Yahweh were required. This is the spirit of the faithful of old: they choose affliction rather than to "enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (see Moses, Heb. 11:25), yet will gladly make known the Will of the Lord to those who send for them.

FINGERS OF A MAN'S HAND

During the festivities, there appeared the fingers of a man's hand, writing certain things upon the wall. Israel of old were taught that Yahweh brought them forth "out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with **a mighty hand**" (Ex. 43:11). Again, in the future it will be that "as I live, saith Yahweh, surely with **a mighty hand**, and will a stretched our arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you: (Isa. 20:33). But here, the mighty Hand of God was extended with a message concerning the demise of Babylon's king. The faithful are told: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (1 Pet. 5:6). But the kings of Babylon – as we saw from Isaiah 14 – instead exalted themselves against Israel's God, as they did not recognise how that the Most High rules in the Kingdom of Men, and that he appoints over it whomsoever he will (see Dan. 5:21).

Upon seeing the fingers writing a message upon the wall, king Belshazzar was greatly troubled:

"Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another" (Dan. 5:6).

In this, he was fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah regarding the coming defeat of Babylon:

"Thus saith Yahweh to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and **I will loose the loins of kings**, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut" (Isa. 45:1).

THE UNITED BODY OF CHRIST

By contrast to Belshazzar who lost control over his body, with his joints being loosed so that his knees knocked together, the Body of Christ is united under Christ as its head. So Paul describes the unbelievers:

“not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together increaseth with the increase of God” (Col. 2:19).

The Babylonian empire was the head of Gold in the image that Nebuchadnezzar saw, to be succeeded by other empires. But Christ is the Head (indeed, a golden head: Song 5:11), over a united body which will constitute “the ecclesia by Christ Jesus **throughout all ages**, world without end” (Eph. 3:21).

Moreover, just as the wisest men of Babylon could not make known either Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, or declare the writing on Belshazzar’s wall, even so the wisest men of this age cannot receive the simplicity of the Gospel message. As Jesus himself declared asked: “Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word” (Jno. 8:43). And again, Paul declared:

“we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: **which none of the princes of this world knew**: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory” (1 Cor. 2:8).

By contrast, just as in Daniel 2, the mystery was revealed to Daniel and his brethren, we read that:

“But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1 Cor. 2:20).

By heeding the Spirit-Word, the believer can be “filled with the knowledge of his will in **all wisdom and spiritual understanding**” (Col. 1:9). This was the case with Daniel, as the king said: “I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that **light and understanding and excellent wisdom** is found in thee” (Dan. 5:14). As we said earlier, Daniel was absent from the feast and it’s associated revelry, which meant they had to send for him, to make known the meaning of the hand writing. Peter describes the believers in terms of how they were once part of these things, but have now left them behind:

“For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, **excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries**: Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot ...” (1 Pet. 4:3-4).

This was Daniel's stand: in Chapter 1 of his prophecy, we learn how he refused to partake of "the king's meat", and here we find him refusing to participate in the king's revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries.

The message of the writing upon Belshazzar's wall spoke of how his kingdom was going to end:

"MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it. TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians" (Dan. 5:26-28).

So when he was weighed in the balances of God's justice, the king was found wanting: "surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity" (Psa. 62:9). He was a man of high degree, but was found not to have any weight, being lighter than vanity.

The Historian Herodotus wrote of Babylon's downfall:

"owing to the great size of the city, the outskirts were captured without the people in the centre knowing anything about it. There was a festival going on, and they continued to dance and enjoy themselves until they learned the news the hard way"

THE CHILDREN OF LIGHT

We have already drawn a comparison between the united Body of Christ, and the uncontrolled disunited body of Belshazzar, but there is also another comparison that ought to be noted. The Apostle wrote to the Thessalonians:

"They that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thes. 5:7-9).

Like Daniel, Messiah's disciples do not indulge in the drunken feasts of men, held to the glorification of the flesh, and the idol of Mammon. But by contrast, there is a feast that they do partake of: a spiritual feast, styled by Jude "feasts of love" (Jude 12). This is a feast filled with spiritual delights – not of the wine of Babylon, but the bread and wine emblematic of Messiah laying down his life for his friends. They partake of a small morsel of bread, and a small sip of wine – yet the import of what they do is of

tremendous significance. And in the future, there will be a spiritual feast for the nations to also partake of:

“And in this mountain shall Yahweh of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines upon the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he shall destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord Yahweh will wipe away tears from all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for Yahweh hath spoken it” (Isa. 25:6-8).

This is the true feast to look forward to: not a drunken orgy in defiance of Israel’s God, but a veritable feast of delightful provisions made by Him for their benefit, and His Glorification. We must therefore not enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season like those all around us, but hold fast to the principles of Truth, whereby we might be saved. True believers are united as one around the table of the Lord, a single body controlled by Messiah as it’s head. And the faithful brethren long for the coming destruction of the latter-day Babylonian system (cp. Rev. 17-19), and the establishment of a kingdom that shall truly have no end.

Christopher Maddocks

John 13 – Love, Washing and Darkness

Our chapter for today begins by expressing the love of Messiah towards his disciples:

“Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, **he loved them unto the end ...**” (Jno. 13:1).

Notice the unfailing love that the Lord had towards those who were given to “be with him” (Mrk 3:14) – he loved them “unto the end” – and evidently this is the end referred to by the Lord upon the cross when he cried out, “it is finished” (Jno. 19:30). So he declared: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (Jno. 15:13). Laying down his life for those whom he loved, Messiah displayed the greatest form of love: “Scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:7-8). In the offering up of Jesus, we behold an extension of love – the love of God as well as that of His Son. The Lord Jesus Christ is an arm of salvation extended to those who

would take hold of it (Cp. Isa. 59:16), to lift them out of the mire of humanity, that they might be set on high by His Grace. Both the Father and Son were “one” (Jno 10:30) in purpose and intent, working together the principles of righteousness and love to effect the salvation of the few who would avail themselves of it.

But this great declaration of Love must be reciprocated. Just as Jesus laid down his life for his friends, even so his disciples must lay down their lives in service to each other:

“Hereby perceive we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 Jno. 3:16).

Indeed, this is the commandment of Christ:

“A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also have love one to another” (Jno. 13:34).

This, we are told, is “a new commandment”. But how so? The Law of Moses commanded love:

“Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am Yahweh” (Lev. 19:18).

This was an old, not new commandment! But there is a difference: under the Law folk were to love others as themselves, but under the Law of Christ, we must love each other like he loved. Not just loving others as ourselves, but a self-sacrificial love – the love of Christ towards his friends. This illustrates what love is, in Bible terms. It is not a shallow emotion, a liking for our close friends and family, but it is a reflection of the love of Christ, loving fellow believers more than our own selves – to the extent that we would be willing to lay down our lives for each other. This is the united body of believers, a collective of men and women who seek to show the love of Jesus to each other – and even, if it be necessary, to love their enemies, doing good to those who hate them (Luke 6:27). Indeed, if we do not love our brethren, how can we love God? As it is written: “if a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” (1 Jno. 4:20).

WASHING

The narrative of John 13 continues to describe how in his humility, the Lord washed the feet of his disciples. But Peter appeared not to understand why this was happening – why that the One he had earlier identified as being “the Christ, the Son of the Living God” (Mat. 16:16) was now washing the feet of his disciples as a humble servant:

“Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me” (Jno. 13:8).

There would appear to be a counterpart with the inauguration of the Priests in the days of Moses: “Moses brought Aaron and his sons, and washed them with water” (Lev. 8:6). The washing by Messiah was not an expression of humility alone, for he told Peter that “if I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me”. One suggestion is that he was preparing the disciples for the work that lay ahead of them, washing them into their ministry, as it were. The prophecy of Isaiah stated:

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation ...” (Isa. 52:7).

And this was cited by Paul in the New Testament, and applied to the work of the apostles (i.e. ones sent):

“how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, **How beautiful are the feet of them that preach** the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” (Rom. 10:15).

The One who sent them was the Lord Jesus – as evidenced by the conversion and sending of Paul himself. Their feet were “beautiful”, being washed by the Lord in person! But there is a contrast here, in the failure of Jews to respond to the Master when he came at the first:

“I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled ... I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? **I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?**” (Song. 5:2-3).

Here are the excuses given: not to be defiled: the washing of the feet being one of them. But by the time the espoused virgin got round to opening the door to her alleged beloved, it was too late: he had departed:

“I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer” (vs 6).

Interestingly, the Lord, as the Bridegroom had said earlier:

“Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me; and where I am, thither ye cannot come” (Jno. 7:34).

And again, in our chapter under consideration

“Little children, yet a little while I am with you. **Ye shall seek me:** and as I said unto the Jews, **Whither I go, ye cannot come;** so now I say unto you” (Jno. 13:33).

Where Christ was to go, was heaven itself, and that was where the followers of the Lamb could not go – despite the claims of apostate Christianity: “no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven” (Jno. 3:13).

THE BETRAYER

The Lord Jesus “knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him” (Jno. 6:64), hence he said to Peter: “ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean” (Jno. 13:10-11). This troubled him greatly:

“he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me” (vs 21).

Upon further enquiry, “Jesus answered, He it is to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop, Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly” (Jno. 13:26-27).

Notice the manner by which the betrayer would be identified: the giving of a sop of food. In Scripture, sharing a meal together is an expression of fellowship – which leads to the Breaking of Bread memorials which the believers partake of each week. So we read of the fellowship that Boaz extended to Ruth:

“Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left” (Ruth 2:14).

Notice here, Boaz personally extended the sop to Ruth, as a token of how he was to provide for her. It was an extension of friendship and fellowship, towards the woman who was to become his bride. Even so, Messiah extended his arm of salvation towards Judas, giving him the sop – as an act of fellowship. But it was spurned: “he then, having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night” (Jno. 13:30).

Immediately upon receiving the sop, the betrayer departed in order to prepare to betray his master. He left the Light of the World, departing into the darkness of the night.

THE DARKNESS OF NIGHT

By contrast to Judas who went off into the night, there was another man who came to Jesus under the cover of darkness: “There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night ...” (Jno. 3:2), and then a conversation ensued, in which the Lord taught:

“this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God” (Jno. 3:19-21).

Judas was an example of someone who loved darkness rather than light, whose deeds will be reproved.

Night is the time when most people sleep – hence in Song 5, cited above, the espoused virgin is in bed asleep in the night. But then there is the exhortation of Paul:

“ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: ***we are not of the night, nor of darkness.*** Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober ... (1 Thes. 5:5-7).

Only the “children of light” will receive “the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col. 1:12), hence we must always walk in the Light of the Word of God that comes to us through the Lord Jesus Christ. We must, “give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip” (Heb. 2:1). And “let the word of Christ dwell in [us] richly in all wisdom ...” (Col. 3:16). The words spoken by Messiah are God’s words expressed through him, and these words have the power to enlighten and save us (1 Cor. 1:18). We neglect and disregard them at our peril - but if we allow them to work within us (1 Thes. 2:13), they will save us from death (Jas. 1:21).

In conclusion then, the faithful must love as brethren, be cleansed by the influence of the Word, and be spiritually alert and awake, waiting for the coming of their Lord.

Christopher Maddocks

The Extent of the Coming Kingdom of God

It is said that the Kingdom of God will be worldwide, and that the Lord will rule the earth from Jerusalem. However, that is a part-truth. The Bible teaches that the Kingdom **is** Israel, being the central and dominant nation in the earth at that time. The Christadelphian Statement of Faith (BASF) expresses it thus:

“ XXI.—That the kingdom which he will establish will be the kingdom of Israel restored, in the territory it formerly occupied, viz., the land bequeathed for an everlasting possession to Abraham and his seed (the Christ) by covenant - Mic 4:6-8; Am 9:11,15; Ezek 37:21,22; Jer 23:3-8; Gen 13:14-17; Heb 11:8,9; Gal 3:16; Lev 26:42; Mic 7:20.

Here, the BASF shows that the actual kingdom will be Israel restored, which will exist “in the territory it formerly occupied”. Our verse for today proves that the other kingdoms will be permitted to exist external to that territory, as nations in their own right - albeit with their “dominion” taken away.

It is therefore inaccurate to speak of “the Kingdom” being world-wide. On the contrary, in Elpis Israel, John Thomas shows that whilst Messiah’s Empire will be world-wide, the Kingdom will be Israel - as the BASF also states. It will not only be the case that the Jews will be allowed to live in the land again - they will actually constitute the kingdom, with all other kings and their individual nations being subject to them (see Isa. 2:2-3, Isa. 56:7, Psa. 2:6, 10-12, Psa. 72:11). As Isaiah also wrote: “the nations and kingdoms that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted” (Isa. 69:12).

THE HOPE OF ISRAEL

There are certain important principles that emerge from a consideration of these things. The form, nature and scope of the kingdom is fundamentally Israel restored. Without Israel, there can be no kingdom. Of Israel it is written: “Israel shall be saved in Yahweh with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end” (Isa. 45:17).

It logically follows that if Israel is to be saved “with an everlasting salvation”, then we who also desire salvation must become joined to Israel. We are as branches grafted into the Israelitish olive tree, and look forward to their being restored again: “if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving in of them be, **but life from the dead?**” (Rom. 11:15). For those who embrace the Hope of Israel in faith and love, there is the prospect of “life from the dead” when the Kingdom is Restored to Israel, and the individual nations will be governed by the righteous rule of Messiah.

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