

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

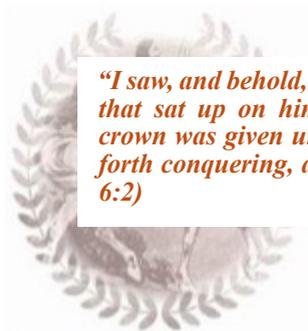
The Living Way

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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)

“If the Foundations be Destroyed, What can the Righteous do?”

There are those who suppose that because it is written, “by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph 2:9), the call to discipleship is not a call to work. That belief alone may save a man, without any exertion of effort or labours on his part. They believe that the Master has done all the work required, and that Yahweh is satisfied with the travail of his soul alone. But to suppose such is to take hold of part of a principle and treat it as a whole. It is palatable to the flesh to suppose that men can be saved with no personal effort, for slothfulness and indolence are things that many incline towards. Even the thought of labour is a weariness to some, and therefore whilst they have the bread of life in their hands, they become too slothful to exert the necessary energy to bring it to their mouths.

The whole counsel of God, is that whilst it is perfectly true to say that men cannot earn salvation by works, and therefore boast of an entitlement to it, it is also true to say that men who have faith must show that faith in the things which they do. So it is written:

“a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils (daemons) also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” (Jas 2:18-20).

Applying these words to the matter in hand, we find that those who would counsel us that no work is required of those who desire to be justified by faith advocate a dead, demonical faith. True, they may have faith; but that faith will do them no more good than belief in One God helped the demon with which Legion was possessed; for it was plunged into the deep with a swinish multitude. The faith that saves is an active, living faith. And as in all things natural life is seen in movement and activity, even so a faith that is alive is plainly demonstrated to be such by works in obedience to the Will of the great redeemer. Without such activity, although a man may have a name that he lives, in the final accounting of things, he will be found to be, in fact, dead.

WISE AND FOOLISH LABOURERS

The call to discipleship then, is a call to work. It is a call to manifest belief by activity - not that through those works salvation can be earned - but rather that through action, a living faith can be displayed. So it is, that in the New Testament portion of our readings for today, the Master presents to our minds two contrasting responses to those who hear – and evidently believe – his words; one who hears and does, and another who hears and does not.

“Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: he is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the

stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it for it was founded upon a rock.

But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation build an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great” (Luke 6:47-49).

In these words, we have before us two types of work; that of a wise man, and that of a foolish man. The wise man is working, and labouring upon the basis of that which he has heard from the mouth of the Master. He gives ear to what is said, and acts upon it; and in so doing, he builds upon a firm foundation for himself that can never be moved. It is a foundation not of his own making, but one laid before him – a Rock. He found, and saw the rock, and chose to build upon it. That is, he heard the words of Christ, believed in their ability to sustain him in times of difficulty and adversity, and he laboured upon the foundation of strength that those words provide. For such a one, Yahweh is his strength; He is a refuge from the storm, and a help in times of need - he will never be moved.

The foolish man, on the other hand, chose to build his house upon a different type of material. Not giving heed to the stabilizing influence of the Master’s words, he chose instead to erect his edifice upon the movable and ever-changing sands of human wisdom and philosophy. That is, he built upon the basis of the flesh; a basis that is easier to work with, and dig into for the short term perhaps, but one that can never last. Though he may have built a grand and magnificent edifice, beautifying it with untempered mortar so that all those around him would hold it in great esteem and admiration, it could not survive the sweeping storm. They supposed that within the house that they had erected, there would be peace – yet by the force of an overflowing shower, great hailstones and a stormy wind (Ezek 13:11), it fell – and great was the fall of it.

This well-known parable of the wise and foolish builders illustrates a fundamental principle of Scripture, expressed elsewhere thus: “Except Yahweh build the house, they labour in vain that build it” (Ps 127:1). The foolish builder constructed a house entirely of his making, upon an unstable foundation. It was independently his, and it fell under the weight of itself, its weak, sandy foundations being unable to sustain it in times of adversity. However, there was a divine element to the wisely built house. The wise man was not building independently, but was a fellow-labourer with God, inasmuch as the completed structure contained elements of his labour and that which God had given. The Divine element was the foundation; he was building, as Paul expressed it, “upon *the foundation* of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord” (Eph 2:21).

The edifice referred to in this place is the ecclesia, erected in the first instance under the labours of the Apostles, upon a Divine foundation, with Yahweh’s blessing. Thus, Paul says elsewhere, “we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, *as a wise masterbuilder*, I have laid the foundation and another buildeth thereon ...” (1Cor 3:8-

10). Paul, as a wise builder, built upon a Rock. He erected the House of God upon a firm, immovable foundation.

The Master also spoke of the foundation of his House: “*upon this rock I will build my ecclesia*; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Mat 16:18). Though stormy winds may rise against it, though rain may beat upon it, and the floods of ungodly men may seek to destroy it, it shall remain and never be destroyed. The gates of death shall never prevail over it.

IF THE FOUNDATIONS BE DESTROYED ...

In our opening citation, the question is posed, “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (Ps 11:3). But this immediately brings to mind further questions: - How can the foundations be destroyed? If the gates of hell cannot prevail upon the edifice; how can anything bring about its ruin?

The context supplies the sense. The background of this Psalm would appear to be the flight of David from king Saul, who sought his destruction:

“In Yahweh put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, ***Flee as a bird*** to your mountain? For, lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the strong, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart. If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (Ps 11:1-3).

Saul, being of the tribe of Benjamin, was proficient in the use of the bow (1 Chron 12:2), and he sought to destroy David, the upright in heart. Indeed, he attempted to drive David from Yahweh’s inheritance, to flee to another place where he would no longer be a hindrance to the king. But why should such an one as David flee as a bird away from His nest? He trusted in Yahweh – why should he flee from his inheritance? So he answered Saul: “If Yahweh have stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering; but if they be the children of men, cursed be they before Yahweh; for ***they have driven me out this day*** from abiding in the inheritance of Yahweh, saying, Go, serve other gods ... the king of Israel is come out to seek a flea, as when one doeth hunt ***a partridge in the mountains***” (1Sam 26:20).

Whereas previously, the Israelitish *Kosmos* was founded upon the precepts and laws of Yahweh, Israel’s first king had corrupted himself. He disobeyed, and led the people to disobey the words of the Most High, by seeking to retain the riches of the Amalekites for their own use. Whereas Moses was faithful in all his house (Num 12:7), Saul sought to undermine the basis upon which the nation was founded, introducing the element of human lust and avarice - and thus set all the foundations thereof out of course (cp Ps 82:5). So the rebuke came: “thou hast rejected the word of Yahweh, and Yahweh hath rejected thee from being king over Israel” (1Sam 15:26). Saul attempted to alter the foundation of his House by introducing elements of rebellion, and rejection of the commandments of Yahweh; and he was rewarded accordingly. No longer building upon the Rock of Israel, his fall was great at the hand of the Philistines. Or as David expressed it: “How are the mighty fallen!” (2Sam 1:19,25,27).

INTERNAL DAMAGE

The foundations can only be set out of course by the builders themselves. Though the gates of hell may war against the House, they shall not prevail if it is founded upon a firm Rock, but if the builders set the foundations out of course by altering them, they only have themselves to blame when they fall – Saul being a case in point. But in such circumstances, what should the righteous do? What was David to do? Should he flee as a bird to another place? Nay, rather he refused to depart from his inheritance; he held fast to the principles of righteousness in faith. He trusted in Yahweh, and though storms raged against him in the form of those who sought his destruction; he was not moved. Yahweh delivered him from the hand of all his enemies:

“The God of my Rock; in him will I trust ... I will call on Yahweh, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from my enemies. ... when the waves of death compassed me, the floods of ungodly men made me afraid; the sorrows of hell compassed me about; the snares of death prevented me; in my distress I called upon Yahweh, and cried to my God: and he did hear my voice out of his temple, and my cry did enter into his ears ... Yahweh liveth; and blessed by my rock; and exalted shall be the God of the Rock of my salvation” (2Sam 22:2-7, 47).

We see therefore, that the call to discipleship is indeed a call to activity, to labour in building up the Ecclesia, which is the House of God. But to build upon any other foundation than that which is laid can only bring disaster. Seeking to alter the foundations upon which the house is already erected can only cause instability and upheaval, with those who seek to do so being destined to fail. Unless Yahweh builds the house, the builders shall labour in vain. Unless the hearers of Messiah’s words build upon the basis of those words, and in obedience to those words, the edifice that they labour to build will not stand. The Master knows our works; whether they are of the faithful kind, in harmony with the precepts he has given, or whether they be for the erection of a new edifice to the glory of men. And at the coming day of judgement, he will determine how they will stand.

Of course, in the ultimate sense, the Foundation upon which we build is Messiah himself, and the things testified concerning him: “for other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11). These other things we have considered in connection with foundations are all bound up with the sacrifice of Christ. Though we must lay a foundation of repentance of good works and faith (Heb. 6:1), that which brings about our repentance and gives us faith, is Messiah, the Holy One of God. It is upon such a foundation in Him that eternal things shall stand. Indeed, it is said of Abraham’s faith: “he looked for *a city which hath foundations*, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10). Living a life of dwelling in a tent as a stranger and sojourner in the land of promise, Abraham looked towards the time when this spiritual city shall be built, and rejoiced to see that day.

The Heavenly Jerusalem referred to here, is said to “have foundations”. Ephesians chapter 2, and verse 20 describes those foundation, in speaking of the Household of God:

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens of the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon ***the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the Chief Corner Stone***; in whom all the building fitly framed together growth unto an holy temple in the Lord” (Eph. 2:19-21).

Again, the book of Revelation speaks of this:

“the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (Rev. 21:14).

The testimony of the Apostles therefore are all part of this foundation. The number 12 emphasises the Israelitish aspect of our Hope, as well as being the number of Messiah’s apostles.

In the days of Ezra, we find that the adversaries of Israel wrote a letter to the king in opposition to the building of the House of God. In this letter, there are basically two charges made against the building:

“Be it known unto the king, that the Jews which came up from thee to us are come unto Jerusalem, building ***the rebellious and the bad city*** ... be it known now unto the king, that, if this city be builded, and the walls set up again, then will ***they not pay toll, tribute, and custom***, and so thou shalt endamage the revenue of the kings ... this city is a rebellious city, and hurtful unto kings and provinces, and that ***they have moved sedition*** within the same of old time ...” (Ezra 4:12-15).

Notice the two points here: firstly the city was rebellious and “moved sedition”, and secondly, they would refuse to pay the taxes: “toll, tribute and custom”. Interestingly, these two accusations were also made against Messiah:

“they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and ***forbidding to give tribute to Caesar***, saying that he himself is Christ a king ... ***he stirreth up the people***, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Gallilee to this place” (Lu. 23: 1-5).

Human nature never changes, and so just as the adversaries raised accusation against the foundation builders of God’s House, even so Messiah’s adversaries raised similar accusations against him. Seeking to put him to death, they wrested his teaching to present him as being some sort of political activist, standing in opposition to the Roman leaders. Of course, Messiah did not forbid to pay taxes, but he did present himself as being the king of the Jews, foretold from ancient times by the prophets of old. A mixture of truth and error was directed against him, to secure his death.

Though they put Messiah to death, nevertheless all things were being directed by “the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23). It was in the purpose of Yahweh that Christ should not only be put to death, but also raised to everlasting life. In so doing, he laid a foundation that cannot be moved by either the adversaries, or by adverse circumstances. It is written concerning him that:

“... if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man’s work shall be made manifest, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is” (1 Cor. 3:12-13).

This is the work that we must set our hand to: building upon the foundation laid by Messiah and his holy apostles, that at the last, we might be found to be faithful labourers looking beyond the difficulties of this life to the “city which hath foundations” – even the New Jerusalem of the Age to Come.

Christopher Maddocks

Colossians – An Exhortation for Unity in Love (6)

“Ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power”

In our earlier studies, we demonstrated how one of the central themes running through this Epistle, is the principle of unity, and how the multitude of believers are united in Christ as a single conglomerate entity; “the body, the ecclesia” (1:18), with the Lord Jesus himself as the Head. And having established that principle, the Spirit through Paul then proceeds to draw certain lessons and conclusions based upon it; one of these being the fact that as the body is “complete” in Christ (as our opening citation indicates), there is no need for anything else in addition to Him, such as the observance of the Mosaic Law.

In this vein, the Apostle gave the warning: “beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy, and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him ...” (Col 2:8-10). Here, the “rudiments” (or “principles” as the word is elsewhere rendered (Heb 5:12)) “of the world” speak of the elementary principles of the Law upon which the then present order of things, or kosmos, was based. We read of these again in the Epistle to the Galatian ecclesia, speaking of Israelites under the Mosaic Schoolmaster: “even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under *the elements of the world*: but when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons ... Now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?” (Gal 4:3-9). The turning back to the precepts of the Law, was a return to bondage; a bondage from which the Lord Jesus had provided redemption. And this was the danger which Paul warned the Colossians against – the Judaisers were seeking to turn the believers away from the Redemption of Christ, so bringing them into bondage to precepts which could only bring condemnation.

But in speaking of the “philosophy” of the Judaisers to the Colossians, the Apostle also speaks of their “vain deceit” and “the tradition of men” which, as we saw in our introductory study, indicates how that they were not simply seeking to bring the believers back under the things commanded by Moses; but also their own teachings which they had mingled with it. The Lord speaks of this, rebuking the Pharisees and Scribes for “teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the command of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition ...” (Mark 7:8,9). The Pharisees effectively negated the precepts of the Law by their traditions which had become superimposed onto it. In rejecting the spiritual principles revealed to Moses, their righteousness stood in the keeping of their own traditions, hence the apostle’s condemnation of it as “empty deceit”. As he wrote to the Galatians; that which the Judaisers sought to bring Christ’s brethren into bondage to, were “weak and beggarly elements”. Not that any elements of the Law were “weak and beggarly”, for they perfectly achieved what the Divine Lawgiver intended. But that the elementary principles upon which the order of things established by the Pharisees and the like, had become “weak and beggarly”, weakened and impoverished, devoid of any spiritual value by the subtraction of the Lord’s Truth, and the addition of the philosophies of man.

And how much like today’s religious scene this is! Truly history has repeated itself in the decline of Christendom to the degenerate state of corruptness and spiritual whoredom (Rev 17:5) which it is in today. Like the Pharisees of old, the leaders of modern churches have “rejected the commandment of God” that they may keep their own traditions. And this to the extent that what is presented to the people is likewise void of spiritual nourishment; being simply the humanistic sophistries of human wisdom which lead the hearers back into the bondage of sin: “While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse than the beginning” (2Pet 2:19:20). So it is, that the principles of Paul’s warning apply to our generation just as they do to the Colossians, a warning which too few hearken to.

***“IN HIM DWELLETH ALL THE FULNESS
OF THE GODHEAD BODILY”***

The very centre of the Mosaic order of things, and the core of National Worship to Israel, was the Tabernacle arrangement, and later the Temple of Solomon’s building. And the key idea found in both of these constructions, was to provide a symbolic means by which the Almighty Creator might dwell in the midst of His People: “let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them” (Ex 25:8), Not that Yahweh would personally descend from His Heavenly Throne and physically dwell in the Tabernacle, but that the glory of His Presence would be there in symbol, dwelling between the Cherubim (Is 37:16), a glory which the people could approach unto once yearly through the High Priest as their representative. But this arrangement of things was but a shadow; a Type of greater things to come. The Law in all it’s various facets

was a “schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Gal 3:24), and so the fulness of all it’s precepts are displayed perfectly in him.

So it is, that being greater than the shadowy institution of old, God was in Christ (2Cor 5:19) by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and by the Attributes of His Glory which were seen in him. The Lord Jesus is “the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person” (Heb 1:3), he is “the Word” which John says “was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth” (Jno 1:14). As the Apostle wrote to the Colossians, “it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell” (1:19), and again, “for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (2:9).

This is the greatness of the Lord Jesus over the Tabernacle/Temple arrangement; there the glory was but a symbol – but in him it dwelt bodily, that is, physically and literally – and not partially, but in “fulness”. As a Son he perfectly manifested the Attributes of his Divine Father, being “God manifest in the flesh” (1Tim 3:16). His “body” being the antitypical temple (Jno 2:21), the Father-Spirit dwelt there, enabling him to perform the miraculous works he did. As the Son himself declared: “the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake” (Jno 14:10,11).

But the practical outworking of this teaching; is that if all the “fulness” of Divine Character dwells bodily in the Lord Jesus Christ, not only is it the case that the Law becomes greatly surpassed and therefore must fade away (2Cor 3:7-11), but those who are “in” Christ by faith and baptism also become complete in him. This is the inspired reasoning of Paul: “in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are complete in him.” In simple terms, if the Divine Attributes of Glory are seen in all their fulness, or completeness in Christ – then those who become joined to him ought also to manifest those attributes; and share that completeness. God is in Christ, and we are in him. As the Lord himself prayed to his Father; “that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (Jno 17:21). The believers then, are all “one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28), a single, complete, united “ecclesia, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all” (Eph 1:23). “The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands” (Acts 7:48), but in the Body of His Ecclesia, in “fulness”. Hence the exhortation to develop the Divine qualities of the Spirit, and not be led away by the beguiling influences of man.

THE HANDWRITING OF ORDINANCES

The Apostle, in describing how the Lord Jesus has removed the burden of the Law from off the believers, speaks of how he has “forgiven you all trespasses, blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross” (Col 2:13,14). This description of a “handwriting of ordinances” being against someone is highly reminiscent of a well known Old Testament Passage, which speaks literally of a hand (or a part of a hand) writing ordinances against a particular individual – a writing of condemnation which

was not blotted out, but allowed to be fulfilled according to the Will and Purpose of the writer.

The 5th Chapter of Daniel records the idolatrous, drunken feast held by Belshazzar the king of Babylon, when the holy vessels taken from the House of Yahweh by Nebuchadnezzar were brought out, and used to praise “the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone. In the same hour came forth fingers of a man’s hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king’s palace: and the King saw the part of the hand that wrote. 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 5:5-6). Here then, was a hand writing ordinances against Belshazzar and his Kingdom. The words which were written were interpreted by Daniel: “this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This is the interpretation of the things: 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” (5:25-28).

In contrast to the Body spoken of in Colossians, Belshazzar was not “complete”, being filled with the fulness of God; but being weighed in the balances of Divine Justice, he was “found wanting”. Too light to be of any real value. The idols he worshipped in defiance of Israel’s God were unable to be of any help to him, for Yahweh had decreed that his kingdom would end – that he would be condemned and would die by being overcome by another nation. And the handwriting of this ordinance was not to be blotted out; the condemnation would not be removed, but rather it was executed fully, and Belshazzar suffered the judgement which rightly fell to him.

And notice the physical effect that the handwriting had upon Belshazzar’s body: “the joints (margin: bindings, or knots) of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another”. What a contrast to the apostle’s depiction of Christ’s body, redeemed from a condemnatory handwriting of ordinances, speaking of “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). Whereas the joints and bindings of Belshazzar’s body became loosed (cp Is 45:1), the “joints and bands” of Christ’s body are tightly “knit together” – in love (2:2), being nourished by the Head, even the Lord Jesus himself.

But Belshazzar provides us with an example of what can happen to a body under the condemnation of a handwriting of ordinances. The exhortation of Paul to the Colossians was that being redeemed from the handwriting of the law, they ought not allow themselves to be brought back to it – and the pernicious influence of false teachers can only cause disunity in the body. To permit and allow wrong doctrine to be taught in the ecclesia will inevitably result in a body like Belshazzar’s – unloosed from the bonds of love, disunited, smiting itself. And this is what the Ecclesia at Colosse would have become like if it had been brought back under the handwriting of ordinances which the Lord Jesus had blotted out. And in contrast to Belshazzar, who was overcome by the power of another kingdom, the Apostle describes the victory of Christ over the powers of the Jewish nation which sought to overcome him:- “having

spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in himself” (2:15).

“WORSHIPPING OF ANGELS”

In continuing the theme of separateness from the philosophies of the Judaisers, and the various feasts, holydays and food requirements of the law, the exhortation continues: “let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind” (2:18). This verse, particularly the reference to the “worshipping of angels” has been the cause of much difficulty for many commentators it appears, for a great variety of opinions are set forth. These include the idea that some, out of a supreme reverence for the Father felt that he could not be approached by mortal man – even through His Son, and so they began making supplications to angels instead. Others suggest that it was a warning against the “Gnostics”. Still others say that the Jews had incorporated angel-worship into their system of things. But the evidence for these suggestions is not convincing. There is no evidence that the Jews worshipped Angels in the time of the Apostles, and we would expect that if the practice was commonplace, then it would receive more attention in the Epistles. As for the ideas relating to the “Gnostics” and others; the context of the chapter is clearly relating to the Judaisers, as we have seen, and it would be strange to have a single verse, about another group in the midst of a warning about Judaisers. We believe the verse should be understood in the context in which it occurs.

The Greek word rendered “worshipping” interestingly, is not the usual word for “worship”. It is used on only 3 other occasions in Scripture (Acts 26:5, Jas 1:26,27), and on each of those occasions, it is rendered “religion”, speaking not of an act of supplication; but an entire religious system. For instance, Acts 26:5 records the words of Paul: “after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee”. So the “worshipping of angels”, we suggest rather related to the religion of, or given by Angels – the Law itself. The inspired writer of the Hebrews speaks of the Law in these terms: “if the word *spoken by angels* was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?” (Heb 2:2,3). The Law itself was given to Moses by Angelic hands (Acts 7:38,53), but the word of salvation came by God’s only begotten Son. And if those who neglected the angelic Law received punishment – what will be our end if we neglect that spoken by the Son of the Creator of the Universe?

So it was, that in seeking to bring the believers in Christ under the Mosaic Law, the Judaisers were unwittingly bringing them to something greatly inferior to Christ. It was the religion, or system of worship from Angels, whereas the Gospel is from the Son, in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells. In doing this, the Judaisers were “intruding into those things which he hath not seen”. And to this day, the Jews have not “seen” the glory of the Law which they appear to delight in; “their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament, which vail is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail

shall be taken away” (2Cor 3:14-16). This was the true position of the Judaisers – they were spiritually blind, unable to see the fulfilment of the Law in the Lord Jesus, but rather gloried in the observance of their own traditions, “vainly puffed up” by their “fleshly minds”.

But the religious world in which we sojourn is really no better. The nations are blinded by the god of this world (2Cor 4:4), that they also cannot see the shining brilliance of the Glory of Israel’s God in Christ. There is then, a dual blindness, or veiling – over both Israel and the nations, for all wander in darkness, unable to see the way of salvation in Christ. But this lamentable situation is soon to have an end, for at the appearance of the Lord Jesus upon the earth once more, “the veil shall be taken away” from Israel (2Cor 3:16), and “the veil that is spread over all nations” (Is 25:7) shall be removed. In that day, Israel shall become an exalted people in the earth, the “first dominion” of the Great Prince, and the nations shall come to bow before him, in recognition of his supremacy, and exalted status as the Son of the Most High God. In that day, the false systems of men’s religion shall be destroyed, and replaced by a glorious new law, which shall go forth from the Mountain of the House of Yahweh, requiring all nations to appear at the city of the great King to keep the feast of Tabernacles, and be taught Yahweh’s ways of Truth. Our wisdom then, is to heed the warning of the inspired Apostle, to remain separate from the blindness of the world’s philosophies and seek to become united as a complete Body in Christ. It is that Body which shall be subject to glorification (Rev 1:13-16), when all the pretence of false worship shall fail, and be exposed for all it’s fleshly weakness. And it is the individual members of that Body which shall come to be partakers of divine nature and so be filled physically with the Glory of God, and so truly become even as our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christopher Maddocks

Themes from Matthew 14

(Transcribed from an address given on 12.01.2020)

Our New Testament chapter for today comes from Matthew chapter 14, where we have three very significant incidents in the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is the beheading of John the Baptist, which marked the end, of course, of his ministry. And we have the feeding of the 5,000, followed by the Master walking upon the waters. In our pursuit for exhortation, encouragement and instruction, we shall look at each of these three aspects, and see what points emerge from the Divine Record.

To begin with, we read in verse one of our chapter, how that Herod the Tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus and he said unto his servants, “this is John the Baptist. He is risen from the dead, therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him”

As an aside, it’s interesting to note that he seemed to believe in the resurrection, because he thought that the Lord was John the Baptist, risen from the dead! But be

that as it may, we are given the reason why John was put to death and beheaded. We read in verse 3 that Herod had laid hold on John and bound him and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife, for "John said unto him it is not lawful for thee to have her". And so John the Baptist then took it upon himself or was moved by the Spirit to testify against the iniquity of the ruler of his day. And we have a similar responsibility, not that we specifically have a commission to address the rulers of our day, but there is a principle that comes out from the example of John the Baptist here.

This is an aspect of the preaching work that we need to be engaged in, when we speak to those around us and see the terrible things that go on in the world. We read in verse nine of Ephesians chapter five,

“for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth, proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but **rather reprove them**, for it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret”.

And so here is the command to us that we must be separate from the ways of the world around us to the extent that we're able to. We still have to live in the world even if we're not of it. But we need to try to stay separate and have no fellowship in the works of darkness, but rather reprove them. That's an aspect of our preaching which perhaps we don't often emphasize: when we present the good news of the kingdom of God to come, we must also reprove those who are dead in their sins that they might perhaps come to their senses and accept the things of the truth.

Returning to Matthew chapter 14, we read in verse 6 that when Herod's birthday was kept, “the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod. Whereupon he promised her an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask. And she being before instructed of her mother said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger’

And so these events described here are actually being orchestrated by her mother, the daughter of Herodias, because she'd already been instructed of her mother in verse eight. So her mother knew what was going to happen. He knew that the king was going to make this decree and this oath. And in preparation for this, she'd already given commandment to her daughter that John the Baptist's head would be taken in a charger.

We find then that he sent and beheaded John in the prison and his head was brought in a charger and given to the damsel who brought it to her mother. And so the ministry of John the Baptist came to an abrupt end with his death.

But of course, John the Baptist was a great man. The Lord Jesus Christ said elsewhere that there's none born of women greater than John the Baptist - saving himself, we would suppose. He was a very great man and he laid down his life in the service of the truth because he was not afraid to rebuke the darkness of the world round about. And in Revelation chapter 20, we have the hope that those who are like John the Baptist would have. In verse four we read:

“I saw thrones and they sat upon them and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of them **that were beheaded** for the witness of Jesus and for

the word of God, which had not worshipped the beast nor his image. Now that I've received his mark upon their foreheads or in their hands, and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

And so here we have reference to those who were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, which is an example of John the Baptist. Matthew chapter 14, appear to suggest there was a close relationship between the Lord Jesus Christ and John. We know that John was the forerunner, preparing the way of the Master. And we read of the Master's response in verse 13 of when he heard that John the Baptist had been beheaded. When Jesus heard of it, he departed then by ship into a desert place apart. When the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities.

And so the Lord Jesus Christ needed solitude. He departed into a desert place apart. Again we read in verse 23 that: "After he sent away those multitudes that we just read of, when he sent away the multitudes, he went up into a mountain apart to pray." When the evening was come, he was there alone. One of the examples of the Lord Jesus Christ of course, is that he was a man of prayer constantly praying to his Heavenly Father but he is also a man of meditation. We'll just look at this in a moment, but wish to look at Genesis chapter 24 first: here we have the example of another man who recognized the need for quiet reflection.

Genesis 24:16 recounts the first meeting between Isaac and Rebekah, his future wife. And verse 61, "Rebekah arose and her damsels, and they rode on the camels and followed the man, and the servant took Rebekah and went his way. And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahairoi, for he dwelt in the south country. And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide and he lifted up his eyes and saw, and behold the camels were coming". So here, Isaac, who was mourning for his mother, went into the field to meditate. He went out, just like the Lord Jesus Christ did on many occasions. He would go out for solitude, that he might reflect upon his thoughts and meditate upon those things. And so we see the importance of stopping and considering and meditating upon the things of the truth.

Again, if you turn over to Psalm 1, this is of great relevance here to our Lord Jesus Christ of whom this Psalm particularly speaks. It's been said that studying without meditating is like eating without chewing. It's something that we need to do in order to spiritually digest the food that the Father has provided for us. So we read in verse 1 of Psalm 1:

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful, but he is delighted in the law of Yahweh, and in his law doth he meditate day and night."

And whilst this is a general description of the believers, it is also specific to the Lord Jesus Christ because ultimately he is *the* man. It doesn't say blessed are men who walk not in the counsel of God. It says blessed is *the* man and that man is the Lord Jesus Christ who delighted in the law of Yahweh and in his law he did meditate day and night." And then verse 3 describes the tree of life and in verse five, therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment nor sinners in the congregation of the

righteous because they've chosen their lot with the men of the world, standing and sitting with them in verse 1. This is something that we tend not to do in this Western world in which we live. The hassle and bustle of life is so great it crowds out any space for quiet reflection and meditation. But that's something that we need to try to cultivate because meditating is a lost art in our day. But we need to cultivate that and try to be like the Lord Jesus Christ and thinking about the things of the word. - his delight is in the law of Yahweh.

The next event that we have described in this chapter, is the feeding of the 5,000. And we're told in verse 14, Jesus went forth and saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion toward them and he healed their sick.

And then we read in verse 15 of the disciple's concern for their needs, their physical needs. They needed to eat food. And Jesus said in verse 16 unto them, they need not depart, 'give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, we have here but five loaves and two fishes". And so we know the account very well that the whole multitude was fed by these loaves and fishes. Just a couple of passages that are relevant to this: It says in verse 13 that the Lord Jesus Christ went into a desert place apart. And when the people heard him, they followed him out into the desert, out into the wilderness.

There are a number of particularly interesting passages in connection with this. There is the need to go out into the wilderness where there's no distraction, where we can meditate. And so, and that essentially is what the people were doing here to listen to the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. Hosea chapter two demonstrates this principle: this is a prophecy to do with Israel when they will be led out of the nations and brought back into the land. And in Hosea chapter 2, we read in verse 14, "therefore will I allure her and bring her into the wilderness". And that's what the Lord Jesus Christ did with the multitudes that he was going to feed. He led them into the wilderness.

They followed him into that desert place. And then it says in the margin, where it says, speak comfortably unto her, it says, speaks to her heart. And so the Lord is brought them into the wilderness where there is no distractions, there's nothing to blur the focus of those who want to focus on the things of the spirit. No cares of this life there, is nothing, only one's own thoughts in a wilderness. And he said, I'll speak to your heart. Bring forth into the wilderness and speak to your heart. Verse eight of Hosea two, states that "she did not know that I gave her corn and wine and oil and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal. Therefore I return and take away my corn in the time thereof and my wine in the season thereof and recover my wool and my flax to cover her nakedness." And so we see that they didn't know that Yahweh Himself was feeding her with the corn and wine and oil.

Matthew chapter 6 and verse 33 reads: "seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." And so the people did that. They sought after the Lord Jesus Christ and he provided for their temporal needs. They sought the Lord Jesus Christ and all those things were added to them. In John chapter six, we read in verse one, that after these things, "Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed him because they *saw the miracles* which he did on those that were diseased". And so here they're following him because of the miracles. And then the Lord Jesus Christ gave the food for them to eat and the miraculous provision was made for the 5,000 men, and also women and children.

And so they were given free food. And that's what they wanted. They wanted the free food. John chapter six and verse 26, they came searching for the Lord Jesus Christ when he'd gone over the sea. And Jesus answered them and said, verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me not because ye saw the miracles, "but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled." You see the point being made here: in verse two, they followed him because they saw the miracles. Verse 25 and verse 26, they followed him now, not because of the miracles, but because they ate the food. And they were looked after in terms of being given free food. And so the Lord tells him in verse 27, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endures unto everlasting life which the Son of Man shall give unto you. For him has God the Father sealed." So we see that the fickleness of the people, one moment they're following him in faith, believing he'd provide for them, next moment they're not interested in the miracles anymore, they just want free food.

Turning back to Matthew chapter 14, we read in verse 23, that when he sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray, and when evening was come, he was there alone. So he went out to be alone. He needed solitude, as we said above. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves, for the wind was contrary. And then they saw the Lord Jesus Christ coming towards them in verse 25 and they cried out in fear, they didn't understand what was happening. Verse 27, "Jesus said unto them, be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord if it be thou bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said come and when Peter was coming to the ship he walked on the water to go to Jesus". Sometimes we can be very critical of Peter, but of course he had the faith and the privilege to be able to walk on the water to the Lord Jesus Christ. We'll come back to that again in just a moment. I just want to notice this aspect of the raging waves of the sea. Isaiah chapter 57 describes the nations in similar terms.

Isaiah chapter 57, and we read there in verse 19. "I create the fruit of the lips. Peace, peace to him that is far off and to him that is near, saith Yahweh, and I will heal him". And we think of the healing miracles of the Lord Jesus Christ. "But the wicked are *like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt*. There's no peace, saith my God, to the wicked". And we see, particularly in the world around us at the moment, and the raging of the sea of nations, where there's a lot of controversies and difficulties and raging, as it were, nations against nation, fighting against each other. And the world around us is like that, they're like a troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. And that's what they do, they cast up mire and dirt against each other. But by contrast, if you go to Revelation in chapter 4, this is the sea of nations in the kingdom. Before the throne, this is the throne of glory that the Lord Jesus Christ is sitting upon: "... there was a sea of glass likened to crystal. And in the midst of the throne and round about the throne were the four living ones full of eyes before and behind. So you've got the sea is no longer a raging sea casting out dirt and mire. It's a sea of glass without any ripple of violence. And again in Revelation chapter 15, Revelation chapter 15 and verse two, we think of Peter. Revelation chapter 15 and verse two, "I saw as it were a sea of glass", Brother Thomas translate this, "*having been mingled with fire.*"

And those that got the victory over the beast and over his image and over the mark and over the number of his name, *stand on the sea of glass* having the hearts of God.

And so as the judgments of God have taken place, the fiery judgments have ceased – and as a consequence, the sea is without any ripple of violence. It's a sea of glass, like crystal, for clarity. And the saints are depicted as standing upon it, just like Peter was walking on the raging waves of the sea. Here the believers, immortalized with the Lord Jesus Christ, stand in authority over the sea of glass.

Well, in Matthew chapter 14, Peter said to the Lord Jesus Christ, bid me come unto thee on the water. He believed that the Lord was able to do that so that he would be able to walk in the water with him. And then we read in verse 28. Peter answered him and said, “Lord, if it be thou, bid me come on the water. And he said, come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid and beginning to sink, he cried saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand and caught him and said unto him, O thou little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?”

And so we think of this doubting of Peter when he took his attention off the Lord Jesus Christ, as it were, instead of focusing solely on him. Verse 30 informs us that it was when he saw the wind boisterous. What he saw was the wind whipping up the waves. And he was afraid when he saw this happening, fearing the waves of the sea. And he cried out and said, Lord, save me – who did in turen save him. Sometimes we can be a bit too critical of Peter in this occasion, because he had the faith to get out of the boat in the first place. I don't know that I would, to walk on the water in a storm! It must take a man of great faith to do that. And Jesus doesn't say he had no faith. He says in verse 31, "O thou of *little* faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" So he did have faith, but he doubted when he saw the raging waves all around him. And of course, we're in that same situation. We see, as we said earlier, the raging waves of the sea around us. And we need to try to be buoyant, as it were, to walk on the waters, as it were, with the Lord Jesus Christ, that we don't sink because of fear of the things that are raging on around us.

We see then this aspect in verse 30, that he said, oh, he cried saying, Lord, save me. Lord, save me, he says. In Psalm 69 in verse 1, we read: “save me O God for the waters are coming unto my soul.” We think of Peter, he says save me because he's sinking in the water. In verse two, “I sink in deep mire where there is no standing. I am coming to deep waters where the floods overflow me. You see the example of Peter there. I'm weary of my crying, my throat is dried while I wait for my God. They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head. They that would destroy me, being my enemies wrongfully, are mighty. Then ***I restored that which I took not away.*** And so we see the afflictions of our Lord Jesus Christ. Notice he says, I restored that which I took not away.

What was that? What is it that the Lord restored without taking away? I think it's the righteousness of God. And the Lord restored the righteousness of God that had been denied in Eden, and which had been denied by mankind down the ages since. The Lord Jesus Christ restored that. “Then restored that which I took not away”. He didn't take it away, it was already taken away by man and he restored it. And another psalm, Psalm 18, again is very significant in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. In verse 16, “he sent from above. He took me, he drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy and them that hated me, for they were too strong for me.

And so the Lord Jesus Christ is here described as being surrounded by raging waves. In verse four it says, “the sorrows of death compassed me and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. And so here he was afraid. The floods of ungodly men all around him. But he trusted in the Lord to save him. He trusted in his father. That was the point that comes out in the example of the Lord to save him. He trusted in his father. That was the point that comes out in the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. He trusted in the Lord to save him out of the waters.

Just a final point: We think also of the example of the prophet Jonah. Jonah is the story which is very well known to us. Jonah was seeking to flee from the presence of God. In verse four, that Yahweh sent a great wind into the sea and as a mighty tempest in the seas that the ship was likely to be broken. And then in verse five, the mariners were afraid. So you've got the waters again, they're being tossed around by the waves. The mariners are afraid and they cried, every man to his God and cast forth the wares that were in the ship to the sea to lighten all of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship and he lay and was fast asleep. And of course, this is what the Lord Jesus Christ did in a different occasion.

When the disciples were upon the waters, he was there asleep in the boat because he trusted implicitly in his Father to save them. And we know what happened in verse 12, that Jonah said to them, “take me up and cast me forth into the sea. So shall the sea be calm unto you. For I know that for my sake, this great tempest is upon you.” And so we find that's what they did. In verse 15, they took up Jonah, cast him forth into the sea and the sea raged from his raging. And the men feared Yahweh exceedingly and offered and sacrifice unto Yahweh and made vows. And verse 17, we're told that Yahweh had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And we know that Jonah was preserved in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights. Also, the particular significance of course, is that the Lord Jesus Christ uses this event to describe his own death and resurrection. Just as it talks about the sign of the Prophet Jonah, he said, there shall no sign be given to this generation, say the sign of the Prophet Jonah, which was the sign of going down into the grave, into the waters and being lifted out again through the belly of the fish. And the means whereby the troubled sea is healed is through the Lord Jesus Christ who will bring healing to the situation. Finally, we turn back over to Matthew chapter 14. There read of the consequence in verse 33 of these things. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, of a truth, thou art the Son of God.

And so we'll bring our considerations to a conclusion. We demonstrated how John the Baptist was reproofing the darkness of the world in which he lived and he was willing to lay down his life to accomplish that. A tremendous example for us in our preaching when we speak to those around us about the word of God.

We've seen the feeding of the 5,000, the way in which the Lord is able to fill the hungry with goodness, as it says in the Psalm 107. And to see his wonders in the deep. We've seen this aspect of the Lord Jesus Christ walking on the waters and Peter trying to be like the Lord Jesus Christ, walking with him. Then we've seen the importance of the future age when the sea will be a sea of glass like crystal, having no ripple of violence, the judgments will have taken place, and the earth will be at rest. And we therefore look forward to that time when the Lord Jesus Christ will come to gather his saints to

himself, that they might be with him in that day of rest to come. And we look therefore to the emblems before us, representative of the sacrifice of Christ. And as we partake of these things, let us be mindful of the example of our Lord who laid down his life for his friends.

Christopher Maddocks
(Transcribed from an address given on 12.01.2020)

How are we Drawn by the Father?

It is curious to think of the line of connection that stretches away from the table we surround this morning to that other table at which, 1,900 years ago, the Lord said: "Do this in remembrance of me". This meeting is a direct off-shoot of that. If that meeting had not been held, we should never have been present at this; and if there had not been a connecting agency all the while between, this could never have taken place. Our never having held this meeting would have mattered nothing to those belonging to the other end of the line. It would have mattered much to us and those who may be influenced or affected by what we do. It belongs to the chain of causation that brings us from darkness to light, and prepares us for a place in the system of things beyond, when the glory of the Lord will fill the earth, through the acknowledgment of an enlightened and immortal population.

HOW FEW RESPOND

It is more curious to think how little, comparatively speaking, has come from the powerful cause that was at work when the Lord, in the midst of his disciples, instituted this simple memorial. The authority of God was present to speak; the power of God was present to heal and do great things; yet after all these years, this is all as yet that has come of it: the patient obedience and cheerful hope of a few persons in the midst of a very numerous population in some countries white, in some countries black: in some, busy and prosperous: in others supine and stagnant; but in all heedless and unbelieving. Such a scantiness of result after such a lapse of time, might perplex and distress us if Christ himself had not prepared his disciples for it by such express intimations beforehand as we have been reading this morning from Paul's letter to Timothy: "The Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith."

Concerning this "some", Peter informs us by the same spirit that "many shall follow their pernicious ways" (*2Pet 2:1-2*) How "many", the visions shown to John in Patmos of "things shortly to come to pass" give us an idea of:

"all the world wonders after the beast ... power was given unto him over all kindreds and tongues and nations" (*Rev 13:3-7*).

This beast had to do with upholding the Romish "woman", "with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication." These particular foreshadowing were all blended in the general prophecy of Isaiah, "Behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people".

We discover from other Scriptures that this state of things would last till put an end to by the Lord's actual return to "take to himself his own great power and to reign".

GOD'S WAY BEST

Consequently, that which at first sight seems an extraordinary and staggering failure of this Divine institution becomes at last apparent as the normal and right state of things. It would not have been in harmony with the forshadowing of the Scriptures had the world at this time been full of the light of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. Such a state of things would have been pleasant to the friends of God, but it would not have been in place, and for everything there is a time and place. It would have been easy for God to have established an institution in the place of the absent Christ that would have put and kept the world in the path of true enlightenment. He could have appointed an immortal Melchizedec at Jerusalem with power to suppress error and rebellion in the way they were stamped out of the camp of Israel in the wilderness, at the beginning; and in the way they will be kept at bay on the earth under the powerful reign of Christ. But He doeth as pleaseth Him in His wisdom. He knows what He is aiming at, and the best method of getting at the object aimed at. If, therefore, He has appointed this breaking of bread – a perfectly voluntary compliance with His will, following in the wake of the enlightenment which the Scriptures, and the Scriptures alone, are capable of conferring – an enlightenment forced on no one, and which, humanly speaking, we might say, if left to take its chance among the frictions and fermentations of human whims and fancies, it is because such an agency is sufficient to accomplish the work proposed in the present stage of operations. That work has been defined by James, and is illustrated in every scriptural description, and every scripturally recorded operation of the gospel, namely, to "take out from among the Gentiles a people for His Name".

This people, when taken out, will be sufficiently numerous to rule the world with Christ in the happy day of promise; and sufficiently interesting to be an acceptable present to Christ, who will present them to himself, in their collective capacity, as "a glorious ecclesia, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing."

INCLUDED IN THE CALL

We have had the happiness to be included in the call that takes this people out. The coming of the gospel to us, in the hearing and understanding thereof, is proof of our inclusion in the call. That all the sons and daughters of God are known to Him from the beginning does not in the least interfere with the fact that when the time comes to bring them to Himself, it is by the hearing and understanding of the gospel that they are so brought. All God's ways are in harmony one with another, and all truth agrees. We need not trouble with the question "Am I among the elect?" The question for us is: "Are we among those who believe the Gospel, and desire the salvation of God with all our hearts, and strive to conform in all our ways to His expressed will?" This is a question to some extent within our knowledge and power, and if we are able to say "Yes", then are we justified in looking forward and upward with full assurance of hope; because the word of Christ is most plain in this connection. "*Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.*" Now if we "come", that is enough; it is proof that we are among those of whom he speaks when he says, "all that the father hath given to me shall come to me". Again, "whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely".

HOW ARE WE DRAWN?

Some are troubled at that other saying, "No man can come unto me except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him." They need not be troubled. No part of the Word can contradict any other part. Some imagine they must become the subject of an invisible, irresistible, miraculous "drawing" that will impel them independently of their wills and independently of their understanding. This would be to set the Word against experience and against the Word itself. No man ever comes to Christ as the result of "taking it into his head", as we might say, through an occult and divine influence operating there. No man ever yet submitted to the requirements of the gospel without hearing the gospel and learning in a natural way what those requirements are, and if any man will reasonably consider the connection of Christ's words, when he speaks of the Father "drawing" those who come to him, he must come to the conclusion that this is the process that Jesus had before his mind when he so spoke: for what does he say immediately afterwards: "every man therefore that hath *heard* and *learned* of the Father cometh unto me".

How do men hear and learn of the Father? Is it not by the word spoken? Is it not written: "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." And is not this in completest harmony with the whole apostolic work of preaching the gospel as "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth"? Is it not in harmony with Christ's own words: "he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved"?

It may be asked, why should Jesus speak of this process of hearing and believing the gospel as a drawing? Because it is a drawing. Have we not felt it's power? Have we not been drawn to Christ? Have we not been attracted to him? What has done it? Is it not the Word heard, understood and believed? It is even so. We must recognise the facts of the case. As rational beings, we are influenced by reason. Men drawn by knowledge are drawn much more thoroughly and permanently than men that are influenced by a feeling of which they can give no account. Let a man know that the house is on fire, and you will get him into the street much more effectually than by trying to mesmerise him into it.

SALVATION OF GOD

But why should Jesus place the Father so prominently in the drawing as the actor in the process? Here again, because it is even so. Salvation is the Father's work. It is "of His own purpose and grace", conceived "before the world began". The gospel is the instrumentality by which His is pleased to work it out. If He had not made known His purpose; if He had not issued the invitation to the marriage feast of His Son, who could have come to Christ? Must not all men have remained in the apathy and stagnation of native darkness! It is even so. Christ meant to emphasise the fact that men have no room for the glory in which it is so common for them to indulge – in matters of mind and matters of futurity, as well as matters of personal strength and rational power. Salvation is "not of works, lest any man should boast". It is altogether God's plan, it is God's drawing and not the result of our superior discernments and choice. If it had depended on this, we never should have emerged from our native mud of ignorance and hopelessness. What Christ said to his disciples is true of all His people: "ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you."

But then the Gospel does not draw some? True, true. There must be an intelligent and responsive ear before the communications of intelligence can be effectual. Whence come these? My friend, all things are of God, in their proper relation. If God have not given you capacity to understand, then no amount of wisdom-teaching will enter your heart; but if you have the capacity, then the Gospel is the Father's voice addressed to that capacity; and if the two are brought into connection, the Father by the one draws the other, and the result is as appointed. If a man believe and love the gospel, and subject himself to its demand, then he has proof in himself that he is called and drawn. Let him rest on the words of the Christ: "let him that is athirst come and take of the water of life freely".

That is our blessed position this morning. We are hungering after the good things of God's revealed purpose. We have heard of them; we have believed them; we have embraced them; and we are seeking to subject ourselves to the Father's requirements: why then should we hold back in the least from the full and perfect consolation? Why would we not heartily rejoice in hope of the glory of God? Is it not so, that "being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have access into this grace wherein we stand"? (*Rom 5:1*).

Brethren and sisters, these things cannot be gainsaid. Let us act on the confidence of them. Let us not be perturbed at the darkness that reigns around us as if it were some strange and unaccountable circumstance. Let us not be intimidated out of our joy and confidence by the cry that it is uncharitable to be sure about the Truth, and that "no lie is of the truth", as John says. As men and women who have attained to a knowledge of the Truth, we are addressed by Paul when he says, "Ye are all the children of the light, and of the day. Therefore let us not sleep as do others. Let us who are of the day be sober". Let us "not cast away our confidence which hath great recompense of reward."

OUR PRIVILEGES

The knowledge of the truth is not without it's drawbacks. It puts us out of fit with the people and the state of things around us. This is far from agreeable or advantageous for the present time. Nevertheless, it is a privilege when rightly esteemed. It is precisely the experience of the first disciples. Jesus said in prayer, "I have given them thy word and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world". Jesus plainly said to them, "The time cometh when whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service"

It is a privilege to fare as Jesus and the apostles fared, even to take no higher view. But there is a higher view. It has pleased God to appoint trial as the preliminary to exaltation. We may not like it, but we may be quite sure it is wise. Our judgement in the matter can only waver in the actual hour of suffering. With a sufficiently wide sweep of the eye, it is impossible not to see that tribulation is a splendid preparation for glory. Does it not make us more humble and sensible than we should be if we had nothing but that which is agreeable in our experience? Does it not enable us more easily to realise that in ourselves we are nothing, and that God only is inherently wise and good and strong and everlasting?

Does it not prepare a sweeter salvation than if we knew nothing but sunshine? What more odious than to see the pampered child of prosperity pass on from promotion to promotion with an air of satiety and disdain? Tribulation will chasten and purify and

beautify and ennoble so that men and angels will acquiesce in the exaltation of a tried and modest faith. God's plan in this respect is beautiful, that He is creating beforehand a reason for conferring an honour that we could not earn for ourselves. He has said: "them that honour me, I will honour".

SERVING GOD IN THE EVIL DAY

What opportunity could we have of honouring God except by being allowed to live in an evil age, when human honour is the great mainspring of action, and God is everywhere in works denied? If the greeting, "well done, good and faithful servant," is waiting, it is because, meanwhile, the Master is gone, and his service contemned as a worthless and dishonourable thing. The time will come when we shall look back upon such a time as a time of great opportunity. If we did not have such an opportunity, we should be dissatisfied now in proportion as we are earnest lovers of Christ, and we should lack the chief joy that will be ours when we have got through the long conflict with darkness and honour and pain and weariness and fasting that is the inevitable lot of saints in the present evil world. Hold on, brethren, "cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward". "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." "it shall be said on that day, Lo, this is our God. We have waited for him. We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation."

Robert Roberts

Secretary's Notes

This issue concludes volume 2 of The Living Way magazine, and **subscriptions are now due** for the next 12 months. We have been able to maintain the amount requested at **£15.00 per annum**, despite increases in postage rates during the last year. Subscribers are advised that there is provision for anyone who cannot remit the requested amount for any reason, to have free subscriptions. In this event, please contact the Secretary as per the details on the back cover. Online subscriptions are free of charge in any case.

Our website has developed into an online resource of studies, recordings and videos on various aspects of Bible Teaching, all of which can be freely accessed here: www.bibleonline.uk

ERRATUM

In the July issue and the August issue, we repeated a citation and response to a correspondent, who misquoted the Logos magazine as saying: "... the Lord Jesus Christ who was always pure in mind and body." The current Logos editor has informed us that this was our misquote: the actual words in the Logos magazine were: "pure in mind and holy". We have no interest in misrepresenting anyone, causing some to misunderstand the Logos Position, and apologise for the error.

Christopher Maddocks

Building and Contending

In describing the preparatory considerations needed for those who desire to follow him, the Lord Jesus Christ spoke of the principles of true discipleship:

“Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to build it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of any of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:27-33).

The comparison is that of building and contending. A man intending to build a tower must first consider the resources at his disposal, ensuring that he has the means to see the thing through to the desired end. Likewise, a king about to engage in war needs to ensure he has enough men to reasonably contend with his enemy – else midway through the conflict, he may find it needful to seek peace in order to survive. And these circumstances, according to our Lord, compare with those of the disciple seeking to serve him. Such a one needs to build – and also to contend.

BUILDING

That which the obedient believer commits himself to building, is “the house of God, which is the ecclesia of the living God, the pillar and ground of the Truth” (1 Tim 3:15). The ecclesia then, is “a spiritual house”, made up of “lively stones” (1Pet 2:5), “builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph 2:22). And as such, it ought to be the Pillar and Ground of Truth – The Truth as revealed by God himself. This is that task that lies before every constituent member of the House therefore – to construct an ecclesial edifice of Truth; “building up themselves in their most holy faith” (Jude 20), that the Whole be an embodiment of the Spirit of Truth; a suitable residing place of the Most High, following a transformation to Immortality.

In his parable, the Lord speaks of the need to consider the resources needed to build a tower. Interestingly, the Scriptures describe the frustrated attempt for another tower to be built – but not to the glory of God. Genesis chapter 11 describes the first human construction project:

“... and they said, Go to, let us build a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And Yahweh came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded” (Gen. 11:4-5).

This tower was to the glory and aggrandisement of man: “let us make *us* a name”. It’s design was to preserve a unity amongst the builders, lest they “be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth”. But Yahweh confounded the languages in a way which was totally unexpected: and as a consequence, they could not finish the tower that they had started to build.

By contrast, there is another Tower, to the glory of God, and not man. “The Name of Yahweh is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe” (Prov. 18:10). Again, the purpose of this Tower is for safety and unity, with the righteous running together into it for refuge: and it is “the Name of Yahweh”. And by contrast to Babel – the city of confusion – the righteous seek another city: “a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10).

THE TRUE BUILDER

It is written that: “Except Yahweh build the house, they labour in vain that build it: Except Yahweh keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain” (Psa. 127:1). Those who are involved with building up the ecclesial edifice are described as “labourers together with God” (1 Cor. 3:9), and “workers together with him” (2 Cor. 6:1) - and the Apostle continues: “ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building”. The faithful are not left entirely to their own devices in building up their family name: the building is God’s and He is the prime mover in relation to these things. The work can only succeed with His Blessing and Approval and will be accomplished not for the glory of men, but His Own Glory, and that of His Son. The days are coming when “the towers” of men’s devising will “fall” (Isa. 30:25, cp. 2:14-15). Then, “the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and Yahweh alone shall be exalted in that day” (Isa. 2:17).

The believers in Christ then, must engage in building together in separation from the ways of common Christendom, who seek to be united despite doctrinal differences. In the days of Ezra, there was an equivalent to the modern Ecumenical movement. So we read thus:

“then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do ...” (Ezra 4:2).

Isn’t this just like our day, when men seek to join together in building, saying that “we all worship the same God”, and should build together! But notice the response of the elders: “ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God: but we ourselves together will build unto Yahweh God of Israel ...” (Ezra 4:3). Even so, Paul writes: “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? ... what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? ... 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. 6:14-18). This must be our response: “ye have nothing to do with us”, and “we ourselves together will build” – and with God’s blessing the work will be accomplished “forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58).

CONTENDING

But vitally important though the work of edification is, that alone is not enough. The Apostle warned that “the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the Truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Tim 4:4). These teachers, elected by those who “love to have it so” are wolves seeking to command the admiration and respect of the flock, promising “liberty” (2 Pet 2:19) from the rigidity and straitness of the Way of Life. Yet, they are themselves but “the servants of corruption”, and being therefore blind leaders, their followers shall be led away from the narrow way (and along the broad way of man’s devising), into the pit from which there is no deliverance. Having turned their ears away from hearing the Truth, they will lose the Hope the Truth gives and shall perish in their own corruption – as it is written: “the man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead” (Prov. 21:16).

This being the case, for the faithful servant of Christ, the work of building is not enough. There is also a need to contend against those who seek to hinder the building, who seek to transform the “Pillar” of Truth into a stronghold of Falsehood. As in the days of Nehemiah, those who labour in the Lord’s work, whilst building, must be ready for battle: “every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded” (Neh 4:18). Like these builders of old, we must build, yet being girded with “the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God” (Eph 6:17) – and be ready to use it at an instant, to “cast down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God” (2Cor 10). So the Spirit exhorts the believer, to be a “good soldier of Jesus Christ” remaining unentangled by the affairs of this life, to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

This is a characteristic of true believers who have a love of the Truth: they “stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel: and in nothing terrified by your adversaries” (Phil. 1:28). Of Israel of old, it is written that “they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth” (Jer. 9:3), and so it is also said that “my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee ...” (Hos. 4:6). By contrast, the believers in Christ have “the full assurance of understanding” (Col. 2:2), being those who “believe and know the Truth” (1 Tim. 4:3). They will not be rejected, but will be led into glory by Jesus himself, as the Princely Leader, or “captain” of their “salvation” (Heb. 2:10).

AN INTERNAL WARFARE

But for those who earnestly contend for the faith, the warfare is not external only: it is also internal. The Apostle Paul identified our bodies of sinful flesh as being something to contend against: “I keep under my body and bring it into subjection lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Cor. 9:27). So, he describes our warfare, as “casting down imaginations, and every high things that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5). Again, he describes “... the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one

to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Gal. 5:17 – see also Rom. 7, whole chapter). This is the most difficult aspect of our contending – against our own minds and thoughts: “let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto Yahweh, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (Isa. 55:7).

Finally in this regard, we should take note that our contending should be motivated by a love of the truth, and not only out of a hatred for the error. The ecclesia at Ephesus were good at exposing false teachers, yet were rebuked for losing the love that they had at the first:

“I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars; and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou hast fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy lampstand out of his place, except thou repent” (Rev. 2:2-5).

This ecclesia were contending together in identifying and expelling false teachers – yet they placed themselves into the position of potentially being snuffed out, because they had forsaken their first love and works.

So then, it is needful to both build and contend. There are those who seek to alter our course, telling us that we must build only. The Truth will never be lost they say, so we must occupy our time with edifying one another, rather than to oppose one another. So much is true – but the reason why the Truth is never lost, is because it has so pleased the Father to preserve the Way of Life through the labours of his Cherubic Servants, who wield the sword of the Spirit against the thorns of apostasy. And they do so in the knowledge that the cause is a just one, sanctioned and required by their Lord. Conversely a minority appear to delight in controversy, and would have us become wholly devoted to contention, engaging in no other work, but to resist the Apostates. But such surely need reminding that the primary duty is to build; and as in Nehemiah’s day, the purpose of our earnest contention, is to prevent that work from being hindered. No good can come from those who merely oppose; the house needs to be strengthened and built up in the Holy Faith also. Both activities are needful – and though one is most frowned upon by those imbibed with the spirit of liberality and toleration which prevails in our day, the rewards of the labours exerted will make it all worthwhile. In our day, those who “contend for the faith” are branded “unloving”, whereas the woolly thinkers who serve up dainty delights of smooth words, “desiring conditions of peace” with the enemy, are held in honour. But such does nothing to edify the body in the doctrines of Truth, as will be revealed at the last.

The question for those who have taken upon themselves the cross of Christ is: have you considered your own circumstance, to ensure that you have what it takes to see the building through? And to win the warfare? What does it take? Faith. Faith is that which ensures the victory (1Jno 5:4), and is the motivating force of our building (Jude 20). Gideon had few men against many, yet through Faith he overcame. Nehemiah

worked with labourers who were weak by comparison to their adversaries, yet through Faith, the walls were built, and the city made secure. Faith is that which gives God pleasure (Heb 11:6), and when God is well pleased, He will give the desire of His servants.

This then, is the course that we adopt - to build up those who need strengthening, and to contend earnestly for the faith. And as we attend to this task, we are determined not be distracted by those who dispute our work with human reasonings to no profit (cp Neh 6:3). Rather, we endeavour to rightly divide the Word of Truth, seeking to be faithful workmen who need not be ashamed before our God (1Tim 2:15).

Christopher Maddocks

“The Redeemer Shall Come to Zion”

THE matter that comes before us in our readings this morning (Jer. 23., Rom. 10., 11.), alike from the prophet and the epistle of Paul to the Romans, is restoration in righteousness after long desolation and judgment because of iniquity. And the exhortation that comes to us so emphatically in this epistle of Paul upon that theme is: “Let us therefore fear.” “Be not highminded,” as he says, “but fear; for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.”

That in brief is the substance of the exhortation, and whatever we may have to say to one another can be but an expansion of that central idea. In the 25th and 26th verses of this chapter from the Romans (11.), Paul says: “For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.”

Can we say that we are “not ignorant of this mystery”? Yes, in the mercy of God, we can, because the truth that Paul preached has been unearthed in the latter days, and declared to us; and we have received it, and “the hope of Israel” has become our hope. We have learned to recognise ourselves as a latter-day remnant of this “fulness of the Gentiles” that is being brought in; and we look for the coming out of Zion of the Deliverer, to turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

For purposes of verification, we turn to the place where it is thus written, for the apostle appeals to the writings of the prophets. This was written in Isa. 59., and when we look back upon it we see the connection, also we see an interesting variation in the words that challenges us in verse 20 of Isa. 59.: “And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord.” How comes the variation? When we study the history of the book, we come to understand that the apostles mostly quoted from the Septuagint, or Greek translation of the scriptures that was made nearly 300 years before Christ. Thus in the good providence of God, the

Holy Oracles became an open book for the Greek-speaking world, against the time when the gospel of the Kingdom in the name of Jesus Christ was proclaimed abroad, beginning from Jerusalem.

Not that Greek translation was always correct. As a matter of fact it is not so; but the apostles under the illumination of the Holy Spirit, used it when it was sufficiently near to the right translation of the Hebrew scriptures to answer their purposes; and when it was not so, they used words of their own with reference to the scriptures. The consideration relieves us of a superficial difficulty. But we turn to this quotation, not for the sake of these reflections particularly, but rather for the larger idea of the connection in which this coming of the Redeemer to Zion is mentioned.

We see that it is just as Jeremiah says, just as Paul says; there was overspreading iniquity, there was no help for the situation but that God Himself should intervene. "Truth faileth, he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey. And the Lord saw it, and it displeased him, that there was no judgment, and he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor." The same thing is said of the Lord Jesus himself: "He marvelled because of their unbelief." "Therefore his arm brought salvation unto him, and his righteousness, it sustained him." That is the Lord Jesus; "the arm of the Lord brought salvation," first to himself individually, and hereafter he will bring it unto all Israel. We know the meaning of that term, a name bestowed upon Jacob when he successfully wrestled with the angel for his blessing until the day dawned. The Lord Jesus will bring salvation to "all Israel," and make those all "princes of God" who have wrestled for the divine blessing all through the night until the day dawn.

"He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke. . . . When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him. And the Redeemer shall come to Zion"; that is the connection. Then the next chapter (60.) is: "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." So here we see the same picture, restoration in righteousness and glory and life eternal after long prevailing desolation because of iniquity, and the exhortation to us is: "Be not high-minded, but fear."

We turn then, under the inspiration of these thoughts, to the chapter in the prophets that we have read together, and it is at the outset—"Woe to the pastors that destroy the sheep of his pasture." God says He is against these pastors, He will punish them; but in verse 3, "I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase."

We hear Paul speaking of a "remnant," do we not? "The election hath obtained it, the rest were blinded." What matter that the remnant was in times past, in all ages, very small? What matter that it has taken 6,000 years to provide a sufficient rulership for the earth in the millennium that is to come? God has plenty of time, as Dr. Thomas used to say; flesh and blood is nothing. You do not trouble over the mass of rock in the quarry when the stones for the palace are squared and set. That is how the matter

lies: the remnant is what is precious; we are called to be among the remnant that is to be saved. If we survive, it will be because we have taken heed to this word to which the elect take heed, concerning which the rest erred so grievously. God's remedy for the situation is the pastors that He will provide,—“I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them, and they shall fear no more.” Central over these is the Good Shepherd of God's appointment, the Lord Jesus Christ, whom we bring to mind this day, who said himself that he was that Good Shepherd who laid down his life for the flock. He said emphatically that he had other sheep beside those of the natural Israelitish fold: “Them also I must bring, and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd.”

And so it comes to pass in these latter days, and in this far-off island of the sea there is found a people gathered together around these same oracles, and the memorials of that Shepherd of Israel whom God hath raised up. “The days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.” Now the Lord God of Israel has raised unto David that righteous Branch, that King of His promise, but he has not yet reigned and prospered, and executed judgment and justice in the earth. Many there are who say in effect that he never will; the truth has taught us differently. We are quite sure that just as he was crucified in Jerusalem now nearly 1,900 years ago, so will he reign there, and just as these words of the prophets relating to the past have been so literally fulfilled, so will the rest of them.

That is the hope that brings us together this morning,—“In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely, and this is the name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our righteousness.” Gentiles have learned to call him by that name already—what do we profess when we are baptised into Christ, but that we set to our seal that God is true, and that thus the Lord Jesus is “The Lord our righteousness”?

In the words that follow, we come across a great historical witness to the truth of God's word in the prophets. The deliverance from Egypt had been a mighty memorial in the nation: God by the prophets had always appealed to Israel to remember how He brought them forth out of Egypt. We had it a while ago in Judges, where God said by the angel: “I brought you forth out of Egypt, and gave you the land, why have you not exterminated these people?” Now by Jeremiah He says: “The days come, saith the Lord, that they shall no more say, The Lord liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, but, The Lord liveth which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country” (23:8).

Now when Jeremiah spoke, they were not in the north country, they were about to be deported to the east country, that is, Babylon. Jeremiah witnessed the scene, of course, and Israel were carried away to Babylon. But in the north country they were not, and far less in “all the countries.” This is not the only place in which this is said in the same prophet, it is emphasised more than once in chap. 16., verses 14 and 15, —

“Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth that brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt, but, The Lord liveth that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north,

and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers.”

So here in this prophet, twice repeated, is a challenge, and in this chapter that we are reading to-day it says: “In the latter days ye shall consider it.” We are in the latter days; we do consider it. In that land of the north, the Russian Empire, the great bulk of Israel is gathered together in circumstances of great tribulation, in the throes of the great “earthquake” of war and revolution. But there is in their midst, as you all know, this mighty movement for the restoration—ZIONISM—which, in the developments of the past few years, has almost turned our faith to sight. They do not believe, however, that the Redeemer shall come to Zion, to turn away ungodliness from Jacob. There is perhaps some sort of Messianic belief among the Jews, but not connected with Jesus of Nazareth, far from it. He is still “abhorred of the nation,” as Isaiah said he would be. He will yet convince them of his identity; but for the present they are there in the north country, and in all countries where God has driven them, and even the remnant that is returning to the Holy Land is going back in unbelief.

Then the prophet lapses into a terrible lamentation. From verse 9 and onwards it is like a dirge for Israel; their iniquities had procured this visitation from God to them. Because of all this God said:— “The whirlwind of the Lord is gone forth with fury; it shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked. . . . Ye shall consider it perfectly.” We look back upon Israel and see what it was. First of all, there was this overthrow by the Babylonian, concerning which God said by this same prophet that there were those of that same captivity who went for good, though it was affliction; but some went wholly for evil; the two classes were represented by good figs and rotten figs. So the situation was thus: the remnant were acceptable to God, though afflicted; the great bulk were rubbish to be cast away.

We have it in history: Daniel is a great example of the accepted ones of the captivity, a man greatly beloved; he read in the books, and studied these prophecies of Jeremiah, confessed his sins and the sins of the people, and prayed for the return of favour to Zion, according to God’s promise. What answer did he have? The angel revealed to him times to come. In connection with that we notice in the end of this chapter that God said He would utterly forget them: “I will forsake you, and the city that I gave you and your fathers, and cast you out of my presence: and I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.” We might be tempted to “consider” that last verse in a wrong way, and say, as many have said, that God has done with the Jews: the “everlasting reproach” is on them, the word has gone forth through Christ to the nations; Israel has no future. Well, they cannot say that now, because of the signs of the times in Israel, but it has been said, and this verse might be quoted in justification.

What shall we say to it? That the words “everlasting” and “perpetual” do not at all define God’s purpose concerning the reproach and shame on Israel. It says elsewhere: “I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame, and though I make a full end of all nations, yet will I not make a full end of thee.”

What is the explanation of it? That these English words do not represent the meaning of the original words. The original word is Olahm, which simply means “age,” ageabiding reproach, shame for ages. You see it at once. The “times of the Gentiles” are times of reproach for Israel, when everything Israelitish is down, and everything Gentile up, but they are terminable. Daniel saw that. What did he see concerning the great Babylonian tree, representing the dominions of men? “Seven times passed” over it, which reduced to years is 2,520. Is that to be reckoned from the first of Nebuchadnezzar? From B.C. 606 to A.D. 1914 is 2,520 years, and the opening of the Great World War was really the signal of the close of “the times of the Gentiles” and the opening of the last phase of the Restoration Movement in Israel. We do not lay stress on a particular year. There have been premature expectations. The only thing was to remove the date a little further. Now the outcome of all studies and speculations is this, that about the middle of the 20th century the longest stretch of the times of desolation must run out, and that means the Redeemer must come out of Zion, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob, and shall come as the prophet said, “to them that turn from transgression in Jacob.”

Both versions are beautifully true. He will come, dear brethren and sisters. How shall we receive him? Will it be found that we have “turned from transgression,” and faithfully held to the Word in obedience? That is the object of the Word, in gathering together to hear it, to be among “the remnant” that shall survive. Anything short of this is a failure; let us recognise it, and if we are borne down with a sense of our own shortcomings, and the great antagonism of the world in which we move, then let us remember the mercy of God, and that He will help those who truly turn to Him, and that the apostle has said He will not suffer us to be tried and tempted above what we are able, but will, with the temptation, make a way of escape, that we may be able to bear it.

Have we not many times found it true? Surely many present can say “yes” to that. Therefore let us trust God, and turn to Him in truth, and honour the Word more and more faithfully as we draw near to the great climax of its ultimate fulfilment on earth. How the truth enables us to enter into the remonstrance against the dreams and chaff of the prophets. There are modern prophets whose visions are merely dreams and chaff. Look at all history that has happened in harmony with this word; look at the present situation developed in harmony with the Word. Yes, it is the Word that has “begotten” us, and will keep us, and give us the inheritance.

Therefore it comes to this commonplace exhortation once more, the daily readings,—let us not neglect them. They are very easily eclipsed, are they not? Do not we know it? But here is the truth, the scriptures are “able to build us up, and to give us an inheritance among all them that are sanctified.” Anything we can say is very secondrate after the apostle speaking by the Spirit of God; but Paul, when he has argued this matter out upon the restoration, says: “I beseech you therefore by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice . . . and be not conformed to this age, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

CC Walker, 1921 The Christadelphian Page 350–354.

**“... I came not to call the righteous, but
sinners to repentance”
(Luke 5:32)**

Paul also taught: “for when we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly ... but God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners Christ died for us” (Rom.5:8). And again, Messiah taught: “They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick” (Lu. 5:31).

The point is that Christ did not die for those who consider themselves to be righteous, but rather for those repentant sinners who trust in his power to save. These constitute his “friends” for whom he laid down his life (Jno. 15:13). But notice that sinners are not accepted just the way that they are: they are rather called “to repentance”. The Word of God is able to cleanse the way of those who seek it (Psa. 119:9), and becomes a transforming power in the lives of those who believe and heed it. According to Paul, it “effectually worketh also in you that believe” (1Thes. 2:13). It is able to change sinners into saints, being “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that that man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

John teaches us that “herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent us his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 Jno. 4:10). In all these things, God is the prime mover. He is the One who graciously ordained a system of salvation from the time that our first parents transgressed His Law. It is he who was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself” (2 Cor. 5:19). All things are of Him (2 Cor. 5:18). Our part is to repent and embrace the arm of salvation extended to us, for then we can look to the future in hope and anticipation, longing for our Lord to return and elevate us in his Kingdom to come On Earth.

Christopher Maddocks

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