

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

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# 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)*

## Colossians – An Exhortation for Unity in Love (8)

### *SEEKING THINGS ABOVE*

In our previous considerations of Colossians chapter 2, we saw how the believers, by becoming united to Christ, join themselves to a “body” which is “complete”, having need of no other addition, whether it be from the Law, or the traditions of men. But in addition to this, believers who have become Christ’s by passing through the watery grave of baptism, have become “circumcised” “in him” (Col 2:10-11). That is to say, their sins and iniquities – the works of the flesh have been effectively “cut off” in that representative grave – left behind, forsaken, as they commence a journey through a new life, wholly devoted to the things of God. The old man, “the body of the sins of the flesh” becomes crucified, put to death, and buried in baptism, as by the indwelling of the Spirit Word, a new man is formed, “which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him”. And this is the theme of Chapter 3 – the manner in which, having laid aside the filthy garments of the flesh, believers ought to be clothed with righteousness, seeking the things which pertain to eternity. Having died, and risen up out of the baptismal waters, believers ought to seek things which are above, where their Lord is: “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col 3:1,2).

### ***“IF YE THEN BE RISEN WITH CHRIST”***

Notice the contrast here with verse 20 of Chapter 2: “Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world (i.e. elementary principles of the *kosmos* that then was) why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances ...”. By becoming aligned with the death of Christ in Baptism, the Colossians had become free from the ordinances of the Mosaic Law – and the traditions which men had added to it. Yet through the Judaistic philosophising of the apostates, they were being seduced back to that which they had forsaken. They were turning back to unearth that which they had previously buried in the grave, and the Apostle exposed the vanity of such. So following the denunciation of the “philosophy and vain deceit” (2:8), of those who would lead the believers back to the ministration of death, Chapter 3 returns to the principles involved with baptism – and the responsibilities of being risen with Christ. The believer must not dwell so much upon what has been left behind – but more importantly, what lies ahead, and the obligations which go with newness of life in Christ.

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God” (3:1). Lifting up their heads to gaze upon the things of eternity, those who are resurrected from their baptismal death, must fix their attention upon the Divine Presence – and the One who appears there “for us” (Heb 9:24).

Rather than to manifest the grovelling spirit of the natural man which, as that of the beasts of the field declines to earthly things, the spirit of the renewed man “goeth upward” (Eccl 3:21), focalising upon the place of favour and blessing – the Father’s right hand, where our Lord is positioned. And in this, the example of our Lord is before us, who always kept the things pertaining to His Father’s Kingdom and Righteousness

to the forefront of his mind, always seeking the will of His Father dwelling in the Heaven above:

“I have set Yahweh always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved ... My flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore”. (Ps 16:8-11).

In these words, the Spirit of Christ speaks prophetically of the meditations of our Lord Jesus, faced with the agony of Crucifixion. Elsewhere it is testified that he, “for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb 12:2). And this Psalm enlightens us as to what that “joy” was which was set before the Lord. “I have set Yahweh always before me”, and positioned at His Right hand, the future seat of power upon which he would set, the Lord saw joy and pleasures: “in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore”. So it was, that by continual meditation and reflection upon such a joyous vision of Glory – even His Father’s Glory, our Lord was strengthened to overcome, enduring the shame of crucifixion that he might ultimately obtain that place of joy himself.

And even so it is with us. For the death of Christ was not the death of one individual – but that of all who are aligned with it in Baptism: “if one died for all, then were all dead” (2Cor 5:14). In our baptisms, we died with Christ. But for us, as with our Lord, crucifying the flesh is not a single event at the time of our immersion; but a daily struggle as we seek to “die daily” (1Cor 15:31). Thus the exhortation was given to the Colossians, that in seeking heavenly things – the “pleasures” at the Father’s right hand – they must crucify earthly things: “mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence and covetousness which is idolatry” (Col 3:5). As we died in Christ therefore, we must put to death earthly things, and do as he did, focus instead on the Joyous Vision of the Divine Presence, and all that it speaks of. For if we are dead with him, then are we also risen with him (Rom 6:5), and our life is bound up in him: “for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (Col 3:3). There is no earthly thing which appears in the presence of the Father – only things of the Spirit. And as our lives are “with Christ in God”, who is the fountain-head of all life, then we ought to have no earthly thing dwelling in us. Only things of the Spirit – and how hard that is to maintain!

### *A CHANGE OF GARMENTS*

In speaking of these principles, the Spirit through Paul adopted the language of clothing. A soiled, defiled garment is removed, that another robe of righteousness might be put on: “but now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth ... Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering ...” (Col 3:8,12). So it is, that the varying attributes to be forsaken or adopted according to their nature, are likened to a garment being put off, or put on, as the case may be. The language here, finds it’s counterpart in a vision shown to

Zechariah, relating to Joshua the High Priest, and his change of raiment, typical of the change of our Lord's nature:

“And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of Yahweh, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And Yahweh said unto Satan, Yahweh rebuke thee, O Satan, even Yahweh that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him, he said, Behold I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of Yahweh stood by” (Zech 3:3:1-5)

In this vision, we have depicted a change of garments taking place – immediately following a contention between one styled “Satan”, and the other styled “Joshua the high priest”. It is a vision over which so many expositors are caused to stumble – and no wonder, for the commentaries are written by those of the Apostasy; believing in devils, demons and hobgoblins – fire and brimstone for the damned, and eternal bliss beyond the skies for the blessed. It is not surprising therefore, that they cannot behold the things pertaining to Divine Mercy, things which relate to the sacrifice of Christ. These things remain hidden to them, for they cannot permit the spirit word to permeate beyond the barrier of the flesh.

But all becomes clear when we recognise that the events thus transacted prophetically speak of our Lord Jesus – the antitypical Joshua, whom the apostle styles the “great high priest”, and his victory over the greatest adversary of all. For just as one styled “Satan”, is depicted as resisting Joshua clothed in defiled garments, even so there was a contest between “the devil” or diabolos, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who wore our defiled nature in order to overcome it: “forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb 2:14). And just as the Satan was ultimately defeated by being given a Divine Rebuke, even so it was in the case of our Lord Jesus, for in him, the diabolos, or “the law of sin” was condemned and destroyed: “God, sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom 8:3). Notice that point – God condemned Sin in the flesh of his Son. To wear the defiled garments of our nature was essential for such to take place, for sin could not be condemned in the Son, unless it existed there.

What then of the change of raiment? Following his emergence from Joseph's tomb, the Lord Jesus received a change of nature, that he might no longer have to contend against the devil within. The garments pertaining to his mortal existence were left behind, to be discovered by Simon Peter at his entrance into the Lord's grave (Jno 20:4-7). The Lord had been “clothed upon” (2 Cor 5:4) with immortality, having no need for the former things relating to his past existence, and so was beheld by Daniel, again in vision, as one “whose garment was white as snow” (Dan 7:9), free from any

sign of defilement. And having overcome, just as Joshua was seen to be greater than the angels (he was crowned, not the Angel, thereby speaking of his typical status over them) even so our Lord, in his elevated status following his resurrection, was crowned with glory, so that now “we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour”, “being made so much better than the angels” (Heb 2:9; 1:4), that he might lead many sons into victory.

### ***THE HIGH PRIEST – A REPRESENTATIVE***

In all these things, it is vital for us to note that the things which were done to the high priest were not for his benefit alone – but for the people whom he represented. By the very nature of that office, the High Priest appeared in the Divine Presence on behalf of, and as a representative of the people. And this being so, the things which he experienced in that office, represent the experiences of the People also. In short, if they wish to enter the Divine presence – if they wish to be represented in him, they must be as him. And so it is, that we must never lose sight of the practical exhortation which cries out loudly in every facet of the Atoning work of our Lord.

And it is these practical examples which are highlighted by the Apostle to the Colossians. A little reflection will confirm this. We have died with Christ in baptism. We have risen with Christ in emerging from the baptismal grave. But Christ has arisen to be given garments white as snow – no longer tainted by “iniquity” (Zech 3:4), or the sinfulness of the nature he overcame. This, we cannot do, for the devil within is a hereditary problem – an inherent power bringing us into enmity with God – it will remain with us until we also receive a change to Immortality, when “this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality (1Cor 15:53). How then can we stand justified in the Divine Presence?

The answer lies in the merciful kindness of the Almighty, extended to us in His Son. If we seek to do as he did; if we resolve to “put off the old man”, and “put on” a new set of attributes, even as Paul exhorted the Colossians, the garments of Christ’s righteousness may cover us also. We are baptised into him (Rom 6:3). We have risen with him (Col 3:1). We are thus part of his “body” (Col 1:18,24). Our life is “hid with Christ” (Col 3:3). But he is clothed with garments “white as snow” – and therefore so are we. We are partakers of His righteousness by faith (Rev 7:14, Rom 4:1-8), for as the Father beholds the people’s representative at His Right Hand, He beholds no spot, or wrinkle, nor any unclean thing, but purity and righteousness. Even so, though our sins were as scarlet before him, they have become white as snow (Is 1:18), covered over with the purity of the Lord Jesus. This then, presents a most powerful exhortation to all minds sensitive to Divine Things. Being thus cleansed, we must not allow our garments to be defiled. We must not clothe ourselves with the works of the flesh – for this is the Promise of Christ Himself: “He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias” (Rev 3:5-6).

*Christopher Maddocks*

## **“Know no Man after the Flesh”**

*“It was needful for me to write unto you and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).*

I am no man’s personal enemy. I have neither time nor inclination to trouble myself about persons, or their affairs. But when they approach me on the premises of the Truth, then they are either my friends or my foes, and I am theirs. I am their friend for the Truth’s sake. I would rather be the friend than the foe of anyone upon any ground. This is the bent of my fleshly nature; and if men will not be friendly, I do not feel resentful, but my disposition is to give them a wide birth.

This is the natural man. But if they pretend to be the friends of the Truth, and they are neither intelligent in, nor faithful to, what I believe to be the Truth, and will not consent to be instructed, then I have a duty to perform as one of Christ’s brethren, in obedience to apostolic injunction, and that is, to “Contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). And in so doing, which is well-doing (1Pet 2:15) “To put to silence the ignorance of foolish men” that their “mouths being stopped,” they may no longer “Subvert whole houses, and lead captive silly people laden with sins” (Tit 1:11, 2Tim 3:6).

In the performance of the duty common to all the faithful, I do not wait to be attacked. If no one will go with me to the assault, I go alone, with the determination to scatter them, or be demolished in the attempt; in which, however, I do not expect to succeed, because: “The saints are prevailed against till the Ancient of Days comes” (Dan 7:21-22).

Why then labour in expected failure? To obey the injunction and prove my own faith. In this spiritual warfare, whose weapons are neither lead nor steel, but more effective than either for putting to flight the aliens, there is neither truce, armistice, neutrality, nor peace. He that is not with us is against us; and he that gathereth not with us, scattereth abroad. I, for one, know no man in this warfare as a brother and friend who is neutral or not gathering. A man who is neutral stands by with arms folded and sees the enemy crushing me to death! He believes in the cause I am fighting for, but he calmly views my destruction without any sign of help.

Is such a man my friend and brother? Is he not rather a sympathizer with the enemy? If he helped me, we might prove too strong for the foe; the enemy knowing this cannot look upon neutrals in any other light than his friends. And this is just where Christ puts all neutrals in the good fight of faith.

But if this be the position of neutrals, what shall be said of those who either oppose or nullify what we believe to be the Truth? Who not only so, but seek to destroy the influence of those who have, while they were mere heathens, proved themselves through evil and through good report, and when the Truth had few to say a good word for it—what shall be said of them?

They may virtually acquiesce in the theory of the Truth, but can we call them friends and brethren? Are they Christ’s brethren? If they were Christ’s brethren, they would love the zealous and disinterested advocates of the Truth, and would be careful to do

nothing that would embarrass them. Shall I call such enemies of Christ, my friends and brethren? I tell you, nay; I will have none such, if I know it. They are my enemies, and it is my duty to make war upon them.

If I belong to the Spirit's witnessing prophets clothed in sackcloth (Rev 11) and any man will to injure me in my witnessing, it is my duty to devour him with the fire of my mouth—to torment him with my testimony. If he persist in storming our works, then "He must in this manner be killed" (Rev 11:5).

I have no sympathy with a yea-and-nay profession and advocacy of the Truth. It does no good to the professor, to those who are associated with him, nor to those dwelling in outer darkness. "The whole world lieth in the evil one" (1Jno 5:19) – in Sin; and the only exception to this are the untraditionalized believers of the Truth we believe and teach and have obeyed; and who are walking as little children therein.

If we are these Scriptural exceptions, we have nothing to do but keep clear of this evil world, and to testify against all the traditions it would substitute for the Truth, or by which it may seek to nullify it.

The greatest and most dangerous enemies to Christ are those who pretend to be his friends, but who are not faithful to his doctrine; and they are unfaithful who from any motives of personal interest would weaken the point of doctrine, or soften it for gratification of their natural feelings, or for fear of hurting the feelings of the enemy, and so affecting their popularity with him.

### ***THE WORK BEFORE US***

We have a great and important work before us. It is to bring people to the understanding of the ancient apostolic doctrine, and to the obedience of faith, in the form inculcated by them upon all believers. If our friends faithfully and intelligently execute this mission they will be placed in opposition to all the world—they will find themselves in the position of the Spirit's witnessing prophets, standing in the court of the Gentiles, and bearing testimony against "The god of the earth" with all the power, learning and influence of the Great Harlot, her State daughters, and dissenting abominations arrayed against them; and besides all this, the heartlessness and cowardice and treachery of professed neutrals and friends.

To take up such a position, and to maintain it without surrender, requires knowledge and faith working by love of what is known. Hence the necessity of meditation upon the Word.

This will develop faith, and the more an honest-hearted man understands of the Word untraditionalized by what is falsely called "science," the more enlarged and the stronger will his faith become; and the more valiant will he be for the Truth, and the more efficient for the work before him as a "witness," a "prophet," a "lightstand," and "olive tree" before the "deity of the earth." The light of Truth must shine clearly in a man's head before he can speak critically or accurately upon "the deep things of the Spirit." and if you undertake to implant these in the brains of the Modern Athenians,

who, like their brethren of old time, are exceedingly fond of gossip, you must be bright and lucid in your irradiations, that you may shine away the darkness of the subtleties and the vagaries of the inner consciousness, with which the cup of the Old Harlot has crazed and intoxicated them.

And this you will find to be, if you have not already done so, no easy work to do. The traditions radiating infinitely and at all angles, form almost an impenetrable cloud—a cloud which befogs everything, and renders it impervious to “the simplicity that is in Christ”.

But shall we despair? By no means. The work before us at present, is not to demolish Antichrist, and the tradition with which he is clothed as with a black and threatening cloud. This is beyond our power, as it is extra to the mission of the saints against whom he has prevailed almost “forty and two months.” His demolition is their work when joined therein by the Ancient of days. This is their patience and faith (Rev 13:10, 14:12). The saints are waiting for this. In the meantime, they hold the position of the witnesses for Jesus; and it is required in witnesses, who are stewards of the testimony, that they be faithful after the example of Christ and Antipas (Rev 1:5; 3:14; 2:13).

At present, they have to show the Truth in every way that will make the Truth shine; that it may stand out in the foreground of the picture so distinctly from all surroundings, that observers at a glance may distinguish it in all its outlines, without any possibility of confounding it with the dark cloud of the things beyond.

This is the work for us to do, that men seeing the photograph, Christ, written upon their minds by the testimony which is light, may confess that it is a true, faithful, and beautiful picture; and embracing it with affectionate hearts, may so put it into their bosom, and become married, or rather betrothed, unto the Lord.

In this way an enlightened, and affectionate and valiant people will be prepared for him; who will not only be watching for him, but—with garments kept, and lamps well trimmed with the golden oil of the good olive tree—will be ready to enter in on the closing of the door against all the world.

*John Thomas (1865)*

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## **The Reign of Christ – Future, not Present**

In his inspired Epistle to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul speaks of the exaltation of the Lord Jesus by his Father: “he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the ecclesia, which is his body ...” (Eph 1:20-23). So it was, that subsequent to his resurrection, the Lord Jesus was given power, and elevated to a status far greater than all the principalities and powers of this world. Yea, a position greater even than the Angels of God, for he received a name “more excellent” than they (Heb 1:4), a name “which is above every

name”, at which “every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth” (Phil 2:9-10). The Lord himself taught his disciples concerning the power now vested in him: “All power is given unto me in heaven and earth” (Mat 28:18). But does the bestowal of this “power” over both earthly and heavenly things mean that the Lord currently possess a royal dominion? Although he has been given “power”, does he currently exercise it as a King ruling from his throne?

The answer of another writer is clear, in commenting upon these words of the Lord:

“Although the words “rule” and “reign” are not used here by Jesus, it is abundantly clear that he has been put in charge of heaven and earth and what else can that mean but that he rules and reigns over both domains” (Les Boddy, *The Endeavour Magazine*, June 1999).

And again, in the same article, we are told concerning the Lord Jesus: “we seem to be so intent on telling others that he is to return to reign on earth that we neglect to tell them what the New Testament teaches so clearly, that he reigns now from Heaven”. And again: “Jesus is not merely the heir to the throne, for he is now enthroned at his Father’s side sharing his Father’s throne, (Rev 3:21) clearly there as King”. And yet once more: “it is certainly not good enough to say that Jesus will not begin his reign until he returns to the earth ...”.

The claim we are being presented with then, is that the Lord Jesus reigns as King even now, ruling and exercising his Royal authority in both heaven and earth. The implications of this teaching is clear. If what *The Endeavour* teaches is true, then the Kingdom of Christ (by definition, the arena over which a king exercises his rule), is not future, but present! Indeed, this is the thrust of the article we cite from, that Christ’s Kingdom is even now being established throughout the world by preaching: “True, evil and wickedness have continued ... but nevertheless the gospel has made inroads into the kingdom of Satan and victories have been made for Christ.” In other words, the Son has been busy bringing the world into subjection to the Father, so that, in the end he may ‘hand over the Kingdom to God the Father’ (1Cor 15:24)”. In such an age when evil and wickedness have not just “continued”, but increased to the extent that the Lord likens it to that of Noah, (Mat 24:38, cp Gen 6:5,11), we may well wonder what “victories” for Christ the writer has in mind! But what saith the Scripture? “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Is 8:20).

### ***THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST***

When we survey the great abundance of Scripture testimony regarding the Kingship of the Lord Jesus, we find one point being so repeatedly emphasised, that we cannot disregard it in any analysis of the matter. The Lord Jesus, was born to be King of the Jews, and the Kingdom over which his dominion is said to extend, is essentially an Israelitish Kingdom. So Gabriel testified: “the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his Kingdom there shall be no end” (Luke 1:32-33). The wise men enquired, “Where is he that is born King of the Jews” (Mat 2:2). Nathanael exclaimed, “Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel” (Jno 1:49). Even the chief priests and scribes

recognised that it was “written by the prophet, And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel” (Mat 2:5-6). Pilate “asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews?” (Mat 27:11), to which our Lord answered in the affirmative. Further examples could be multiplied many times, for the Scriptures are explicitly clear, that the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ is to be centred in Israel, prophetically styled, his “first dominion” (Mic 4:8).

If it is the case that the Kingdom of Christ began subsequent to his resurrection, something that it is alleged “the New Testament teaches so clearly” we would expect the prophetic word of the Old Testament to speak likewise. Yet we find that this is not so. The prophets reveal Jerusalem, not heaven to be the location of Christ’s royal throne, for it is written; “at that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of Yahweh; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of Yahweh, to Jerusalem” (Jer 3:17, cp Is 24:23). Jerusalem, not Heaven was the ancient site of the Davidic seat of power; and so it will be in the future, when the Lord commences his reign. He will be seated in Jerusalem, the “city of the great king” (Mat 5:35), his Throne being positioned in the Temple yet to be constructed there (Zech 6:13, Is 6:1), that he might reign as a Kingly priest, after the order of Melchisedec (Heb 7:15). So it is, that without Israel, there can be no Kingdom, for the dominion of our Lord is that ancient Israelitish polity restored (Acts 1:6), Jerusalem being the future capital city of the World (Is 2:3), with the citizens of that “first dominion” being restored both to their land (Ezek 37:25), and to their God (Ezek 37:28). Has the reign of Christ thus described begun already? Clearly not – no passage in the Old Testament teaches that the Lord will rule from Heaven – rather upon earth, from the reconstructed Davidic seat of power in the ancient city of Jerusalem.

### ***THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KINGDOM***

The scriptures also clearly reveal that the Kingdom of God will be established by the conquest of nations, not their voluntary submission to the gospel, as our adversary would have us believe. So it is, that the Prophets speak of the Lord’s judgements against the coming invaders of Jerusalem: “I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead (Heb: judge) with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land” (Joel 3:2). “For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle... then shall Yahweh go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle” (Zech 14:2,3). “I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire and brimstone thus will I magnify myself and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am Yahweh” (Ezek 38:22,23). This is the means whereby Yahweh, the great God of Israel shall be made known in the eyes of many nations – by the greatness of his power being openly declared in the judgement of Israel’s enemies, and the salvation of His People (Is 66:18, 52:10).

At that time, whilst there will be some who submit, having witnessed these judgements, (Ps 18:44), there will be others who seek to rebel: “The kings of the earth

set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against Yahweh and against his anointed (Christ), saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us” (Ps 2:2,3). This rebellion is further described in the Revelation to John, speaking of the “kings of the earth”: “These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful” (Rev 17:14). So it is, that far from being brought under the Dominion of Christ by a humble submission to the Gospel, there will be many who refuse to accept his reign even having witnessed such a mighty outpouring of his power. They will war against Christ, who will deliver them a crushing blow, (cp Dan 2:34, Mat 21:44), and impose God’s laws upon a subjugated world. The apostle clearly teaches that the “natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God” (1Cor 2:14), and so the Kingdom will not be established by the world humbly receiving the Gospel. Rather, it will be by the Power of Almighty God, bringing all the earth into subjection to His Son. The Lord Jesus does not presently exercise such dominion over his enemies; but in His Father’s Purpose it will be so, for he is now “set down at the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool” (Heb 10:12,13).

### ***CHRIST IS CURRENTLY LORD, BUT A FUTURE KING***

Despite the breadth of his sweeping statements, and the repeated affirmation of his unjustified claims, LB, by his own admission is unable to find passages which use the words “rule”, or “reign” in connection with the current work of our Lord. So it is, that in speaking of Ephesians 1:18-23, he confesses, “it is true that the word “rule” is not literally in the Greek ...”, even though it is in the faulty translation he uses. Again, in the extract we cited earlier, when speaking of Mat 18:18-20 he concedes; “... the words “rule” and “reign” are not used here by Jesus ...”, although he continues by saying, “it is abundantly clear that he has been put in charge of heaven and earth and what else can that mean but that he rules and reigns over both domains?”. But no such thing is “abundantly clear”! What is “abundantly clear”, is that if the Lord intended to inform us that “he rules and reigns over both domains” now, he would have told us such, and by Les Boddy’s own admission, he has not! What the Lord did tell his disciples, and what the New Testament does “teach so clearly”, being “abundantly clear” from our opening citations, is that the Lord has been given “power” “in heaven and earth” – which, in the absence of scriptural support, is interpreted to mean he has been given Kingly rule. We are asked, “what else can that mean ...?” Well, let us search the Scriptures and see!

The apostle clearly informs us, that there are two aspects to the status of the Risen Jesus. “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). So then, Jesus is both Lord and Christ. The word Christ, according to Les Boddy means “king”. Not so, no Greek scholar worth hearing would accept this definition. It means, “anointed”, speaking of one anointed to be King/Priest. The Lord Jesus, is both Lord and has also been anointed to reign as a king/priest after the order of Melchisedec – two aspects which we need to consider.

When he comes, Yahweh's Christ is to reign from David's throne (Luke 1:32), yet although he is currently "anointed", he does not now so reign. In the life of the original incumbent of that throne, we see a precedent for this. David was selected by the Lord God to reign over his people in the place of Saul, who He had rejected (1Sam 15:26, 16:10), even being anointed by Samuel in preparation for that position. Yet a considerable time elapsed between the time of anointing, and the time when his reign actually began. He had a number of opportunities to take up his reign before due time, (1Sam 24, 26, cp Jno 6:15), yet rather demonstrated a spirit of faith and patience in waiting for the time appointed by the Father. The situation is similar in the case of the Lord Jesus Christ – being rejected and persecuted by the Israelitish authorities, he has departed into "a far country", to await the appointed time in which he might return to take up his reign. But the parallel goes even further than this; during the interim period of Saul's reign, the Spirit informs us that "every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him, and he became a captain over them ..." (1Sam 22:2). He became a "captain", and "lord" (cp 1Sam 25:24) over those who sought him before his return to Reign. Even so, we who are discontented and distressed by the evil ways of this wicked generation, forsake the ways of sin, having our debts forgiven (Mat 6:12) by association with him. We join with him in the hope of his future reign, that as his brethren, we might reign with him (2Tim 2:12, Rev 5:10), and experience the blessedness of his coming Kingdom. Were any of those who followed David as their Captain and Lord under any delusion that he was already reigning as King? By no means! Why then is it, that some who profess to follow the Greater David (Ezek 37:24) in similar circumstances believe that his Kingdom has begun – especially whilst recognising that Christ himself did not speak in such terms?

The Lord Jesus is our Captain – the "captain of our Salvation" (Heb 2:10), whom we pray will lead us into glory. His reign has not yet begun, yet his lordship over us remains (Jno 13:13). But the difference between our Lord and David, is that his current Lordship is far, far greater. He has been given "power" "in heaven and earth" (Mat 28:18). He has been raised to be seated at his Father's right hand as a Lord, "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet ..." (Eph 1:21,22).

Not that he is currently King over "all things", for Heaven is the domain of Almighty God – He is King reigning there, the dominion of Christ is to be upon earth, as Yahweh's representative. Rather, being given a name "more excellent" than the Angels of God, being "made so much better than they", the Lord Jesus exercises control over world events through them. It is so truly written that "the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Dan 4:17), yet we know that He does not do this by issuing Royal commands which kings and princes tremble at and obey. Rather, the angelic hands of Providence move unseen to those ignorant of His Purposes (cp Dan 10:13,20), to accomplish the Divine will. And the Lord Jesus, being given power "in heaven and earth", having dominion over the Angels of God is able to move world events according to the Apocalyptic scheme given to Him by the Father (Rev 1:1), that they might culminate in the ultimate overthrow of the Kingdoms of Men, for him to take up his rightful reign from David's throne. Now, as a most

Highly exalted Lord, he is able to watch over, and guide all things towards that great climax – but then, as Yahweh’s anointed King, he shall reign openly, with the kings of the earth bowing before him, in trembling obedience.

In the next issue, if the Lord Will, we shall examine more fully the present role of the Lord Jesus Christ in this regard; and also, his current activities in the life of the believer. Having made “abundantly clear” what the present role of Christ is not, we hope to progress to consider what it actually is.

*Christopher Maddocks*

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## **The Establishment of the Kingdom of God**

The Scriptures teach the coming again of Messiah to the earth to be an absolute certainty. For instance, in Revelation 16, the Master himself states:

“Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame” (Rev. 16:15).

Here, the Lord Jesus Christ informs us that he shall come as a thief. A thief will usually come at night (cp. 1Thes 5:2), when the occupants of the house are sleeping. Then, swiftly and silently, he takes those things which he considers to be of any value, and leaves as discreetly as he came. In the morning, the occupants awaken to chaos, and only then they realise what is missing. Even so, the Lord Jesus shall come amid the darkness of the Gentile night, to take his Special Treasure (Mal 3:17), as the world is asleep (1 Thes 5:7). Then, in the morning, when the Sun of Righteousness shall arise to burn up the wicked as stubble (Mal 4:1), they shall awaken (Joel 3:9,12), to sudden destruction (1 Thes 5:3), and the sudden disappearance of Christ’s Brethren (Mat 24:40,41).

But, we are “not of the night, nor of darkness”, but “the children of light and the children of the day”. Therefore, we must not sleep, as do others (1 Thes 5:5,6), but as the Lord tells us, we must “watch and be sober”, and keep our garments, lest we walk naked. But what must we watch? Surely, the things that are going on around us! In order to prepare for Christ’s Return, we must watch the unfolding of Bible Prophecy in the World’s affairs, and with a correct interpretation of what lies ahead, we shall be able to discern at what point the Lord shall come, and so prepare. However, if we are not watching, and do not discern the signs of the times, we shall not be ready, and shall be found naked and shamed at his coming.

The world at large shall be at sleep when the Lord comes. Joel elaborates on this, and tells us that the mighty men of war shall also be asleep (3:9), and there shall be a shortage of weapons to deal with the coming destruction (3:10). This describes a state of peace. Armies are at rest, and disarmament agreements have been made, reducing the amount of weapons possessed by each country, (which concords with the cry of “peace and safety” of 1 Thes 5:3). So then, just before the battle of Armageddon, it is

as a result of peace, that the world has been lulled into a false sense of security, resulting in a state of complacency, and sleep.

But there cannot be peace amongst the nations, and war in Israel. The Middle East must be at peace also. This is what we have described in Ezekiel 38, which speaks of the Jews who are “brought out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely, all of them” (v8). And again, the words of the Lord to Gog, “in that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know it?” (v 14). So it is that Israel shall dwell safely, and therefore, at peace, immediately before the Gogian invasion of Ezekiel 38. But is this before, or after Christ has established himself as King in Israel? Undoubtedly before, for the Lord alludes back to this period of peace, in the description of the Kingdom Age of chapter 39:

“After that they shall have borne their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid” (Eze. 39:26).

During this time of peace, then, the Jews are still in their trespasses. This is clearly before they repent and mourn for the Lord Jesus Christ “as one mourneth for his only son” (Zech 12:10). Therefore, in our day, the Jews have returned back to their land in unbelief, as Bro. Thomas envisaged (Elpis Israel, page 441).

There are those who suggest that Israel shall only have lasting peace after Christ Returns. This is true, of course, but then what we see in Ezekiel 38 is not true peace, for it is soon broken by the Gogian aggression! As Ezek 28:25,26 shows, true peace shall only be in the land after Christ Returns, but also after all Israel’s enemies are destroyed. In our day, we can begin to see the fulfilment of these verses. The word for peace in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, literally means “to join together”, as a basis of peace. In the world today, particularly in Europe, we see precisely that: nations seeking to join together, forming a union of nationalities as a basis of peace between them. Israel also has made peace treaties with all its bordering nations, (except Syria, where talks are under way), and with all it’s borders secure, then it will be in safety.

Following this state of peace, the apostle tells us there shall be “sudden destruction”. Joel informs us that the sleep shall be disturbed by a cry to the mighty men of war, and a great rearmament campaign (Joel 3:9,10), as all nations awaken to prepare for war. These nations shall then be gathered together against Jerusalem to battle, “For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle”, declared the Lord (Zech 14:2), and in Joel: “I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat” (Joel 3:2). This must refer to the same battle, for both Joel and Zechariah describe this confederacy as being brought by God, and destroyed by God (Joel 3:12,13, Zech 14:3). The description is so similar as to exclude the possibility of two separate conflicts.

### ***THE APOCALYPSE***

Revelation 16 also describes such a gathering together. Firstly, verse 14 describes a gathering together of kings under the influence of the frog-like democratic spirits, or teachings spoken by the dragon (Russia), the beast (Europe), and the false prophet

(The Pope). They “go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world to gather them to the battle of the great day of God Almighty”. Then verse 15 describes the Return of Christ: “Behold, I come as a thief”. And verse 16 describes a second gathering, this time by Christ himself: “And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue, Armageddon”.

What this tells us, therefore, is that there are to be 2 gatherings; one before Christ’s Return, and one after. And there are important differences between the two. The first is caused by Democracy, and the second by Christ. The first is a gathering together generally, but the second is a gathering “into a place”.

The first gathering is said to be “to the battle of that great day of God Almighty”. Bro Thomas renders this, “... *for* the war of the great day ... “, and is therefore descriptive of the purpose of the gathering, not the place. Therefore, before the Return of the Lord, there shall be a kind of gathering of the Kings of the Earth (a phrase which, as we shall see is associated with Europe), and of the whole World. We are living in the last days, and we see these words being fulfilled exactly. As we have said, the word rendered “peace” in 2Thes 5 literally means, “to join together”. We are currently witnessing the gathering, or joining together of many nations to form a basis of peace. This is not to a specific place, for it is not a literal gathering, but figurative, of how the nations are seeking to unite, and gather themselves as one. That this gathering is upon the basis of Democracy, as described in Revelation, is amply illustrated by the collapse of the Berlin wall, which resulted in the joining together of Germany.

So then, this is the situation in the world described in Bible Prophecy, just before the Return of Christ. As we have demonstrated, this description fits the situation in our day exactly. It behoves us, therefore, to be diligent in the Truth, and prepare for him, that we be not found naked when he comes.

### ***THE RETURN OF CHRIST***

The next event in this sequence is the Return of Christ. Then, there will be the second gathering, into a particular place, styled, Armageddon in Revelation, but by Joel, “the Valley of Jehoshaphat (Jehoshaphat = The Judgement of Yahweh, being descriptive of the purpose). But who are those peoples who shall lead the confederacy?

This brings us back again to Ezekiel 38, but before we examine any of the names, let us first establish that it is speaking of the same invasion as Zech 14, (and therefore Joel 3 and Rev 16).

Ezekiel 38 describes a great confederacy of nations being brought by God (see verse 4, “I will bring thee forth” cp v 16) against His people. Not recognising the Hand of God in bringing them down, (Mic 4:12), they shall have a natural motive, “to take a spoil, and to take a prey” (v 12, 13). Chapter 39:10 tells us that this purpose is indeed accomplished, for the Jews “shall spoil those that spoiled them”. But when the confederacy has thus taken the spoil, the Lord shall fight against them (v 18-23), and during the Judgements, there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel: “Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel (v 19, the word “shaking”

is the same Hebrew as “Earthquake” in Zech 14:5, and Amos 1:1), and the end result is that all the invading nations shall know God, “And they shall know that I am Yahweh” (v 23, Cp Is 66:18).

If we are correct in claiming that this is the same event as described in Zech 14, then all the details must match exactly. When we compare the prophecies, we see an exact match. Verse 2 of Zech 14 describes how it is God who shall gather all nations against Jerusalem. Verse 1 describes the spoil they shall take. Verse 3 describes how Yahweh shall fight against them, and verses 4 & 5 describe the earthquake. And verse 9 describes how Yahweh shall be king over all the earth. As we have said, the details are identical, and we therefore have no reason to doubt that this is the same invasion.

### *COUNTRIES IDENTIFIED*

So then, who is it who shall lead this confederacy of “all nations”? Ezekiel 38 provides the answer. There are those who claim that we can’t be dogmatic about what powers the names of Ezekiel’s prophecy refer to. It is for their benefit that we shall first prove which nation is the leader, and then look at the names later.

Even if we don’t understand any of the names, we can show from the description which the Lord has provided us with which country is being referred to. Three times we are told that those who lead the attack on Jerusalem are from “the north parts” (Ezek 38:6,15, 39:2). Now, if we consult any map of the world, and draw a line from Jerusalem due North, surprisingly, we only go through 2 countries before we reach the North Pole – Turkey and Russia. The Hebrew has it, “The uttermost parts of the north”, indicating the northern extremities. Now consult the map – who is it likely to be? Obviously Russia, which in any case, shall possess Turkey, as it establishes itself as the Kingdom of the North.

Now let us examine the names of verse 2. “Gog, the Land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal”. As is indicated by some translations, the phrase “chief prince” should be rendered, “The prince of Rosh”, or Ros. So, the man symbolically named Gog is of the Land of Magog, and is the Prince, or Ruler of Ros. According to Bochart in 1640, “Ros is the most ancient form under which history makes mention of Russia”. We can see linguistically how this is so.

“Magog”, (Literally, “the Land of Gog”) is identified by Josephus with the Sythians, whose land, according to Herodotus, stretched from the Carpathians, to the Don. Thus, they inhabited the area we know as Russia. Although they later migrated to other places, such as Germany, Ezekiel is not concerned with the people themselves, but the geographical location of the land, and this appears to be where they were located at the time when the prophecy was given. The land of Gog, then, is the land of Russia. Gog = High, a name also suggesting the location of the land of Gog, upon the top of the earth, but also descriptive of the high-minded arrogance of the man (Cp Hab 2:5). Zenaide A Rogozin, in his book on Assyria gives evidence to suggest that Gog was actually the name of a Sythian Chief, during the reign of Assurbanipal, the king of Assyria (as quoted by P. Whale in The Testimony, September 1985).

“Meshech and Tubal” are identified by Herodotus as the “Moschi and Tabereni”. The Moschi originally inhabited the area by the Caucasus mountains, now known as Georgia, and Armenia, and migrated further north, to a land which was named after themselves, Moskva, the capital of which is Moscow. The Tabereni lived in the land east of the river Thermodon, in the mountainous district east of the Black Sea, part of the area of land Russia shall inhabit, as “the king of the north” (Dan 11:40) expands his territory. Bro. Thomas identifies Tubal with the river Tobolsk in Siberia, and its surrounding area, Tobolski. Either way, our attention is directed to Russia.

From the abundance of evidence which the Lord has provided us with, it should be clear that Russia is the leading force of the confederacy, which shall include the nations specifically named in verses 5 and 6, and “many people” with him, which shall make up the “all nations” of Zechariah 14, and Joel 3.

These then, are the nations which shall be gathered together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue, Armageddon. Micah also speaks of this gathering: “Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion. But they know not the thoughts of Yahweh, neither understand they his counsel: for he shall gather them as sheaves into the floor. Arise, and thresh, O daughter of Zion ... “ (Mic 4:11-13). So then, these nations are to be cut down, as in the time of harvest, (Joel 3:13, Rev 14:15,16), and gathered together into a threshing-floor where they shall be judged. This is what is meant by the word “Armageddon”.

### *ARMAGEDDON*

Bro Thomas shows in Eureka, how the Hebrew word “Armageddon”, is made up of 3 words, “aremah” (A heap of sheaves, cp Ruth 3:7), “gai” (valley) and “don” (Judgement). Thus, the word means, “a heap of sheaves in a valley for Judgement”, speaking of the threshing floor which Joel refers to as “the valley of threshing” (Joel 3:14), where all the multitudes of Gog’s host shall be gathered. When the Lord Jesus Christ and his saints come against the united confederacy with the destructive impact of the Divinely slung stone, the whole confederacy shall be broken in pieces, and threshed under the Judgements of Yahweh. Then, they shall be as “the chaff of the summer threshing floors: and the wind shall carry them away”, that they be no more. (Dan 2:35, cp Is 17:13, 41:15,16).

But Israel shall also have a part to play in the destruction of the Northern Invader, for Is 41 speaks of this, “Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains; and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them; and thou shalt rejoice in Yahweh, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel” (v 15:16). Ezekiel 39 also describes how the Jews shall fight against the enemy: “And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons ... and they shall spoil those that spoiled them, and rob those that robbed them, saith the Lord Yahweh” (verses 9-10).

And so, as a consequence of the work of Elijah, (Mal 4:5), and the destruction of Jerusalem, the Jews shall turn to God once more, and he shall strengthen them to be

his “battle axe” (Jer 51:20), to overcome the enemy. It is only after the oppressor has ceased that Israel shall have true peace, as it is written “They shall dwell safely therein, and shall build houses, and plant vineyards; yea, they shall dwell with confidence when I have executed judgements upon all those that despise them round about, and they shall know that I am Yahweh their God” (Ezek 28:26).

After the conglomerate Image has been destroyed, then shall the Throne of David be established in Zion, occupied by the Lord Jesus Christ, (Luke 1:32), surrounded by his great company of holy ones, (Rev 4:2-4), and the whole earth shall be called upon to surrender in obedience to the Son of the Most High. However, they shall not obey. Psalm 2 describes how, after the Lord is seated upon His Throne, there shall be a rebellion against His Rule:

“The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against Yahweh, and against His Christ, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us” (Ps 2:2,3, but read the whole Psalm for the context).

So it is, that following the destruction of the Gogian confederacy, there shall be another gathering against Christ, led by those styled, “The kings of the earth” (Cp Rev 16:14). Revelation chapter 17 describes the Catholic Harlot sitting upon her European Sea Beast, (made up of many nations, cp v 1 with v 15) that is, guiding and directing it’s movements, “with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication” (v 2). The kings of the earth, then, are not part of the European Beast, but are rather other nations which have joined themselves to it, following the overthrow of nations at the battle of Armageddon.

In addition to the kings of the earth, we read in verse 12 that the beast shall receive strength and support from 10 other kings: “And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast”. These 10 kings are represented by 10 horns which are featured on the beast throughout it’s history. These answer to the 10 divisions of the Roman Empire, following it’s destruction by the barbarians (Dan 7:24). These were: Huns, Vandals, Visigoths, Burgundians, Gepidae, Lombards, Franks, Suevi, Alans, Bavarians. In the situation pertaining to the time of the end, powers after a similar pattern shall exist. The United Roman Catholic Empire of Europe, shall be supported by 10 king-powers, which shall only be given power for “1 hour”, or 30 years (See Eureka for an explanation of this), with the beast (v 12). These powers, then, are not the same powers as spoken of in Daniel 7 but ten which shall exist after the same pattern of things. These 10 kings are said to “have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast”. In surrendering their power to the Beast they therefore, place themselves under the control of it’s rider, the Harlot.

So then, after the destruction at Armageddon, rather than submitting to the Rule of Christ, those nations which have already seen the Glory of Yahweh manifested through His Judgements, shall unite together under the Catholic Banner to war against him. Firstly, the Harlot shall send out the 10 kings which have pledged allegiance to her, to do battle with the Son of God: “These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb

shall overcome them: for he is Lord of Lords, and King of Kings, and they that are with him, are called, and chosen, and faithful” (v 14). Being defeated by the Multitudinous Body of Christ, these 10 nations shall then turn, and fight against the Harlot herself: “And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire” (v 16).

And so, after continuing for “one hour”, in submission to the Harlot, strengthening her beast, having been defeated by her Enemy, the king’s rebel, and turn against her, beginning the process of destruction which shall be completed by the Body of Christ. Chapter 18 describes this destruction: “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird ... therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for great is the Lord God which judgeth her” (v 2,8). In this chapter, we also read of the response of her kingly paramours: “and the kings of the earth who have committed fornication with her, shall bewail her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgement come” (v 9,10). And so, the Kings of the Earth, of Psalm 2, those who united themselves with the Catholic Harlot shall be in great distress, and mourn over her destruction. Yet, despite these repeated displays of the power and glory of the Lord God of Hosts, they shall not repent, but turn themselves against the Army of Stone. These shall then unite themselves once more, in a final, desperate attempt to throw off the yoke of their destroyer. Revelation 19 describes this: “And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army” (v19). This is the stage as described in Psalm 2. We note that under the rebellion commanded by the Harlot, it was not the Kings of the Earth, which actually fought, but the 10 kings which shall pledge allegiance to her. After the rider has been removed, her beast, and the Kings which committed fornication with her shall unite together to avenge her destruction, under the leadership of the Pope, apocalyptically styled, “the false prophet”, who has lost his religious empire, but still retains his position of authority over the beast.

However, “he that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision” (Ps 2:4). As mighty an army it will be that will be mustered in this last rebellion before peace is established, the rebels shall be coming against the Power of the Almighty. It truly is laughable how mortal man shall presume he is capable of overthrowing the armies of God! Rev 19 continues: “and the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him ... these both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone, and the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.” (v 20-21), as the Saints shall come like birds of prey to take a spoil.

And so, the body of the beast shall finally be burnt, (Dan 7:11), all rebellion shall cease, and the Kingdom of God shall extend over the whole globe. It is after the Cherubic Chariots have returned from going to and fro throughout the earth carrying out the Judgements of God, the earth shall be at rest (Zech 1:11), as a sea of glass,

without even a ripple of violence. Then, those who have been crowned with victory shall stand with the nations subdued under their feet, as kings and priests, and they shall “sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgements are made manifest” (Rev 15:3-4).

Such would appear to be the order of things at the establishment of the Kingdom of God. But why do we need to know this? The Lord does not provide us with the riches of His word simply so that we might accumulate a wealth of knowledge, but so that we might be filled with wisdom, and understanding of His ways. The purpose of any Bible study is to become “wise unto salvation”, that we might be “perfect, thoroughly furnished with good works” (2Tim 3:15-17). And so, having learned of these things, we must seek to enrich our lives with an application of them.

What we have seen, is that the Establishment of the Kingdom of God is not an instantaneous event, but a process. It is a process, which may take some time to complete. As we have seen, the nations shall not surrender to Christ at his appearing, but shall do all they can to resist Him. This is what the World is like – totally opposed to the things of God. We have seen the Roman Catholic System exposed for what she really is. The most disgusting of all women is used to symbolise the “Mother Church”, which shall close her eyes to the glory of God, and to the end shall sit in pride and arrogance, saying in her heart, “I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow”. Yet she shall be cut down, and all nations shall submit.

Let us not be of the world, for “all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life”, shall “pass away” (1Jno 2:16-17), taking with it every abominable thing. Let us separate ourselves, and do the will of God, that we might “abide for ever”. Let us not sleep, as do others, but let us be separate, knowing what the end shall be. We are not the night, nor of the darkness, therefore, let us “watch and be sober”, that when our Lord comes, we shall be taken from the destruction which is to come (Is 26:20), and rejoice for evermore in the coming Age of Glory

*Christopher Maddocks*

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## **Daniel – a Man Greatly Beloved**

The first direct reference to the prophet Daniel, is in the words of Yahweh to Hezekiah:

“... and of thy sons which shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon” (2 King 20:18).

The fulfilment of these words is recorded in Daniel chapter 1:

“the king spake to Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king’s seed, and of the princes, children in whom was not blemish ...” (Dan. 1:3-4).

These men were selected to be taught “the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans” (vs 4), and they were granted the privilege of partaking of the king’s food:

“the king appointed them a daily provision of the king’s meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king” (vs 5).

Daniel, however, refused to eat this royal sustenance:

“But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself” (vs 8).

The question that arises from a consideration of these things, is Why did Daniel refuse the king’s food? It is often suggested that it could be that it was offered to Idols, and it would therefore have been defiling to eat of it – and there is evidence to support this (see Hos. 9:3 and Eze. 4:13). However, the record itself does not make this point – the emphasis in the Divine Narrative, is that it was “the king’s meat”. The phrase occurs 4 times in this chapter: it was the royal dainties that Daniel refused.

We have other examples in Scripture which display a similar principle. Moses would not enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season (Heb. 11:25), and chose rather to suffer with the people of God. Nehemiah said:

“Moreover, from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah ... I and my brethren *have not eaten the bread of the governor*” (Neh. 5:14).

Again, Uriah the Hittite refused the food of king David that was sent to him, saying, “The ark, and Israel, and Judah abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As thou livest, and as thy soul livest I will not do this thing” (2 Sam. 11:11).

The situation with these three examples, is that these men refused royal food, because they rather wished to be identified with their people. They could not partake of the king’s meat, whilst their people were in affliction – and that, we suggest, was the case of Daniel. His people were given “the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction” (Isa. 30:20), and so this was what Daniel asked for instead – poor man’s food: “pulse to eat, and water to drink” (Dan. 1:12). Declining the pleasures of sin, he chose rather to identify with his people who were living in the degradation of captivity.

There is a lesson for us in these things: there is a latter-day Babylonian system, which offers intoxicating wine, and “delicacies” of food (Rev. 17:1-2, 18:3). We must not desire the delicacies of the kingdom of sin: “incline not my heart to any evil thing, to

practise wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties” (Psa. 141:4). And again, “be not desirous of his dainties, for they are deceitful meat” (Prov. 23:3). The wine and meat of Babylon then, is something to be avoided at all costs. We do not wish to become intoxicated with the errors of the apostasy, or be led astray by the delights of her delicacies. Like Daniel, we must eschew the riches and pleasures of the Babylonian system, and identify ourselves with those who were afflicted by her: the faithful minority. By refusing to eat of the Babylonian king’s meat and drink, we will not be made drunk by her teachings, or be filled with her falsehoods. The example of Daniel therefore is something for us to emulate, so that we, like he, will remain faithful to Yahweh in a day of adversity.

### ***REVEALING SECRETS***

We read in Daniel chapter 1, that the eunuchs were in training for 3 years, but Daniel chapter 2 describes certain events that took place in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2:1). This means that matter of the king’s dream being made known and interpreted by Daniel, took place during his training period. The wisest men of the realm could not declare, or interpret the dream, but the trainee – Daniel, could, saying, “there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days” (Dan. 2:28). The principle here, is again expounded by Paul:

“God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty” (1 Cor. 1:27-28).

Interestingly, there are other allusions back to Daniel chapter 2 in this context. Just as the wisest men of Babylon could not declare the secret, or mystery of the king’s dream, Paul declares: “we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew ...” (1 Cor. 2:7-8). Again, speaking of the revelation of this mystery, he writes: “... but God hath revealed them unto us by the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (vs 10). And this parallels with Daniel 2:22 “he revealeth the deep and secret things ...”. Of a truth, there is a God in heaven which revealeth secrets, and it is truly a tremendous privilege to know the true Gospel message, which even the mightiest and wisest of men cannot comprehend.

### ***A MAN OF PRAYER***

One of the preeminent characteristics of Daniel, is that he was a man of prayer. Hence in the example above, he and his companions prayed to God for the revelation (Dan. 2:18). Again, this is the focus of chapter 6 of his prophecy. Out of jealousy, when king Darius had appointed Daniel to a position of authority, “then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God” (Dan. 6:4-5).

This is a wonderful testimony to the character of Daniel: though he were scrutinised very carefully by his adversaries, they could find no fault in him at all – similar, perhaps, to the way in which Messiahs’ adversaries could find no fault in him. Indeed, can that be said of us? But Daniel was known to be a man of prayer to his God, and so this was the means by which he was to be condemned. The presidents and princes convinced the king to establish a law “that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions ... wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree” (Dan. 6:7-9).

The narrative continues to record how that “when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime” (Dan. 6:10). Here is another example for the servants of God today – to pray regularly. The Psalmist also prayed thrice daily: “Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice” (Psa. 55:17). This is appropriate: to be focussed in prayer at least for 3 times a day. And notice also the content of Daniel’s prayer: he “gave thanks before his God.” Even so, the believer’s prayers should be more than a shopping list of things that they want – they should reflect a deep-seated gratitude for everything that He provides. They should be found “giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph. 5:20) – such is the practice and habit of all the servants of God.

The consequence of Daniel refusing to stop praying, was that he was cast into the den of lions – from which he was delivered by the God that he served. Accordingly, he was saved from the lions by a dramatic and miraculous means – the Angel of the Lord was sent to save him: “My God hath sent his Angel, and hath shut the lions’ mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt” (Dan. 6:22).

The Angels are “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Heb. 1:14), and Messiah’s brethren must recognise the angelic hand in their lives. The Psalmist expressed the same confidence:

“This poor man cried, and Yahweh heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of Yahweh encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them” (Psa. 34:6-7).

This is the confidence of those who fear the God of Israel: that His Angels will minister according to His Will, and deliver them. Not that they are granted immunity from the stresses and vexations of sustaining a mortal existence, but that rather when troublesome times come, the Angel will be there. That deliverance might not be easy, and it might even be through death itself (Isa. 57:1) – but in the kingdom, the saints will be able to look back and discern the angelic hand in their lives, in ways that they couldn’t appreciate at the time.

In chapter 9 of his prophecy, we have a prayer of Daniel, which was focussed on seeking mercies of the God of heaven, to forgive sins. So he describes: “... I was speaking and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and

presenting my supplication before Yahweh my God” (Dan. 9:20). Confession of sin features frequently in this prayer (see vs. 5, 6, 9, 11, 15, 20). Though he personally couldn’t be faulted by his peers, nevertheless he recognised his own sins and those of his people. The spirit is repeated in Messiah’s parable of the Pharisee and the Publican: whilst the Pharisee proclaimed his own perceived righteousness, the Publican simply confessed his sin “have mercy upon me, a sinner” (Lu. 18:13) – and he was the one who went back to his house “justified”. The lesson for us is obvious – we must confess and forsake our sins, and pray for mercy before the Throne of Grace.

### *SEEKING UNDERSTANDING*

A final aspect we ought to consider, is how that Daniel sought understanding. Chapter 10 of his prophecy describes how that a certain thing was revealed to him, yet he did not understand it. But he greatly desired to understand, and went into mourning for three full weeks, and chastened himself. So the Angel came to him again:

“Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words” (Dan. 10:12).

Again, this is an example for us: do we find studying the Bible hard? Are their parts which we find difficult to understand? If so, how do we deal with the situation? Do we diligently search out the meaning? “it is the glory of God to conceal a thing, but the honour of kings is to search out a matter” (Prov. 25:2).

Isaiah describes how there is always an excuse not to read and understand the revelations of God:

“the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed: And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he said, I am not learned” (Isa. 29:11-12).

Notice, that both classes have an excuse not to read the book. One says that we are not meant to understand, for the book is sealed up, and another says that because they are not a scholar, they can’t read it. Indeed, the present writer has encountered both reasons given for not engaging in Bible Study – to make excuses is easy, but to seek understanding is better. John was of a kindred spirit to Daniel. He was confronted by a sealed book: “and I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon” (Rev. 5:4). He wasn’t indifferent to the Revelation: he, like Daniel sought out understanding. We also must diligently apply ourselves to the pursuit of the wisdom that comes from God’s Word – there will be no excuses in the day to come.

In our brief survey of the character of Daniel, we have seen how that he refused the pleasures of this life, to identify himself with the suffering of his people. He was considered faultless by his peers, who couldn’t find any occasion against him. He was a man of prayer and humility, seeking the Grace of God for forgiveness. And he was a man who earnestly desired to understand the Revealed Word of his God. Let us heed his example and go and do likewise!

*Christopher Maddocks*

## Betrayal and Denial

The Spirit of Christ in the Psalmist speaks of how at the time of his greatest need, Messiah's closest companions deserted him:

“reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, **but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none ...**” (Psa. 69:20). The shepherd being smitten, the sheep were scattered (Zech. 13:7; Mat. 26:31) everyone to his place. There was no man who would stand by the Master during either his trial, or the imposition of the death-sentence that was passed upon him. Humanly speaking, he was alone in his darkest hour.

Mark chapter 14 brings us to consider two of Messiah's disciples in terms of their relationship with him and his sufferings – and neither of them are presented in a good light. One actively betrayed our Master, taking the lead in securing his death, whereas the other distanced himself from the Messiah, denying that he had any connection with him. As one writer expressed it, Simon Peter denied his Lord under sudden impulse when caught in the toils of circumstances, but Judas sinned with deliberate and calculated treachery.

It is one of the features of Scripture, that the narrative records the failures of men and women, as well as their successes. By presenting the negative as well as the positive, we are given a proportionate picture, into which we can place ourselves. If the Scriptures only recorded the good points of the men and women it describes, that we would find ourselves at a loss, feeling greatly inferior, and perhaps concluding that to live a life in Christ is too hard, too difficult, being constantly aware of our own personal failures. But the record is well balanced in its approach, detailing the failures and shortcomings of those men and women who, though they be called away from the ways of the world, nevertheless find how difficult life is, saying with the Apostle Paul, that “it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me ... O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death” (Rom. 7:17, 24). By seeing the failures of those who have gone before, we can take hope in the forgiving nature of our Master, identifying ourselves with them, throwing ourselves upon the mercy of the Lord.

But we must not presume. We cannot hope to be delivered from the body of this death, if we continue in Sin, and follow after the ways of the flesh. Those who seek after the affairs of this world, the Apostle describes, are those who “ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward” (Jude 11). And Judas was no exception. Betraying Messiah for a few pieces of silver, he treasured the things of this life as being better than the life to come. After the error of Balaam, who sought to curse Yahweh's People, Judas sought to bring the curses of men upon the Only Begotten Son of Yahweh – but in so doing, he secured his own destruction.

There is a background to the ways of Judas described in the book of Psalms. Three Psalms in particular describe the pernicious ways of the betrayer of Messiah, and we shall consider them in turn:

“When he shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin. Let his days be few; and let another take his office. Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. Let his children be continual vagabonds, and beg: let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places” (Psa. 109:7-10).

This is cited by the Apostle, in Acts 1:20, and directly applied to Judas. This man was crooked from the outset. When he protested against what he considered to be a waste of ointment poured over the Master, claiming it could be better used to help the poor, the narrative informs us:

“... this he said, ***not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief,*** and had the bag, and bare what was put therein” (Jno. 12:6).

He stole from the collection. No doubt, to support his family which Psalm 109 refers to, and raise their standard of living, seeking to improve their lot in life. Interestingly, the Psalm seems to allude to this disregard for the poor, saying in verse 16:

“... he ***remembered not to show mercy,*** but ***persecuted the poor and needy*** man, that he might even slay the broken in heart” (Psa. 109:16).

Seeking his own wellbeing before those for whom the money was collected, he “remembered not to show mercy”, and as a consequence was condemned to die – albeit at his own hand. But in the ultimate sense, the poor and needy man who he “persecuted” is Messiah himself. Christ is “the broken in heart” who Judas sought to destroy, as we read earlier in Psalm 69:

“Reproach ***hath*** broken ***my heart;*** and I am full of heaviness ...” (Psa. 69:20)

The Master bore the scorn and reproach of many, as those he came to save derided him on every side. Yet he had a work to do. “Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me” (Rom. 15:3). Bearing reproach for his Father’s Sake, Christ gave us an example, that we must position ourselves in the same situation: “Let us go forth therefore to him without the camp, ***bearing his reproach***” (Heb. 13:13).

The other two Psalms that directly speak of Judas are Psalms 41, and 55:

“Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me” (Psa. 41:9)  
“for it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him. But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance ...” (Psa. 55:12-13).

There is a historical background in the life of David, and his relationship to Ahithophel. During the time of Absalom’s rebellion against his father, Ahithophel

sought to betray David, and it is that situation that the Psalmist is alluding to in this prophecy of Messiah. The words here are most instructive: we are told that “Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and ***who should betray him***” (Jno. 6:64). With the full knowledge of what Judas was to do, the Master regarded him as a “familiar friend:” “my guide, and mine acquaintance”. Even at the time of his betrayal, Messiah addressed him as such: “***Friend***, wherefore art thou come?” (Mat. 26:50). Such things are surely most instructive to ourselves in dealing with issues between brethren. The Master did not give a railing accusation, but left his Father to rebuke his enemy.

It is difficult to see what motivated Judas to betray Messiah, being as that he saw all the healing miracles of Messiah, which demonstrated his power over mortality. But it would appear, that for the love of money – filthy lucre – he sought occasion against the One who though he were rich, became poor for his brethren. As it is written: “that we, through his poverty might be rich” (2 Cor. 8:9). So it was that his greed became Judas’ downfall, and the curse of Psalm 109 came true – as Jesus himself said: “truly the Son of Man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed” (Lu. 22:21).

### ***SIMON PETER***

Peter on the other hand, although he exhibited weakness when pressed about his relationship to Christ, did not set himself against his Master. His denial was not a betrayal; it was a distancing himself from the sufferings of Christ, that he might not be condemned with him. We see a reformed Peter later speaking of how he was “a witness of the sufferings of Christ ...” (1 Pet. 5:1). No longer afraid to be identified as being an apostle of Jesus Christ, he was moved by the Spirit to write to others:

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ***ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings***; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy” (1 Pet. 4:12-13).

Psalm 1 speaks of the Blessed:

“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 ...” (Psa. 1:1).

Ultimately, “the man” who was separate from sinners is Messiah, yet these words take a more general sense for those who seek to become like him. Peter, in his momentary weakness stood in the company of the sinners who recognised his connection with Christ. He even went so far as to sit with them, and warm himself with the light of their fire:

“And Peter followed him [i.e. Christ] afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and ***he sat with the servants, and warmed himself*** at the fire ...” (Mrk. 14:54).

So it was, that at the time of our Master's final hours, none stood with him. Thrice Peter was asked if he were one of the disciples. But rather than being ready always to give an answer to those who asked him (cp. 1Pet. 3:15), he repudiated association with Christ.

First, "he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest" (Mat. 26:70). Then, secondly the record recounts that "he denied with an oath, I do not know the man" (Mat. 26:72). Then thirdly: "then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew," and the Master "turned and looked upon Peter" (Mat. 27:74; Lu. 22:61), who as a broken man "went out, and wept bitterly." As a stone smitten by the gaze of the Greater Than Moses, the water of repentance flowed from his eyes, as he realised that his Master's prediction of failure had come true. What a desolate position Peter was now in – separate from his Master, with all hopes and expectations dashed, as there was a certainty that Christ would be condemned to death by Jew and Gentile alike.

But our Lord is merciful. When he was raised incorruptible, the Angels told the women who had gone to the tomb:

"Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples *and Peter* that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you" (Mrk. 16:6-7).

Notice this: specific mention is made of "Peter" – it was of utmost importance that he know that the Master be risen, for Christ had a further purpose with him. Though it is true that if we deny Messiah, he will deny us (2 Tim. 2:12) - and that before the angels of God (Lu. 12:9), Peter was going to be given another opportunity to be reconciled to his Master, and devote the rest of his life in humble service in his Name.

In fact, when we consult the record, we find that the resurrected Jesus himself gave Peter a special and specific mission. So the narrative recounts in John chapter 21:

"... Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs" (Jno. 21:15).

Peter had only days before denied association with Christ, and now the Master asked him if he loved him more than any of the other disciples! There is a point here that is missed in the English translation: the words "lovest" and "love" are different in the Greek. The love that Messiah asked about was "*agape*" – a sacrificial love. This is the love being referred to in the saying, "Greater *love* hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (Jno. 15:13). This is the love of Christ extended to his brethren. How could Peter claim to have such a love towards Christ?! So he used a different word, saying "lord, though knowest that I love thee." The word here is "*Phileo*," which is a love from a man to his friend or acquaintance. Not quite as intimate a love as one where a man is willing to lay down his life for another, but a sense of liking, or enjoying one another's company. Peter here does not claim to love

Messiah any more than others – indeed, he is even unable to use the same word – *agape* – as Christ does. He said, “thou knowest that I love thee”, as if to say, Thou knowest I can only admit to *phileo*, but not *agape*.

The Master repeated the question, and Peter repeated his answer a second time. Then a third time – but here, Christ himself changes the word that he uses. Now, he uses the word “*phileo*”, a recognition that Peter could not, as yet, claim to have that sacrificial love that Christ had for him:

“He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest (*phileo*) thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, *Lovest* thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I *love* thee” (Jno. 21:17).

Peter was grieved, because he knew that the Master was coaxing out of him a declaration of what he had done - that rather than lying his life down for Christ’s sake, as he had pledged to do, he had denied him, and did not show forth *agape* love. But here was the mercy of Christ: Peter had denied him 3 times, and was now induced to confess his love 3 times. Moreover, rather than to be separate from Christ, the Master gave Simon a new work, which he was to spend the rest of his life doing: “feed my sheep”. And moreover still, he assured Peter that in his death, he would be very closely identified with his Master:

“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girded thyself, and walkest whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he *signifying by what death he should glorify God*” (Jno. 21:18-19).

Rather than to deny his Master, Peter was to devote his entire life in service to Christ, and even at the end, would glorify God by his mode of death.

In these two men therefore, we have two representatives of mankind that we can identify ourselves with. Judas, who after the error of Balaam turned against his Master and Peter, who disassociated himself from Christ. One was greedy for filthy lucre, but the other disabled by human weakness. For Judas, his sin was the end: there is nothing but “woe” to await him at the grand assize. But for Peter, there was a life of remorse for what he had done. It has been pointed out many times that for Peter, his initial denial is what shaped the rest of his life, as he laid it down in the servitude of Messiah. We also, then, can take heed to his example. Let us forsake the way of Judas, and consider the latter end of Peter. Let us truly show that precious *agape* love for our brethren and sisters, and also the Master himself, that in the day of his appearing, we shall be confessed, and not denied before the Angels of God (Lu. 12:8).

*Christopher Maddocks*

## **“Behold, I Come as a Thief”**

*“Behold, I come as a Thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame” (Rev 16:15)*

These words which form part of Messiah’s last message to his brethren comprise an exhortation for readiness at the time of his coming again. In our considerations therefore, to mentally prepare ourselves to remember what he accomplished for us in the bread and the wine, it is appropriate to examine the exhortation, and take the lessons learned to heart:

### ***BEHOLD, I COME AS A THIEF***

This expression is used by Messiah a number of times, to encourage a state of readiness in the minds of those who look for him. Naturally speaking, a thief enters a house under cover of darkness, and takes to himself those things he considers to be valuable. Having collected together those things, he leaves just as silently as he came. No-one knows what has happened before the breaking of a new day, when the occupants rise from sleep and find their house ransacked, and their goods taken. Even so it will be with Messiah at his coming: he will come to a world in darkness, and gather to himself his special treasure. He remains undetected by man until at the dawning of a new Millennial day, when it is seen that the graves are opened, the dead raised, and those saints who are alive and remain until that day have been taken away from their midst. So Messiah spake thus:

“know this, that if the Goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh” (Mat. 24:43-44, cp. Lu. 12:39).

We, who do not know the day, never mind the hour of our Master’s coming, need to be on a constant state of readiness. Like a man who knows that the thief will come sometime in the darkness of the night, but does not know when, we must always be alert, and waiting for him to come. Again, Paul exhorted the believers:

“... of the times and seasons brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night ...” (1 Thes. 5:1-2).

And again, the words of Messiah:

“... if therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee” (Rev. 3:3).

The common theme in these passages, is to be in a constant state of readiness. When a thief comes, it is to the detriment of the house-holder in that valuable things are lost. But also, there is a rejection of those things that are worthless: they remain amongst the mess that the thief leaves behind him, having ransacked the place. Even so shall it be when Messiah comes to judge the household of faith.

## ***“BLESSED IS HE THAT WATCHETH”***

A key point referred to in some of the passages cited above, is the need to “watch”. “Watch therefore: for ye do not know what hour your Lord doth come” are the Master’s words (Mat. 24:42). Again, Luke further records him as saying:

“Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them” (Lu. 12:37).

The question requiring an answer here, is What is it that we should be watching? The answer is clearly: those things that go on around us. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees, saying: “... O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?” (Mat. 16:3). The “signs of the times” therefore constitute the things to be watched, that through the light of a sure word of prophecy, we can discern our place in the outworking of the purpose of God in the affairs of men. By watching the things that go on around us with the illumination of the Word, we can, perhaps, make more sense than most in the tangles and threads of human affairs.

## ***“WATCH UNTO PRAYER”***

There is another sense in which we must “watch”. Peter exhorts: “watch unto prayer” (1 Pet. 4:7), or be alert to the things of God in our prayers before Him. This is what Jesus required of his disciples during his agony at Gethsemane, yet it was something they could not do. “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me” (Mat. 26:38). But this was something they could not do. Though the spirit was willing, their flesh was weak, and so the spirit of Christ in the Psalmist wrote: “I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none” (Psa. 69:20). So Christ spoke to Peter, who had only just avowed loyalty to him (Mat. 26:33), “What, could ye not watch with me one hour?” (Mat. 26:40). This is our task. Even as the disciples waited for their master to come back to them, so we await his return. They could not “watch” for one hour, for the weakness of the flesh. But what of ourselves? We will only know in that day to come, when Christ shall come for us, no longer in weakness, but with power and great glory. It is written that “where there is no vision, the people perish” (Prov. 29:18): the word “perish” is rendered in other translations as “made naked”. To avoid being “made naked” therefore, we must have a clear vision and focus on the things of the spirit, seeking above all else, the Kingdom of God.

## ***“AND KEEPETH HIS GARMENTS, LEST HE WALK NAKED”***

The figure of a “garment” occurs many times in Scripture. Jude exhorts the believers to try and save lapsing brethren, “hating even the garment spotted by the flesh” (Jude 1:23). The ecclesia at Sardis had those within it “which have not defiled their garments” (Rev. 3:4). And Isaiah was told to be a living parable, and “walk naked” as a sign to Israel and the nations amongst whom he lived. So the word came to him:

“... go and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put off thy shoe from off thy foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot. And Yahweh said, Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and wonder

upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia, So shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians prisoners and the Ethiopians captives, young and old, naked and barefoot, even with their buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt.” (Isa. 20:2-4)

The Egyptians were to be shamed by the uncovering of their nakedness, as enacted by Isaiah in his walk before men. We can well anticipate a similar situation to come upon the world at large when Messiah comes. In this age – maybe more so than any age – there is great pressure to present an outward appearance of things. To wear the latest fashions and designer clothes: to make a show of ourselves and our things. Israel of old did this very thing, as Isaiah describes in chapter 3 of his prophecy:

“... the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet ... and it shall come to pass that instead of sweet smell there shall be stink, and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty” (Isa. 3:16-24 – read the whole chapter for context).

The outward beauty of Israel therefore, was to be stripped away, and sackcloth – a garment of mourning be worn instead. For Egypt and Ethiopia however, it was even worse: they would be “made naked” without even sackcloth to cover their loins.

We need then, to ensure we are clothed. But as the parable of the wedding feast shows, those garments must be of a particular type (Mat. 22:11-12). So it was so since the foundation of the world: Adam and Eve devised their own garments which were rejected by God. What is needed for man is not for himself to devise his own covering for sin, but to make use of the garments provided by God. Yahweh is the offended party, and only He can state what is acceptable to reconcile man to Himself. The clothing of His providing, being skins, involves death and sacrifice, foreshadowing the merciful sacrifice of His Son. It is only through Baptism that a man can adorn himself with the proper garments, as it is written:

“put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Rom. 13:14).

Jesus is the Slain Lamb: the One through whom forgiveness will come. He provides a covering (the Hebrews for “atonement”) that the shame of nakedness be not seen before Yahweh. The teaching of Paul is identical:

“... ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:26).

Putting on these Christ-garments, we can draw near to the throne of the Most High – not with any sense of shame, but rather rejoicing in a clear conscience, being sprinkled by the blood of the Lamb (Heb. 9:14).

Exodus chapter 32 records Israel’s return to idolatry, soon after they had left Egypt under the leadership of Moses. Verse 6 records that the people, in Moses’ absence “sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play” (Ex. 32:6) Moreover, they corrupted themselves in

making a molten calf to worship, to which they offered sacrifices, both burnt and peace offerings.

In these circumstances, we see a parallel between the situation of Israel as they awaited the coming of Moses again, and the way in which we ought to wait for Messiah, the prophet “like unto” Moses. Israel proved themselves to be “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2 Tim. 3:4). Eating, drinking, and playing are the Spirit’s words that characterise this people. Whereas the exhortation in the Apocalypse is “blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments” (Rev 16:15), Israel walked naked and their shame was displayed to all:

“...when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:) Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on Yahweh’s Side?” (Exo. 32:25,26)

The reference to “their enemies” implies that what they were doing was open for all – both friend and foe – to see. Whether they literally took their clothes off, or whether the description is of a spiritual nakedness, we can see the parallel with our own day. In the absence of our Great King, do we “watch”, patiently waiting for the coming day, or do we, as Israel, grow tired of waiting, and turn aside to the pleasures of this life for our amusement and gratification? Only we can answer this question individually.

In this question, we have the example of Moses to help us:

“by faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season: Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward ...” (Heb. 11:24-26).

Here we see the difference between Moses and the people he led. They enjoyed the pleasures of Sin, whilst Moses forsook Egypt and all the attractions and lures thereof. He “had respect” or “looked away” towards the things of God, rather than the things of Egypt. Suffering affliction at the head of a stiff-necked and rebellious people, his patience was truly tried to the uttermost.

In each of these particulars, we see Messiah, particularly in the context of his sufferings. Of him it is written that:

“for the joy set before him [he] endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down on the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2).

In the day when sin’s flesh was laid bare, he was physically stripped of his garments by the Roman soldiers, and impaled upon the tree of cursing. We see the example of Christ in choosing and enduring affliction and shame for his people’s sake. It is written: “the eyes of Yahweh are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry” (Psa. 34:15). So it was that the pre-eminently Righteous One cried to his Father: “and was heard in that he feared” (Heb. 5:7). He was one who “watched”, in that he always had his Father’s glory in his sight (Heb. 12:2), and presents a powerful example for us to follow.

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