

*“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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**Volume 3: Issue 9**

**June 2026**

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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 will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations” (Isaiah 60:15)*

# Israel – the Future Kingdom of God

*(The following article is from a presentation given  
At the Liverpool Library on 22.06.2026)*

It is common church teaching that the salvation extended to mankind is life in heaven – but the Bible does not teach this. According to the Bible, God will establish a kingdom upon earth, with His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, reigning as king. Consider the following well-known words from the Lord’s Prayer:

“Our Father which art in Heaven, Hallowed by thy Name. **Thy kingdom come. Thy Will be done in earth as it is in heaven.** Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for **thine is the kingdom**, and the power, and the glory for ever. Amen” (Mat. 6:9-13).

Notice the sections highlighted in red: God’s will is to be done on earth, like it is in heaven. And this will only take place, when God’s kingdom comes! The Bible uses the expression: “as the days of heaven upon the earth” (Deut. 11:21) to describe this aspect. The Gospel record of Matthew also uses the expression “the kingdom of heaven” to describe the dominion of Christ: not a kingdom **in** heaven, but the kingdom **of** heaven - that is, a kingdom governed by principles that originate in heaven.

This aspect of a future kingdom upon the earth is taught throughout the Bible. Take the following sample texts:

“Blessed are the meek for they shall **inherit the earth**” (Mat. 5:5).

Abraham: “the promise that he should be the **heir of the world** was through the righteousness of faith” (Rom. 4:13).

“we shall **reign on the earth**” (Rev. 5:10).

These verses are conclusive in teaching the purpose of God for mankind. It is not that disembodied spirits, AKA immortal souls, will ascend to heaven, but rather that men and women will inherit a kingdom and “reign on the earth”.

There are many more verses that teach the same. The Old Testament prophet Daniel spoke of the days in which we live, and the way in which the present kingdoms of men will ultimately be replaced:

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

And the book of Revelation also teaches:

“... the **kingdoms of this world** are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ: and **he shall reign** for ever and ever” (Rev. 11:15).

### ***AN ISRAELITISH KINGDOM***

Our title indicates that this future Kingdom upon earth, will in fact, be the Kingdom of Israel restored. Again, this is the clear teaching of the Bible. We have the words of the Angel Gabriel to Mary, regarding her son Jesus:

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

Jacob, here, was another name for Israel (see Gen. 32:28). The throne of David was situated in Jerusalem – upon earth – hence the Lord will also reign over the house of Israel/Jacob from this city. The disciples of Christ recognised this aspect, asking their master:

“... Lord, wilt thou at this time **restore again the kingdom to Israel?**” (Acts 1:6).

This latter verse illustrates a key principle: the Kingdom will be “restored” – which implies that it previously existed in times past. The ancient kingdom of Israel was the previous kingdom of God upon earth, as can be seen from the descriptions given to Solomon’s rule, which replaced that of his father David:

“... and of all my sons ... he hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon **the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over** Israel” (1 Chron. 28:5)

“... then Solomon sat on **the throne of the Lord** as king instead of David his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him” (1 Chron. 29:23).

This is highly relevant to our current considerations: the throne of David which Solomon sat upon, was “the throne of **the kingdom of the Lord.**” The Kingdom and Throne were God’s – and the verses we have considered above indicate that the Israel of the future will be that ancient polity restored. The Lord Jesus Christ will sit upon the ancient Davidic seat of power, reigning over the 12 tribes of Israel (cp. also Mat. 19:28).

The prophet Ezekiel was also shown this throne – and it’s place “in the midst of the children of Israel:

“... and he said unto me, Son of man, **the place of my throne,** and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell **in the midst of the children of Israel for ever ...**” (Eze. 43:7).

### ***A TIME OF TROUBLE***

The word “Jerusalem” in the Hebrew literally means a “city of peace”. But when we consider the troubles of present-day Jerusalem, it is clear that major changes will be necessary for it to become such. Israel as a nation must come to recognise Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah – and they must be humbled before him. So, there is a time of even more trouble to come upon Israel – but they will be saved by Christ when he comes to take up his rightful place upon the throne of David. As Jeremiah prophesied:

“Alas! For the day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble, but **he shall be saved** out of it” (Jer. 30:7).

This is an aspect which is really beyond the scope of our current considerations, but Bible prophecy indicates that nations will come against Israel, in an attempt to obliterate her. The prophecies of Zechariah chapter 14, Joel 3 and Ezekiel chapter 38 should be read together, to see what will happen then. But Zechariah informs us that when Israel is brought to her knees by her adversaries, the Lord will fight for her:

“... then shall the Lord go forth, and **fight against those nations,** as when he fought in the day of battle ...” (Zech. 14:1-3).

The Lord Jesus Christ will come as a deliverer (See Rom. 11:26), and save Israel from the hand of those who are stronger than she. Then, Israel will be elevated, and their Messiah will “make Jerusalem a praise in the earth” (Isa. 62:7), and “an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations” (Isa. 60:15). Having been humbled, the people of Israel will look upon Jesus whom they pierced and mourn for what they have done (Zech. 12:10). They will turn from their sins and confidence in the flesh, and Jerusalem will be exalted to become the capital city of Messiah’s kingdom. Consider these words of the prophet Micah:

“... But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: **for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.** And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, **neither shall they learn war any more**” (Micah 4:1-3, also Isa. 2:2-3).

In that day, the Jewish nation will no longer be despised amongst men, but honoured and held in high esteem:

“at that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: **for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth,** when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the Lord” (Zeph. 3:20).

### ***CHRIST AS KING OF ISRAEL***

The reference to Micah chapter 4 (cited above) proves that the nations will go to Jerusalem for the purpose of instruction and worship. Israel as the kingdom of Christ will be elevated above all other kingdoms and nations. Consider the following:

“... the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and **kings** to the brightness of thy rising ...”

“... for the nation and kingdom **that will not serve thee** shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted” (Isa. 60:3, 12)

And Jesus, as king over the exalted nation, will be honoured amongst men:

“... that **at the name of Jesus every knee should bow**, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess **that Jesus Christ is Lord**, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:10-11).

“... the kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, **all kings shall fall down before him**: all nations shall serve him” (Psa. 72:10-11).

“... yet have I set **my king** upon my holy hill **of Zion** ... ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel” (Psa. 2:7-9).

### ***THE OTHER NATIONS***

The above testimonies prove that whereas today the name “Jesus Christ” is commonly used in a derisory way, as an oath or curse of contempt, it will be honoured and extolled when he comes again. But notice that these verses also portray king Jesus as a ruler amongst the other nations, not just Israel. Whereas Israel shall constitute his Kingdom, the other nations will also be subject to him, as part of his Empire. The other peoples of the earth will maintain their national identity, yet be subject to Israel and her king:

“... they had **their dominion taken away**: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time” (Dan. 7:4).

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

As we have seen, the nations shall go to Jerusalem for worship and instruction, and God’s house “shall be called a house or prayer for all people” (Isa. 56:7). But the Scriptures reveal that the kingdom of Christ will be changed after one thousand years have passed (see Rev. 20:4). It will endure “for ever”, but it’s

nature and constitution will change (cp. 1 Cor. 15:24-28). At the end of the thousand years, the other nations will then cease to exist! As we saw from Daniel chapter 7, cited above, the lives of the nations will only be prolonged for “a season and time”: after this, they shall exist no more. Consider the following:

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

Whereas the nations will be made a “full end of”, only Israel will remain:

“... Israel shall be saved in the Lord with **an everlasting salvation**: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded **world without end**” (Isa. 45:17).

Only Israel will remain at the last: when all other nations shall cease to exist: the kingdom of Israel will continue “world without end”. As Gabriel has it (cited above): “of his kingdom there shall be **no end**” (Lu. 1:33).

### ***THE HOPE OF ISRAEL***

When we consider the above, it is pertinent to ask the question, “Why?” “Why is it that God will restore Israel as His kingdom, above all the other nations and kingdoms of the earth?” The simple answer is that it Pleases our Maker to do so. As Samuel told the people of Israel: “... the Lord will not forsake his people for his great Name’s sake: because **it hath pleased the Lord** to make you his people” (1 Sam. 12:22). Moreover, it has Pleased God to make his dealings with Israel the very basis upon which men and women can be saved from sin and death. Consider the following:

“Salvation is **of the Jews**” (Jno. 4:22)

“... what shall the receiving of them be, but **life from the dead?**” (Rom. 11:25).

And again, those who are not part of the family of Christ are alienated from Israel and the promises concerning her:

“...remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12).

There is “no hope” aside from Israel. Hence, Paul exclaimed in his sufferings for Christ’s sake: “... for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain” (Acts 28:20). And the very Gospel message itself is stated to be to do with Israel and her king:

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

Here, the Gospel – which word literally means “good tidings” – is to do with salvation being published, to the effect that Zion’s God will Reign!

### ***RIGHTEOUSNESS***

When Israel is so glorified, they will have turned from their sins and become a righteous nation. Hence, Jesus links the kingdom with the Righteousness of God being made known: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” (Mat. 6:33). As the prophet has it:

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

And because righteousness shall be in the earth, there will be peace and tranquillity:

“the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever” (Isa. 32:17).

Then, Jerusalem will indeed be a city of peace, with the young and elderly being safe to go into the streets without fear:

“there shall yet old men and old women dwell in **the streets of Jerusalem**, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof” (Zech. 8:4-5).

### ***BLESSINGS OF THE KINGDOM***

The picture painted by the Hebrew Prophets concerning the kingdom to come, is one of harmonious co-existence between both men and animals. Consider the beauty of Isaiah’s prophecy of future blessings upon Israel:

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

Notice that all the promised blessings will come about as a consequence of one thing: the earth being “full of the knowledge of the Lord”. As we have seen, the nations will flow to Zion to learn this knowledge (Micah 4:1-4). When the nations are taught the Way of Righteousness, then there will be harmony amongst them also, as they shall learn war no more. The blessings will thus be provided in the subject nations also, as all the earth shall be bathed in the warmth and splendour of the Sun of Righteousness (Mal. 4:2).

### ***OUR OWN POSITION***

We have demonstrated above that the Hope of Salvation for men and women is bound up with the Hope of Israel. Whilst the churches teach disembodied immortal souls living in a kingdom beyond the skies, the Bible teaches a literal kingdom upon the earth. The Lord Jesus Christ will be the future king, reigning over the restored tribes of Jacob from the ancient Davidic seat of power. His kingdom will be Israel, and his empire will extend globally, with all other nations and kingdoms being under his control, and subject to his people.

We have seen that whilst these other nations and kingdoms will have an end, it is written: “Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end” (Isa. 45:17). It logically follows therefore, that if we desire to be saved with an everlasting salvation, and be part of a kingdom which will have no end (Lu. 1:33), we must become part of Israel! Then no longer being alienated from God, we can embrace her national hope. Previously we were “without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometime were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ ...” (Eph. 2:12-13).

The overarching purpose of God is to set His Righteousness in the earth. And it has so pleased Him to accomplish this through Israel, as a paradigmatic nation. Israel turning back to God, with their land becoming Messiah’s kingdom, will be the means by which those who embrace her hope will be saved: being “made nigh by the blood of Christ”. We must therefore investigate these important matters further – and act upon the principles of the true Gospel. Then we can be part of that wonderful kingdom to come, and rejoice with the Apostle in the glorification of God: “unto him be glory in the ecclesia by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, **world without end**. Amen” (Eph. 3:21).

*Christopher Maddocks*

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## **Spiritual Food**

Once a person becomes a believer in Christ, they embark on a journey through life to the end goal – a place in the coming Kingdom of God. They have tasted the good word of God (Heb. 6:5) and seen that the Lord is both Gracious (1 Pet. 2:3), and Good (Psa 34:8). But there is a continual need to feed upon the spiritual sustenance that can only come from the Bible. Having been begotten by the Word (Jas. 1:18), they begin as spiritual children, and develop into adulthood as they mature in their understanding and appreciation of Divine Things. And the Word of God is able to assist them to do this, for it is written: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

In his temptations in the Wilderness, the Lord gave a rebuttal to each trial from the Word of God – which is itself a tremendous example for us to follow. But in considering the temptation to change stones into bread, he said: “... it is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Mat 4:4). In these words, we behold the vital need to continually partake of the Words that proceed out of the mouth of God in order to “live”. The converse is also true – if we do not eat from the Word that gives life (Jno. 6:63), we will spiritually die. Just as natural food is needed to sustain a mortal existence, even so spiritual food is needed to sustain the new man of the Spirit, in his growth into adulthood. To neglect such a feeding is to place ourselves into the position of being “ready to die” (Rev. 3:2), even if we have a Name, or reputation amongst men (Rev. 3:1) as being alive to the things of the Truth.

Job was a man who endured many trials, and is commended in Scripture for his example of patience (Jas. 5:11). But despite whatever faults he had, he nevertheless had a correct approach to the Word of God: “neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips: I have esteemed the words of his mouth ***more than my necessary food***” (Job. 23:12). Here is the correct priority: to seek first the things concerning “the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness” above all other natural concerns (Mat. 6:33). Then “all these things” which we need for natural life shall “be added unto you”. It is only if we are “nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine” (2 Tim 4:6), that we will have the strength to overcome the trials of life.

### ***THE BREAD OF LIFE***

The Lord Jesus Christ declared: “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst” (Jno. 6:35). And again, “I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever” (vs 51). Natural bread gives life: whereas spiritual bread gives everlasting life! That being so, it is pointless to seek the bread that the world provides:

“Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? And your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live ...” (Isa. 55:1-3).

The Lord likewise comments:

**“labour not** for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall **give** unto you ...” (Jno. 6:27).

Men naturally labour to obtain the very best of this world’s goods – yet true riches cannot be purchased with money. The free gift of God is everlasting life (Rom. 6:23), and it can only be acquired by faith in the Promises he has made. The gift of God cannot be bought, it has to be given – and it will indeed be granted to those whom the Lord will choose.

It is necessary then, to avoid the junk food of worldliness, and partake of the nutritious Bread of Life. Indeed, this is the cry of Wisdom:

“... Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled. Forsake the foolish and live; and go in the way of understanding” (Prov. 9:5-6).

The wise will hear, see and understand!

### ***EATING THE WORD***

Speaking of his fathers’ rediscovery of the Word of God, Jeremiah said: “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart: for I am called by thy name, O Yahweh God of hosts” (Jer. 15:16). The partaking of spiritual delights is source of joy for men of the spirit: “his delight is in the law of Yahweh; and in his law doth he meditate day and night ...” (Psa. 1:2). Again, the Psalmist spoke of this aspect:

“How **sweet** are **thy words** unto my taste! Yea, **sweeter than honey** to my mouth” (Psa. 119:103).

“.... The statutes of Yahweh are right, rejoicing the heart ... the Judgments of Yahweh are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: **sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb**” (Psa. 19, see vs. 8-10).

It has truly been said, that “to read without reflecting is like eating without digesting”. Meditation and reflection upon the Word is necessary to imbibe its principles: without it we will be unable to assimilate them into our thinking.

But although meditating upon the word is a delightful and “sweet” thing, it has the effect of bitterness upon those who inwardly digest it. John experienced this:

“... and I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel’s hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter ...” (Rev. 10:9-10, see also Eze. 2:9 – 3:14).

Brother John Thomas expounds this bitterness in his work “Eureka” thus:

"But when he came to digest it, that is, to consider the consequences of its consumption, 'his belly was made bitter.' It is sweet to a believer to know that 'the scripture cannot be broken;' but when he is made to understand that the breaking of the nations like a potter's vessel, and the pouring out of the unmixed wrath of God upon them, are among its indispensable purposes, the consideration of the terrible tribulation is bitter to his soul."

And again:

"It is a 'bitter' thing to the flesh to digest the word; for its assimilation stirs up the direct enmity of the world, and results in 'much tribulation,' and often in death."

The absorption of Divine concepts into the believers’ mind results in bitter experiences as a consequence – both at the wrath of God upon the unbelieving, and the difficult tribulation which they experience as a result. It is in a similar vein that when the Passover Lamb was eaten, it was accompanied with bitter herbs (Exo. 12:8).

### ***PROGRESSING IN UNDERSTANDING***

It is written that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ...” (1 Cor. 2:14), hence there is a need for a transformation of his mindset: “be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:2). This transformation is a process, which takes time to

complete. Firstly, the student of the Word must come to understand and accept what the Apostle calls “first principles” (Heb. 5:12). This is, as it were, the milk of the word – suitable for growing infants. Hence Peter exhorts:

“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious” (1 Pet. 2:2-3).

But as the student becomes a believer, embracing and obeying the Gospel, he must mature onto solid food. In our New Testament reading for today, the Apostle rebukes the Hebrews for not progressing in this way:

“... for when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat (or, ‘solid food’). For everyone that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat (‘solid food’) belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5:12-14).

Again, to the Corinthians, Paul wrote:

“... And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able” (1 Cor. 3:1-2).

Progression into maturity is a goal to be accomplished for those who would be saved. Sometimes it is thought that all that is needed is a basic understanding of First Principles – but in actual fact the assimilation of these is only the beginning. We must progress from simplicity to Wisdom (Psa. 19:7). Hence the cry of wisdom in the Proverbs:

“How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? And the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you” (Prov. 1:22-23).

And again, Proverbs chapter 9:

“Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith unto him, come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled ...” (Prov. 9:4-5).

To partake of the spiritual solid food of Wisdom is essential in order to progress from simplicity to understanding – to eat the bread and drink the wine thereof will strengthen us in order to endure the trials that a life in Christ will bring.

In the natural order of things, we would use a recipe book in order to prepare our daily food. But it is of no use to just read the recipes – we must also follow the instructions given, and do what is required to prepare and eat the food! Even so, we must ensure that the spiritual food we partake of is the purity of the Word with the nutritional value that only the Bread of Life can provide. Just reading the instructions alone is not enough – we must act upon what we read, to receive our daily bread.

The Lord Jesus Christ spoke of himself: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (Jno 6:53-54). We must feed upon the Bread of God’s appointing, the Manna provided to sustain us on our wilderness journey. Then, we will know good and evil (Heb. 5:14), and be able to choose the good and refuse the evil (cp. Isa. 7:16). We must mature in our understanding of God’s Ways, as saith the Apostle: “Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men” (1 Cor. 14:20). Let us therefore feed upon the spiritual banquet that God has provided for us – and then will we mature and be strong enough to endure even unto the end.

*Christopher Maddocks*

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## “That Woman Jezebel”

The Master’s letter to the ecclesia at Thyatira describes a corrupting influence within the assembly of brethren:

“... Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest **that women Jezebel**, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat

things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not ..." (Rev. 2:20-21).

The allusion here, is to Ahab's wife who was named Jezebel, and who instigated great evil amongst the congregation of Israel. The first reference to this woman in Scripture describes her origins, and how Ahab did wickedly in marrying her:

".... And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of Yahweh above all that were before him. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him" (1 Kings 16:31).

We find then, that not only did Ahab marry outside of the Truth, he embraced an idolater. And not only so, but forsaking the true worship of Yahweh, he went and worshiped her deity with her. And she proved to be a pernicious influence for evil in the nation which should have been Holiness to Yahweh.

### ***FALSE PROPHETS***

Once Jezebel had a foot in the door, so to speak, she used her position to persecute the true followers of Yahweh. The record in 1 Kings 18 describes how she "cut off the prophets of Yahweh" (vs 4). The chapter continues with the challenge of Elijah to the gods and prophets of Jezebel. Verse 19 describes how there were 450 prophets of Baal, and 400 prophets of the groves, which ate at Jezebel's table - and by contrast, there was only a single prophet of Yahweh remaining: Elijah himself. The contest was set, and the prophets of Baal were proved to be as impotent as their god. The sacrifice of Elijah was consumed by the Divine fire of approval, and the prophets of Baal were slain, with not one of them escaping (vs 40). But the response of Jezebel and her weak husband was not to repent of their idolatry, but to seek to slay the only remaining prophet of Yahweh:

"And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time" (1 Kings 19:1-2).

Having received the message, Elijah fled in despair. He “went for his life” (1 Kings 19:3), into the wilderness for refuge. There, in his state of despondency and depression, Elijah “requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now O Yahweh, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.” (vs 4).

However, the hand of the Lord was gracious to his Prophet, and material sustenance was provided. Yahweh famously manifested His Presence in the words of a still small voice, and sent Elijah on a mission to further the progress of the Word that was spoken. And He also provided words of encouragement to the effect that although Elijah was the only remaining prophet of Yahweh, there was still a remnant that had not forsaken the worship of Israel’s God:

“Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him” (1 Kings 19:18).

This passage is cited by Paul the Apostle, another one who was sent for the furtherance of the Truth. He demonstrates that even in the deepest Apostasy, there will always be a few who hold to the Truth:

“... what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee, to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace ...” (Rom. 11:4-5).”

In every age, there is always a remnant who refuse the evil, and choose the good. In Elijah’s day, there were 7,000, but in Noah’s day, there were 8. In our day, the truth-holders are undoubtedly in the minority – but all things will work out “according to the election of grace”.

### ***NABOTH’S VINEYARD***

One of the elect 7,000 was a man named Naboth, whose vineyard King Ahab desired to have. It was one of the prophesied characteristics of Israel’s kings, that they would “take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them ...” (1 Sam. 8:14), and Ahab was no exception to this:

“and Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house:

and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it; or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money. And Naboth said to Ahab, Yahweh forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my father unto thee” (1 Kings 21:2-3).

It was a principle of the Mosaic Law, that land ownership could not be transferred between the tribes. So, in speaking of a particular situation we read:

“So shall not the inheritance of the children of Israel remove from tribe to tribe: for every one of the children of Israel shall keep himself to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers” (Num. 36:7).

And in the future kingdom of God, when the land shall be apportioned once more, we read:

“Moreover the prince shall not take of the people’s inheritance by oppression, to thrust them out of their possession; but he shall give his sons inheritance out of his own possession: that my people be not scattered every man from his possession” (Ezek. 46:18).

What a marked contrast this is, to Ahab, and the means by which he was to eventually obtain the inheritance of Naboth! Rather than to accept the situation as detailed by Naboth, Ahab sulked like a spoiled child who couldn’t have things his own way! “he laid himself down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread” (1 Kings 21:4). But notice how he relayed the situation to Jezebel his wife, in response to her question as to why he was so miserable:

“And he said unto her, because I spake unto Naboth the Jezreelite, and said unto him Give me the vineyard for money; or else, if it please thee, I will give thee another vineyard for it: **and he answered, I will not give thee my vineyard**” (1 Kings 21:6)

In Ahab’s complaint, we have a gross misrepresentation of Naboth’s words. He did not say: “I will not give thee my vineyard” at all. What he actually said was: “**Yahweh forbid it me** that I should give **the inheritance of my fathers** unto thee”. There are two items here: firstly, God would not allow Naboth to do this thing. And secondly, the land was regarded as an inheritance of his fathers, not solely his own to do as he pleased with it. This is the way of the

flesh: to misrepresent the people of God. Ahab saw the situation as a personal one between him and Naboth, whereas in actual fact, it was between Ahab and Naboth's God. Men of the flesh cannot see the difference, but to the children of the spirit, it is of vital importance.

"That Woman" the unprincipled Jezebel, however, devised means by which Ahab could have his plot of land and do with it as he pleased. She wrote letters in Ahab's name saying:

"Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people: and set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the king. And then carry him out, and stone him, that he may die" (1 Kings 21:9-10).

This thing was not to be done in a corner. Naboth was to be lifted up before the eyes of all the people, and two false witnesses would indict him before them all. The claim was that he had spoken against God and the King. Nothing could be further from the truth: far from blaspheming God, he actually remained faithful to Yahweh's commandments. Yet in the eyes of the unbeliever, truth is a secondary element: Jezebel, herself a blasphemer of Israel's God had no regard for truth, but was intent on condemning the guiltless in order to take possession of the vineyard for her weak and sullen husband.

The charge against Naboth is similar to the accusation made against Stephen, one of the early disciples. Like Jezebel, "they suborned men, which said, we have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God" (Acts 6:11). Moreover, in addition, they "set up false witnesses which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law" (Acts 6:13). In both cases, the principal charge was that faithful men were actually blasphemers. A passage from the prophets comes to mind:

"Hear the word of Yahweh, ye that tremble at his Word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let Yahweh be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed" (Isa. 66:5).

For Jezebel, the great idolater, it was the utmost hypocrisy to condemn Naboth as being a blasphemer of Israel's God. Similarly, those who rejected the Lord Jesus Christ had no good cause to claim Stephen had spoken against God. But both were condemned by the words of false witnesses and were put to death by stoning, by the people.

It is interesting to note that Jezebel, despite her wicked idolatry, knew something about the Law of Moses. According to the Law it was written:

“One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: **at the mouth of two witnesses**, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established” (Deut. 19:15).

So it was that Jezebel raised up two witnesses to testify against Naboth. But it was not Naboth alone who was killed: ordinarily upon his death, his children would inherit his property and that which appertained to him. Indeed, that is how Naboth had possession of the vineyard: it was the inheritance of his Fathers. Jezebel had to put his sons to death, in order to remove any claims to that inheritance. This is related later on in Scripture, in the words of the Lord:

“Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth, **and the blood of his sons**, saith Yahweh; and I will requite thee in this plat, saith Yahweh” (2 Kings 9:26).

In various ways, the slaying of Naboth in order to take his inheritance, typifies the slaying of the Lord Jesus Christ. We read that those who were incited against Naboth were his own kinsmen: “the elders and the nobles that were in the city, **dwelling with Naboth**” (1 Kings 21:8). They rose up against him, and had him killed. Even so it is written regarding Messiah:

“One shall say to him, What are these wounds in thy hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded **in the house of my friends**” (Zech. 13:6).

Just as the charge against Naboth was blasphemy against God and the King, so Jesus was accused likewise:

“... whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar ...” (Jno. 19:12).

“then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses?” (Mat. 27:65).

And verse 60 tells us that there were “two false witnesses” that spoke against him, just like in the case of Naboth. Again, just like Naboth, the Lord was slain

in order that others could possess his inheritance (see Mat. 21:38). But notice the response of the landowner: “He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons” and the interpretation of this is given: “the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof” (Mat. 21:41, 43). Here is the irony: those who oppressed others to take their inheritance will themselves have it taken from them and given to another. Though Jezebel and Ahab secured the death of Naboth, he will be amongst that nation to whom the kingdom will be given, rendering the fruit in due time. Indeed, this is implied by the meaning of his name: Naboth means “fruitful” - by contrast to Ahab and Jezebel who bore no fruit to the landowner: Yahweh himself. They will therefore be miserably destroyed at the time when those who have given their lives for the preservation of the Truth shall be rewarded according to their deeds.

It is interesting to note that whilst Jezebel had Naboth and his children slain, the same was to be done to the Jezebel influence in the ecclesia: “... I will kill her children with death; and all the ecclesias will know that I am he which searcheth the reins and the hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according unto his works” (Rev. 2:23). These children are again represented later in the Apocalypse, in the vision of the Mother prostitute: “... upon her forehead was a name written, mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations upon the earth” (Rev. 17:5). These daughters, together with their harlot mother, will be destroyed with the coming of Messiah. Truly it is that “there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of Yahweh, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up” (1 Kings 21:25).

But by contrast to Jezebel, the faithful remnant will make themselves ready to be Messiah’s ecclesial Bride. It is a characteristic of the Proverbial virtuous woman, to care for her children, and plant vineyards (see Prov. 31:16, 28). And it is the responsibility of those who would be part of Messiah’s Bride to be diligent in their work. Rather than to permit the Jezebel influence to prosper in our midst, we must be discerning and reject her, like the first Century believers were to do. We must heed the example of unbelief of both Ahab and Jezebel, and rather look forward to better days ahead. Then, we will be given our inheritance, which no man can take away – and the Jezebel influence which can only stir up trouble and strife in the ecclesias, will finally be removed.

*Christopher Maddocks*

## Our High Calling

We have been reminded of the high position to which we have been called in having been invited to the possibility and prospect of being made equal to the angels. Such a prospect is the highest possible to the human imagination. It is the highest possible in the nature of things. To those unacquainted with the grounds on which it rests, it is nothing more than an idle dream. How far it is in truth from being such, you very well know. It is no mere conception of a poetic imagination, though containing within itself all and more than such an imagination could picture as desirable. It is no utopian ideal, though coming up to and going beyond the utmost excellence that could possibly be associated with such an ideal. It is a sober matter of fact, commended to our judgment and faith by many evidences and considerations which enable us emphatically to endorse Peter's statement that we have not followed cunningly-devised fables.

### ***NOT ALL CHOSEN***

But there is another side to the question which it will be profitable for a moment to look at. It is the side associated with the thought that must have presented itself more than once to every thoughtful mind, namely, "Can it be that all the people we know in connection with the profession of the truth are destined to become equal with the angels?" We are able to obtain for this enquiry a positive Scriptural answer. We have the Lord's authority for a decided "No." He tells us in many ways that it is not every one that is called that will be chosen. He plainly makes us understand by various forms of teaching that only a selection will be made from among those who profess His name; and the matter that ought to constantly engage our attention is, the principle upon which the selection will be made. As to this also, we need never be in any manner of doubt. The reason why He will choose some, and not choose others, has been stated by Him with a plainness that is almost considered childish by the wise of our generation. It is for us to discern and conform to this reason, remembering that the Lord has said, "Except a man receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no case enter therein." He has told us that it is not sufficient to know about Him; that many in the day of decision will say to him, "Have we not preached in thy name?" to whom he will say, "I never knew you."

To what then, besides the knowledge of him, must we attain? We get the answer by considering the various indications scattered about in the apostolic

writings. Here is one: Paul says, in Hebrew 3:6, that we are the house of Christ, “if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.” We can all understand this. The least gifted among us knows what it is to be “confident” and to “rejoice.” To be confident about a thing is to be sure. He wants us to be sure about the hope; to banish all doubt. This is reasonable. To lack certainty is to dishonour him. Even men refuse friendship to men when doubt is harboured with regard to declared intentions; how much more essential to acceptance with God in Christ is it that we fully believe that what He has promised He will perform. You know the declaration that “without faith it is impossible to please God” (Heb. 11:6). But perhaps you say “It is my nature to doubt; I cannot be confident; and if I cannot help it why should I be rejected?”

Well, there is an answer. There are things which no man doubts, whatever be his nature, provided only that he be properly informed. No man doubts that Queen Victoria reigns in England <sup>1</sup>, and that London is on the banks of the Thames. If a man could be found doubting these facts, it would be because of ignorance which would scarcely be considered an excuse. Uncertainty is an effect. It is the result either of ignorance or forgetfulness. Now for a man to be ignorant or forgetful in relation to the hope, he must be neglectful of the means of knowledge and memory God has given us. God has given us abundant reason for confidence in giving us the Scriptures, and the many confirmations with which those Scriptures are accompanied. Now, if we neglect the Scriptures, are we not responsible for the effect that will spring from this neglect? Are we not chargeable with the uncertainty of faith that will arise? Is it not reasonable that Paul should ask, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was afterwards spoken unto us by them that heard him?” It is certain that we cannot escape if we are guilty of this folly. Consequently, the course of wisdom is evident, how narrow-minded or vulgar soever it may be considered by the “polite.” Let us not neglect, but give a daily attention to the Bible. There is no need of excess: but a daily place it ought to have.

Do not be too much taken up with temporal things. Be taken up enough with them, of course. There is no need to advocate attention to temporal things. They are sure to be attended to: the only danger connected with them is the danger of attending to them too much, and not too little. And there is little danger of attending to spiritual things too much: the danger is of attending to

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<sup>1</sup> This exhortation was written in 1884!

them too little. The situation of things on this point is very well indicated by the fact that while there are many hundreds of entreaties in the Bible to attend to wisdom, there is only one caution against going too far in this direction (Ecc. 7:16).

There may be a possibility of going to extremes of devotedness to God's great salvation, but the liability is as one to a thousand. The need of exertion lies all in the opposite direction. Do not devote the energies of your life to the attainment of a present result. Labour not to be rich. Lay not up treasure upon earth. Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Jesus makes this a reason why we should not pile treasure now. We must all allow the reason to be good and true. We must all admit that wherever what we treasure is laid, there our hearts will be. It is a universal and inevitable rule. If we lay up treasure in the present order of things, our hearts will be bound up with the present order of things, and, consequently, our sympathies will be weakened for the purpose of God to do away with the present order of things and establish a new order. Let our treasure be laid up in heaven. This is Christ's advice, and he has told us how to do it. Whatever we give to God is laid up in heaven; and we give to God when we give to the poor or to the furtherance of His truth among men. The man who appropriates and lays up all for his own use, Jesus speaks of a man "who layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God" (Luke 12:21).

### ***BEWARE!***

We must, therefore, beware of the sophistry by which men think they have done enough, when they provide for themselves and their own families. It is part of well-doing to make this provision: but there is another part, which is more acceptable, because more difficult and more godlike: viz., to provide for the poor and the gospel, according to the ability God hath given us. This is a hard saying for the children of the flesh: but it is the doctrine of the first-born of the children of the spirit: and time will yet show it the wisest doctrine. Even now, there is a reward. The man who acts out this policy of Christ finds his confidence growing stronger, day by day, instead of reaping the experience of the penurious man who is apt to find his faith getting thinner and weaker as time advances, until at last he wonders if he has any faith at all, or worse still, makes shipwreck of it altogether, and is again entangled and overcome of the world, after having once escaped its bondage. Solomon speaks of the faith of the righteous shining brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. This is the result of persevering attention and obedience. The confidence of the hope increases as time advances, until the heart settles into the condition of Abraham who, against hope, believed in hope: that what God had promised He would certainly, in due time, perform.

This state of confidence in the heart of saints gives pleasure to God and to Christ. It is a ground of acceptance with them. But there is not only the confidence but the rejoicing of the hope. We must not forget this part. It is a necessary part. God requires it of our hands. I think we will say it is reasonable that He should if we but reflect. Suppose it is the case of our own children: we promise them something good on conditions: they fulfil the conditions in part, but are not greatly concerned whether they get what we promise or not. They show indifference. They are not glad. Should we not in such a state of things feel disinclined to bestow what we proposed? How different in the other case. How interested we are to give when we see our children building upon our promise, and anticipating with gladness its fulfilment. Of course there is a difference between mortal parents and God: still we are in His image: and the Scriptures give us to understand that, though in much higher measure, He works upon similar principles.

### ***REJOICING IN SALVATION***

Surely it is the natural outcome of the confidence in His promises that we should rejoice in them. What could be so calculated to make a person glad as the prospect of what God has promised to those who believe and obey Him? If we rejoice not, it must be because our faith is weakened by what Jesus calls "the lust of other things." What those other things are, we know: because we have all had experience of them and know how easily they kill confidence and joy in the things of the Spirit. We must be on our guard against them. Some people seem to think we don't require to take care. Such people sooner or later become the best examples of the need of taking care. Their interest in the purpose of God and the things of the Spirit, and the work of Christ becomes so weak that they are a drag on every true servant of Christ. Their faith is so uncertain that they never refresh a fellow traveller by rejoicing in the hope: but are all the time rather in the condition of having to be persuaded by argument there is a hope. For this state God holds a man responsible, because it is the result of causes in his control. It is the result of his attending very little to what God requires at his hand, and attending very much to matters in which his own pleasure merely is engaged. He neglects the Bible; he neglects God in prayer, in service, and in meeting; he neglects God's friends. He attends much to business, much to professional study, much to light reading, and much to worldly friends: the result is, his heart is drawn away, and he grows dead. He serves himself much, and others little, and God not at all. Can we wonder at his sinking into such a state of barrenness and paralysis in relation to all God's affairs?

Let us repudiate the policy that leads to such results. Let us “hold fast” to everything that keeps us in God’s company, and we shall thus hold fast the rejoicing as well as the confidence of the hope, steadfast unto the end. Not that we shall never know sorrow or gloom. On the contrary, the joy the truth gives us has its obverse side. The burden of mortal nature, and the evil state of the world in all its aspects, will unitedly operate to cast us down—not rarely. Still these are accidental and transient. They are but as the dullness of a cloud-covered sky. They do not blot out the sun. They do not alter the fundamental verities of the ages and the universe.

All things are on our side if we are in harmony with God. Our sadness is but for a moment, and on the surface. We have no reason but mechanical and short-lived reasons for being sad. The state and the time we live in overbear the perceptions of the understanding yes, sometimes, because of our weakness. But we can blow the clouds away, often, with a rally. We can ask with David, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou so disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance.” We discover by such introspections that there is no cause for sadness, and that our glooms are due to the weakness of the hour, for which we are not responsible. How much better to be thus than in the state that calls for the contrary question. If David said “Why am I sad?” James asks others, why they are glad. He tells them to let their laughter be turned to mourning, and their joy to heaviness, and to be afflicted and mourn and weep (Jas. 4:9), and these too, recollect, were brethren by profession—men who had a status among the brotherhood, and were in good odour with many whom, nevertheless, James describes as “sinners” and double-minded men, and whose sinfulness Paul defines as a walk after the flesh and minding earthly things.

There is a time for everything. This is not the time for pleasure and mirth and gladness, on the part of those whose part it is to have filled up in themselves the (remaining) measure of the sufferings of Christ (Collos. 1:24). To rejoice in the hope is admissible to any degree, but to rejoice with the world in their joy is to rejoice with a Godless joy—a joy with no God in it—a joy which is destined to burn out, and leave nothing but ashes behind.

Christ asks us to be quite sure about the hope, and to find our gladness in it. But he also asks other things at our hands. He asks us not only to be but to do. This opens out many points, but we must confine our attention to two—one positive; the other negative: one, what we ought to do, and one what we

ought not to do—of both of which, there are many forms and examples in the word of Christ. We first refer to one that is of universal knowledge and fame, but that is practically disregarded almost as generally as it is known. “As ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them.” I need stay to speak of the excellence of such a rule among men. The observance of it makes men interesting to each other and happy in themselves. The practice of the contrary rule, which is almost the universal rule—that, viz., of leaving your neighbour out of consideration—has just the contrary effect; it makes men hideous and unhappy. How good and reasonable and beautiful it is that Jesus should require this mode of action in his disciples. For what is he developing them for? That they may be a glory to God, a joy to him, a joy to each other, and a blessing to the world when they shall reign with him. How could they be any of these if they were sluggish selfish men, interested only in their own affairs?

### ***A BROAD APPROACH***

Let us look this broadly and strongly in the face. It is a commandment. We may not feel like obeying it by natural impulse; but if we set ourselves to do it because Christ has commanded it, it is wonderful how it becomes not only a habit but a pleasant habit, yielding health and satisfaction to ourselves and blessing to those with whom we may be thrown in contact. No doubt, we will often be discouraged in the attempt to carry it out. If everybody acted on it, it would be easy and delightful; but when the rule is the other way, then it seems as if your kindness came blighting back into your own bosom, and as if there was no use in trying. But then, if we take an enlightened view of the matter, we shall see that we do not do it because there is any “use” in the matter; that is, not because we expect to reform the world by it, or even to evoke the reciprocation of it from those to whom we practice this self-denying rule. We do it simply and purely because it is Christ’s commandment, who is preparing thus for himself a band of noble men and women who will see great joy of it yet in the day of their muster in his presence, and their exaltation to that position of power in which they will have the fullest scope for acting out the noble precepts that Christ has delivered as part of the power that prepares the generation of the righteous for the promised blessedness of all families in Abraham. Do not let us forget that we must act on this rule if we are to be chosen of Christ at his coming. He has told us plainly and frequently that only if we “Do whatsoever he has commanded, are we his friends.”

The other thing I spoke of is something we are not to do. We are not to “recompense to any man evil for evil.” On the contrary we are to do good to

those that who do evil to us. This is perhaps a harder rule than the other. It is a primitive instinct with all men to resent; to retaliate; to pay back, if possible, a larger evil than has been inflicted on us. And primitive instincts are hard to conquer; but conquer we must. This primitive instinct we must tie up in chains and refuse to allow it a part in our deportment or policy. As the servants of Christ, we are not at liberty to act upon it. There must be no unkind word for unkind word, or disobliging act for disobliging act, but contrariwise, blessing. Let us put all our vigour into the acts of duty and business efficiency. Don't let it get into our resentments. Executive impulse is useful as steam in the boiler: it drives the machinery: but if you let it out, it scalds, torments and destroys. The commandment is excellent in every way we can think of it. No commandment could more effectually train us to the exercise of self-restraint. Nothing could be more calculated to tame the natural tiger: and help the higher law of kindness to get the upper hand. The result of its obedience is the development of beautiful character, well fitted for the exaltation which awaits the suffering house of Christ in the day of his glory.

Paul advised Timothy to give himself wholly to these things, that he might be a vessel filled for kingly use in the great day. We cannot receive better advice. The process may be severe for flesh and blood, but it is short if it extends to the longest natural lifetime, and its results are so transcendent and unutterably good in the day of Christ, that the tribulation of seven times increased in duration and intensity, would still be properly described in the words of Paul as “our light affliction which is but for a moment,” working out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

*Robert Roberts, 1884: The Christadelphian, page 251–255.*

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## **“Blessed Is He That Considereth The Poor”**

In Deuteronomy chapter 15 verse 11, we read that the poor would always exist within the Land:

“ ... the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land”

So it was, that the poor were to be given special privileges, and be looked upon favourably by the Children of Israel, as they dwelt in the land of promise.

As it is written: “Blessed is he that considereth the poor: Yahweh will deliver him in time of trouble” (Psa. 41:1). The poor, for the most part consisted of the “stranger, the fatherless and the widow” (Cp Deut. 24:17, 19, 20, 21): that is, those who had no helper to deliver them out of times of trouble. In the merciful provisions of the Mosaic Law, it was commanded that these three groups of people would be provided for in particular ways. Indeed, there were lessons to be learned from this, not simply issues of humanitarianism:

“Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless; nor take a widow’s garment to pledge: *But thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and Yahweh thy Elohim redeemed thee hence: therefore I command thee to do this thing.*” (Deut. 24:17-18).

In making provision for the poor then, Israel were to remember that they themselves once had no helper, when they were slaves in Egypt. Yet Yahweh had mercy and compassion upon them, and redeemed them from bondage. Therefore, they were to bless as they had been blessed; to give as they had been given. They were to bless the poor, because they themselves had been blessed of Yahweh.

This aspect of remembering one’s origins features several times in the Apostolic writings. After listing the seven qualities of the spirit, Peter was inspired to write:

“But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, *and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins*” (2 Pet. 1:9).

Again, James spake:

“Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, *and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.* But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed” (Jas. 1:24-25).

Interestingly, James goes on to describe pure religion:

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this. To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (Jas. 1:27).

Pure religion then, involves tending to the needs of the fatherless and widows, a work which will surely be rewarded by the Almighty, when done in a faithful

recognition of His Blessings. But the point of citing these verses, is to show that the believers, as Israel, must remember their origins. The faithful were “purged” from their “old sins”. They must not forget what manner of men they were: under bondage to sin and death. Yet, the Love of God hath appeared unto men in providing an arm of salvation, to lift those who believe out of the mire, and purify them with the blood of the Lamb. They are no longer in bondage, living under “the law of liberty” in Christ Jesus. Once being slaves to sin, they are now the servants of righteousness. They must never forget what they once were, and the Grace of Yahweh in lifting them from the dunghill, and setting them on high, being called His Sons through faith in Christ Jesus.

Deuteronomy chapter 24 speaks of particular means whereby the afflictions of the poor should be eased:

“When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that Yahweh thy Elohim may bless thee in all the work of thine hands” (Deut. 24:19).

This was truly a merciful provision, allowing the poor to enter the fields of their neighbours, and search out their own food. Far better than modern welfare systems of our age, this provision ensured that even the poorest could work to obtain the blessings of Yahweh, by going out to the field, and gleaning that which was left. Leviticus 19:9 goes on to further describe how that the corners of the field were also to be left when reaping the harvest, again, to make provision for the poor. This was just one way under the Law, in ensuring that the stranger, the fatherless and the widow were provided for.

In the book of Ruth, we come across one who was a stranger (a Moabitess), and a widow. She was sent by her mother-in-law, Naomi (who was also a widow) to glean in the field, to see what provisions she could obtain.

“And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech” (Ruth 2:3).

Boaz, seeing the damsel’s industry made enquiry as to who she was, and upon learning her identity said to her:

“Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens: let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go after them ...” (Ruth 2:8-9).

He also “commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not: and let fall also some of the handfuls of

purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not” (Ruth 2:15).

Here was a merciful man indeed – going beyond even what the Law required. Not fearing to be identified with the damsel, he referred to her as his “daughter” and moreover, rather than simply allow her to gather those sheaves which had been forgotten, or left in the corner of the field, he actually commanded his young men to drop handfuls as they went, for her to pick up after! Here was an Israelite indeed; one who recognised the spirit of the Law, and who sought to provide for one who had chosen Yahweh to be her God, and who desired to join herself to the Hope of Israel.

There is an interesting allusion to this in the ministry of Messiah. Matthew chapter 15 describes how a stranger, a woman of Canaan came to the Master, beseeching him to make provision for her. Her daughter was “grievously vexed with a demon”, and so she cried, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David ... but he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs” (Mat. 15:22-26).

In these words, we find the Master putting this Gentile to the test. As the parable of the Unjust Judge (Luke 18:1-8), it is required of those who would obtain Divine Blessing to show persistence – which in turn shows faith, and courage. In firstly ignoring the woman, and then twice sending her away (cp Ruth 1:8, 11, 12, 15), the Master was seeing whether she had the necessary faith both to persist in her request – and also to recognise her position as a Gentile seeking the blessings that were given to the Jews first. In his words, Messiah spoke of “the children’s bread” – food that belonged to those who were yet infantile in their understanding, yet who belonged in the House. Like the corn which grew in the field, his provision was primarily for Israel, secondly for “the stranger” who would come in faith, seeking his blessing. The woman recognised this, and said:

“Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master’s table” (Mat. 15:27).

Like as sheaves of corn were permitted to fall on purpose for Ruth the Moabitess, so the Canaanitish woman made her request that the Master would permit “crumbs” to fall to her, from His Table. These words demonstrated her conviction that Christ would provide, and also showed how she recognised her

position as a Gentile.

“Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour” (Mat. 15:28).

This event is filled with instructive principles, given for our learning. The Gentile believers also seek to take up the crumbs permitted to fall from the Master’s Table. They were “strangers”: “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12). They must not forget our origins. They must not vaunt themselves against the branches that were cut off through unbelief (Rom. 11). Rather, they must humbly recognise their position, and give thanks that they, who were once far off, are brought nigh by the blood of Christ.

Returning back to Ruth, we find that Boaz gave beyond the requirements of the Law, not simply in allowing sheaves to fall on purpose for the Moabitess to gather up, but also in giving her food to sustain her during her labours:

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

Here, when the workers were all together sharing this meal of “bread” and “vinegar,” or sour wine, Boaz personally handed her the parched corn for her to eat, as a token of favour towards her.

These events are again reflected in the Ministry of Messiah. Matthew chapter 26 recounts how the disciples were together enjoying a meal of fellowship:

“and as they did eat, [Christ] said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I? And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me” (Mat. 26:21-23).

Simon Peter said unto him, “Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon” (Jno. 13:25-26).

Just as Boaz reached out the parched corn to Ruth, as a token of favour, even so Christ extended his favour to Judas the Betrayer. Even to the last, he

treated this man as a brother and “friend” (Mat. 26:50), though he knew from the beginning who it was that should betray him. Granting him the sop from his own hand, in this act of favour Christ identified the Betrayer. Judas had no regard for the poor – not only because he stole from the bag, but also because he aided the death of a “poor and needy man”, even Messiah himself (Psa. 109:16). He did not remember where he had been called from, and what he had been called to, but rather covenanted to betray the Son of the Highest for the price of a Hebrew bondsman. Blinded by the god of this world, Judas sought after his own things, to the exclusion of the things of Jesus Christ.

The true believers partake of the Memorial feast of bread and wine, after the example that was set for them in that upper room. The disciples, when alerted to the fact that a betrayer was amongst them, each said “is it I?”. None of them looked accusingly at the other; they all looked inwardly at themselves. Even so, the Apostle Paul exhorts us:

“Let a man examine **himself** and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body” (1 Cor. 11:28-29).

The brethren and sisters therefore come to the emblems, as tokens of Yahweh’s favour extended to them. They were once strangers, but thanks be to God, they have been given the victory through Christ Jesus their Master, Redeemer, and coming King.

*Christopher Maddocks*

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