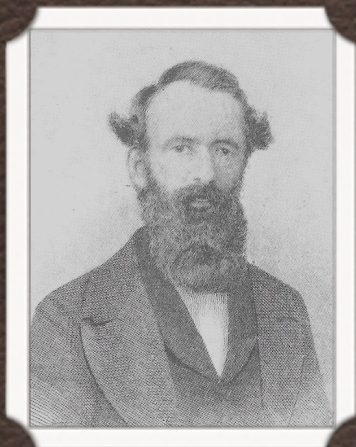


The Things of the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ



It is of primary importance that we believe the truth, and not a substitute for it; for it is by the truth only we can be saved; "the truth as it is in Jesus," neither more nor less, is that to which our attention is invited in the word. "The truth" is set forth in the law and the prophets; but we must add to these, the apostolic testimony contained in the New Testament, if we would comprehend it "as it is in Jesus." The kingdom is the subject matter of "the truth;" but "as it is in Jesus," is

the truth concerning him as the king and supreme pontiff of the dominion; and the things concerning his name, as taught in the doctrine of the apostles. As a whole "the truth" is defined as "the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 8:12). This phrase covers the entire ground upon which the "one faith," and the "one hope," of the gospel are based; so that if a man believe only the "things of the kingdom," his faith is defective in the "things of the name;" or, if his belief be confined to the "things of the name," it is deficient in the "things of the kingdom." There can be no separation of them recognized in a "like precious faith" (2Pet. 1:1) to that of the apostles. They believed and taught all these things; God hath joined them together, and no man need expect His favor who separates them; or abolishes the necessity of believing the things He has revealed for faith.

- Elpis Israel, pp. 192,193

Vol. 27 Summer, 2017 No. 2

THE SANCTUARY-KEEPER

*A Magazine for the Exposition and Defense
of The Holy Scriptures*



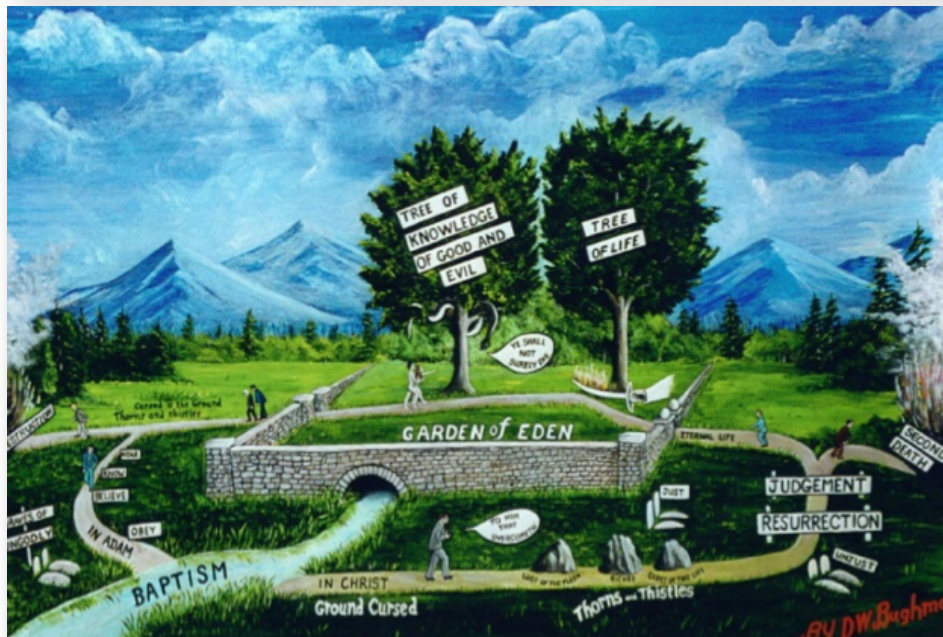
PRESSING FORWARD

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The **Sanctuary-Keeper** is published on a quarterly basis at \$10.00 per (U.S.) funds. The doctrinal position of this magazine is founded exclusively on the principles of Bible Truth as outlined and defined in The Christadelphian Unamended Statement of Faith. Subscriptions, correspondence and materials submitted for publication should be sent to the editors/publishers via email or the physical address of **"The Sanctuary-Keeper", P.O. Box 302, Greenbrier, AR 72058**

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A Response to the Pearce/Gates Booklet,
Apostolic Teaching on Fellowship and Withdrawal



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*A Magazine for the Exposition and Defense of
The Holy Scriptures*

“Ye shall keep the charge of the sanctuary, and the charge of the altar”

Num. 18:5

“Ye are...an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices.”

I Peter 2:5

“Thou hast kept My Word and hast not denied My Name” - Rev. 3:8

VOLUME 27

SUMMER, 2017

NUMBER 2

PRESSING FORWARD

EDITORIAL COMMENT

AS a follow up to the Sanctuary Keeper Spring, 2017 magazine, we would like to make the following comments. These comments are related to the editorial comments that were provided in regard to question #4 of that Spring, 2017 article – What responsibilities do we have and what actions must we pursue to move forward in contending “for the faith once delivered to the saints”?

In Philippians 3:13-14, the apostle Paul makes these statements – *“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”*

In this day and age and within this current generation, the exclusively Unamended Christadelphian Body is shrinking more and more every year. Within the last 10-15 years, false doctrine has abounded amidst the Unamended Body. Every Unamended Ecclesia and Bible School has been impacted by these false doctrines that simply started with a little leaven that was created by a few Unamended brethren who believed that it was important

for them to bring these false doctrines to the mainstream Unamended Body. Their decision to do so and the inability and unwillingness by many Ecclesias to quickly address these false doctrines and resulting loose fellowship practices have caused many separations around the Table of the Lord. Therefore, we should take Paul's wise words to heart. We need to learn to press forward with our only goal being to reach the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Brethren, please consider this one suggestion in answer to the question that was presented in the Spring, 2017 edition. Let us use the words of Paul from our opening reading in Philippians and press forward, forgetting those things that are behind us. Although Paul was probably not specifically addressing the subject matter of this article, I believe that he was addressing all things that would keep him and his brethren in Christ from reaching that stated goal. This is not to say that we shouldn't take every opportunity to be always ready to provide an answer for the hope that lieth within us. We should always be ready to help convert a sinner from his/her sinful ways. We should strive to always manifest agape love to every brother or sister, seeking opportunities to help them see the error of their ways. We should not wish anyone evil, but do good to all men, especially those of the household. But there comes a time when all attempts to discuss the problems of the day are rejected by those opposed to our position. What is left to do?

Some of the remaining remnant of those who are striving to remain exclusively Unamended in belief, practice, doctrine and fellowship may still be trying to cling to the way that things once were within the Unamended Body. We want to learn who the invited teachers will be at Bible Schools that are no longer attended by our remnant. We may stay attached to certain brethren through the social media networks of the day. Although this is an individual decision, maybe now is the time to move forward. Let us focus on the things that may strengthen brethren who are like minded in doctrine and fellowship. It is tough to disassociate ourselves from those with whom we grew up in the Truth. But when they choose to ignore God's words and fail to listen to scriptural discussions about the issues that separate the two camps, isn't it time to spend more of our efforts with those who are like minded with us?

Those who have opposed the exclusivity of our fellowship stance have chosen to spread false accusations about our beliefs and why we believe as we do. This writer hopes that these false accusations stem from a lack of knowledge and an unwillingness to find out the truth about our beliefs as opposed to outright lies. Only Yahweh can truly make that determination. We have been accused of running brethren away from the Truth and driving away our young people. We have been called unloving, harsh, and haters of those who oppose us. We have been called names in private conversations and in public platforms that the SK does not want to even mention. All of these things are done without even the slightest degree of agape love manifested

PRESSING FORWARD

toward us. Every one of us has experienced the hurt and pain manifested toward us from brethren who once believed and followed the same principles that they now oppose.

Brethren is it now time to cut the ties with brethren who have chosen to follow certain fellowship practices that we do not agree? If we don't like the messages and doctrines put forth by the Christadelphian publications of today, then unsubscribe. Wouldn't that approach be better than to continue to receive these publications and then turn around and complain about the contents or the authors of the articles? If we believe that we are not able to communicate with certain brethren in person, phone or direct email, then shouldn't we discontinue our associations through the social media of the day? If we have made a conscious spiritual decision to not support certain Ecclesias, Bible Schools or Gatherings, then what difference does it make who they invite for teachers? We do not go to Amended sites just to see who they have invited for teachers. But, human nature being what it is, likes to keep up with what is going on in the other camp. For what reason, brethren? To see what they are talking about or to see who they are associating with? Is this spiritually healthy for us? When we find out things that we do not agree with, do we go to those brethren to try to discuss these differences? If we do, then this new knowledge may be able to produce good fruit and it may be profitable to have this knowledge. Does this knowledge make us sad, mad or possibly provide an opportunity to give in to the works of the flesh and devise ways to retaliate? Unless we can use this knowledge for good in a spiritual manner, is this new knowledge that important for us to keep it in our memory banks? If this new knowledge about our brethren does not produce good fruit, then what value is it to us? We understand that we should always leave our doors open in case someone wants to come to us to discuss matters of the Truth, but we should not try to keep up with every detail of their natural or spiritual lives.

Regardless if one accepts or rejects these suggestions to move forward, each and every one of us still has a responsibility to remain watchful for matters that may be introduced into our small remnant. False doctrine and the spreading of leaven still could impact each of our Ecclesias. If this happens, then we must continue to address these matters in a Christ like attitude. We must try to bring the sinner back to the Truth and warn others about the possibility of leaven in our midst. We must remember that the exclusively Unamended remnant is not immune from future outbursts of leaven in our midst.

Strengthening the things that remain should be our only option to show agape love towards our brethren in this evil day just prior to the return of our Lord and Master. However, the way that we provide and manifest this strength is established by the requirements of God's Holy Word. We must remember that we can never make, force or shame a brother or sister into understanding the Truth as we do or to working in God's vineyard as we do. Rebuke and reproof are necessary at times. But these still must be done with

the primary objective of restoration. Different individuals sometimes require different scriptural approaches in order to help them. This is all part of the process of "Pressing Forward". Through our agape love for each other, we must find a way to bear each others burdens, restore each other to the faith once delivered to the saints and to strengthen each other as much as possible.

During the 2017 Arkansas Bible School, we were exhorted to stop the back biting, the murmurs and the complaints about our brethren. Part of the process of pressing forward toward the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus is to take heed to this exhortation. There are times that we can rightly apply these words of admonition to those who oppose our exclusive stance. But, in the same manner, we should apply this warning to ourselves. We cannot treat others any differently than we expect others to treat us. We should never be a back biter, a murmurer or complainer about how brethren treat us individually or as an Ecclesia. If we don't like what someone says about us or does to us, then go talk to them. If we don't have the strength to talk to brethren on an individual basis or choose not to talk to them, then we have no option other than to forget about the things in the past and press forward, move on. Stop complaining and murmuring. Strengthen the things that remain. Press forward towards the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

In 1 Corinthians 15:58, we are commanded to be steadfast and unmovable in the work of the Lord. Are we being steadfast and unmovable when we continue to cling to the negative matters in the past that have separated us from our brethren because of scriptural beliefs?

This writer admits that social media may be the only way to keep up with the physical health of the members of the Christ body who are separated from us either in geographic distance or in spiritual matters. And if this is all that our social media contacts are used for, then that may be a good and profitable and spiritual utilization of our time. The individuals from whom we have separated because of differences in basic scriptural doctrines are still our brethren and we should continue to pray for their physical and spiritual health.

Brethren, it is a sad commentary about the state of the Unamended Body that we even have to write articles such as this. It would be wonderful if we didn't have divisions and hurt feelings and differences in personalities and different understandings of first principle doctrines, but we do. It is an unpleasant fact that we have to live with and in the opinion of this writer, it will not be resolved until Christ returns.

As the previous Spring, 2017 article asked, where are our feet planted? Are they solidly with others who have chosen to return and maintain the exclusivity of the Truth as commanded in every book of God's Word or are they dragging one foot behind with those who have willingly chosen to support false doctrinal beliefs and unscriptural fellowship practices that are not supported by Scriptural commandments?

PRESSING FORWARD

We should never dis-fellowship brethren without due cause and without an honest and objective search for the truth of the matter under discussion followed with a sincere effort to discuss the matter with the erring brother or sister. This should not be a quick or knee jerk decision, but rather it should only be done after sincere and humble prayer to our heavenly Father for guidance and direction. The same considerations should be taken when we dis-associate ourselves fraternally and socially from brethren who we continue to agape, but with whom in good conscience we cannot walk down the path that they have chosen.

Brethren, the time of our mortality is short, the days are quickly flying. Let us focus on those things that we can spiritually impact in a positive manner. We should be striving to crucify the thoughts and actions of the flesh that would keep us from the Kingdom. Do we gather knowledge about our brethren for condemnation, for criticism or to murmur to complain or to help them and restore them to the path that is defined by God's Word? How will we answer that question at the Judgment seat? Let us take heed to the words of Paul and "*press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*".

I Corinthians 15::58 – "*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*"

B. Henderson

Waiting for God is a painful part... It never was intended to be anything else. It involves self-denial on all hands. It makes those who accept it the poor, the sorrowful, the meek, the weeping, the weary, the hungry and thirsty, the broken down, the persecuted, the defamed, the disliked, and (in past times) the killed; but the future of this class is so glorious that Jesus tells them to rejoice and be exceeding glad in the midst of their tribulations. Theirs is the turning of weeping into laughter; theirs is the great joy of being, in the great day at hand, the manifested children of God with glory, honour, and immortality. Who would not, in view of such a coming reversal of position, choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

- Robert Roberts, Sept, 1875, The Christadelphian.

THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL

Numbered - Weighed - Divided



PRIOR to reading this article, we ask our readers to open their Bibles and turn to the fifth chapter of the prophet Daniel.

When studying the book of Daniel, we should remember that Daniel and his 3 companions (among others) were among the first to be taken captive to Babylon, about 605 BC. About 2 years later, we read in Daniel 2:1, that Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams. This was in the second year of his sole reign as king, which according to Jeremiah 25:1, was also the 5th year of Jehoiakim's reign as the Judean king. The year of this dream would have been about 603 BC and Daniel would be about 17 years old.



The dream was troubling to the king, and finally Daniel was called upon to reveal the dream and its interpretation. Daniel establishes that the dream was about an image of a man whose various parts were made up of differing types of metals. In verse 38, Daniel says, “*thou art this head of gold*”, he then adds in verse 39, “*and after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee*”.

This “inferior” kingdom would, of course, be that of the Medes and the Persians, who captured Babylon during a drunken feast that co-regent Belshazzar was hosting, wherein he defiled the holy vessels that were stolen from the temple in Jerusalem.

In Daniel 5, we find these statements that are recorded about the dream of Belshazzar: *"In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another. The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And the king spake, and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and shew me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom. Then came in all the king's wise men: but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof. Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished. Now the queen, by reason of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banquet house: and the queen spake and said, O king, live for ever: let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed: There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers; Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and shewing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will shew the interpretation. Then was Daniel brought in before the king. And the king spake and said unto Daniel, Art thou that Daniel, which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry? I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee. And now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the interpretation thereof: but they could not shew the interpretation of the thing: And I have heard of thee, that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts: now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom."* (vv 5-16)

Therefore, 64 years after Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the prophet was called upon once again, this time to interpret the handwriting on the wall. Daniel was now about 81 years old and was sent by Yahweh to predict the end of the first stage of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Daniel 5:25-28 records this prediction – *"And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.* This is the interpretation of the thing:

- **MENE**; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it.
- **TEKEL**; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.

- **PERES**; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.”



The prophet had witnessed the fulfillment of Jeremiah and Ezekiel's predictions about the destruction of Jerusalem about 47 years earlier when he was about 34 years old. But this, the first of his prophecies, was coming to pass right before his eyes. It most assuredly would have done nothing but to bolster his already perfect faith in his Creator.

Concerning this event, history tells us of the details. Historical maps indicate that the City of Babylon was built on both sides of

the Euphrates river with most of the important buildings on the east side of the river, but with a wall surrounding the entire complex.

While all the royalty of Babylon was in a drunken stupor; the miracle of the spirit hand was writing its message on the wall. The armies of the Medes and Persians were busy diverting the flow of the river into a nearby marsh land, and when the river had receded to about two feet in depth, the enemy marched into Babylon and took control of the city without a fight. Belshazzar was killed, and in a matter of one night, Daniel's prophecy had come to pass.

This picture of the Chronicle of Nabonidus offers proof of the events of which we have been speaking of. This is a chronicle of Nabonidus, who was the ruler of the Babylonian kingdom, and father of Belshazzar,

whom he appointed as ruler over the city of Babylon. When Nabonidus knew that the Persians were coming, he left the city and fled to Borsipa, leaving Belshazzar in charge. This chronicle was written sometime after the fact.

This being a brief history of those events of 539 BC, we should ask what all this may mean to us. I think it all points us to the future and something that is written in Revelation 16:12 — *“And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon*

Nabonidus Chronicle, c .539 BCE



In the month of Arahsamna, the third day [29 October], Cyrus entered Babylon, green twigs were spread in front of him—the state of peace was imposed upon the city. Cyrus sent greetings to all Babylon. Gobryas, his governor, installed sub-governors in Babylon.

the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared."

Revelation 16 provides a prophecy of the "latter day" Euphrates that will be dried up, so the antitypical Babylon might be conquered, by the antitypical Cyrus.

- **Isaiah 44:28** – *"That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid."*
- **Isaiah 45:1-2** – *"Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron."*
- **Isaiah 41:1-3** – *"Keep silence before me, O islands; and let the people renew their strength: let them come near; then let them speak: let us come near together to judgment. Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings? He gave them as the dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow. He pursued them, and passed safely; even by the way that he had not gone with his feet."*



It has long been contended that the drying of the Euphrates spoken of here was the demise of the old Ottoman Empire, and that drying began about 1820 AD and that the Euphratean power has continually been reduced to where it is but a trickle today in the form of the

country of Turkey. We certainly are not going to dispute that because it is a historical fact and yet as long as Turkey exists the Euphrates still flows.

The word "dried" in Revelation 16:12 is Strong's G3583, ξηραίνω, *xērainō*, *xay-rah'ee-no*. This word comes from G3584; *"to desiccate; by implication to shrivel, to mature: - dry up, pine away, be ripe, wither (away)."* To "desiccate" means to dehydrate, and when something is dehydrated, it has no water.

To better understand the future drying up of the antitypical Euphrates, we ask the readers to read from *Elpis Israel* beginning on page 413 (page 425 Logos Edition) under the heading *"THE EASTERN QUESTION IN THE TIME*

OF THE END". Brother Thomas explains how Russia is to take Constantinople in the last days.

In the "last of the days" when Gogue takes Turkey by storm, and more importantly, Istanbul, that is Constantinople, the Euphrates will be desiccated or dried. Nebuchadnezzar's colossus will stand erect in that day. But

when the stone is cut out of the mountain, and the antitypical Cyrus and his army destroy Gogue, the way to Rome, the antitypical Babylon, will be wide open and the drunken feasting of the harlot will soon thereafter cease. Belshazzar's feast is repeated in the last of the days, when the Gogian Autocrat is defeated, and the Papal power is consolidated in the revival of the old Holy Roman Empire, and the temporal power of the Papal throne is also restored.

As Belshazzar called for a thousand of his Lords to come and drink wine and celebrate, he ordered that the golden vessels, stolen from the temple at Jerusalem, be brought forth and as they drank wine from the vessels, they praised the gods of **gold, silver, brass, iron**, wood and stone, thereby making a mockery of the name Yahweh.

In the same way, the antitypical celebration is called for, and the kings of the earth gather themselves to imbibe and they are made drunken with the wine or doctrines of the harlot's filthiness, and by partaking thereof they endorse the actions of the harlot, and are in communion, fellowship, and agreement with the dictates that proceed forth from the mouth of the harlot, which is the little horn that speaks blasphemous words.

- **Revelation 17:2** – *"the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication."*
- **Revelation 17:4-6** – *"And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration."*

Remnant of the Ottoman Empire



- **Revelation 18:3** – *“For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.”*

These kings of the earth that endorse the policy of the beast, will receive power as kings one hour with the beast. This “one hour” is a prophetic period of 30 years. This next series of verses spells out the demise of the beast over that period.

- **Revelation 17:3** – *“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.”*
- **Revelation 18:10** – *“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 judgment come.”*
- **Revelation 18:17** – *“For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off,”*
- **Revelation 18:19** – *“And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.”*

The parallels between Daniel 5 and Revelation 16, 17 and 18 are clearly evident.

The writing obscured, but then revealed

The prophecies of the “*end of the days*”, that is, the end of the times of the Gentiles are set in place, the Spirit hand produced the writing on the wall 2000 years ago, and the apostasy has obscured what it said, but in the last days the words “*you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting*” will be as clear as crystal.

Regarding that, note in Daniel 5:25, the writing was not in Hebrew, but it was written in the Chaldean language. Of the 1000, or so, people that were at Belshazzar’s feast, all of them most likely spoke and read Chaldean. So why could they not read the writing on the wall?

The astrologers, the Chaldeans, and soothsayers were called in but they could not read the words either. The Queen mother, who was the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, came to Belshazzar and advised him to seek the help of Daniel the prophet, who years before, had interpreted the Dream of her father.

After Daniel condemns all that Belshazzar was and what he stood for, look at Daniel 5:24 – “*Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written.*” So simply enough, the hand of the Spirit of Yahweh had obscured the writing, but when the “*hand was sent from him*”, the words were revealed. Daniel then explains that the meanings of the written words of

MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PERES (KJV – verse 25-27) were - “numbered, numbered, weighed, and divided”.

The words were not a warning, they were a condemnation, a pronouncement of guilt and judgment. That night Belshazzar was slain, and the kingdom of Babylon was removed.

To emphasize the end of Babylon and its antitypical counterpart, let's take a quick look at what the prophet Jeremiah said about this Babylon and what it foreshadowed.

- Jeremiah 50:38 – *“A drought is upon her waters; and they shall be dried up: for it is the land of graven images, and they are mad upon their idols.”*
- Jeremiah 51:1-10 – *“Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will raise up against Babylon, and against them that dwell in the midst of them that rise up against me, a destroying wind; And will send unto Babylon fanners, that shall fan her, and shall empty her land: for in the day of trouble they shall be against her round about. Against him that bendeth let the archer bend his bow, and against him that lifteth himself up in his brigandine: and spare ye not her young men; destroy ye utterly all her host. Thus the slain shall fall in the land of the Chaldeans, and they that are thrust through in her streets. For Israel hath not been forsaken, nor Judah of his God, of the LORD of hosts; though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel. Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity; for this is the time of the LORD'S vengeance; he will render unto her a recompense. Babylon hath been a golden cup in the LORD'S hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad. Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed: howl for her; take balm for her pain, if so be she may be healed. We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed: forsake her, and let us go every one into his own country: for her judgment reacheth unto heaven, and is lifted up even to the skies. The LORD hath brought forth our righteousness: come, and let us declare in Zion the work of the LORD our God.”*
- Jeremiah 51:13 – *“O thou that dwellest upon many waters, abundant in treasures, thine end is come, and the measure of thy covetousness.”*
- Jeremiah 51:24-26 – *“And I will render unto Babylon and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight, saith the LORD. Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the LORD, which destroyest all the earth: and I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain. And they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations; but thou shalt be desolate for ever, saith the LORD.”*
- Jeremiah 51:36 – *“Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will plead thy cause, and take vengeance for thee; and I will dry up her sea, and make her springs dry.”*

- Jeremiah 51:39 – *“In their heat I will make their feasts, and I will make them drunken, that they may rejoice, and sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the LORD.”*

Everything is self-evident about Babylon of the past, there only remains Babylon of the future. We know of its impending judgments, as we know the prophecies. We see the signs of the times, and we wait for their fulfillment.

Is that all we have to do? Wait? I'd say that while we're waiting, we are to busy ourselves in preparation for that great and terrible day of the Lord, because, there remains the matter of the writing on the wall for you and me.

There is more than sufficient scripture that directs us in maintaining the integrity of the faith once delivered unto the saints, scripture that encourages us to remain steadfast and alert. And more than ample help in directing the affairs of our daily lives as would be in accordance with the commands of our Lord.

So, we don't have any excuses for not doing those things that are right and expected of us. Yet our flesh is weak, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, too often gain the upper hand and those thoughts and desires direct us where we ought not to go, and do things we ought not to do. We can gain strength in the prayer of Daniel.

In chapter 9 of Daniel we see the beloved prophet as he was contemplating the words of the elder prophet Jeremiah, about the 70 years of the desolation of Jerusalem and the captivity of his people (Jeremiah 25). Surely Daniel knew that within 2 years of this writing, the 70 years would expire. He would have looked forward to a better time for his people, for whom he prayed.

Daniel 9:1-19:

- *“And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments...”*
- *“O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day...”*
- *“O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him; Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws...”*
- *“Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and*

- *the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him...*
- *“O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us. Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.”*

Our sins may not be as those of Israel, yet they are driven by the same factors that caused the people of Yahweh to sin and fall away. Our prayers should be as those of Daniel 9:19. We too are called by his name, **“the Israel of God”**, and we pray that he defer not till the prophecies are fulfilled.

Brother Thomas had this to say about prophecy: *“The great incidents of history which have given rise to successive kingdoms and dominions, from the overturning of the kingdom and throne of God, and of David, His anointed, in Judea, by the Chaldeans, to the present time, are but events predetermined and arranged in the purpose of God, and revealed in the “sure word of prophecy”*. Not a kingdom has been established, nor a king dethroned, but it has formed a move, which has contributed to the maturity of the present crisis, which will ultimate in the introduction of the kingdom of God”. Elpis Israel – page 323 – “The light of prophecy”.

Prophecy, brethren, is the great motivator. Our desire is to be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, from this body laden with corruption and sin, to a body filled with spirit nature. That will only happen when the prophecies concerning “the end of the days” have arrived. What we see before us today are the fore- runners of the fulfillment of all things

Let each of us pray for our own steadfastness, but moreover let us pray for the good of each brother and sister and the ecclesia as a whole, in these, the end of the days.

Our exhortation is that when we stand before the judge of heaven and earth, may none of us see or hear the words: “You have been weighed in the balances and found wanting.”

Tommy Azbill



WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE



IN Prov. 3: 13-20 it reads:

“Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her. The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens. By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew.”

The words **wisdom** and **knowledge** are sometimes used interchangeably as if they mean the same thing. However, there is considerable difference between them. Knowledge, we might say, refers to what we know, while **wisdom** concerns the proper use of that knowledge.



Wisdom requires a store of knowledge from which to draw; and as a rule, the more knowledge we have the more wisely we are able to conduct ourselves. The mere possession of knowledge, however, is no assurance of

wisdom. A man with only a little knowledge may actually be wiser than another with much more knowledge. We need wisdom to make the best use of our knowledge, and we require knowledge for the proper exercise of our wisdom.

Another word closely related to both wisdom and knowledge is **understanding**. Understanding, we might say, fits in between wisdom and knowledge and includes some of the meaning of each. We find it used quite often in the Bible as a synonym for either one or the other, or both.

Many passages of the Bible stress the importance of true wisdom and knowledge, and strongly urge us to acquire them. They also refer us to the Word of God as our most reliable source, and warn us against deceptive substitutes that pass for wisdom and knowledge among men but in the end lead to destruction.

Prov. 4: 7-10 reads:

"Wisdom is the principle thing; therefore get wisdom and with all thy getting get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. She shall give thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee. Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings, and the years of thy life shall be many."

How do we get wisdom? And where do we find the treasures of knowledge? Wisdom and knowledge, like God himself, are everywhere and all around us. All that we really need is the ability to recognize them when we find them. Reading the Word of God, which he gave us for this very purpose, will open our eyes and give us understanding.

Prov. 2: 1-6 states:

"My son if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee, so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding: yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding: if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding."

And in Prov. 9:10

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy (Holy One) is understanding."

This makes it clear that until we learn to know about God and to fear him we cannot know the meaning of true wisdom, and will search in vain for any real understanding. The only one who can be any worse off than this is he who does not even believe that there is a God. And concerning such we read, *"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God."*

On the other hand, those who find God and learn to know him have found the fountainhead of all wisdom and knowledge, and the source of every good and perfect gift. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of him is life eternal. *"This is life eternal",* said Jesus, *"that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."* And having come forth from God, Jesus himself is the very embodiment of true wisdom and knowledge.

The Scriptures also tell us, *"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."* And again, *"The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man that they are vanity."*

The apostle writes in 1st Cor. 3: 18-19:

"Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God."

This is certainly not very flattering to the men of this world who pride themselves on their wisdom. Perhaps some of the present generation would readily agree that people were not very wise in the days when the above words were written. Just look at some of the wonders of modern science, they might say. Surely you can't call all of this foolishness?

But before we go any further let us recall again that there is a difference between wisdom and knowledge. We can admit that no knowledge based on fact is foolishness. We can admit that the world today has accumulated a vast amount of very valuable knowledge. But many will agree that this knowledge is not always used wisely, and therefore, that in spite of its knowledge, the wisdom of this world is often foolishness.

Another thing to remember is that nearly all of this modern knowledge and "know-how", has to do with temporal things: while in the knowledge of God and his righteousness there has been very little real progress in nearly 2000 years. Thus, the words of the apostle Paul would still apply as much as they ever did where he speaks of men, "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 3:7).

Therefore, the foolishness of the world today need not refer to its scientific achievements themselves but rather to the fact that men still make these temporal things their primary objective in life, while neglecting the eternal things of God that are far more important. Paul, speaking with the wisdom that comes from above, says in 2nd Cor. 4:18.

"While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal".

How quickly the few years allotted to us are over. And how foolish to spend them all in the pursuit of temporal things, especially when even our present life can be richer and happier by giving attention to the wisdom from above. Jesus provides the following advice in Matthew 6:33.

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you."

One of the peculiar things of the world is that most men will give almost anything for a few more years of their present life, but at the same time show little interest in God's offer of eternal life. Is it any wonder, then, that in the sight of God the wisdom of men is foolishness? Yet the majority of men have assumed this attitude ever since the priceless gift was made available to them.

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly," said Jesus. But in one of his parables he relates in Matt. 22:2-3,

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come."

They all had something else they wanted to do, and mistreated and even killed those that were sent. Finally the king said to his servants in Matt. 22:8-9,

"The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage."

This parable was of course directed chiefly against the Jews to whom the offer was made before it went to the Gentiles. As Paul also told the Jews, in Acts 13,

"Seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." But among the Gentiles also, "many are called but few are chosen."

True wisdom tells us that we can well afford to make any sacrifice that may be necessary in our present life to win eternal life, even to giving up our life itself. In fact, this is just what we are asked to do: to give our temporal life to Christ in exchange for the eternal life he gives to us.

"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it," said Jesus, *"and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."* But to most men their present life seems more important than God's promise of a better life to come, which of course is only what we must expect from the man who looks at things which are seen rather than at things which are not seen.

Paul tells us in I Cor. 2:14,

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him, neither can we know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

And so the wisdom of men is foolishness with God, and the wisdom of God is foolishness to men. And as long as this state of affairs exists men will continue to die in their folly. John 3:19 states,

WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE

“And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

Hence, to obtain eternal life we must first of all change our way of thinking. We must, as Paul put it, *“become fools”* in order that we may be wise. And when Jesus and his disciples called on men to *“repent and believe the gospel”*, they were offering them a new life through a new way of thinking. For this is what it means to repent: *“to have another mind”*, which also agrees with Paul in Rom. 12 where he says,

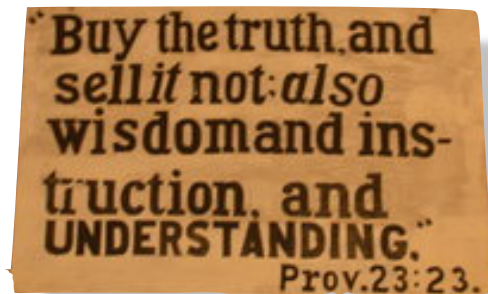
“Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

And now, in conclusion, let us note that the two kinds of wisdom we have been considering really correspond to the two minds that are dealt with throughout the Bible, and, which have been fighting for supremacy in the world of men ever since the transgression of Adam and Eve; namely, the carnal/fleshly mind and the spiritual. When we are possessed of both a carnal mind and a spiritual mind, as are all true followers of the Lord Jesus, there is bound to be conflict within us, as well as without. One mind telling us one thing and the other something else.

In order to overcome this condition there is only one thing for us to do: we must make up our minds once and for all that we will always try to decide in favor of the wisdom that is from above. When we do this we will have found true wisdom, and the way to life eternal.

“Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.”

Joel Thomas



THE THIEF ON THE STAKE

FEW subjects are as misunderstood by the modern Christian world as “the thief on the stake”, while we would also submit that few Bible characters are as ignored or overlooked as this man who suffered beside our Lord on that dark and mournful night. Through this article it is our goal to learn more about this man while reinforcing our beliefs regarding our Saviour that suffered beside him as the Lamb of God.

Before going further, we would suggest that the reader opens their Bible and turns to the record of the crucifixion as written down in Mark 15:9-28. These verses begin with Pontius Pilate asking the crowd what should be done to Jesus, King of the Jews and then follow in detail of the mock trial, cruel scourging and finally the crucifixion of our Lord on the stake at Golgotha. What an awful scene where the Son of God, our righteous Savior, was nailed to the accursed tree. And while we are forever thankful for what Jesus was to do that day, providing atonement for himself and his people and thereby opening a new way to the tree of life, we must also realize the precious price that was paid. There are so many distinct parts of this chapter that we could spend time on, for Christ’s atoning work is one of the two key subjects of the Gospel, but for today let us focus our minds on some things that happened while Jesus hung from the stake, a wonderful yet sometimes overlooked event, involving the thief on the stake.



As we see here in Mark 15:27, Jesus was crucified with two thieves. Luke calls them *malefactors*, a word which simply means “*wrong doer, criminal*”. One was on his right hand and the other was on his left, while Jesus hung in the middle, the perfect man amidst two ardent sinners. He was indeed numbered with the transgressors. This of course, as Mark 15:28 references, was in fulfillment of Isaiah 53:12 - “*and He was numbered with the transgressors...*”

Like in many Gospel studies, it is important to turn to the various writers to obtain all of the key details. Accordingly, please turn to Matthew’s account in Matthew 27:34-44. In the verses before us we see an awful scene. Jesus our Lord hanging from the stake, mocked as the King of the Jews, a derision to all that were before him. Indeed a crowd even sat down to watch him suffer and wag their hands at the Son of God, as if at a sporting event, mocking him for the various proclamations he’d made in his ministry. And, sadly, the two thieves themselves joined in. Matthew 27:44 says, they “*cast the same in his teeth*”. The Hebrew word for “*cast in teeth*” here means “*to defame, rail at, chide, taunt.*” Thus we see Jesus not only taunted by the crowd below him, but also by the two dying thieves beside him – which, of course, he could probably hear more easily.

Yet something amazing was soon about to happen with one of the two thieves, an amazing transformation that we would like to discuss in depth. *Here was a criminal, a man who was justly hung for his sins, a man that was taunting the Lord, and yet something clicked.* How and why did this happen? That is for us to explore now.

“Father, forgive them...”

Before we do our next reading we would like to make a quick side note that is very important to our study. We would like to note that throughout the four Gospels, it is recorded that Jesus made seven sayings as he hung on the stake. All were purposed, all had their place. Some of these sayings we can bring to mind quickly, such as “*Eli Eli Lama Sabachthani*” or “*It is finished*”. We remember his last words, “*Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.*” In any case, the critical passage that we are going to consider contains two other of the Lord’s sayings and it has been suggested that the two which we reference here are the first and second sayings uttered by our Lord Jesus as he hung on the accursed tree.

So with these things in mind, let us further explore the account of the thief on the stake as recorded in Luke 23:32-43. In verse 34 we see the first saying of Jesus Christ on the stake. A man who was being murdered, a man who could have said just about anything chose to say in prayer before anything else passed his righteous lips, “*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do*”. Jesus here takes the Supreme moral high road that he taught in the Sermon on the Mount, turning the other cheek to those mocking him around about. Judgment had been proclaimed upon the wicked leaders of the people already in the Mount Olivet prophecy and elsewhere and that would certainly

remain. However, many of the people had been whipped into a frenzy and Jesus now prayed for them – that they would turn to a new course of life. Of course, we know from the rest of his teachings and Yahweh's word as a whole that forgiveness is not given without repentance. These two principles are inseparable concepts or pillars of Scripture. Thus as Jesus hung over this wicked crowd with two malefactors on each side of him, he prayed for their repentance and their forgiveness in such case. While his Olivet prophecy spoke of the just judgments to come down on the leaders and the people, he was willing that none should perish but that all would come to repentance. We think of Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 7:9-10 which have applicability here - *"for godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation..."* Here we see that godly sorrow works repentance. Repentance in turn is connected with forgiveness as preached, for example, by Peter in Acts 5:30-31 - *"The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."*

It is also important to note at this point that Jesus in saying these words, *"Father, forgive them"*, was acting as a mediator, a role which he assumed as the high priest. As the Scriptures later recorded in 1 Timothy 2:5, *"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."* Paul also speaks of this mediatorial work in Hebrews 9:14-15 - *"He is the Mediator of the new covenant..."* Coming full circle as we picture the scene in Luke 23 in our minds, we see this mediator offering himself without spot to God. Though suffering immensely, he was praying for those around him, those who would repent and be forgiven through the atoning work that he was courageously and confidently completing.

While we certainly believe that Jesus' prayer was answered as many of the Jews who were witnesses and even participated in these awful events would soon learn the Truth, repent, and convert as part of the work of the apostles. (For that matter, even the apostles themselves had to be fully converted!) However, in one way, the prayer was answered for Jesus right there, right then. Because we fully believe that in those hours, in those minutes before our Lord fell asleep, Jesus saw the first fruit of his prayer come to fruition in perhaps a most unexpected source (at least to most men, we would say, for Jesus could see the heart of the suffering criminal beside him).

A transformation

Back in Luke 23:39, let's pick up with our consideration of this key passage. In this verse we see the first thief railing on Jesus. When you look this phrase up in Strong's, it simply means *"to vilify, speak impiously."* You can almost hear the vile language and attitude of this thief as he mockingly says, *"If thou be Christ, save thyself and us."* It is at this point of course, that the other thief shows a complete transformation. Remember, before this moment we know that **both** of the thieves were mocking Christ and yet, now, something was different. For the second thief, think of what he had just heard

from Jesus and then from the crowd: verses 34-37. It is evident that these words were not lost on the second thief. He heard Jesus praying to His Father for forgiveness. He saw this man mocked as King. And he heard many of the rulers and the first thief mockingly refer to this man, Jesus of Nazareth, as the Christ.

At some point in this sequence of events it is evident that something clicked. We note that the word Christ means *anointed* or *Messiah*. It is the title of the man that the Jews had longed for over the centuries. We know the Jews were looking for him as seen for example in Matthew 2:4-6. We see here that even wicked Herod knew about the coming Messiah and his birthplace was well known from the prophecy of Micah 5:2,4-5. Here we see one of the many prophecies of the Messiah, but in these verses we see a concentration on the Kingly aspects and indeed this is what the Jews of Christ's time looked for. They desired a King that would come and break off the yoke of the Romans. Thus we see how excited the Jews were when John the Baptizer showed up on the scene in John 1:19-23. We know of course that the term "*that prophet*" in verse 21 refers to the prophet like unto Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15-19. The point is that the nation was looking for the Messiah – they were just looking for him as a King!

Prophetic expectation

We could go on and on, but the point is this - The Jews as a whole knew the prophecies of the coming Messiah. However, with very few exceptions they chose to concentrate on the prophecies of the coming King and completely, totally, missed the prophecies of the suffering savior who would take away the sins of the world. Ironically, one of the most important prophecies of the Old Testament that gave a timeframe from the Messiah, was not understood.

Let's turn over to Daniel 9:25-26 - *"from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks ... and after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off..."* In this prophecy of the 70 weeks, a clear timeframe was being given for the Messiah, a timeframe that men and women of faith like Simeon and Anna looked for. Yet somehow most missed the detail that Messiah would be cut off, though having no personal transgression, and in so doing would confirm or seal the everlasting covenant. Note here that Messiah is referred to here as the Prince which should have guided their minds back to Daniel 8:9-12,23-25. Once again, these verses clearly show two appearances of Messiah the Prince, once in the last days of Judah's Commonwealth and then again in the latter days of Gentile times. Why could they not see? Most notably we think of other prophecies like Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22 which so clearly teach the doctrine of a suffering savior. Yet all they could think of was the King aspects, not the Savior aspects.

Focusing our minds back to the scene at Calvary, it is evident that finally the second thief understood. He was hanging beside this Messiah. The man

that he and the majority of other Jews had longed for was right beside him. He was the Messiah, he was to be the King of Israel. We believe this is a moment similar to when Saul of Tarsus finally was given the key of knowledge, for in the following verses we see the second thief illustrate a strong knowledge and faith in the Truth. Yahweh had opened his eyes, and he responded. We see then that he immediately speaks up in defense of Jesus: Luke 23:40-41 - *"Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man hath done nothing amiss."*

The Fear of God

In verse 40 it is said that he rebuked the first thief. This word in the Greek means *"to tax upon, censure, admonish"*. Through his own pain, through his own suffering, this man then turns to the other thief (and remember, Jesus our Lord is in the middle) and admonishes the other to *"fear God"*. The thief had come to this conclusion already. The word *fear* here means *"to frighten, be alarmed, be in awe of, revere"*. We are commanded likewise to fear God in 1 Peter 2:17, and the world will someday hear these words as part of the mid-heaven Gospel proclamation in Revelation 14:7. The key principle here is that to fear God is the beginning of wisdom and indeed is the beginning of a path to salvation. Let's look up some key verses which no doubt the second thief now understood:

- Proverbs 1:7 - *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: But fools despise wisdom and instruction."*
- Proverbs 14:26-27, - *"In the fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death."*
- Ecclesiastes 12:13 - *"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."*

After expressing his own fear of Yahweh, the second thief continued in Luke 23:40 by saying, *"thou art in the same condemnation."* The second thief understood that all three men were condemned to death. The Greek word is *krima*, simply meaning *"a decision"*, referring to the condemnation of all three by the chief priests, and commonly rendered *"judgment, condemnation or damnation"* in the Bible. One key set of verses we'd like to look at in regards to this word is found in Romans 5:12-21. In these verses we see the word *judgment* used in verse 16 – this is the word *krima* that the thief on the stake referred to. Here in Romans this word refers to the judgment decision that was placed upon Adam that led in turn to the condemnation that was placed upon many. The latter word *condemnation* here is *katakrima*, meaning *"adverse sentence, the verdict."* We thus see that while Adam was judged and punished due to his breaking of the Edenic Law, all of his posterity – though not personally responsible for his sin – would come under the effects of a legally condemned nature to be passed down through the generations. Hence we are inheritors of Adamic Condemnation.

All three men were bearing the *krima* of judgment from the leaders and were now accursed as they hung on the tree. However, the second thief could see a difference. He saw that – just like us – he and the other thief received what he called “*a due reward for our deeds.*” This just reward is recorded in Romans 6:23, which says, “*the wages of sin is death*”.

However, as the thief said, Jesus had done nothing amiss. The phrase “*nothing amiss*” here is even clearer in the Greek. It literally means “*not even one thing out of place*”. Jesus did not even have one thing out of place. He never missed the mark. He never sinned. And it is evident that the second thief now understood this fact. He recognized that the man suffering beside him was a morally perfect man and, as I believe we can imply based upon the words he would continue to say, it is likely the thief now understood this was the Lamb of God. (John 1:29, 36.) Had the thief ever heard these words from the mouth of John the Baptizer? We do not know. Nonetheless it seems certain that the thief now grasped the concept which was a centerpiece of the Law of Moses and that would be spoken of later by the apostles in passages such as Hebrews 9:11-14.

Hope of the Kingdom

We would now like to turn back to the account in Luke to look at the last words that we know the repentant thief spoke in Luke 23:42 - “*Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.*” In this verse we see an awesome scene. We see this thief, once a common criminal who mocked the Lord as they both hung on the stake, now humbled, defending Jesus from his detracting mockers and now ready to show true repentance. He now turned to Jesus, who no doubt had heard the entire conversation between the two thieves, and offers what amounts to a simple prayer. He starts by saying, “*Lord*”, the Greek word *kurios*, meaning “*supreme in authority*”. He recognizes Jesus now as his Lord, his authority, and his savior. He then continues by asking, “*remember me*”. This word means to “*bear in mind, recollect*”. The words “*remember me*” are remarkable in and of themselves. We think of how these same words were used by some of the greatest of the faithful many generations before – Hezekiah used a similar phrase, and Nehemiah is known to have used it many times. “*Remember me.*” Two simple words, but they relay such a wonderful lesson. In order to seriously put forth these words to the Lord, the thief had to believe that Messiah would be resurrected and be able to remember him at some future time. This is something that the apostles themselves did not understand! As they had forsaken him, fled and denied him, the apostles – even faithful John who stayed near the Lord – did not understand the doctrine of the resurrection until after it happened. Yet the thief did. Perhaps the thief remembered one of the Messianic Psalms such as Psalm 16:9-10 - “*For Thou wilt not leave my soul in sheol; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption.*” Or perhaps the thief clued in to what the apostles has missed from the words of the Master himself: Matthew 20:18-19, 16:4, John 10:17, 2:18-22. I think it is very likely that the thief knew about these words of Jesus as we know they were even used in mockery at

the stake as seen in Matthew 27:39,40,44. So again we see that this thief understood that the words that even he had perhaps been using as a jeer against this man Jesus – these words were true. Jesus would destroy the temple and build it again in three days, speaking of course of his flesh.

Hope in the Messiah, His return, and His resurrection

We now continue to look at the prayer of the second thief. In Luke 23:42 he continues by saying, *“when thou comest”*. The thief thus confesses his belief not only that Jesus would live again and be able to recollect him, but that Jesus would come back again. In particular he says, *“when thou comest in thy kingdom.”* The thief thus believed that Jesus would return as a King at a time yet future. He could see in this man a fulfillment to such prophecies as Genesis 49:8-10, Ezekiel 21:26-27, Hosea 3:4-5 to name a few. It seems that the thief understood that prophecies like these referred to Jesus of Nazareth. Yes, the man suffering beside him would return some day as a King, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, to take his rightful crown. The apostles did not understand this, as we see that in Acts 1:6-7 they wanted Christ to restore at that time the Kingdom to Israel. Yet the thief believed in a coming of Christ to fulfill all. Finally, and this should not be overlooked, the second thief understood that if Jesus accepted his repentance, the thief himself could be remembered by Christ and therefore could be resurrected and saved from death. Note that the thief does not ask for relief from current pain or suffering, he does ask to get out of his own inevitable death. He understands the Lamb of God’s mission and willingly suffers with him in hope of the future day. He understood that he would rest in hope and his dead body would be remembered, that he would be risen and that he would stand before the judgment seat of the man he now called *Lord*. Let’s look at some verses to establish these facts:

- Isaiah 26:19 - *“Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs.”*
- Job 19:26 - *“And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God (Eloah).”*
- 2 Corinthians 5:1-4 - *“that mortality might be swallowed up of life”*

Before moving forward to the words of our Lord Himself, let us think for a moment of the import of this prayer. What does this thief understand? We see that he has confessed that all three of the men are condemned, but only two justly in the sense of their transgressions. He thus recognized his guilt. He now sees that Jesus is the sinless Lamb of God. There was not one single thing amiss in this man. Though stricken with sinful flesh, he had never given into it. All of the men and women around them were mocking this man as the Messiah, but *he was the Messiah*. He was the Messiah who had just prayed that they would repent and be forgiven by the Father. And so the thief did

repent. He calls Jesus his Lord. He believes that Jesus would die, but that he would be resurrected after thus fulfilling his mission laid out in the prophets. He believed the grave could have no power over this righteous man. He believed that Jesus would one day come again as King and that in that day, Jesus would remember him and as the mediator Jesus could forgive him after his own resurrection. While the thief may indeed have been an 11th hour convert so to speak, it is clear then that he knew well the full Truth. He knew the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ. And he certainly recognized that *“there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”* What an amazing transformation! How great was this man’s faith!

“Thou shalt be with me in paradise”

We now turn to the words of Jesus himself. Before reading them, can we imagine what joy that these events gave to Jesus? His prayer to God had been answered, here was a man that now understood and repented, a man that humbled himself before his Lord. The simple response, for no doubt words were painful, is recorded in Luke 23:43 - *“Verily I say unto thee To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”* What beautiful words, and yet such misunderstood words by the masses that believe both Jesus and the thief were about to float off to heaven. We do not wish to distract too much from the main thrust of our topic by delving into the error here, but we must give a brief explanation of these words.

First and foremost we note that no Scripture can contradict Scripture. Believing that this verse speaks of heaven-going completely negates the lessons we have just reviewed regarding the thief on the stake. For instance, where does the resurrection come into play if Jesus and the thief were in heaven that day? Why would Jesus have to remember the thief because they would soon both be in heaven together? And what would it mean that Jesus had to come again in his Kingdom? How is it that Jesus would later say after the resurrection that he had not yet ascended unto the Father if he already had ascended to the Father? These things make no sense. And perhaps the best question of all – Jesus himself had spoken of the time he would spend in the grave. Does this make the grave paradise? Was Jesus celebrating death? Of course not. The simple key to this passage is that in the Greek, there is no punctuation. Also, in the Greek, *“shalt thou be”* is one word that could otherwise be accurately translated *“thou shalt be”*. When the translators took this passage from Greek to English, then, they put in their Orthodox biases of false Christianity. The Truth of the matter is that Jesus likely said the following: *“Verily I say unto thee today, thou shalt be with me in paradise.”* Before moving on from this point it is important to note that in Biblical speech the word *today* is often used without a specific time being stressed. For example, look at Exodus 34:11, Deuteronomy 8:19.

And now we return to our topic, the thief on the stake. No, Christ was not promising a place in a Kingdom beyond the skies. Jesus instead promises the

faithful thief a place in paradise. Paradise. Such a beautiful word yet so misunderstood. In the Greek the word means “*a park, an Eden*”. What a wonderful thing then as Jesus promises the thief that he will be with him in the Eden of the future Age. Yes, the thief will see Christ when he returns as King and, yes, the thief will be forgiven and be rewarded for his great faith in that day that we all desire. He will see the future day and be a part of the planting of Yahweh in the future Eden of the Age: Ezekiel 36:33-35, Isaiah 61:1-3, Psalm 92:12-13, Revelation 3:11-12.

Conclusion

As we conclude our thoughts on the thief, we know that he suffered on that night. He saw his Lord as the Spirit left him, as he finished his course and committed his life to the Father. He saw his Lord die, the breath of life returning to the Father. Eventually the soldiers came to break his own legs, thus speeding the painful process of his own death. Yet that man died in faith. He was risen upon the stake as a sinner, he came down as a humbled, repentant Brother in Christ. So what about us? We are not suffering on a literal stake, we are not there on the dark and mournful night. But do we fully appreciate the great sacrifice that our Lord made that night? Do we truly desire above all else to be with Christ and the thief in paradise? We make that answer now. In conclusion, let us look at several verses that we hope will mean even more to you now than they did before: Romans 8:13,18, Mark 8:34-35, Galatians 2:20.

David Bryan



THE blessing of being in the kingdom with Christ is predicated upon baptism based upon belief of the Truth; and since our Lord promised the thief that he should be with Him in paradise, or the kingdom, it follows that baptism had been submitted to. “But he was a thief!” some exclaim. Yes; that is against him his crime being a very grievous one. But God’s merciful kindness is great toward us. If it were not so, hopeless would be our case. In this matter it is not in evidence that the man was habitually a thief. As to the degree of his crime the Savior was a better judge than the Roman government was and than we can be. In any event there was penitence in the case, and what could be a more beautiful finish to the natural life of the “man of sorrow” than extraordinary manifestation and exercise of Divine mercy of which He was and is the very embodiment?

- Thomas Williams, *World’s Redemption*, pp. 522,523

SCOURGING AND CRUCIFIXION IN ROMAN TRADITION



Excerpts from *On The Physical Death of Jesus Christ*, JAMA, March 21, 1986 – Vol 255, No. 11). (The medical terms in this article have been edited into layman's terminology by: Carol R. Ritchie; TNCC, MSN, RN, CNOR.)

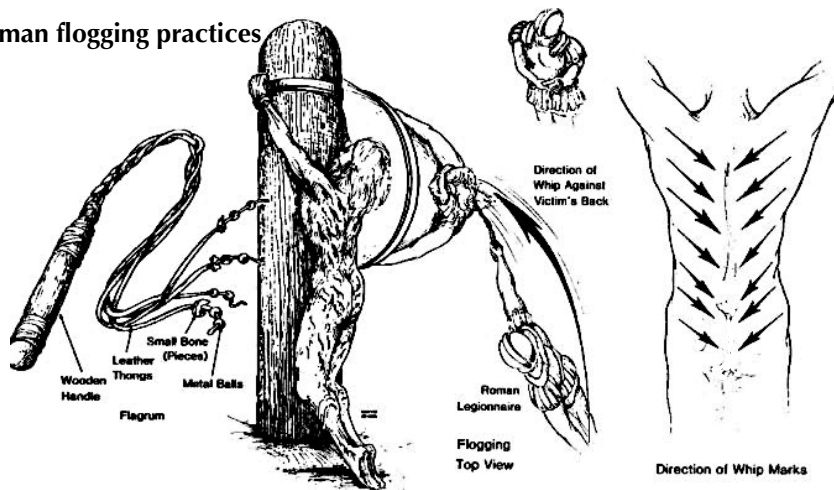
Scourging Practices

Flogging was a legal preliminary to every Roman execution, and only women and Roman senators or soldiers (except in cases of desertion) were exempt. The usual instrument was a short whip with several single or braided leather thongs of variable lengths, in which small iron balls or sharp pieces of sheep bones were tied at intervals. For scourging, the man was stripped of his clothing, and his hands were tied to an upright post. The back, buttocks, and legs were flogged either by two soldiers (lictors) or by one who alternated positions. The severity of the scourging depended on the disposition of the lictors and was intended to weaken the victim to a state just short of collapse or death. As the Roman soldiers repeatedly struck the victim's back with full force, the iron balls would cause deep contusions, and the leather thongs and sheep bones would cut into the skin and subcutaneous tissues. Then, as the flogging continued, the lacerations would tear into the underlying skeletal muscles and produce quivering ribbons of bleeding flesh. Pain and blood loss generally set the stage for circulatory shock. The extent of blood loss may well have determined how long the victim would survive on the cross. After the scourging, the soldiers often taunted their victim.

Crucifixion Practices

Although the Romans did not invent crucifixion, they perfected it as a form of torture and capital punishment that was designed to produce a slow death

Roman flogging practices



with maximum pain and suffering. It was one of the most disgraceful and cruel methods of execution and usually was reserved only for slaves, foreigners, revolutionaries, and the vilest of criminals. Roman law usually protected Roman citizens from crucifixion, except perhaps in the case of desertion by soldiers.

(The cross) was characterized by an upright post and a horizontal crossbar, and it had several variations. *[There is reasonable debate as to whether it was a "cross" or a single post stake. - SK]* It was customary for the condemned man to carry his own cross from the flogging post to the site of crucifixion outside the city walls. He was usually naked, unless this was prohibited by local customs. Since the weight of the entire cross was probably well over 300 lb. (136 kg), only the crossbar was carried. The crossbar, weighing 75 to 125 lb. (34 to 57 kg), was placed across the nape of the victim's neck and balanced along both shoulders. Usually, the outstretched arms then were tied to the crossbar. The processional to the site of crucifixion was led by a complete Roman military guard, headed by a centurion. One of the soldiers carried a sign on which the condemned man's name and crime were displayed. Later, the sign would be attached to the top of the cross. The Roman guard would not leave the victim until they were sure of his death.

Outside the city walls was permanently located the heavy upright wooden post, on which the crossbar would be secured. To prolong the crucifixion process, a horizontal wooden block or plank, serving as a crude seat, often was attached midway down the post.

At the site of execution, by law, the victim was given a bitter drink of wine mixed with myrrh (gall) as a mild pain reliever. The criminal was then thrown to the ground on his back, with his arms outstretched along the crossbar. The

hands could be nailed or tied to the crossbar, but nailing apparently was preferred by the Romans. The nails were tapered iron spikes approximately 5 to 7 in (13 to 18 cm) long with a square shaft 3/8 in (1 cm) across. The nails commonly were driven through the wrists rather than the palms.

After both arms were fixed to the crossbar, the crossbar and the victim, together, were lifted onto the post. Next, the feet were fixed to the cross, either by nails or ropes. Nailing was the preferred Roman practice. Although the feet could be fixed to the sides of the post or to a wooden footrest, they usually were nailed directly to the front of the post. To accomplish this, flexion of the knees may have been quite prominent, and the bent legs may have been rotated outward.

Roman crucifixion nails



When the nailing was completed, the sign was attached to the cross, by nails or cords, just above the victim's head. The soldiers and the civilian crowd often taunted and jeered the condemned man, and the soldiers customarily divided up his clothes among themselves. The length of survival generally ranged from three or four hours to three or four days and appears to have been inversely related to the severity of the scourging. However, even if the scourging had been relatively mild, the Roman soldiers could hasten death by breaking the legs below the knees.

Not uncommonly, insects would light upon or burrow into the open wounds or the eyes, ears, and nose of the dying and helpless victim, and birds of prey would tear at these sites. Moreover, it was customary to leave the corpse on the cross to be devoured by predatory animals. However, by Roman law, the family of the condemned could take the body for burial, after obtaining permission from the Roman judge.

Since no one was intended to survive crucifixion, the body was not released to the family until the soldiers were sure that the victim was dead. By custom, one of the Roman guards would pierce the body with a sword or lance. Traditionally, this had been considered a spear wound to the heart through the right side of the chest—a fatal wound probably taught to most Roman soldiers. Moreover, the standard infantry spear, which was 5 to 6 ft (1.5 to 1.8 m) long could easily have reached the chest of a man crucified on the customary low cross.

Medical Aspects of Crucifixion

With a knowledge of both anatomy and ancient crucifixion practices, one may reconstruct the probable medical aspects of this form of slow execution.

Each wound apparently was intended to produce intense agony, and the contributing causes of death were numerous.

The scourging prior to crucifixion served to weaken the condemned man and, if blood loss was considerable, to produce conditions leading to a severe drop in blood pressure, fainting, and even organ failure. When the victim was thrown to the ground on his back, in preparation for transfixion of his hands, his scourging wounds most likely would become torn open again and contaminated with dirt. Furthermore, with each respiration, the painful scourging wounds would be scraped against the rough wood of the post. As a result, blood loss from the back probably would continue throughout the crucifixion ordeal.

It has been shown that the dense fibrous tissue connecting the bones together, and bones of the wrist, can support the weight of a body hanging from them, but the palms cannot. Accordingly, the iron spikes probably were driven between the radius, the heavier of the two forearm bones, and the carpals, the eight wrist bones. Another probability for placement of the spikes could be between the row of carpal bones nearest the radius, or through the strong fibrous band-like tissue that covers the carpals, which forms a tunnel for the various fibrous bands connecting the eight carpal bones. The nail driven at this location would crush or sever the rather large median nerve. This nerve provides sensation and movement, particularly to the 2nd and 3rd fingers. Damage to the median nerve results in a contracture or a claw-like deformity of the hand. The damaged nerve would also produce excruciating bolts of fiery pain in both arms.

It is likely that the deep peroneal nerve, extending to the front of the ankle, and branches of the medial and lateral plantar nerves, would have been injured by the nails driven through the feet. Although scourging may have resulted in considerable blood loss, crucifixion per se was a relatively bloodless procedure, since no major arteries, other than perhaps the deep plantar arch, a confluence of arteries in the foot, pass through the favored anatomic sites of transfixion.

The crucial effect of crucifixion, beyond the excruciating pain, was a marked interference with normal respiration, particularly exhalation. The weight of the body, pulling down on the outstretched arms and shoulders, would tend to fix the chest muscles used for breathing in an inhalation state and thereby hinder passive exhalation. Accordingly, exhalation would require using the abdominal muscles rather than the chest muscles, and breathing would be shallow. It is likely that this form of respiration would not suffice and that a high level of carbon dioxide in the bloodstream would soon result. The onset of muscle cramps or tetanic contractions, due to fatigue and the high levels of carbon dioxide in the blood, would hinder respiration even further.

Adequate exhalation required lifting the body by pushing up on the feet and by flexing the elbows and pulling the shoulders inward. However, this maneuver would place the entire weight of the body on the bones in the feet, and would produce searing pain. Furthermore, flexion, or bending of the

elbows would cause rotation of the wrists about the iron nails and cause fiery pain along the damaged median nerves. Lifting of the body would also painfully scrape the scourged back against the rough wooden post. Muscle cramps and loss of feeling in both the outstretched and uplifted arms would add to the discomfort. As a result, each respiratory effort would become agonizing and tiring, further reducing the oxygen levels in the blood, and lead eventually to asphyxia.

The actual cause of death by crucifixion was multifactorial and varied somewhat with each case, but the two most prominent causes probably were shock from inadequate perfusion of critical organs due to blood loss and inadequate oxygen levels in the blood due to inability to breathe properly. Other possible contributing factors included dehydration, stress-induced arrhythmias of the heart, and congestive heart failure with the rapid accumulation of fluid around the heart and in lungs. Death by crucifixion was, in every sense of the word, excruciating (Latin, *excruciat*, or "out of the cross").

Scourging of Jesus

At the Praetorium, Jesus was severely whipped. (Although the severity of the scourging is not discussed in the four Gospel accounts, it is implied in one of the epistles - 1 Peter 2:24. A detailed word study of the ancient Greek text for this verse indicates that the scourging of Jesus was particularly harsh.) It is not known whether the number of lashes was limited to 39, in accordance with Jewish law. The Roman soldiers, amused that this weakened man had claimed to be a king, began to mock him by placing a robe on his shoulders, a crown of thorns on his head, and a wooden staff as a scepter in his right hand. Next, they spat on Jesus and struck him on the head with the wooden staff. Moreover, when the soldiers tore the robe from Jesus' back, they probably reopened the scourging wounds.

The severe scourging, with its intense pain and appreciable blood loss, most probably left Jesus in a pre-shock state. Moreover, bleeding from the skin particularly from the capillaries around the sweat glands from severe stress had rendered his skin particularly tender. The physical and mental abuse meted out by the Jews and the Romans, as well as the lack of food, water, and sleep, also contributed to his generally weakened state. Therefore, even before the actual crucifixion, Jesus' physical condition was at least serious and possibly critical.

Death of Jesus

Two aspects of Jesus' death have been the source of great controversy, namely, the nature of the wound in his side and the cause of his death after only several hours on the cross.

The gospel of John describes the piercing of Jesus' side and emphasizes the sudden flow of blood and water. Some authors have interpreted the flow of water to be fluid from the lining inside abdomen or urine, from an abdominal midline perforation of the bladder. However, the Greek word used by John

(pleura) clearly denoted laterality and often implied the ribs. Therefore, it seems probable that the wound was in the chest and well away from the abdominal midline.

Although the side of the wound was not designated by John, it traditionally has been depicted on the right side. Supporting this tradition is the fact that a large flow of blood would be more likely with a perforation of the heart near the distended and thin-walled right atrium or ventricle than the thick-walled and contracted left ventricle. Although the side of the wound may never be established with certainty, the right seems more probable than the left. The water probably represented fluid draining from the tissues lining the lung and heart and would have preceded the flow of blood and been smaller in volume than the blood. Perhaps in the setting of low blood volume and impending acute heart failure, lung and heart tissue drainage due to cellular imbalances may have developed and would have added to the volume of apparent water. The blood, in contrast, may have originated from the right atrium or the right ventricle or perhaps from a collection of blood from the lining around the heart.

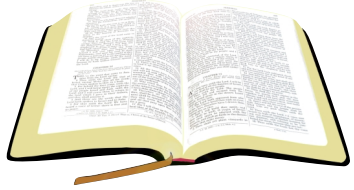
Jesus' death after only three to six hours on the cross surprised even Pontius Pilate. The fact that Jesus cried out in a loud voice and then bowed his head and died suggests the possibility of a catastrophic terminal event.

The actual cause of Jesus' death, like that of other crucified victims, may have been multifactorial and related primarily to shock from low blood volume, exhaustion asphyxia, and perhaps acute heart failure. A fatal cardiac arrhythmia may have accounted for the apparent catastrophic terminal event. Clearly, the weight of historical and medical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead before the wound to his side was inflicted and supports the traditional view that the spear, thrust between his right ribs, probably perforated not only the right lung but also the pericardium and heart and thereby ensured his death.

(We have not provided this article as a matter of morbid curiosity, but as a stark and all too realistic reminder to Christ's Brethren as to the profound degree of suffering experienced by our Savior. He who "was wounded for our transgression. He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement **which procured** (*marginal rendering* - SK) our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." - SK)



GOD'S ATTRIBUTES AND THE NATURE OF MAN



Fundamental Doctrines



PART TWO

THERE are 10 attributes of man that I would like to consider. Man is beneath God and his power and is but a spot or blemish on the footstool of God. The earth is God's footstool. This is the first weakness or attribute of man that we want to examine.

1. **EARTH IS GOD'S FOOTSTOOL.**

- **Isaiah 66:1**- *"Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?"*
- **Matthew 5:34-35** - *"But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: ³⁵Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King."*

So we see here that there is, like we said, no comparison. Heaven is God's throne and the earth where man resides is his footstool.

The second aspect of man that we want to examine is that:

2. **MAN IS MORTAL, OF THE DUST OF THE EARTH.**

- **Genesis 3:19** - *"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."*
- **Ecclesiastes 3:20** - *"All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again."*

God is immortal, but man is a dying creature. We return to the ground as we are put in the grave and rot back into the dust from which God made man.

3. **MAN IS BUT A FEW DAYS AND FULL OF TROUBLE.**

- **Job 14:1 reads** - *"Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble."*
- **Jeremiah 17:9-10 states** - *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings."*

No clean thing can come from an unclean thing. We are all born cursed with Adamic Condemnation inherited from Adam. Our heart is wicked and deceitful during the short time that we live. It's a lifetime of work to overcome the flesh.

4. **MAN IS LIKE THE GRASS THAT WITHERETH.**

- **James 1:8-11** - *"A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways."*
- **Isaiah 40:6-8** - *"The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever."*
- **1 Peter 1:24-25** - *"For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."*

Mankind thinks he can accomplish all of his fleshly desires in this life. We can attain great riches, have 25 cars, play major league baseball, have a three million dollar mansion, and accomplish every goal we want out of life. But we all get old, and our flower fadeth and we are like the grass that withereth. All of those supposedly great accomplishments, in reality, have accomplished nothing. Unless we are in Christ, we have no hope. The word of God is unchanging and stands forever. It tells us that we must come out of Adam and into Christ in order to be resurrected and judged and have hope.

5. **MAN IS AS A VAPOR.**

- **James 4:14** - *"Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."*

This attribute shows that man's mortal life is very short and we are not promised tomorrow. This is the time, starting today to get our priorities straight and realize what's important. Time flies and it will be gone before we know it. If you're not baptized, then maybe you don't know God yet. As stated in Daniel 11:32, the people who know their God will be strong or display strength and take action. So if you know your God, you will take action. Well, that first action is obtaining scriptural knowledge of God then entering into His covenant through baptism. We don't want to turn down the free gift or the grace that God has provided us. That free gift was Jesus. It was a way out of Adam and into Christ. Just as a vapor, one day we're here and the next day we're gone. With all the things going on today, the door is soon to be shut. We don't know the exact time that it will be, but if we don't take action, it's going to be too late. Just like a vapor, we'll be gone.

6. **MAN IS OF THE EARTH, EARTHY.**

1 Corinthians 15:47-48 - *"The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly."*

The first man spoken of here are those who are in Adam or are of the world. They live a short time, they accomplish their fleshly desires, and then they're gone. The second man are those in Christ. They keep their minds on things above rather than things beneath. They realize that this life means nothing. They exchange their fleshly desires of the present life for something better. They set their mind on the kingdom of God and strive daily in hope for an inheritance in God's kingdom. The first man is a sprinter. But the second man runs the race with endurance. The first man's race is over really quick. The second man's race, if he wins it, is an everlasting reward.

7. **MAN HAS SOUGHT OUT MANY INVENTIONS.**

Ecclesiastes 7:29 - *"Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions."*

God created man and gave him all that he needed. He gave him the land to live off in the Garden of Eden. This land was perfect and everything that man needed was provided. Man, after falling short, has created his version of the perfect land. He created Babylon. He created the great city. He created the light bulb, the television, the rocket, the camera, the computer, the vehicle, the airplane, and the shotgun. All of this is foolishness in God's eyes. This is man's attempt to be his own god. Just as Adam and Eve ate of the tree thinking that they would become as gods, people have created technology to become as gods to make their lives easier. They have polluted the earth and destroyed it. They have built great cities full of abominations. All of these great cities will crumble and fall. None of this great technology will be able to stop or prevent the great and terrible day of the Lord. In the kingdom age, man will become upright again and not invent things to please himself. God will provide for man once again supplying him with everything he needs.

8. **MAN IS AS GRASSHOPPERS.**

Isaiah 40:22 - *"It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in"*

God compares man to a grasshopper in this verse. A grasshopper is a very small harmless insect to man. Likewise, man is very small, weak, and harmless compared to God.

9. **ABRAHAM SAID THAT HE WAS DUST AND ASHES.**

Genesis 18:27 - *"And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the LORD, which am but dust and ashes"*

It would be impossible to understand this if man were such a "precious immortal soul" as taught in popular theology and religion today. By realizing that man is mortal and returns to dust and ashes, we are able to truly understand the scriptural use of the word death. If we do not understand what death is and our mortal state, then we can not understand the weakness of man in comparison to God. We also can not understand the purpose of Christ if we are already immortal and do not return to dust. If there is no purpose for Christ, then there is no purpose for God's Kingdom. We have already established at the beginning of this article that the kingdom is part of God's purpose and it will be fulfilled.

10. **NONE DOETH GOOD IN THE SIGHT OF GOD.**

- **Psalm 14** - *"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD. There were they in great fear: for God is in the generation of the righteous. Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the LORD is his refuge. Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! when the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad."*
- **Psalm 55** - *"Give ear to my prayer, O God; and hide not thyself from my supplication. Attend unto me, and hear me: I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise; Because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked: for they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me. My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. Selah. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest. Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues: for I have*

seen violence and strife in the city. Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof: mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it. Wickedness is in the midst thereof: deceit and guile depart not from her streets. 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. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company. Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell: for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them. As for me, I will call upon God; and the LORD shall save me. Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice. He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me: for there were many with me. God shall hear, and afflict them, even he that abideth of old. Selah. Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God. He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him: he hath broken his covenant. The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords. Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in thee."

None have done good in the sight of God. All have fallen short except for one; and that was Christ. Man's attributes do not even begin to compare to the mighty attributes of God. All have been born under Adamic Condemnation, in a state of sin. We have all been condemned to die. But because of God's mercy he has provided a way. He provided us with the Everlasting Covenant. The Everlasting Covenant consists of the Edenic covenant, the Abrahamic covenant, the Noahic covenant, the Davidic covenant, and the fulfillment in all of them through the purpose of Christ.

Turn to Genesis 3:15. This is known as the Edenic Covenant and is the first promise ever made within the everlasting covenant.

This is God's message to the serpent:

Genesis 3:15 - *"And I (God) will put enmity between thee (the serpent) and the woman, and between thy (the serpent's) seed and her (the woman's) seed; it (the woman's seed) shall bruise thy (the serpent's) head, and thou (the serpent) shalt bruise his (the woman's seed) heel."*

Sin and Death is symbolized by the serpent's seed. Christ is the woman's seed spoken of in this scripture. When Christ was crucified, the woman's seed was bruised on the heel. A bruise to the heel is temporary, and can heal. Because Christ had no sin, the grave could not hold him. He ascended to the right hand of God; to one day return and establish the Kingdom and fulfill God's purpose. When this took place the serpent's head was bruised. A

wound or bruise to the head is much more devastating than a temporary bruise to the heel. A bruise to the head can be deadly. When Christ was crucified he suffered a temporary bruise. He was in the grave for 3 days. When he ascended he conquered sin and death forever. This is a more punishing bruise. When Christ returns, the last enemy of sin and death will be conquered for good for all those in his name. This will be the manifestation of the bruise to the head that the woman's seed will deliver upon the serpent's seed. Sin and Death are the last enemy. Do we want to be part of this everlasting covenant? Do we want to conquer sin and death as Jesus did and live in the Kingdom of God with Christ? If so let's realize the awesome power and attributes of our God and the mercy he has shown us. Let's realize how weak and helpless we are without him. Let's realize his purpose and take action.

Sam Dew

IMMORTALIZATION

Jesus Christ was changed to spirit-nature (Rom. 1:4) when, "by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place" (Heb. 9:12); for the most holy which was beyond "the veil, that is to say, his flesh" (Heb. 10:20), represented spirit-life. He was, therefore, immortalized as the result of justification "by his own blood" from the Adamic condemnation and the Mosaic curse. His brethren, if faithful, are to be made "like him" (1 Jno. 3:20 on the same basis. They are related to his blood from the commencement to the close of their probation. When washed in the laver of regeneration (Titus 3:5), they are sprinkled with that blood from the altar of burnt offering (1st Pet. 1:2; Exod. 29:21; Heb. 13:10); at the same time some of that blood is put upon their "right ear," the "thumb of their right hand," and the "great toe of their right foot" (Exod. 29:20), to show that henceforth they must heed only holy words, perform only holy acts, and walk only in holy ways; and they are clothed with priestly garments (Exod. 29:8,9) to enable them to enter, and officiate in, the holy place. When they sin, the horns of the altar of incense have to be touched with the blood of the sin offering (Lev. 4:7), and their incense, when offered, must be consumed by fire taken from the altar of burnt offering (Lev. 16:12, 13).

As priests in the holy place, the brethren of Christ are on probation to test their worthiness to be incorporated, by identity of nature, with their great high priest in the most holy place. When he reveals himself from behind the veil, he will be the manifestation of God in spirit, and they will stand in the Divine presence. Whatever their character they will still be, in a legal sense, within the confines of the holy place, and not until the record of their priestly career has been made known, will the decree be given to expel the unfaithful, and to authorize the faithful to pass beyond the veil into the most holy. To enable the latter thus to ascend, they must be made "incorruptible" by "the body of their humiliation" being "conformed to the body of Christ's glory" (Phil. 3:21), "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1st Cor. 15:52). This consummation is the result of justification on entering the holy place, on the maintenance of that justified condition during their sojourn therein, and on the decree of justification pronounced by their judge. Without justification from all sin to which they were previously related, they could not enter the holy place, and without justification from all sin subsequently committed they cannot enter the most holy. - J.J. Andrew, *The Blood of the Covenant*, Section 30, p. 39

THE BOOK OF ESTHER: A PROPHETIC REVIEW

ALTHOUGH the name of Yahweh appears nowhere in the book of Esther [though it does in acrostic form - 1:20; 5:4; 5:13: 7:7 - SK], His works are manifested throughout the book in looking to End Times prophecy. What appears on the surface as an interesting story takes on new meaning when viewed through the eye of faith looking for that sure and certain return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Before looking into the prophetic application, though, it is of interest to see how others view this book. The Jewish

Women's Archives call it "historical fiction," meaning a story in an historical setting which features some real people and real events, but the bulk of which is fabricated by the author. The website states that it was written only for the Jews in the Diaspora to give them a picture of how to succeed no matter what country you are in. It also mentions that rabbis had condemned Esther because she married a Gentile and didn't keep the feasts as she should have. The website Women in the Bible consider it to be political satire, claiming that Haman's demise taught that one should be careful what one wishes for. It also says that the story might be related to stories about the Persian deities Ishtar (meaning Star – the Babylonian goddess of love) and Marduk (the



principal male god of Babylon). This website also notes that it might be based on an older Babylonian story which Jewish people heard during the Babylonian exile. The Jewish Virtual Library's biography on Esther mentions her being named for the Babylonian goddess Ishtar or Ashtar. This is plausible since she would have been born during the captivity and perhaps her parents, of whom we know only the name of the father, had become comfortable in their Babylonian setting. We recall that it is only when she is first mentioned in Ch. 2: 7 that we are given her Hebrew name, Hadassah, meaning myrtle. Throughout the book, she is known as Esther. This would have helped to conceal her Jewish identity.

Like some mainstream churches, Christadelphians believe in the infallibility of the Scriptures and we go so far as to include it in our Statement of Faith. Based on this belief, then, it does not seem likely that the Spirit, working through its chosen writers and compilers, would have ordered the Holy Writ to include a tale of a Babylonian god and goddess. We are then left with the belief that these people are real and that their story is real. So, what have we learned about these real people and the real events that affected their lives?

We see the story of a young orphan maiden, brought up in the house of her much older male cousin. Under his tutelage, this young woman grows in humility and grace, obedient to the admonitions of her cousin. When she is brought to Shushan as part of the harem, the characteristics she has developed in the house of Mordecai serve her well. It is noted that Hegai, the eunuch in charge, favors her with special food, serving maids, beauty treatments and the best place in the harem. After serving her probationary period and when it is time for her to be taken to the king, she asks for no special favors and once again, her humility and gentle nature win the favor of everyone, including the king. Having received the crown and having been feted at a royal banquet, Esther settles in to what apparently is a quiet life, her true identity still a secret.

But then the evil Haman, a true personification of Sin in the Flesh, becomes more prominent and undertakes to bring about the destruction of the Jewish people. Men, women, children, young and old, are destined for complete destruction under Haman's decree. Mordecai, in the sackcloth and ashes of extreme grief, sends word to Esther that the time has now come for her to step out of her pleasant, easy life, to stand up for her people, and, if necessary, perish in the attempt to intercede on their behalf. At first reluctant to take such a bold step, through Mordecai's encouragement, she develops the faith and the courage to take on this difficult task. Esther calculates her plan and brings it to fruition in the form of two small steps, two separate banquets.

The revelation of Haman's perfidy, revealed at the second banquet, results in his death. Mordecai and Esther, with the King's approval, formulate a new

decree allowing the Jews to defend themselves. On the designated day, the Jews hold forth and destroy their enemies. Esther maintains her place in the affections of the king and is rewarded handsomely. Her cousin Mordecai is elevated to be the king's second in command.

We see then a young girl, humble and compliant, grown into a woman of great strength and power who yet retains all that is good and beautiful in her character. It's a beautiful story, one with a Cinderella, "happily ever after" ending. But, when we come to this book in our daily readings, is that all we see now?

We, as Christadelphians, are not like others who see their future as mansions in heaven on streets paved with gold, indulging in whatever the heart desires. No, we see our future, Lord willing, as it is laid out in Scripture. If, through Yahweh's grace and mercy, we are accepted at the Judgment Seat and are blessed to be part of the Multitudinous Son of Man, the Rainbowed Angel, then we will be participating in the destruction of Gogue and the nations of the world who ignore the appeal of the mid-heaven gospel. So, is the book of Esther, which contains no overt mention of Yahweh, just the nice story I have recounted or are there hidden depths, a thread of gold, if you will, showing the readers of all ages the prophetic future? At the Arkansas Bible School is a painting by Bro. Bughman, done in the 1940's, of the Books of the Bible. It is depicted as a book shelf with the sixty-six books arranged in order, by theme. The books of Moses together, the history books, the books of poetry, the major and minor prophets, the gospels and the epistles all on their designated and labeled shelves. Esther is shown as the last of the history books. But is that the only place that this book belongs? Could it perhaps be tucked in, say, between Zechariah and Malachi? What have we learned about the book of Esther in its prophetic application?

Antitypes applied

The book opens with natural Israel, represented by Queen Vashti, being called upon by Yahweh, represented by King Ahasuerus, to show forth the glory with which he had blessed her. **Jeremiah 13:11 - *"For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, saith the LORD; that they might be unto me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory: but they would not hear."*** Like Queen Vashti, Israel was rebellious. **Jeremiah 3:20 - *"Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the LORD."*** So, Yahweh cut them off. **Leviticus 26:33 - *"And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste."***

Years pass and we are introduced to Christ, represented by Mordecai. He adopts and raises up an orphan, represented by Esther who typified the ecclesia as raised up by Christ. **Ephesians 1:5 - *"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."*** Esther, in our prophetic review, represents the multitudinous bride of Christ. **Revelation 2:17 - *"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."***

Like Esther, the called-out ones are subject to a period of purification or probation in preparation for marriage. **Colossians 1:10 - *"That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God."*** At the Resurrection and Judgment seat, those who are counted worthy will be chosen to be part of that multitudinous Bride. **2Corinthians 5:10 - *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."***

Like the wicked Haman, Gogue, or the Russian confederacy, thinks of an evil plan to destroy Israel. **Ezekiel 38:10-12 - *"Thus saith the Lord GOD; It shall also come to pass, that at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought: And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwall'd villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, To take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land."***

Thus, Gogue, appears on the scene, invading the glorious land, subjugating the Persian realm and driving the king of the south (Britain and allies) to the land of the south. **Daniel 11:41 - *"He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon."***

Gogue invades Egypt, enslaving the Jews who have sought refuge there. **Dan. 11: 42,43 - *...the land of Egypt shall not escape. But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt...."*** However, Russia will also hear disturbing things that cause him to move north to Israel and besiege Jerusalem. **Daniel 11:44-45 - *"But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many. And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him."*** Gogue is triumphant! The great Assyro-Babylonian Image of Nebuchadnezzar stands in full manifestation. At this point in time,

Gogue, like Haman at the first feast, feels confident and powerful. **Ezekiel 38:15-16** - ***“And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army: And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes.”***

After leaving Egypt, the Russian forces at Bozrah are defeated by the Multitudinous Christ (Isa. 63: 1-6). Christ and the saints advance to the plains of Moab, swing around the Dead Sea, cross the Jordan River, through the Valley of Achor towards Jerusalem. Christ will stand upon the mount of Olives which will cleave in its midst. **Zechariah 14:4** - ***“And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.”***

Here, in the Valley of Judgment, or Armageddon, the Gogian confederacy is utterly destroyed by the Rainbow Angel and the feet of Nebuchadnezzar's Image commences to crumble. **Ezekiel 39:3-5** - ***“And I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand, and will cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right hand. Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou, and all thy bands, and the people that is with thee: I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. Thou shalt fall upon the open field: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD.”***

But the war is not over, the enemy is not yet completely destroyed and the great image has not been crushed. Although Haman is dead, his decree still stands. Mordecai and Esther's decree calling for the Jews to defend themselves on the assigned day has its counterpart in the End Times with a two-fold application. First, the call for the Jews, especially Ephraim, to return home and to come to the defense of Israel is the work of the resurrected Elijah. **Malachi 4:5** - ***“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.”*** Second, in Mordecai's call to the rulers of the Persian kingdom, we see the Lamb who stands victorious upon Mount Zion and proclaims the mid-heaven gospel to all nations requiring them to submit to their new King. **Revelation 14:6-7** - ***“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.”***

As Mordecai gave Esther the commission to save her people, likewise, our King, Jesus, will call on Elijah and the Redeemed to save the remnant of the

Jewish people. **Isaiah 10:21-22** - ***“The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God. For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return. The ships of Tarshish will provide the means for their journey home. Isaiah 60:9 Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far...unto the name of the LORD thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel....”***

The Western Beast nations and the False Prophet of Rome reject the ultimatum to submit to Christ. **Revelation 17:12-14** - ***“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 have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. 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.”***

The annihilation of Haman's ten sons and the others in opposition to the Jews is a shadow of the annihilation of Daniel's Fourth Beast and the False Prophet of Rome at the hand of Christ and the Redeemed. **Eureka pp. 150-151 (Logos Edition)**. ***“All the tribes of the earth will howl, for the anguish of the times will be great – Israel among the nations, as a lion among flocks of sheep; Yahweh's battle-axe and weapons of war to break in pieces the nations, and destroy the kingdoms; his new sharp threshing instrument to beat the mountains small, and to make the hills as chaff; his fan to fan them; a whirling wind to scatter them as thistle-down.”***

At this time, Mordecai is arrayed in royal apparel. In the same way, Jesus the King will be recognized at a public coronation with his angels and the Redeemed rejoicing. **Revelation 7:9-12** - ***“After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.”***

Quoting from Bro. Al Bryan's book **The Book of Esther: Drama of the Ages** on p. 43: ***“Esther presided over two feasts that set the stage for the destruction of Haman. Likewise, Jesus Christ and His immortal bride will preside over two main events: (1) Armageddon and the destruction of Gog represented by Haman the Agagite and (2) the destruction of the beast nations represented by the ten sons of Haman. Both events are compared to feasts in the Bible.”*** In the same manner as the celebration of Purim signified

the success of the Jews upon their enemies, the Redeemed and Yahweh's battle axe, the Jewish remnant, will celebrate their victory. **Isaiah 25:6-7 -**
"And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations."

Finally, we see Mordecai as second to the King. If we are so blessed to be chosen to be part of that great and glorious throng, we too will see our King, sitting on David's throne, ruling over his Father's kingdom. **Zechariah 14:9 -**
"And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one."

At long last, the city will have a new name: Yahweh Shammah – *He who shall be is there.*

Psalms 72:1-19 ***"Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son. He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment. The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness. He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations. He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust. 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. For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight. And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for him continually; and daily shall he be praised. There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. His name shall endure forever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen."***

Submitted by a sister

FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT



Nov. 22.

My Dear Mother:

I had a long talk with my dear wife last evening, and the result is a much better understanding between us than there has been for a long time. When I told her that I had already applied to the Christadelphians for immersion she cried a good while and moaned piteously while I walked the floor and prayed silently. When she became quiet I began to reason with her and to explain how necessary it was to my eternal welfare that I should take this step. "If it were any other sect but the Christadelphians," she said at length, "I would not say a word against it," and she began to weep. When she became calmer I questioned her to find the reason for her objection to the Christadelphians. It seems that Mrs. Kennedy and some other members of the Winthrop Street Church have been filling her mind with evil reports about the Christadelphians and their doctrines and had made her believe that if I should become a Christadelphian it would not be long before I would give up all religion and become an infidel. They told her that it was her duty to oppose me all she could and not to let me argue with her on the subject of religion, as that was the only way to keep me from going headlong to destruction. No wonder the poor woman felt so bad under such circumstances. I reasoned the matter out with her and showed her the extreme improbability of my rejecting God and the Bible when the doctrines I have received are based wholly upon the Bible, which I now believe more than ever to be the Word of God.

I think I succeeded in satisfying her mind on the matter, for she seemed more content to accept the situation; in fact she seemed more like herself than she has been for several months. We each agreed to do our best to live in peace and harmony under the changed conditions, and to allow each other full liberty in matters of conscience. The last obstacle in the pathway of obedience now seems to have been removed.

Nov. 26.

My Dear Mother:

I met the committee from the Ecclesia yesterday afternoon at Mr. Evan's house. There are three in the committee, including Mr. Evans, who acts as chairman. After explaining why an examination of this kind is necessary, they proceeded to ask me questions. The object seemed to be to find if I had a clear understanding of the

covenants of promise, the condition the human race is in, the cause of that condition, and the details of the plan which God has revealed for saving us from that condition. They also made sure that I had entirely abandoned the false doctrines of the apostasy, that I understood the import of all the commandments of Jesus and His apostles, and was prepared to separate from the world and walk faithfully in the strait way unto the end. I was able to answer all their questions satisfactorily, and they finally announced that they were prepared to assist me in putting on the saving name. It was agreed that we meet for that purpose at Mr. Evan's house next Saturday evening.

Becoming a Christadelphian does not seem at all like "joining the church." When I joined the Methodist church a book containing questions and answers was put into my hand just as we were about to stand up before the "altar." We were expected to read the answers just as they were printed, and give our assent to doctrines we did not understand. On the other hand the Christadelphians will not accept anyone who does not thoroughly understand the Truth and is prepared to "obey from the heart that form of doctrine delivered unto us." While they are anxious to bring as many as possible into the Truth, and make many sacrifices to spread their doctrines, it is not with the expectation of building up a large and powerful organization, but of saving some of those who are perishing in darkness and superstition.

Nov. 28.

My Dear Mother:

At last the step has been taken which has united me with Christ and made me an heir of God and joint heir with Jesus Christ to an incorruptible inheritance. I am now a brother of Christ, a child of Abraham by faith and an heir according to the promise. I am "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." I am no longer a mere sone of Adam, an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, a stranger from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." I am in solemn covenant relation with the Lord God of Israel, the possessor of heaven and earth, and He has promised me an inheritance in the earth and an immortal nature by reason of my relationship with his son Jesus Christ. You will not wonder when I tell you that I am happy and rejoice all the day.

To the unenlightened person there is nothing very impressive about the rite of baptism, but when we understand the change of relationship thus introduced and the great and far-reaching results which are made possible by this simple ceremony, we cannot fail to realize its importance.

Quite a number of the brethren and sisters were present and witnessed my immersion. One of the brethren, appointed for the purpose, offered a short prayer and then said slowly and solemnly, repeating my name, "Upon the profession of your faith in the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus christ, I baptize you into the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen." Thus having been buried with Him through baptism, I have also (figuratively) risen with Him from the dead to walk in newness of life. May God grant that I may run with patience the race set before me, and at last obtain an abundant entrance into His kingdom.

Brother Evans (he is no longer Mr. Evans to me, but a beloved brother in Christ) was the first to grasp my hand in fraternal greeting, and thanked God that one more Gentile has been taken out for the name. What a wonderful thing is true motherly love based upon the Truth! It is truly good and pleasant for brethren to dwell together in unity. After each brother and sister present had taken my hand in brotherly greeting, the presiding brother called the meeting to order and gave out a hymn which all joined in singing, after which he read the 6th chapter of Romans and made some remarks appropriate to the occasion. Brother Evans then spoke a few words of exhortation, another hymn was sung, the meeting closed with prayer, and I went on my way rejoicing.

When I got home my wife greeted me affectionately, but I could see that she had been crying during my absence. I feel that I love her more than ever now and I shall pray earnestly every day that her eyes may be opened as mine have been.

Dec. 5.

My Dear Mother:

I was exceedingly glad to receive your letter and to learn that you have fully made up your mind that the Christadelphians have the true faith, and that you have determined to obey it. I spoke to Brother Evans about it, and he says there is no organized Ecclesia in your vicinity, but that there are two or three brethren living there. He has sent them your address with a request to call upon you, and you will probably receive a visit from them soon.

Last Sunday I was received into fellowship and broke bread with the Ecclesia for the first time. The members sit in a circle, of which the presiding brother forms a part. They have a regular order of service, consisting of prayer, singing, reading the Scriptures, collection, fraternal announcements, exhortations, and partaking of the bread and wine after giving thanks for each. The money collected is used to pay the hall rent and other expenses of the Ecclesia, and to assist those who may be in need.

It was a very impressive service, and I shall never forget how I felt as I partook of the bread and wine and assisted in showing forth the Master's death in the appointed way. May I be kept in the narrow way until He returns.

Dec. 23.

My Dear Mother:

I was overjoyed to receive your letter containing the welcome news that you have been immersed into the saving name of Jesus. How strange that I should have been the humble instrument to bring my dear mother to a knowledge of the Truth.

I also have good news to write. My dear wife is now opening her mind to the Truth, and I hope she will soon be numbered amongst us. It appears that she first began to feel doubtful of her position some time ago. She says she used to search the bible every day in hope of finding something which would overturn my ideas, but the testimony was so strong in my favor that she angrily laid the book aside and refused to read it. Then she began to read Mr. Wilson's theological books, but the absurdities and contradictions contained in them were so glaring that she began to lose her faith in the wisdom of the clergy. This made her very unhappy and unsettled, and then she began to read a little

occasionally in the “Great Salvation.” This was all unknown to me, and I had no idea of what was passing in her mind until she began to ask me questions about the Truth, which I gladly answered to the best of my ability. Finally she consented to allow me to invite Brother Evans to come to our home and talk with her. She now has a good understanding of the Truth and is anxious to obey it as soon as possible. She has entirely gotten over her former prejudice against Brother Evans and wonders how she could be so blind. What a wonderful thing is the Truth, and what radical changes it will work in anyone who will yield to its influence.

I meet my old church friends occasionally, but they seem to wish to avoid talking on the subject of religion. I feel that I love them as much as ever, and I would do anything in my power to bring them into the Truth. One dear old lady whom I met on the street addressed me as brother and asked if I was as happy as when I was a Methodist. You see they think that happiness and religion are synonymous terms. To the truth, however, I never felt more real happiness than I do at present, for I feel that my feet are on the solid rock of the truth.

Jan. 1.

My cup of happiness is now filled to overflowing, for my dear wife has been baptized into Christ and is now an heir with me of the grace of life. “O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men.” It is just one year to-day since I began writing these letters. What a change has taken place in those few brief months. How dark were our minds twelve months ago! How wonderfully our eyes have been opened, even unto the full assurance of understanding. Even in opposition to our own will we have been led, step by step, until at last we have recognized and obeyed the Truth. As I think of these things my heart swells with pity for the multitudes who are still groping in darkness and error. Even with the Bible in their hands they cannot discern the Truth, being blinded even as we were by the traditions of men. I hope our Lord and Master will soon be here, but I hereby resolve to do all in my power to bring as many as possible out of darkness into light. And may God help me in the glorious work, and preserve us all unto His glorious kingdom.

W.H. Clough

The Christadelphian Advocate, August 1901 (Concluded)

EDITORIAL FLYLEAF

NOTE TO OUR READERS

We find that our quarterly issues become later and later away from a desired and consistent schedule. This “summer” issue of the SK is about 2 months later than we would have desired. We can find no self satisfying excuse except that it seems we are finding demands on our time (ecclesial, work and home) that chip away from a more consistent interval of publication. We will work to do

better, but the organization and formatting of a publication is not a fast process, even with the help of computers.

SIGNS IN THE SUN MOON AND STARS

With the recent solar eclipse over the United States in August, followed by a so called “blood moon” full moon; and then the effort to tie the alignment of various planets in the constellation Virgo (the virgin) on September 23rd with Revelation 12 - a portion of the Evangelical world has been abuzz with claims of the “Rapture”, the “End of the World” or cataclysmic natural disasters corresponding with these celestial phenomena. Such individuals pander their sensational claims based upon literal misinterpretations of passages such as Joel 2:30,31 - *“And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.”* Also Luke 21:25 - *“And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring.”*

It is bad enough that these peddlers of false religion and sensationalism spout out such nonsense, setting up the Return of Christ as something to be mocked. But, it is even worse that some Christadelphians buy into the very same delusion and shallow emotionalism, and try to apply either Christ's return or something End-Time related to these natural events. We had heard that some brethren were quite excited about the assumed prophetic prospects of the recent solar eclipse as well as the September 23rd tie in with Revelation 12. We made the same critique a couple of years ago regarding the “Blood Moon” lunar tetrad craze of 2014-2015 in which various prominent Evangelicals and some vocal Christadelphians were touting as something very significant in regard to prophecy. We even provided very blunt warnings from both bro. Thomas and bro. Williams who denounced tying in prophetic expectations with astronomical events (for their times, Haley's comet was quite the harbinger of doom.) At that time we received quite the stinging criticism from a brother for daring to denounce such delusional prophetic assertions. It would appear that some brethren are more willing to open their ears to Evangelical and cosmic sensationalism rather than the clear-headed observations of our earlier brethren. When expectations never panned out, did we ever hear of an apology or retraction? No we did not, and brethren continue to look for the next astronomical event to hang their hopes, and others continue to eat it up - for the people “love to have it so” (Jeremiah 5:31). They do not seem to learn.

All of us desperately long for the soon Return of The Master. And, the Scriptures give us very clear hope in the signs we see in the “sun, moon and stars” of the **political heavens** that are the TRUE harbingers of the fast approaching Day of the LORD. Whether it be tomorrow, next month, next year or within the next decade - we KNOW that we are living in the Last Days of Gentile Times. **We cannot** and do not need to misapply Scripture or seek astronomical encouragement or to foolishly warn of cosmic events to raise our own and other brethren's hopes and expectations. All we have to do is open our Bibles and our eyes - look at Israel, look at Russia, look at the Vatican, look at Europe and Britain. Look at the promised disintegration of society and of the diminishing of The Christ Body - there are our SIGNS. Though the time frame is revealed to us (e.g. Daniel 12:12) - the exact “day and hour” is not. As Christ commanded, let us “WATCH”, but let us be watching for the right things. - S.K.