

No More Curse

“And there shall NO MORE BE ANY CURSE: but the throne of the Deity and of the Lamb shall be in it.” Rev. 22:3

The conclusion of the whole matter is that there shall be no more any curse upon the earth and upon them who inhabit it. The Eternal Wisdom and Power did not create the world that it might be forever under a curse. A curse is only an incidental occurrence, or casualty, in the Divine purpose; which was to erect a splendid habitation here fit for Him to reside in; surrounded by neighbors, all of whom should be intelligent, wise, faithful and affectionate, sons with whom He could freely associate and enjoy life. This was His ultimate purpose in Creation as He has revealed it in this wonderful prophecy given to the Anointed Jesus; and by him communicated to the servants of the Deity, through his beloved disciple in Patmos. What is a week's curse of seven thousand years compared with an eternity of blessedness to follow? The curse of this Millenary Week is a mere incident in the situation, turned to good account by the wisdom of Him who imposed it. The occasion of the curse was the transgression of the Divine law by the “very good” nature formed in and of the dust of the ground. “Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; 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”. So long, then, as the Sin-Nature continues to inhabit the earth there must be sorrow, toil, and death; for the sentence pronounced upon the sinning nature declares the continuance of the curse to be in all the days of its life.

To abolish the curse, then, is equivalent to the abolition of the nature cursed with sorrow, toil, disease, and death. This abolition is the consummation of all things, by which is introduced an entirely new creation; the basis of which is a nature that neither has nor can transgress - that is, the Divine Nature...In such a removal of curse and uncleanness, a higher nature is developed, which is so clean and pure, that when it is indicated, it is represented by “fine linen, pure and bright,” or “white,” and “pure gold, transparent as crystal.” How infinitely inferior to this is the nature cursed!”

John Thomas, Eureka, Vol. 5, pp. 362, 363

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THE SANCTUARY-KEEPER



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

MARRIAGE & YAHWEH'S PLAN

Also

BIDDING “GOD SPEED”

THE BIBLE OR HUMANISTIC POLITICS?

WHAT HAVE WE VOWED?

FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT

REMARKS AT THE GRAVESIDE

EDITORIAL FLYLEAF

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Bobby Henderson - bobdebhend@aol.com
 Aaron Thomas - aaronstaciethomas@gmail.com
www.sanctuary-keeper.com

UPCOMING ARKANSAS BIBLE SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

The Arkansas Bible School activities for 2016 are listed below.

- Spring Gathering - April 22-24 - Adult Teachers - Brethren Sam Dew and Bobby Henderson (already transpired by the appearance of this issue of the SK).
- June Bible School - June 18 - June 25 - Adult teachers - Brethren Don Northey, Mac Briley and Aaron Thomas
- September Gathering - September 2-5 - Adult teachers - Brethren Pat Hamilton and Sid Strickland

To Register for any of the annual activities - contact Brother Bobby Henderson at bobdebhend@aol.com or 501-679-2093.

THE WORLD SCENE

A whole issue of the Sanctuary-Keeper could be devoted to world developments and their application to latter day prophecy. Suffice it to say the activities of Russia continue to be of great interest as they create turmoil on numerous fronts, putting its assumed enemies completely off balance.

- Russia has firmly dug in its heels in Crimea and continues its proxy war in eastern Ukraine - without tangible consequence from the U.S. and NATO.
- Russia continues to provoke NATO (U.S.) naval and air forces who are operating in the Baltic Sea. Numerous and dangerous fly-bys of U.S. ships and bombers continue to play an essential game of chicken with NATO in order to assert Russian dominance in the northern region.
- Russia has stirred up fighting between oil-rich Azerbaijan and Armenia in the effort to move Azerbaijan away from growing ties with the West.
- Russian intervention in Syria created a tidal wave of immigration to Europe which has completely disrupted the European Union.
- The Russian intervention in Syria was originally sold as an attempt to squash ISIS. Russia has paid very little attention to the ISIS threat while squelching the Syrian rebels, and securing Bashar al-Assad's hold on power.
- Russia recently declared that they were ending operations in Syria and would be pulling its military forces out. No such withdrawal has happened with only an increased Russian military build up as the result.
- Russia continues to build up a military presence on the borders of Turkey as tensions continue to escalate between Turkey and Russia over involvement in Syria, and Russian support of an independent Kurdish state.
- The Polish foreign minister recently stated that Russia and not ISIS was the biggest threat to the world.
- Israeli jets recently have had confrontations with Russian fighters. In a news report from the Israeli times (4/22) it has been reported that Russia had fired upon Israeli Air Force planes at least twice in recent weeks. This despite the fact that there are "mechanisms" supposedly in place to coordinate between Israeli and Russian activities in Syria. That Israel must coordinate anything with Russia is quite remarkable, as Russia is now the controlling power in the region, whereas Israel has had virtual free-run over the last few decades.
- Israel finds itself in a very difficult position as both Russia and the U.S. are pressuring Israel to give the Golan Heights back to Syria as part of a broader Syrian peace deal - a conflict that Israel itself is not even involved in. This escalates Israel's tenuous position with Russia to an even greater degree.



THE SANCTUARY - KEEPER

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*“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

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NUMBER 1

BIDDING GOD SPEED

IN the Holy Scriptures we will find the expression “God speed” twice, and in both instances there is a negative instruction. Once, in 2 John 10, the admonition is to not bid certain ones God speed, and second, in 2 John 11, the dictum is, *“For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”* The entirety of the book of 2 John emphasizes the duty of the ecclesia to maintain the proper standards of the truth. John announces his love for the ecclesia, rejoices that they were walking in the truth, and encourages them to love one another which he defines as walking after God’s commandments. He warns them of the many deceivers around them who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, which deceivers he labels as antichrist. One who believes that Jesus Christ was not of the Adamic flesh believes in another Jesus than the one preached by the apostles. The religious world around us believes in an entirely different Jesus than that presented in the Bible. It is imperative that Jesus be seen as having come in the flesh if we are to perceive him correctly.

John further urges the ecclesia, the elect lady and her children of verse 1, to *“look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought,*

but that we receive a full reward.” Any warning given by inspired writers of the Bible are in effect commandments of God. John was not offering a casual suggestion that the ecclesia should feel comfortable about its status, but he was commanding them to take stock of their spiritual and doctrinal values. The seriousness of his counsel is seen in the words that follow: *“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.”* It appears from this verse that this is one wrongful act or position, that of transgressing and abiding not in the doctrine of Christ. The verbs do not appear to be inferring two separate and distinct positions.

Then we come to the warning and course of action required in the text, *“If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”* To receive one into your house is fellowship reciprocity of kind feelings. The ecclesia was warned that, in the particular instance of transgressing and abiding not in the doctrine of Jesus Christ; fellowship should not continue with such an one. To continue in fellowship is equal to agreeing with such transgression and false concept of Christ's nature.

This illustration in the inspired Word is one example of an individual believer's walk and belief which cannot be countenanced by an ecclesia. If one came into our midst, and this does not mean they have to migrate from other cities or states they can arise in our midst – who transgresses and believes the kingdom has already been set up, then he would be unacceptable for our fellowship or good wishes. We would not want to bid him God speed in such belief. The same could be said if a bigamist came into our midst; we could not bid him God speed in such position. The ecclesia who fails to act against such transgression is guilty of the doctrine of toleration or implied consent. Recognizing that the ecclesia is not a place for militants to constantly search for matters of minor importance, we nevertheless must be vigilant. each one of us, to see that our standards are maintained as we have received them. Without maintenance, they are sure to decline in effectiveness. Soon we would be just another church of the multitudinous denominations of Christendom. What keeps us a separate and distinct people is our perseverance for truth in all important matters. In connection with this we suggest that the section of the Statement of Faith on “The Commandments of Christ” be reviewed by each of us.

In regard to the maintenance above referred to, many times the onus has been placed on the arranging or managing brethren of the ecclesia. Some will ask, “What are the arranging brothers going to do about this?” True, the arranging brethren do have a responsibility of maintenance of correct standards, but they do not have it all. We cannot depend on the arranging brethren to save us; we must have definite convictions and be able to stand up for those convictions as individuals. At the judgment seat, Christ is not going to say to us, “You were in an ecclesia where the arranging brethren allowed regrettable practices and doctrines, so you are free from any guilt or

responsibility, therefore you will be allowed to enter the kingdom.”

On the other hand, the arranging brethren cannot wash their hands by saying, “We told him not to do it, but he went ahead anyway, so that's about all we can do.” The dictum in 2 John is to *“receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed.”* Even though the word “God speed” is given in the Authorized Version as two words, it is from the single Greek word, *chairō*, meaning “be glad” or “rejoice.” It is easy to see what the apostle means here: Do not rejoice in wrong actions or beliefs, do not agree and sympathize with the wrong-doer, do not express gladness at what has been done, but rather reprove it so its cancer does not spread. Love for our brother, from Paul's analysis in 1 Corinthians 13, *“rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.”* From a dictionary definition, Godspeed (a single word) means “good fortune; success; a wish for the welfare of a person starting on a journey or venture.” We often use this expression to well-wish someone leaving our midst to travel home. We want to see them protected from harm and granted the blessing of continuing in their race for life. To such an one who can be described as antichrist, of which the illustration in 2 John is only one, we cannot bid them God speed, or else we partake of their evil deeds.

An ecclesia is a group of people called out of the Gentile world by the good news and glad tidings of the gospel. It is not merely a social group who agrees to get along with one another. The Truth has to come first and the social amenities are subsidiary. An ecclesia, of which most of us are a part, is designed to help and strengthen poor, weak, mortals to become better in their spiritual aptitude. It is made up of weak, imperfect people who are capable of erring in judgment, so judgment should not be hasty and without mercy. But we must remember the ecclesia is founded upon a covenant made by each individual member that “all that the Lord hath said, that will we do.” An ecclesia is not an institution where each member does as he pleases, and disregards the well-being of the whole.

The illustration of Romans 14 involving the eating of meats serves as a good example. Paul made it clear that eating of meals or observing of a certain day were not wrong in themselves. But, there was a greater responsibility than merely participating in such practices, and that was the conscience of others in the ecclesia. “But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died” (vs.15). We can have our way and disregard the conscience of others, or we can yield to our brother's weak conscience and help him. Mind you, this is in things which are not specifically forbidden by the Word, such as the option of eating meat or whatever it's parallel might be. Later Paul says, *“It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak”* (vs. 21).

I have had a reasonable amount of experience with situations such as the bidding of God speed teaching of 2 John. In a great majority of instances the party who opposes the wrong-doing comes under more criticism than the wrong-doer. The wrong-doer is made a martyr while his critic is often treated

as a heathen and a publican for expressing views which he genuinely believes to be consistent with the teachings of the Word. He is often viewed as a trouble-maker and a factionist. Rarely is he called aside and kindly asked to review the Bible principles upon which he bases his claims. And even more rarely is he given the kindness of the statement, "Well, I have respect for your viewpoint, and feel that you are sincere in it, but I cannot quite see it the same way."

Let us recognize that there are instances where the ecclesia must act to not receive some into our house, or to put it another way, to disassociate ourselves from fellowship from those who depart from the doctrines of Christ. Paul says, "*Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own body; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple*" (Rom. 16:17). Some mistake this for witch-hunting, looking for an excuse to cast out someone for a minor infraction. May the Lord spare all of us from such an attitude. On the other hand, if the ecclesia is unwilling to preserve its stand on principles, there is no good reason why the Pope of Rome should be excluded from our services.

Paul further writes, "*But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person*" (1 Cor. 5:11- 13). Here the ecclesia is instructed to put away from their company certain brethren whose walk is contrary to Christ's commandments. The ecclesia has a duty to maintain its integrity, not to cater to the special interests of those socially acceptable to them.

Again Paul writes, "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us" (2 Thess. 3 :6). There is but one avenue to follow here; the ecclesia is not to countenance disorderly walk. Experienced brethren recognize that the apostle is not here talking about mistakes or weaknesses, for we are all guilty of these. Disorderly walk is habitual and locked-in practices which are the lifestyle and continued indulgence by a brother. Certainly there is no pleasure in withdrawing from a brother. Every effort should be made to recover the offender. Counsel should be given as to the dangers of his losing his crown of life, and the secondary danger of causing discord in the ecclesia. These are perilous times in which we live, ones which present ominous threats to our individual and ecclesial spiritual prosperity.

James Stanton

MARRIAGE AND YAHWEH'S PLAN

Part 1

WE find the topic of marriage in the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation. Here in our consideration of the subject we will look at the traditions of Jewish culture and see it is based on the marriage process as practiced by the patriarchs. As we trace marriage from the Garden to the Kingdom you will see that marriage is a major Biblical theme. We will see that even the purpose of the Creator is expressed in the marriage language.



When we read, *“You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, nor shall your land anymore be termed Desolate; But you shall be called Hephzibah (My delight is in her), and your land Beulah (Married); For the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married.”* (Isaiah 62:4) and also, *“For your Maker is your husband, The LORD of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth”* (Isaiah 54:5). We cannot deny that the concept of marriage is a major theme and understanding marriage correctly is essential to understanding God’s plan.

The institution of marriage has been evolving over the centuries. Marriage in the Bible is very different from the Christian or even the Jewish ceremony we find today. There is very little in the Bible that defines specifically how a marriage is to be undertaken. But several examples exist where we can gather details on the development. We know from the Garden that the creator made Adam a helper, and Adam called her woman. Then we read: *“Therefore shall a*

man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife and they shall be one flesh”(Genesis 2:24).

This commandment has been adapted by many religions and recently corrupted to apply to those of the same gender. The Scriptures are full of the language of marriage from the first days in the Garden, to the relationship of Yahweh and his people, in the prophets, in the parables of the Messiah, and in the relationship of the Messiah and the Saints. It is critical that we understand the marriage process as instituted and followed in Biblical times to properly understand the symbolism of marriage when it is used in type to illustrate the relationship between Yahweh and His chosen, and Jesus with his Bride.

Since matrimony is instituted in the Garden by Yahweh himself, it assumes a decidedly religious value. “*God himself was the witness of the vows between thee and the wife of thy youth*”, Malachi 2:14 and “the faithless wife” is branded according to Proverbs 2:17 as one who has “forgotten her vow to the LORD”.

There is very little found in the Scriptures that would instruct us in the way marriages are to be conducted. Marriage in the Biblical era was not at all like the wedding ceremony we see today. However, the references to marriage are innumerable. For us to understand the marriage references it is necessary for us to understand the marriage process that the Scriptural references are based upon. This background material can be gathered both within the Scriptures and through historic documents.

Historical Roots

Let's first examine how a marriage was brought about in ancient Israel. It all began when a young man had determined to enter into matrimony and made his choice based either on the dictate of his affections, or in accordance with the wishes of his father, or upon someone's recommendation. Then his father or some confidential friend would then bargain for the maiden at the hand of her father or her brother. It was not customary for the young man to conduct this in person. If the father of the maiden had given his general consent, it then became necessary to agree on the purchase price, which was known by the distinctive name “*mohar*”. There is no direct account of the maximum value of this *mohar*, but from comparison of Deuteronomy 22:29 and Exodus 22:16, we can infer that in the time of Moses, toward the close of the kingdom of Judah, the average amount of the *mohar* was 50 shekels of silver. From the moment when the *mohar* was paid and accepted, the marriage was regarded as legally concluded even when it was not yet accomplished in fact. It is clear from the account of Rebecca in Genesis 24 that the maiden was not bartered like an article of commerce, but that her consent was necessary. Likewise, the father could refuse to give his consent to a union. Legally considered, the wife was the property of her husband. The husband indeed bears the very name of “owner”, ba'al, and the married woman is called “*is-sha'h be'ulath ba'al*”, a woman who has become the property of an owner.

There is not a hint of any religious consecration of the matrimonial tie, or any ecclesiastical ceremony. The marriage contract was purely a family affair.

The next part of the marriage ceremony was the fetching of the bride from the house of her father and the solemn home-bringing to that of her husband. This home-bringing was accompanied by songs and ceremonies of all sorts, but there was nothing in the nature of religious rites. In the prepared chamber, the marriage would be consummated. Here it would be determined if the bride was a properly prepared virgin. If the bride was accepted, the couple would then move to the wedding feast. These proceedings lasted up to seven days and were at the expense of the bridegroom.

The process of marriage occurs in two distinct stages: *kiddushin* (commonly translated as betrothal) and *nisuin* (full-fledged marriage). *Kiddushin* occurs when the woman accepts the money and the contract offered by the prospective husband. The word "*kiddushin*" comes from the root "*Qof-Dalet-Shin*", meaning "sanctified." It reflects the sanctity of the marital relation. However, the root word also connotes something that is set aside for a specific, sacred, purpose. The ritual of *kiddushin* sets aside the woman to be the wife of a particular man and no other. *Kiddushin* is far more binding than an engagement as we understand the term in modern English. Once *kiddushin* is complete, the woman is legally the wife of the man. The relationship created by *kiddushin* can only be dissolved by death or divorce. However, the spouses do not live together at the time of the *kiddushin*, and the mutual obligations created by the marital relationship do not take effect until the *nisuin* is complete. The *nisuin* (from a word meaning "elevation") completes the process of marriage. The husband carries the wife into his home and they begin their married life together.

The *kiddushin* and *nisuin* would routinely occur as much as a year or two apart. During that time, the husband would prepare a home for the new family. There was always a risk that during this long period of separation, the woman would discover that she wanted to marry another man, or the man would disappear, leaving the woman in the awkward state of being married but without a husband. "*And what man is there that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her? Let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man take her*" (Deuteronomy 20:7).

Because marriage under Jewish law is essentially a private contractual agreement between a man and a woman, it does not require the presence of a rabbi or any other religious official. It is common in modern times, however, for rabbis to officiate - partly in imitation of the Christian practice and partly because the presence of a religious or civil official is required under United States and Canadian civil law.

Let us look into the Biblical marriage in more detail. We will describe the process then look at each step in more detail with Scriptural references. Then we will examine the anti-type and how the type of marriage is used in

Yahweh's plan. Lastly we will look at several cases where a modern view of marriage has resulted in a distortion of the truth.

Biblical marriage process

The Scriptures are silent on much of the activities of the marriage process that would have been understood and accepted as normal when the Scriptures were written. We can turn to other historical documents to fill in some of the details and practices related to the marriage process. "The Culture of Ancient Israel" (1914) by Carl Heinrich Cornill fills in much of the cultural norms that add to our understanding of the daily activities of the nation of Israel. From both historic secular documents and the inspired Word we see that matrimony and family life were regarded in ancient Israel as unqualifiedly the normal, divinely established and prescribed state. *"He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favour of the LORD."* And, *"House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the LORD"* (Proverbs 18:22 and 19:14).

When a son is of age to be married, the father will select a bride for him. This may be done directly or through an agent. The negotiations for the bride include a price and a covenant. The price is determined by the wealth of the groom's family. The covenant describes what the groom is bringing into the marriage and how he is going to look after his wife. The contract sets out the basis of the relationship, defining what the groom would provide for the bride. If the bride agrees to the contract, they share a cup of wine to acknowledge its acceptance. At this point, the wife was legally the property of her husband. This is the betrothal period. During this period the espoused bride was to prepare herself for the groom.

We see the example of Esther in Esther 2;12. *"Each young woman's turn came to go in to King Ahasuerus after she had completed twelve months' preparation, according to the regulations for the women, for thus were the days of their preparation apportioned: six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with perfumes and preparations for beautifying women."* The groom is to prepare the room or home where they are to live. The role of the groom's father is not over yet. During the betrothal period, he is to oversee the preparations of the wedding chamber by his son. Once he feels the work is done he instructs his son to collect his bride.

The Espousal period typically lasts one to two years. It is a time when the bride prepares (sanctifies) herself and makes herself ready for her groom. The groom also has duties during this time. He must prepare the wedding home. Depending on the wealth of the family, this may be a home, or just a room or chamber. The groom also has a duty to look after the wellbeing of his espoused bride. They are considered married in every way except they do not live together and have not had any sexual contact.

The covenant relationship can only be broken through the death of the bride or groom or through a process of divorce. Divorce can be obtained by

the groom if it is discovered during the espousal period that the bride is not a virgin.

When the father of the groom determines that the preparations undertaken by his son are complete, he will instruct his son that the time is right to go and collect his bride. This is sometimes called the “fetching”. It is done with much celebration. The groom along with the friend of the groom will go to the bride’s home. Some distance off they will sound the shofar to give notice that they are coming. They will knock on the door and the bride is expected to be waiting. Her time of preparation is over. They will carry her to the place the groom has prepared. In this wedding chamber, they will consummate the marriage. Tradition allows for this period to last up to seven days where the groom will learn all about his bride. It is the duty of the groom’s friend to provide for their needs. The groom will determine if she has been a properly prepared virgin. When they leave the chamber he has two options. He can announce the bride is either acceptable or reject her. If he determines the bride is not “pure” and yet he still loves her, he can overlook those flaws and still announce that she is his wife. So there are three states that are recognized.

1. Perfectly prepared and accepted,
2. Flaws overlooked and accepted,
3. Not prepared properly and rejected

Once accepted, they come from the room and proceed to the wedding feast where they announce to the world that they are now bride and groom. They again share a cup of wine to symbolize the completion of the marriage process.

This is the pattern that existed throughout Scriptures and upon which all the references to marriage are based. If we try to interpret the Biblical references of marriage to the marriage process we practice today we will make erroneous conclusions.

Biblical examples outlining the marriage process

The events in Genesis 24 describe the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah. This account begins with Abraham sending his most faithful servant back to Abraham’s homeland to select a wife for Isaac. From the text we know that Abraham was of “advanced age”. Perhaps he desired to select the bride himself, but knew that this would not be possible. He selected his most trusted servant, one that had been with the family for many years. It is understood that this servant would have watched Isaac grow from a child, understanding his personality. Abraham trusted his servant to select a bride for Isaac. The servant went to the city of Nahor and following the example shown by Abraham, prayed to Yahweh that he would be lead to make the correct selection of a bride. (Genesis 24:12-14)

Rebekah was the answer to the prayer. Then the servant brought out jewellery of silver, jewellery of gold, and clothing, and gave them to Rebekah. He also gave precious things to her brother and to her mother. (Genesis 24:53)

The price was paid. All that remained was for Rebekah to accept the offer. Then they called Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" She said, *"I will go."* (Genesis 24:58) Rebekah had a choice to accept or reject this offer. "And if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be released from this oath; only do not take my son back there." (Genesis 24:8)

We read that Isaac came from the way of Beer Lahai Roi, also known as Kadesh-barnea, for he dwelt in the south. It is recorded that he was meditating in the field in the evening. What were his thoughts and prayers? I suspect his prayer was that the servant would return with a proper bride that would fulfill the promises that Yahweh made to his father Abraham. He was meditating on the role this bride would have on the family. Making the descendants of Abraham, through him, a great nation. He was overlooking the road that would bring the caravan from the north. He was waiting for the arrival of his bride. When the caravan that brought his bride came into sight he went down to meet them. The servant described to Isaac what had transpired since he left and how the bride was selected. He would have explained that Rebekah had agreed to be his wife. *"Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent; and he took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death."* (Genesis 24:67) This verse summarizes a lot of detail into a few words. How and when was the wedding chamber prepared? Sarah has been dead for two years. The family was continually moving to tend to the herds. Her belongings would certainly have been packed away. When did Isaac prepare his mothers' tent to celebrate his marriage? During the months that the servant was gone, Isaac would have been preparing the wedding "chamber". He had finished the work, the wedding chamber was complete. He then left to watch for his bride to arrive.

In this marriage we see that the father of the groom had directly or indirectly selected the bride. We see that there was a price paid and that she agreed to the marriage. While the bride was being prepared we see that the groom was preparing the wedding chamber.

The price paid for a bride is not necessarily monetary. Saul requested that David perform an act rather than pay a monetary *mohar*. *"Now Michal, Saul's daughter, loved David. And they told Saul, and the thing pleased him. David arose and went, he and his men, and killed two hundred men of the Philistines. And Saul said, thus shall ye say to David, The king desires not any dowry (mohar), but a hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to be avenged of the king's enemies. But Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines. And David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full count to the king, that he might become the king's son-in-law. Then Saul gave him Michal his daughter as a wife."* (1 Samuel 18:20, 25, 27)

In Deuteronomy 22:29 the Law established the *mohar* or brides price at 50 shekels of silver. *"If a man entices a virgin who is not betrothed, and lies with her, he shall surely pay the bride-price for her to be his wife. If her father utterly refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money according to the bride-price of virgins."* (Exodus 22:16-17 NKJV). This version correctly translates

the word *mohar* as bride-price. In the KJV the word is translated as endow. In this example the marriage format was not followed but could be recovered if the man pays the brides price and takes the woman as his wife.

During the espousal period the bride is to prepare herself. What was the process if the bride was found to be not a virgin? There is no better case that that of Mary and Joseph. When they were espoused, Joseph found out that Mary was pregnant. He loved her and sought to put her away quietly by a divorce. The divorce could break the marriage contact only during the espousal period. Mary by all appearance failed to be a properly prepared virgin. *“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.”* (Matthew 1:18&19)

Marriage language in Scriptures

Marriage Idioms

- The spreading of wings, shirt or garment over someone is an idiom for marriage.
- *“Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over you, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, says the Lord GOD, and you became mine”* (Ezekiel 16:8).
- *And he said, "Who are you?" So she answered, "I am Ruth, your maidservant. Take your maidservant under your wing, for you are a close relative" (Ruth 3:9).* A better translation that correctly uses the idiom of marriage would be: *“And he said, "Who are you?" And she said, "I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your garment over your servant because you are a redeemer" (Ruth 3:9).*

Yahweh and His People

- *“For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.”* (Isaiah 54:5)
- *“And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know Yahweh”* (Hosea 2:19-20).
- *“You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, nor shall your land anymore be termed Desolate; But you shall be called Hephzibah (My delight is in her), and your land Beulah (Married); For the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married”* (Isaiah 62:4).

Jesus and the Ecclesia

- *"These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being first fruits to God and to the Lamb"* (Revelation 14:4).
- *"For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ"* (2 Corinthians 11:2).
- *"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the ecclesia, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious ecclesia, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish"* (Ephesians 5:25-27).
- *"Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."* (Revelation 19:7)
- Then he said to me, *"Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'"* And he said to me, *"These are the true sayings of God"* (Revelation 19:9).

The bride is selected by the father of the groom. We can now understand the language of marriage when Jesus states, *"Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day"* (John 6:43-44).

Bridegroom Tarries

"For the vision is yet for an appointed time; But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (Habakkuk 2:3).

State of Readiness

- *"I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"* (Luke 18:8)
- *"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints"* (Revelation 19:7-8).
- *"Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless"* (2 Peter 3:13-14).

Duty of Groom

The duty of the groom was to look after the needs of the bride during the espousal period. Now what is the case in the spiritual sense? *"And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they*

toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, what shall we eat? Or, what shall we drink? Or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knows that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:28-33). “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:19)

The groom was also to prepare the wedding chamber for his bride. *“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions (dwelling places): if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:1-3).*

Role of the Groom's father

Our walk in the LORD began with the language of marriage. The father of the bridegroom selects the bride. *“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.” (John 6:44)* The Father of the groom determines when the time is right for the groom to collect his bride. *“But of that day and hour knows no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man comes.” (Matthew 24:36, 44)*

Role of the “friend of the groom”

John, referring to himself as the “friend of the Bridegroom” and to Jesus, the Bridegroom: *“He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.” (John 3:29)*

Can there be any doubt that our walk is based on the betrothal marriage process? The scriptures are full of marriage language as it relates to our walk. These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being first fruits to God and to the Lamb. (Revelation 14:4) *“For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:2).* Then he said to me, *“Write: ‘Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb’” (Revelation 19:9).*

How ready will we be? What are we busy doing during our time of sanctification? What will our Bridegroom find when we meet with him in the chamber he is preparing? *“Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless” (2 Peter*

3:14). *“Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready”* (Revelation 19:7).

Those that proceed from the wedding chamber as his bride will then enjoy the wedding feast. *“Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband”* (Revelation 21:2).

John Manson

Russia Warns it Will Restore Istanbul Back to Christianity

In a recent address to a delegation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church Putin made some remarkable statements in regard to Russian ambitions and views:

1. That nothing can sever the alliance between Russia and the Ukraine despite efforts of the present Ukrainian government. He referred to the current government as “rising neo-Facism”, which indicates the depth of Putin’s hatred towards the Ukraine’s attempts to align with the West. He went on to state that *“we are determined to stop this plague.”*
2. In a direct threat aimed at Turkey’s involvement in Syria, Putin was very clear that he would *“end the job the late Tsar Nicholas II left unfinished”* if Turkey did not cease support of al-Qaeda in Syria. This is in reference to the desire by Russia to take back Constantinople as well as as the Dardanelles and Bosphorus during World War I. Putin stated, *“He sought to restore Constantinople to Christendom and protect Russian maritime security by liberating (the) Dardanelles and Bosphorus straits, but fate prevented him”*, i.e. the Communist Revolution of 1917. As indicated by the Orthodox Cross pictured, the triumph of the Orthodox religion over Islam (the crescent moon) is very much a part of their mindset. The Russians have wanted Constantinople back from both a religious conviction to restore what was lost to the Ottoman’s in 1453, as well as a military necessity. The Bible student understands that in order for Russia to take on the full mantle of the “King of The North” (Dan. 11) as well as the “Little Horn of the Goat” (Dan. 8) in its Latter Day push into the Holy Land, that Constantinople and the Turkish territory must fall to Russian hands. Putin has made his intentions very clear.



MARRIAGE AND YAHWEH'S PLAN

Part 2

THERE are several specific Bible passages that take on a fuller meaning once we understand the marriage process. Looking at these in the context of the Biblical marriage theme these passages take on a much fuller meaning. Let's consider a few.

"In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:2-3).

When we understand the beauty of the marriage theme we can see that Jesus is using the language of marriage. Our Lord states that, as the Bridegroom, he will be leaving them for a while to prepare the wedding chamber, or room. He continues in this role by stating that he will return to gather his bride. *"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only"* (Matthew 24:36).

Again we have a marriage statement. The role of the Father is to determine when the preparations are complete. He will determine the time to send His son the Bridegroom to collect His Bride.

Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, *"Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is*



shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom" (Matthew 26:27-29). All the details of the betrothal are contained in this event. The marriage covenant; the price paid, (not silver or gold), but with the precious blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:18-19); the forgiveness of our sins (the only way we could hope to be accepted during the consummation period); and the cup of wine to seal the contract. Jesus then completes the picture by assuring the 11 disciples that they will seal the marriage by again sharing a cup of wine with the bridegroom at the wedding feast in the Kingdom.

It must be now obvious to the reader of the parallels of marriage to the plan of God. At our baptism we became espoused to Jesus. We have accepted the covenant made to Abraham. We have been bought with his blood. We remember this covenant by sharing the cup of wine. We await the sound of the shofar and the return of our Bridegroom when we will be carried together by him to Sinai. There, our time of preparation will be evaluated and with His grace, our failures will be overlooked and we will be welcomed into the wedding feast as constituents of the New Jerusalem. There he will share the cup of wine with his bride.

Shofar

The blowing of the shofar is used many times in the Scriptures. At a wedding, as we have discussed, when the groom goes to fetch his bride and at the time of the Feast of Trumpets. It is interesting and certainly worth remembering that one of the names for the Feast of Trumpets according to



Jewish literature, is *"The wedding day of the Messiah."* This whole marriage feast is a picture of Yahweh coming for His Bride before Yom Kippur, the Day of Judgment. There was a link to the blowing of trumpets and marriage. This can be determined by the times that Yahweh has blown the shofar. Yahweh sounds the shofar only twice in scriptures. The first time was in Sinai. *"And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightning,*

and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet (Shofar) exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled" (Exodus 19:16). As we have already shown, this was when Yahweh brought His bride, the young nation of Israel, to Sinai and entered into a marriage with His espoused nation. Is it any wonder that tradition has associated the sounding of the shofar with marriage? So, for the nation, the feast of trumpets was a

reminder of this marriage in Sinai. *“And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, in the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a Sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. Ye shall do no servile work therein: but ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD”* (Leviticus 23:23-25).

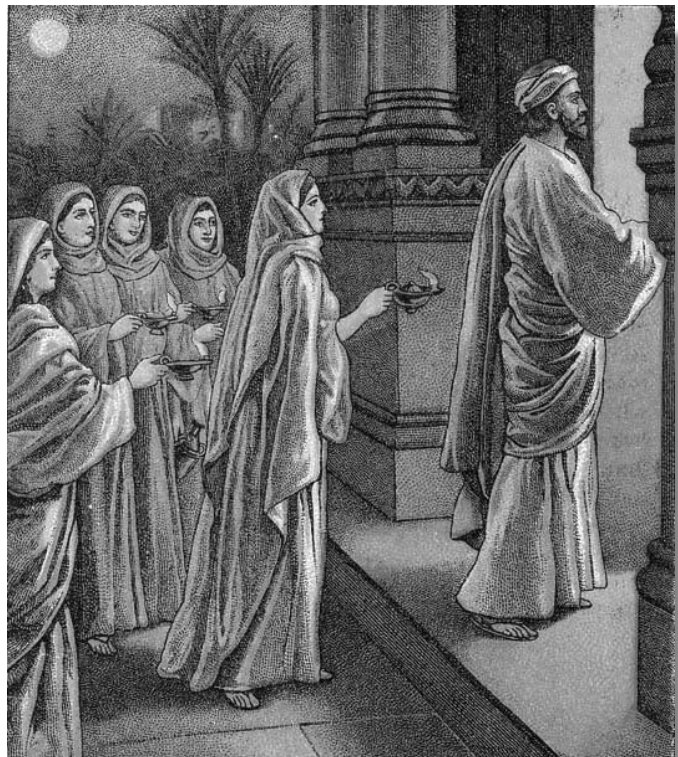
The second time the shofar will sound is yet future when Yahweh will gather those that have been bought with the blood of the covenant. *“As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. And the LORD shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning: and the Lord GOD shall blow the shofar, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south. The LORD of hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour, and subdue with sling stones; and they shall drink, and make a noise as through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar”* (Zechariah 9:11, 14-15).

Parable of the Ten Virgins

Our look at marriage in the scriptures would not be complete without looking again at this parable. *“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom”* (Matthew 25:1 NKJV).

The parables presented by the Messiah are directed only to those in Covenant. Therefore, we will examine the Parable of the Ten Virgins on the basis that both the wise and foolish virgins are in covenant. Both groups represent the espoused bride of Christ.

The Master had just finished relating the prophecy on the Mount of Olives. With these words still fresh in their minds, *“And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other”* (Matthew 24:31 NKJV), He creates the parable of the Ten Virgins.



The parable is directed to those who are alive and watching for the day that Yahweh has determined that He will instruct his angels to sound the shofar and send the Bridegroom to collect his bride. This parable continues with the language of marriage and is both an exhortation to watch, but more specifically, to be prepared. Watching requires knowledge of what to watch for

and preparedness describes the application of this knowledge.

The Olivet Prophecy tells us what to watch for (*a majority of the prophecy is primarily devoted to the events of 70 AD, with the latter portion of the prophecy devoted to Christ's Return - SK*) and now the Master illustrates how we should be prepared.

The bride's responsibility is to prepare herself for the day when her bridegroom comes to fetch her. According to the customs of the day, the bridegroom came to his bride's home and his attendants would sound the shofar to awaken her. She was expected then to be ready at the door when he knocks and to leave with him directly to the wedding chamber. Her time of preparation has come to an end. It will now be up to the bridegroom to determine if she is acceptable as his bride.

The Master uses the language of marriage overlaid with the end time events. The virgins represent the brides to be and are to accompany the bridegroom to the marriage home. They were "virgins". They separated themselves from the world to serve Christ. They are the same as Jesus described to John in his revelation. *"These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being first fruits to God and to the Lamb"* (Revelation 14:4 NKJV).

They have not defiled themselves. They have kept themselves pure out of respect for their prospective husband, so that when he comes to fetch her, she will be found worthy of marriage. Paul states: *"For I have betrothed you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ"* (2 Corinthians 11:2).

Oil was beaten out of olives in order to make pure oil for the lamps in the Tabernacle and the Temple. It took much effort and time to extract the oil. Similarly, it is the obligation of Christ's followers to carefully study the Word of God, that they might radiate its light in both doctrine and action.

Both the wise and foolish virgins in this parable made oil, and knew what was to come. But some of them did not qualify for the marriage feast, implying that to merely separate from the world, is to observe only the negative aspects of God's requirements, and is not sufficient. There remains the need to apply the affirmative principles also, thus manifesting the divine qualities in action. The virgins are represented as bearing lamps fed by oil, symbolizing the truth shining in darkness. *"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path"* (Psalms 119:105).

Knowing what is to come and what to do is but the starting point. The foolish virgins had this part complete. But they failed to apply this in their walk. *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven"* (Matthew 5:16).

"While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept." They had anticipated that the bridegroom would come earlier than he did, but when this

did not prove to be the case, they became drowsy through the long wait. Some began to slumber, their heads nodding through tiredness, whilst others fell into a deep sleep. The parable suggests that all would be tired. Paul realized the significance and warned against this. *"Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober"* (1 Thessalonians 5:6). Jewish weddings traditionally took place in the early evening at six o'clock. In this case, the cry was delayed and came at midnight, when least expected. The shofar sounded. Both the foolish and wise recognized the sound and knew what it meant. The Bridegroom comes! They arose to trim their lamps that the light which identified them might shine forth at its best. It was when the virgins came to trim their lamps, that the foolish realized how inadequate was the store of oil they had provided. Similarly, it will be when we are brought to the Judgment Seat, and then we will all recognize how inadequately we have prepared for it.

The foolish panicked and pleaded to the wise for oil. Who would not have sympathy with them and lend them some oil? But what the foolish virgins were really asking was: *"It is late, and we are unprepared, please help us to get ready."* David wrote *"None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him"* (Psalms 49:7).

We cannot provide the oil or the light for others. Each one must shine forth on his own account. The wise virgins acknowledged this, and as Peter stated: *"Now if the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?"* (1 Peter 4:18). The answer is, they will not appear at the wedding feast, for they have failed to make it past the time when the Bridegroom approves his bride. The door will be shut. Remember the days of Noah when the door of the ark was closed and how it must have pained Noah to hear the pounding on the door and the cries of those outside only to be gradually drowned out as the storm intensified. The foolish virgins called out, *"Lord, Lord, open to us!"* Their cry would carry throughout the wedding feast, begging the Master to let them in. And what was his response? *"Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you."* They had studied his word. They knew him, but he did not know them. The Bridegroom did not recognize them. Their actions did not reflect his standards. Nevertheless, the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: *"The Lord knows those who are His,"* and, *"Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity"* (2 Timothy 2:19).

The parable draws our thoughts to the Grace of Yahweh. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." (Ephesians 2:8) May our walk be consistent with the Bridegroom's words, and where we fall short may His Grace be poured out to us.

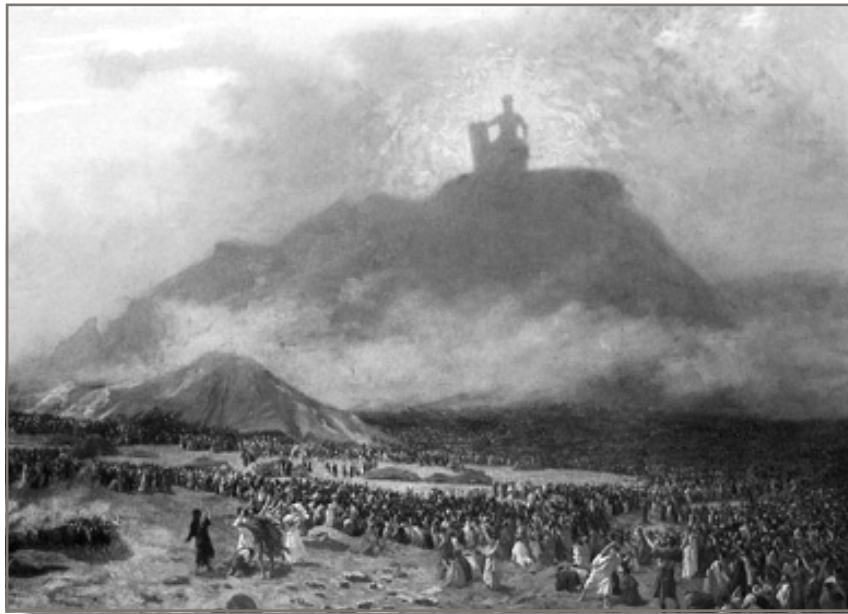
In the time remaining we must apply what we have learned. Let our light shine. Our actions must not be inconsistent with his word. Do we feed, house, cloth, visit, or give aid? *"Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and take you in, or naked and clothe you? Or*

when did we see you sick, or in prison, and come to you?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me' (Matthew 25:37-40).

The foolish virgins knew the Lord. They knew what was expected of them. They had the knowledge but were unprepared! They expected the door to be opened for them. *'Lord, Lord, open to us!'* But even with their last minute effort, the message they received was shattering to them. *'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.'* They knew him very well; they knew what the signs of his coming were and what was required of them. They knew the Bridegroom but he did not know them. Could any story be sadder? How foolish to spend a life time learning the truth of Yahweh but never walking in His way. That is the lesson of the Ten Virgins.

Who will be gathered to Sinai when the Bridegroom gathers His Bride?

Over the centuries man has corrupted marriage by redefining the roles of the bride and the bridegroom. But let the word of Yahweh speak the Truth. Just as Yahweh brought the young nation to marry in Sinai, so will Jesus bring his espoused bride to Sinai to judge if she is properly prepared. The Truth has been distorted when some say that all those who have knowledge of Yahweh's



plan will be carried with the espoused bride to be judged. They argue that you cannot limit Yahweh's power. While that is true, it has nothing to do with the marriage that is to take place in Sinai, where those who have been called, bought with a price greater than silver and gold, who have accepted the covenant, and who are

the espoused of Christ are brought. Can the bridegroom bring others along to the consummation? What does Jesus say about such behavior? *"But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart"* (Matthew 5:28). He calls such behavior "adultery". By his own words it would be adultery to take a woman who is not his espoused bride to Sinai. *"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah--not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the*

day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD" (Jeremiah 31:31-32).

The original covenant, a marriage in Sinai, where the Children of Israel, at the base of Mount Sinai said; *"all that the LORD commands we will do."* They began their betrothal period and we know they failed a short time later. God's desire was to be their Husband. Then began the process of the new (marriage) covenant with Jesus as the Bridegroom. Soon the shofar will sound and the Bridegroom will gather those betrothed to him to Sinai to be "judged" and to determine if their preparations were enough. Many will be accepted as brides which will ultimately lead to being called to the "marriage supper of the Lamb". Here the marriage will be completed when the words of the bridegroom are fulfilled *"I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God."* Understanding the gathering to Sinai for Judgment as part of the marriage process answers the question that has divided us. Who will stand before the judgment seat of Christ? The answer is simple; only those betrothed to him, those who have been called, who have accepted the contract, purchased not with silver but with his blood, and who are preparing themselves - his espoused bride! The Shofar will sound and Jesus will collect his bride; to pick up strangers would be adultery.

Adultery

The discussion of marriage would not be complete without taking a look at what happens when things go wrong. The law is very clear; *"Thou shalt not commit adultery"* (Exodus 20:14). The penalty is severe *"the man who commits adultery with another man's wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death"* (Leviticus 20:10).

We have shown that the relationship between Yahweh and Israel was a marriage; Israel being espoused to Yahweh in Sinai. What happened to this relationship? *"Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also"* (Jeremiah 3:8). How had Israel committed adultery? They turned to other gods, they adopted the false doctrines of the nations around them. *"And the LORD said to Moses, Behold, you will rest with your fathers; and this people will rise and play the harlot with the gods of the foreigners of the land, where they go to be among them, and they will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them"* (Deuteronomy 31:16). What was the nature of the adultery? It was not sexual relations with the neighboring nations. They had adopted the false doctrines of these nations!

Yahweh pleads with them to return to Him and He will continue to provide for them as is the duty of the Groom. *"Return, O backsliding children,"* says Yahweh; *"for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion. And I will give you shepherds*

according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding” (Jeremiah 3:14-15).

Yahweh had given them a bill of divorce. The espoused bride was proven unworthy and the marriage covenant was dissolved. Yet Yahweh pleaded with them to return. Can the marriage be recovered? Can the Groom once again enter into a covenant with the bride?

Let us look at the law as it was established. *“When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man's wife, if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance” (Deuteronomy 24:1-4).* The law allowed for the groom to divorce his espoused wife if she proved to not be a virgin (unclean). She was free to marry another. If that husband divorced her or if he died, the former husband could not take her back.

The spiritual message is that while the marriage between Yahweh and the nation is under a “Certificate of Divorce” and the covenant has been dissolved, He can take her back ONLY if she does not enter into another covenant with another. *“You shall make no covenant with them, nor with their gods” (Exodus 23:32).*

A new covenant was created, called the “Everlasting Covenant”. *“Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah--not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me” (Jeremiah 31:31,32&40).*

Spiritual Israel will be recovered. Hosea wrote about this recovery process. *“And it shall be, in that day, says the LORD, That you will call Me 'My Husband,' And no longer call Me 'My Master'” (Hosea 2:16).* *“I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and mercy; I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, And you shall know the LORD” (Hosea 2:19-20).*

Do we commit “Spiritual Adultery”? It was the acceptance of false doctrine that separated Yahweh from His people. Would not the same apply to us? Do we take notice of the warnings given by Yahweh to not associate with the nations around? We have been placed in a nation where we are to wander

as a sojourner, but where we, by some necessity, have to work and interact on a daily basis. This relationship, with those outside the covenant, those not part of the espoused bride of Christ, has a profound effect on our walk and preparation. We begin to enjoy the pleasures of this world. We adapt and finally incorporate their ideas and thinking into our mind. We accept their false doctrines. Worse still, we bring them into our Ecclesia. They are pleasant to look upon. Spiritual adultery was the downfall of the nation of Israel that came out of Egypt, and that resulted in the divorce of Yahweh with the nation. *"Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"* (Luke 18:8).

While our preparation for the day that we are carried to Sinai is individual, it is in the association with others of "like precious faith" that strengthens us. It is the opportunity to come out of the world and gather together as one. The symbol of the nation separated from those around being realized in the ecclesia. Where all the false doctrines of the world are stopped at the door and we gather around the one truth. *"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend (struggle) for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints"* (Jude 1:3).

Divorce

We have just seen that Yahweh had given a bill of divorce to the nation for their adultery. The process of divorce has been used today to allow any marriage to be dissolved for any reason. We have reminded you of the Biblical marriage process and its type in the role of Christ and his bride - the ecclesia. So what place does divorce have in marriage? Many quote Matthew as allowing divorce for specific reasons. *"It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causes her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced commits adultery."* (Matthew 5:31-32) But remember that Matthew was writing to the Jews and they understood the process of marriage. Just as it would have been appropriate for Joseph to put away Mary, once it was discovered that she was with child during the espousal period, so too could a husband put away his espoused wife if she was found to have committed adultery. Once they completed the marriage process, only death could dissolve the marriage. Jesus confirms that divorce is only possible during the betrothal period. It is also interesting to explore the reasons why only the sins of the bride are listed. Consider that we are the bride and Jesus is the bridegroom, and you can see that while we may be unfaithful, He will always be faithful.

Finally

There is much more that can be said, for marriage is the theme of the Scriptures. Yahweh's plan is one of marriage. Once you understand the language of marriage you cannot help but see it in every book of the Scriptures. It is our hope, as properly prepared brides, that we will be found

worthy, and that where we have failed, it is our hope that his grace will overlook our blemishes and that we may be one of the multitude that marches to Jerusalem to sit down with the bridegroom at the wedding feast. There we will share a cup of wine with him one final time. It will no longer be a memorial cup but a celebration of the marriage of the bride and the bridegroom. It will be the realization of the promises in the marriage covenant delivered so long ago to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David.

The shofar will soon sound. When the time of preparation is over, we must run to the door and wait for the bridegroom to knock. We will be carried to Sinai where the marriage will be completed. The sound of the shofar is unmistakable. It is like no other instrument. You can feel it reverberate in your chest. It makes the hairs on your head stand on end. When you hear it, will you be prepared?

- *“Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Revelation 21:2).*
- *“Then he said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’ “And he said to me, “These are the true sayings of God”” (Revelation 19:9).*

Are we like the five wise virgins properly preparing ourselves as brides? At the end, when the kingdom is turned over to the Father, a people will bear God’s name and He will be their husband.

John Manson

The complete brotherly character of the first century relation of one believer to another, in their co-operative companionship for the work of the truth, is well exhibited in the following endearing descriptions, viz, “fellow citizens,” “fellow disciples,” “fellow heirs,” “fellow helpers,” “fellow laborers,” “fellow servants,” “fellow soldiers,” “fellow workers,” and “fellow prisoners.” F.R. Shuttleworth, 1880

THE BIBLE OR HUMANISTIC POLITICS?

IN 2016, millions and millions of Americans will embark on a historic journey that is fairly unique to the United States of America. These American citizens will continue to finalize the process of electing a new President of the United States. There will be rallies, debates, caucuses, primaries and general elections. There will be multi-colored signs, banners and billboards on every street corner in every city of this nation. There will be lengthy speeches and a multitude of opponent accusations, lies and insulting rhetoric that will be reported on and analyzed by everyone who knows how to spell the word “politics”. There will be untold campaign promises made and campaign promises broken. There will be politicians in each party who will suddenly become friends and supporters of the front runners who once were their despised opponent. There will be constant intense discussions between individuals around every coffee pot in corporate America in regard to the political issues of the day. Who is the best man or woman for the job? Who would be the best Commander in Chief? Who will be able to solve all of the hot political issues of the day? Who has the best interests of the average American at heart? Will it be Trump, Cruz, Clinton, or Sanders? These questions will be in the headlines of every daily and weekly news outlet in the world and will finally be answered on November 8, 2016. On January 20, 2017, the new President of the United States will be sworn into the office of the presidency and will stay in this office for at least the next four calendar years.



How do all of these events impact the Family of God, the sons and daughters of the Almighty God and the spiritual brethren of the only begotten Son of God? What is the believer’s position and responsibility in regard to the political discussions and issues of the day?

We would like to look at a few key elements of the entire political process that are being forced upon us in these last days of the Kingdom of Men. We also will compare the humanism in these political elements with what the Bible teaches us about the same principles.

Definition of the word “Politics” – Merriam-Webster.com

1. The art or science of government; the art or science concerned with **guiding** or **influencing** governmental policy; the art or science concerned with winning and holding **control** over a government
2. Political actions, practices, or policies
3. Political affairs or business; especially: **competition** between competing interest groups or individuals for **power** and **leadership** (as in a government); political life especially as a principal activity or profession; political activities characterized by artful and often **dishonest** practices
4. The political opinions or sympathies of a person
5. The total complex of relations between people living in society; relations or conduct in a particular area of experience especially as seen or dealt with from a **political point of view**.

As we read through these definitions of the word politics, there are several red flags that should automatically be raised in our minds. What does the Bible say about these elements of the humanistic political systems of the world?

In order to discuss the concepts and elements of any political system, there are a few primary and basic fundamental Biblical principles that always have to be considered in discussions of these types.

- **GOD IS IN CONTROL OF ALL THINGS AND AT ALL TIMES.** In **Daniel 4, verses 17 and 32, Daniel 5, verse 21 and Daniel 2, verse 21**, we read that the Most High (Yahweh) ruleth in the Kingdom of Men and giveth it to whomsoever he will and setteth up over it the basest of men. He setteth up kings and removes them. The objective of this principle is to ultimately bring all nations to the point that is required prior to the establishment of the everlasting Kingdom of God.
- **MAN CAN CONTROL NOTHING.** Due to the sin nature and weaknesses of the flesh, mankind cannot create, devise, put into place or maintain a perfect society. **Jeremiah 10:23** reads – “*O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.*” If mankind cannot resolve any of the critical problems of the day, then why should mankind place their trust in those who do nothing more than make promises that can never be 100% upheld? **Psalms 118:8-9** tells us that our trust should always and only be in Yahweh. In the debates of the politicians, what is the number one statement that comes out of these individuals’ mouths? - I

AM or I CAN or I WILL. Their speeches are all about themselves, what they can do, what they think that they can accomplish, how much better they are than their opponents. The egos of these individuals are off the charts. When we consider these men or women, we must remember the last part of the verse in **Daniel 4:17** – those that God sets up over the Kingdom of Men are the basest of men. Isn't it very telling that even in the man-made definition of "politics" that we are reviewing, one of the definitions of the humanistic political systems of the world is that they are characterized by artful and often dishonest practices? Many of these men and women claim to be servants of God and state that they will give God glory when they win. How can they reconcile their egotistical attitudes with the words of these holy men of God?

- **Isaiah 57:15** - *"For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a **contrite** (feeling or expressing remorse or penitence; affected by guilt) and **humble** spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."*
- **Isaiah 66:1-2** - *"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? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a **contrite** spirit, and trembleth at my word."*
- **Micah 6:8** - *"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to **walk humbly** with thy God?"*

Another red flag that we observe in this definition is the desire of the men and women involved in politics to guide, influence, control, have power over and lead others in the establishment of governmental policy. These men and women may be sincere in their beliefs that they think they can improve the lifestyles of those who they govern. But, where should our desires lie as taught by the Bible?

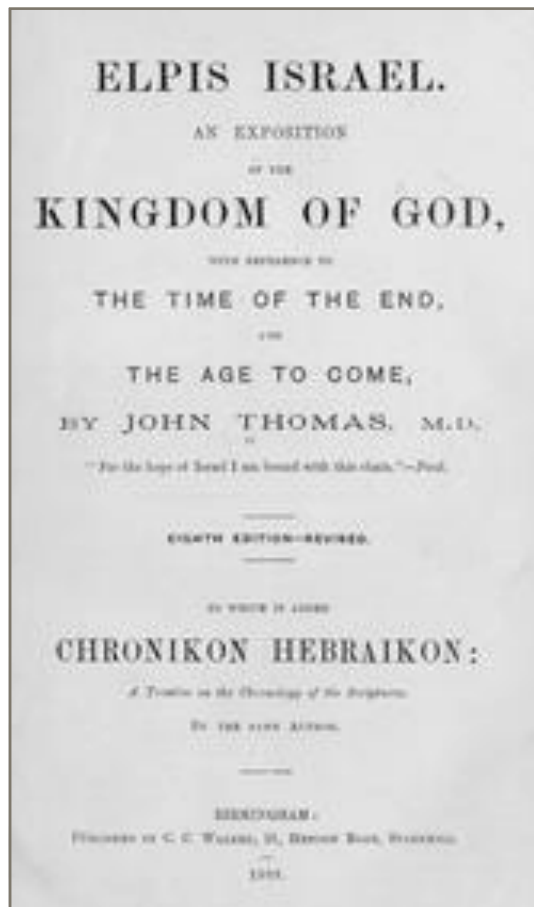
- **Matthew 6:33** - *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."*
- **2 Samuel 23:3-5** - *"The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all*

things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow."

- **Psalms 27:4** - *"One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple."*

Another red flag is found in the third point of the definition. This part of the definition emphasizes the competition that exists between those who are vying for political office. As we see and read of the dirty, nasty, wicked acts committed by those who desire to defame their opponents and glorify themselves, we can truly understand that these things are of the world and are not of God. We are continually bombarded from all of the media outlets by individuals who see and report the nastiness of the competition and "love to have it so". What does the Bible teach about this?

- **Matthew 5:44** - *"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.."*
- **James 3:8-10** - *"But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. There with bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be."*



What value does the politics of this world bring to its inhabitants? Let us quote from Brother John Thomas from pages 1-2 of Elpis Israel:

"Such is the being that claims the independent sovereignty of the globe. He has founded dominions, principalities, and power; he has built great cities, and vaunted himself in the works of his hands, saying, "Are not these by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" He repudiates all lordship over him, and claims the inalienable and inherent right of self-government, and of establishing whatever civil and ecclesiastical institutions are best suited to his sensuality and caprice. Hence, at successive periods, the earth has become the arena of fierce and pandemoniac conflicts; its tragedies have baptized its soil in blood, and the mingled cries of

the oppressor and the victim have ascended to the throne of the Most High.

Skilled in the wisdom which comes from beneath he is by nature ignorant of that which is “first pure, and then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.” This is a disposition to which the animal man under the guidance of his fleshly mind has no affinity. His propensity is to obey the lust of his nature; and to do its evil works, “which are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, sects, envying, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like.” All these make up the character of the world, “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life”, upon which is enstamped the seal of God's reprobation. “They who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God, but they shall die”. Such is the world of human kind! The great and impious enemy of God upon the earth. Its mind is not subject to His law, neither indeed can it be.” End Quote

What does the wise servant Solomon state in **Ecclesiastes 1:2-3 and 9-10 and verse 14**? If the man in whom Yahweh gave so much wisdom and understanding believed that all worldly things are vexation (longing, striving) and vanity (emptiness or nothing), how can the political representatives of mankind believe they can change the ways of the world by their own feeble beliefs and devices? As Solomon stated, there is nothing new under the sun. The political professionals of the day all believe that they and only they can do something that none of their predecessors were able to do – change and overturn the guidance and direction of Yahweh's Plan and Purpose for His Creation. Contrast these vain and empty thoughts, activities and attitudes of the politicians of every age with what Paul states of the true believer in **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*”. There is nothing vain or empty when we serve the Lord with all our heart, mind and soul.

As we are bombarded by all of these elements of the American political system, we should be so thankful that we do not live in fear as others who have no hope nor knowledge of God's Glorious Plan and Purpose for His creation. Americans are concerned about their safety, their savings, their day to day expenses, their health care, and their children's education and welfare. Brethren of Christ have the same trials, but we should have no anxiety about the ultimate outcome of these trials. God is in control of all things. Let us place our trust in Him only. He will provide all things that we need.

The politics of men compared to the absolutes of God's Kingdom

Let us now compare some of the hot political issues of the Kingdom of Men to what the Bible teaches about these same issues when the Kingdom of God is established in the very near future, Lord willing.

ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION – THE KINGDOM OF MEN

An illegal entrant being a person unlawfully entering, or seeking to enter, in breach of a deportation order or of the immigration laws and includes a person who has so entered: Immigration Act 1971.

BIBLICAL TEACHINGS ABOUT THE INHABITANTS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Immortal saints – All individuals throughout the ages who have entered into the everlasting covenant through the requirements that Yahweh has set forth will be gathered together before the righteous Judge, Jesus Christ, and will receive a fair and just judgment of their degree of obedience to the Lord's commandments during their years of probation. Some will receive everlasting life and some everlasting shame and contempt. Psalms 50:5, II Corinthians 5:10, Daniel 12:1-3.

Mortal Subjects – Only those individuals who will survive the great judgments that will occur throughout the earth at the setting up of the Kingdom of God will be allowed to continue into the Kingdom Age. These individuals must recognize Christ as their King and recognize the need for obedience to the righteous laws coming out of the Capital City of the Kingdom – Zion – Jerusalem. No others will be allowed to exist during the kingdom. Zechariah 8:21-23, Zechariah 14:17, Isaiah 35:8, Isaiah 52:1.

GLOBAL WARMING – THE KINGDOM OF MEN

A gradual increase in the overall temperature of the earth's atmosphere generally attributed to the greenhouse effect caused by increased levels of carbon dioxide, chlorofluorocarbons, and other pollutants.

BIBLICAL TEACHINGS REGARDING CLIMATIC CONDITIONS IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Pre-Establishment of The Kingdom of God – During the time period immediately preceding the establishment of the Kingdom of God, there will be overflowing rains, great hailstones, fire and brimstone (probably an indication of volcanoes erupting), and earthquakes in various places. Along with the end time shakings of the political environments, there will be shakings of the natural earth and unheard of climatic events that will disrupt and influence all nations. Ezekiel 38:22; Job 38:22-23, Zechariah 14:4; Luke 21:11

Climatic Conditions During the Millennium Kingdom Age – During the Kingdom, the natural environment will gradually return to a more agrarian society. Every man will sit under his own fig tree and the plowman will overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed, and the mountains will drop sweet wine. The land will return to a situation similar to what was found in the Garden of Eden. Plants shall thrive in locations where there once was no hope of production, from a humanistic way of thinking. Roses shall bloom in a lonely place. All of these statements indicate very

favorable climatic conditions in the Kingdom that mankind has never experienced outside of the original Garden of Eden. Isaiah 51:3, Amos 9: 13, Micah 4:4; Isaiah 55:13; Psalm 72:16.

BUDGET DEFICIT – THE KINGDOM OF MEN

A status of financial health in which expenditures exceed revenue. The term "budget deficit" is most commonly used to refer to government spending rather than business or individual spending. When referring to accrued federal government deficits, the term "national debt" is used.

ECONOMIC GROWTH – THE KINGDOM OF MEN

An increase in the capacity of an economy to produce goods and services, compared from one period of time to another.

BIBLICAL TEACHINGS REGARDING FINANCIAL SITUATIONS IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

In the Kingdom of God, there will be no financial institutions, no stock markets, no IRA's, no company savings or retirement plans or national welfare systems. As we have previously stated, the Kingdom will be more agrarian, thus having no need for the monetary inducements and downfalls from corporate businesses that are experienced in today's society. The primary goal of the constituents of the Kingdom of God is to bring God praise glory and honor, not to become rich, famous or powerful. Isaiah 55:1; Matthew 6:31-33.

FOREIGN POLICY – THE KINGDOM OF MEN

A policy pursued by a nation in its dealings with other nations, designed to achieve national objectives.

NATIONAL SECURITY – THE KINGDOM OF MEN

The protection of a nation from attack or other danger by maintaining adequate armed forces and guarding state secrets

BIBLICAL TEACHINGS REGARDING INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

In the Kingdom of God, there will be no individual governments, no mortal leaders, no mortal rulers, no presidents, no Congress, no diplomats, no policy other than that which proceeds from Jerusalem, the city of the Great king. All things will be put under the subjection of Christ and His immortalized co-rulers. All laws will be just and righteous and all mortal inhabitants will be required to be obedient to the law that will proceed from Zion. Nations will have to recognize the God of the Hebrew people and will have to come and bow to His Anointed King who is His only begotten Son. There will be no more war, nations will not lift up sword against nations. There will be no more armies, navy, or air forces. There will be no need for national security, as nations will not have to worry about threats and invasions from their neighbors. Those nations that do not come to the special Feast

days, such as the re-established Feast of Tabernacles, will experience the judgments and wrath of the World Wide King and His associates. The nations of the world will be glad to bring to the King the materials to build the coming Temple of God, the House of Worship for all people. Isaiah 2:1-4; Zechariah 8:21-23; Psalm 72:10; Isaiah 60:9; Zephaniah 3:9-10; I Timothy 6:15; Revelation 17:14; Revelation 19:16; Philippians 2:10.

CATASTROPHIC EVENTS – THE KINGDOM OF MEN

Any natural or man-made incident, including terrorism, which results in extraordinary levels of mass casualties, damage, or disruption severely affecting the population, infrastructure, environment, economy, national morale, and/or government functions.

BIBLICAL TEACHINGS REGARDING CATASTROPHES IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

These natural catastrophes will not cease until the King of Peace sits on His throne and rules and reigns over a world that will finally experience the peace so long sought after. However, immediately preceding the establishment of the Kingdom of God, the world will experience a time of trouble like there never was. Due to the extreme wickedness and evil that will exist prior to the second advent of our Lord, God will pour out His wrathful judgments on a world that has chosen to glorify only themselves, to defame God's name and to deny His laws and commandments. During this time period that the scriptures identify as Armageddon, many people will refuse to accept the Kingship of God's Son and will be destroyed. The latter day nation of Israel will also experience the judgements of God. He will bring against them a conglomeration of nations, led by Russia, the Gogian despot, which will result in the destruction of two thirds of the Jewish population in the land. The Gentile nations will experience the wrath of God in the day of His vengeance and in the year of His Redeemed and in the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion. Daniel 12:1; Revelation 6:17; Revelation 19:15; Revelation 16:16; Psalm 2:6-12; Zechariah 13:8-9; Ezekiel 38-39; Daniel 11:40-45; Isaiah 63:4; Isaiah 34:8

Summary

After comparing some of the political issues of the day with what the Bible teaches on the same subjects, our next question is, "How are we supposed to react to these political issues and systems of the day?" The first thing that we should always remember is the lesson from **Psalm 118:8-9**. *Trust in the Lord with all our heart, soul and mind*. We do and should have a very deep interest in the outcome of national policies. However, our interest is not to help influence these outcomes, as we know that Yahweh is and will always be directing these matters. Our interest helps to keep us alert and watching these events so that we may manifest correct doctrinal beliefs and conduct and prepare ourselves as we see that the return of our Lord is nigh

upon us. We should be thankful that we live in a land and a time where we can worship our God in peace. We should submit ourselves to the laws of the land until they contradict the laws of God. **Matthew 22:21; Romans 13:7; Acts 5:29; Titus 3:1-2.** We are not allowed to talk evil of any man, even the wicked rulers that govern our lives. Our concern should be to bring God glory and honor. We are not to criticize our natural rulers nor take up a formal protest against them or their policies. If we can only place our continual trust in Yahweh, then the words of **Psalms 34:7-9 (also Psalms 37:1-11; 22-40)** are a great comfort.

“The angel of the YAHWEH encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them. O taste and see that YAHWEH is good: Blessed is the man that trusteth in Him. O fear YAHWEH, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear Him.

B. Henderson

Timely excerpt from “Exposition of Daniel”

“The Little Horn of the Goat represents the undivided power of the Kingdom of Babylon from the annexation of the northern kingdom to Rome, B.C. 65, to the loss of Italy, and the West; and the same power *minus* Italy and the West from the eighth century to the present time. But when the Autocrat gains Constantinople, and Russianizes Italy and the West; and having superseded the Ottoman *regime* in Asia, comes as Gog to invade the Holy Land and to besiege Jerusalem, the Little Horn of the Goat will again represent the power of the whole dominion briefly united under one chief, and he the proudest that ever exalted and magnified himself above all the rulers upon earth. In that near future the Little Horn of the Goat will be “exceeding great”, over-shadowing all the sovereignties represented by the Two-Horned, and Ten-Horned, Beasts, and the Psuedoprophet of the Beast. But when it is “broken in pieces without help” it appears no more as a symbol upon the prophetic page. Its mission in the Holy Land against Judah ends with its own Pharaoh-like destruction; and the East delivered, future events re-open in the West; where only a Beast, the False Prophet, and the Ten Horns, their Russian Constantinopolitan confederacy being dissolved, remain to be ground to powder, and destroyed by fire and sword.” pp. 59,60

WHAT HAVE WE VOWED?

OUR introductory reading comes from Deut. 23:21-23 and reads, *“When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee. But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee. That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform; even a freewill offering, according as thou hast vowed unto the LORD thy God, which thou hast promised with thy mouth.”*

Under the law there were many vows that could be taken, all of which were voluntary, freewill offerings whose purpose was to please Yahweh and thank Him for the blessings received from His hand. For the most part, the terms of the vow were determined by the person taking the vow, but there are a few instances in Scripture where an individual’s vow was given to him by his parents or by God Himself. In this article we’ll examine our covenant and what we have vowed we would do for Yahweh through the freewill choice we have made or will make to get baptized.

This was originally written to be directed toward young people, but we know that anything that can be said to somebody 13-20 years old concerning the truth can apply to people 25, 45 and even 95 years old. I’ll be starting with the responsibilities of the young people but will be explaining their duties that they’ll be taking on as they grow into adults, have children and when they become elders of an ecclesia.

Young people ages 13-20: You are no longer children. You are growing into young men and women and the instruction left to us by Paul can be found in 1 Cor. 13:11, *“When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”* This is the time to begin putting away childish things. Society around us keeps immaturity and these childish things as long as they can, so we see people who are 30 years old trying to be like 18 and 20 year olds instead of growing up. This is not how we should act. Instead, we are left instructions in 1 Cor. 14:20 that tell us: *“Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.”* Don’t be childish in your understanding of God and His scriptures. As you grow up it is required that you develop a spiritual mind and set aside the immaturity of childhood

because the deep things of God cannot be discerned with an undeveloped, natural mind.

Some at this age are baptized already, and some are not. Those which are should understand and be aware of what I'm going to express, but I understand that at this age we don't always think everything through to their conclusion before deciding to go ahead and do it. As parents, do we know what we should be teaching our children to exemplify? At this age, do we know what responsibilities we have as children of believers? Our responsibility is to honor our fathers and mothers according to Ephesians 6:1-3. *"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth."*

This applies no matter what age we are. Reading also from Hebrews 12:9-11. *"Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."* We are chastened by our parents so that we will give them reverence and learn how to give Yahweh reverence when He chastens us. If we do not give reverence to our parents when they chasten us, then we won't give God reverence either because we won't understand how to revere him. This is why at any age we must honor our fathers and mothers, otherwise we have a stiff neck and we know that Yahweh does not yield to the stiff necked, but rather he brakes the stiff necked and makes them bend to His way or He destroys the work of their hands. We're also told in Proverbs 1:7 that *'The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom;'* this word 'Fear' carries with it the meaning of 'reverence;' so we see that the reverence of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom and this reverence must first be directed toward our parents when they chastise us before we can direct it toward our Heavenly Father when we grow older. This is our responsibility whether we're baptized or not.

This reverence for God, the mind of Christ and the lifestyle that we should be living after we are baptized has to be developed and should be evident to those around us before we even consider being baptized. This doesn't mean we need to be walking without sin and know everything there is to know about the Bible; rather, it means that we need to understand the Truth and the doctrines that we're accepting by being baptized and be prepared to stand up for them against all foes (whether they're friends, family or nobody that we even know) and not be entangled in the things of the world or in certain sins that are recurring in our lives. This is the way Christ walked before and after he was baptized and it's the way we should be walking before and after we're baptized also because we will not suddenly change when we come out of the water at our baptism, we still have the fleshly desires and they will war against

the spirit as long as we live. It is in our best interest to wait to be baptized until we're better able to combat those fleshly desires with the word of God.

Terms of our vow

The terms of our vow, or covenant, with Yahweh were set long before we came on the earth. We are simply agreeing to the terms when we are baptized just as the children of Israel said *'All that Yahweh hath spoken we will do'* (Ex. 19:8); we don't change the terms or decide what we are and aren't agreeing to at baptism. Know what the terms are before you vow because God will not back down from His end of the covenant and saying that you didn't know that something was required of you will not be an acceptable answer; for we read in Eccl. 5:4-6: *"When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?"* (Also consider Luke 14:26-33 - SK.)

Those which are baptized have many more responsibilities (than those which are unbaptized) that they've vowed to fulfill to their Heavenly Father. It doesn't make a difference if we were baptized yesterday or 70 or more years ago, we have the same responsibility today as we did the moment we came out of the water, which is: paying that which we have vowed. The Strong's definition of 'sin' is 'to miss the mark.' The truth is not a circle that encloses, but rather, it is one spot that we either stand on or don't stand on as it's laid out in our statement of faith (a statement of faith is simply something that declares what you have faith in). The truth doesn't move or change just like Yahweh doesn't change; it always stays in one location so we know where to find it. The question is: do we want to find and understand that truth or not? When we sin or we change the doctrine delivered by God through Christ we are no longer standing on that spot, we've missed the mark set forth by Yahweh and in so doing we've broken the terms of our vow, according to 2 John 9: *"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son."*

We have been given many instructions on what is required to please Yahweh in both the old and new testaments, too numerous to read in a few hours time, but we will cover as much as possible while commenting and connecting these verses with the vow we've made to God through baptism.

Reading from Ex. 20:1-3: *"And God spake all these words, saying, I am the LORD thy God (He who will be thy mighty ones), which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me."*

Yahweh brought or called them out of Egypt or the land of darkness, just as He does with us by calling us out of the dark, un-illuminated, death state that we were born into, unto His marvelous light. He then states the very first

and the most important command which in our day could be translated to say: 'thou shalt not have anything be more important to you than God.' If it hinders your service in the vineyard or lowers your spirituality then it could be considered a "god" as they had back then and it most certainly provokes our Heavenly Father to jealousy. Some things that can fall into this category include: work, our boss, house work, pets, cell phones, TV, internet, car shows, fathers/mothers, siblings, boyfriends/girlfriends, husbands/wives, friends outside the truth, even friends in the truth. I could go on and on but we should all be able to discern these things on our own.

Ex. 20:7 reads: *"Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."* When we are baptized we take on the name of Yahweh by putting on Christ; for this reason we are called the children of God and joint-heirs with Christ. When I was young and spent the night somewhere or went to gatherings without my parents they always told me before I left: 'Remember who you represent.' My first thought was, "I represent you, my parents, and I don't want to bring shame to your name" (because they told me that). Now that I'm baptized I have another thought, "I represent Yahweh and don't want to bring shame to His name." This is the feeling we should all have whenever we are around other people, whether they're Christadelphians or not. Do not take on the name of the Lord in vain and so disgrace it because verse 7 says our God will not hold that person guiltless and Hebrews 10:27 informs us that judgment and fiery indignation shall devour these adversaries.

Verses 8-10 of Ex. 20 read as follows: *"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates."*

Regarding the Sabbath day - it is no longer a commandment that must be followed on penalty of death, **but the principles it stands for still apply.** The body and mind need a day of rest from the world around us and from the works of the flesh; not just a rest but also a counteracting by putting in spiritual things. Our mind needs more spiritual food throughout the week than just two hours on Sunday morning before we head out to spend time with worldly people the rest of the day and week. This is something the young people need to consider, especially those which are heading to college or are in college already; if you're living on campus you're even more embedded in an atmosphere that is not beneficial for a spiritual mind. *"Be not deceived: evil communications (or associations) corrupt good manners (or moral habits)"* (1 Cor. 15:33). Who you spend time with will affect your thought pattern, what you say, and your actions. BE NOT DECEIVED! Don't think you're the one person that is immune to it and you know better than God does. This is the reason that Yahweh tells us that friendship with the world is enmity or opposition to God and those which have these friendships are referred to as adulterous in James 4:4. We have vowed to God that we won't create these

friendships with the world and we will separate ourselves from those with evil lifestyles (whether they're in the body or in the world) because our good morals will be corrupted therewith.

Col. 4:5-6: *“Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.”* We must understand who is profitable to spend time with, profitable for us and for them because we are speaking about the truth. I think it's interesting that the very next verse (vs. 6) talks about the language we communicate with because so many people (especially young people) don't think about the words they say as barring them from the kingdom as Christ tells us in Matt. 12:36: *“Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.”* I know lots of Christadelphian young people (even really young teens) using words like 'suck' without thinking about what it means. It is completely corrupt and does not season your speech with salt, and if the salt loses its savor then it is to be thrown out. What we do and say around those in the world should show the wisdom of God. We should act the same way around everybody in the world as we do every Sunday morning in our home Ecclesias.

Rom. 12:1-3 *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.”* The vow we have taken is to give our bodies as living sacrifices to perform Yahweh's will and manifest Him to all men but especially to those of the Household of Faith (Gal 6:10). This requires us to be transformed from following after the flesh to pursuing righteousness. The world wants us to be less religious and not talk about religion, but He who will be manifest in a multitude and wants us to be part of that multitude desires us to be so strong in our beliefs that we will leave our own parents or children if it's required of us (as some who receive this publication have done). What does that say of those that know not the truth or have turned from it and don't want to have anything to do with it? It means leaving them behind so they don't drag us down spiritually.

Our bodies are to be living sacrifices and are the members of Christ's body, how then should we adorn the body of Christ? 1 Tim. 2:9-10: *“In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.”* This has always been a problem since the beginning of time, but especially now in the Body we've entered a time when immodesty is not looked upon with shame, but rather it is embraced by men and women alike of

just about every age. For this reason, I think that this verse can apply to both men and women. You might think ‘Well Andrew, are you saying I need to go around looking ashamed and sad and depressed all the time wearing a robe down to my feet?’ No, the verse does not mean we are to stand around looking sad and depressed. Shamefacedness means ‘Bashfulness, that is (toward men) MODESTY or (toward God) awe.’ When a man or woman can see a lot of our skin or our clothes are so tight they know what is underneath them, we should feel bashful and want to be more modest! Adam and Eve were the only two people on earth, but they still desired to be covered. Why? Because they knew that Yahweh could still see them. Sobriety means ‘Soundness of mind, sanity, or self control.’ Be sane and have self control instead of doing as society around us does, decking themselves with gold, pearls, and costly or revealing array, but rather put on modesty, self control, and good works.

This does not apply to only women and it does not apply to only people age 13-25. This is to both men and women and applies to all ages. Clothing choices can lead to lusts and imaginations for men and women of every age which is adultery in their hearts according to Christ in Matt. 5:28 and that is a stumbling block that we can personally cast in front of one of these little ones in Christ. Matt. 18:6 says it would be better that a mill stone be hanged about the neck and that person be cast into the sea than that he should appear at the judgment seat with that on his record. I was a teenager and I know how the mind of a boy works. I don’t know how the mind of a young woman works. I’ve been told it’s similar, but since I’m a man I’ll be speaking from a man’s perspective. Tight clothing and low cut tops draw eyes to the nakedness that Adam and Eve tried to cover. Short skirts and shorts draw eyes to the legs. Leggings are meant to be worn underneath something, not as pants so that everybody can see every curve and line underneath them. Yoga pants aren’t meant to be worn outside of the house. Boys and young men: pants that are down below your hips and show your underwear draw eyes; buy a belt, they’re cheap. Tight pants also draw the attention of people. Let us remember that the eyes of Yahweh are in every place beholding the evil and the good. When we buy our clothes and get dressed and wonder how we look and if people will notice how good our clothes fit, our Father knows those thoughts and they are vanity to His way. What we should be thinking is whether we are dressing in a way that is appropriate and that sets us apart from those in the world by manifesting our heavenly Father’s character and makes those around us ask of the hope that lies within us, not ask us for our phone number.

Exhortation of Titus 2

Turn to Titus 2. I’ve inserted word changes into this passage from the meaning of the Greek words to make this chapter a little clearer. We’ll be reading the whole chapter because this has exhortations for each age group. When we are baptized these are the things we should be working to manifest and perfect in our lives:

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- *“But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: That the aged men be circumspect, worthy of honor, self-controlled, convicted to the truth, to love, to patience.”* Here we have the description of the aged men. When we are baptized we should be working to perfect these things throughout our whole lives because it takes that long to perfect some of them. To those which are already aged, it is your responsibility to be leaders and examples to the babes in the truth so they can learn from your example how to manifest these characteristics.
- *“The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of the right; That they may teach the young women to be sound minded, to love their husbands, to love their children, To have self control, be modest, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.”* The aged women are to be teachers of the right that they may teach the young women. Again, you are their example and they will follow after your example. Teach them what a sound mind is; how to be modest and love their husbands because this must be taught in the home first and backed up in the Ecclesia. If it isn't being taught in the home through the words and examples of the parents then the children will not understand how to grow into aged men and women with a sound mind.
- *“Young men likewise exhort to be sound-minded. In all things presenting thyself a pattern (or statue or shape) of good works: in doctrine shewing purity, honor, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.”* Paul tells Titus to teach these things to those in the ecclesia so they know how they ought to be acting, but he also says that Titus himself needs to be displaying these same characteristics so that the brethren can learn from his example. This is very important! We can't tell somebody to dress appropriately if we aren't doing it ourselves and we can't tell anybody to be more convicted to the truth if we don't take it very seriously ourselves, which is exhibited by our attendance at ecclesial and Bible school functions and whether our speech revolves around the truth or the things of the world.
- *“Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; Not embezzling, but shewing all good fidelity (showing that you can be relied on); that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.”* We have bosses, so essentially we are servants to them. We are to work as unto the Lord which means we should do what our employer wants as long as it isn't against any laws of man or God. We're also supposed to be trustworthy so that they notice a difference between us and everybody else that we work with.
- *“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, disavowing ungodliness and mundane or corrupt lusts,*

we should live with a sound mind, we should live righteously, and we should live godly, in this present world; Awaiting with confidence and patience that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.” Young people, when you get baptized, these are the things you need to be working on to exemplify in your life. These words that are used here contain a lot of meaning. There are whole chapters written that expound upon these words, but this one chapter contains all the things needed to live a life acceptable to God. If we had more space we’d turn to 1 Tim. 3 and read about the deacons and bishops because those verses expound upon the positions of the elders and young men in the ecclesia and how their lifestyles have to be in order before they can be worthy of such a position in the ecclesia.

For lack of space I have a few passages now that I’ll be quoting and some I’ll be skipping over, but we pray you will read them instead of skipping over them to finish the article. Those which have not been baptized especially need to read these verses because ignorance of what you’re pledging to Yahweh through baptism is not acceptable to him as we quoted from Ecclesiastes chapter 5 previously. We have agreed to seek after and uphold the wisdom from above. Can we name the first characteristic that defines the wisdom from above? Purity! James 3:17: *“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.”* First comes purity of doctrine then comes peaceableness, but this can’t be accomplished unless we are studying to show ourselves approved unto God as a workman that needeth not to be ashamed because we are rightly dividing the word of truth; as 2 Tim. 2:15 declares and adds in verse 16 that those which have rightly divided the truth can then shun profane and vain babblings because they know the difference between the truth and vanity. This is how the purity is kept, by shunning that which is profane and vain before Yahweh.

- **Ps. 15:** *“LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not. He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.”*
- **Rom. 12:9-21:** A small excerpt from that passage says, *“Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in*

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honour preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.”

- **Eph. 4:25-32:** A small excerpt from this passage reads - *“Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.”*
- **Eph. 5:20-33:** If you’re married you need to read this with your spouse; if you’re planning on getting married soon you need to read this with your soon to be spouse; if you are planning on getting married at some point but you don’t even have somebody in mind yet, you need to read this. This is the purpose of marriage, the positions of husband and wife in the home and the reason why Yahweh has set it up this way. It is VERY important to understand this passage and put it into practice in order to have a happy and loving relationship with your spouse for your whole life.
- **Eph. 6:1-9:** Explains how we should treat our parents, our children, our masters (bosses) and our servants (employees under us).
- **Gal. 5:19-26:** The works of the flesh that we should be putting away with the old man and the fruits of the spirit that we’re to follow after in Christ

We’ve vowed to ask for the old paths, where the good way is and to walk in them as Jer. 6:16 says. We have also covenanted to Yahweh that we’ll be content to live with only food and raiment if we’re not provided with any other blessings in this life for “godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content,” according to 1 Tim. 6:6-8; but if we seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, all these blessings (found in Matthew 6) will be given unto us for our Father in Heaven is able to open the windows of heaven and rain down on us more blessings than we are able to receive as Malachi 3:10 informs us.

The most important and hardest decision to make after baptism: Marriage

Before we begin we’ll read from Pro 24:27: *“Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house.”* This verse speaks of both baptism and marriage. The field can be compared to the vineyard that we enter and we’re supposed to work in after being baptized. To ‘prepare thy work without and make it fit for thyself’ means to prepare yourself for baptism, then when you are ready, get baptized. Don’t procrastinate. Set yourself to study and understand the word and put the distractions of the flesh and this world aside. Once you have been baptized then begin to think of building a house: meaning to get married and have a family. Until you are baptized, marriage and even dating should be the last thing on your mind because love and in particular infatuation inhibits the mind

from thinking clearly ESPECIALLY in regards to spiritual matters because “the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God” as 1 Cor. 2:14 states.

Concerning marriage itself we’ll look at 1 Cor. 7:39 which is a very good verse on the subject, though the whole chapter is pertinent to the subject of marriage in and out of the truth. *“The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.”* **ONLY IN THE LORD!** This does not apply only to widows; this is a command to everyone that is baptized because you are then in Christ. The word ‘only’ comes from the Greek word ‘Monos’ which means single or one, from which we get words like monogamous - a marriage to one person. Remember what was stated about taking on the name of the Lord? We become adopted into the family and have vowed that we will marry only in the Lord or we will lose our privilege of partaking of the holy things as the priest’s daughters did when they married out of their family’s tribe (Lev. 22:12). Why are we to marry only somebody that has been baptized? The answer is given to us earlier in the chapter in verses 32-35: *“But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband. And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.”* The married man or woman does things to try to please his or her mate. The mate is supposed to be a help meet for us: somebody that helps us in our weaknesses, particularly in those things relating to God’s word. If we marry out of Christ then we will not have a help meet in things pertaining to God, but rather we will be held back because our natural husband or wife will have no desire for the spiritual things that we are to focus on in life. We have made a covenant with Yahweh to marry only in the Lord, or in the Body of Christ.

What manner of persons we are to be

We have only discussed a few of the verses that we could have, but I’m going to list a few of the things that we have vowed to do as adopted by Yahweh through immersion into Christ. We must devote our lives to God, not just two hours on Sunday (Rom. 12:1). We must treat our spouses well (Eph. 5:33), our brothers and sisters in Christ well (John 13:35), those in the world well (Gal. 6:10), and our enemies well (Rom. 12:14); We must marry only in the Lord (1 Cor. 7); feed the hungry and visit the sick and imprisoned (Matt. 25:33-36), and visit the widows and fatherless (Jam. 1:27); Honor our fathers and mothers and provoke not our children to wrath (Eph. 6:1-4); Wear clothing that is appropriate for Christ’s brothers and sisters to be seen in and that

reflects Christ and God (1 Pet. 3:1-5); Shun profane and vain babblings (2 Tim. 2:16) and in meekness instruct those that oppose themselves (2 Tim. 2:25); We're to be a 'royal priesthood' as 1 Peter 2:9 says; the priests never took part in wars or fighting; instead, they were to study the law and teach and instruct those around them in God's way, which makes that our duty as well. To the adults and parents: these things are not inherent in children, they are born with the flesh and the flesh wars against the spirit. We have vowed to teach these things to our children through our words but most importantly through our example because that is how children learn (Deut. 6:6-9).

We've vowed to not let our lifestyles (who we spend time with, what we wear, what violent or sexual TV we watch or video games we play, etc.) and conversations (what we talk about, using any bad or derogatory language while we're talking, etc.), we've vowed to not allow any of these things alienate us from Yahweh. Why is it that we want to avoid those things? Because we don't want to be found among those *'who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them'* (Rom. 1:32).

To conclude we'll read a passage from Ecclesiastes: 12:13-14: *"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man (this is what completes mankind). For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."*

Fear God and keep his commandments. The original Christadelphian Statement of Faith and the 1909 Christadelphian Statement of Faith are both very condensed versions of the doctrines and terms of the covenant we accept at baptism. I personally use the original because it is clearer on the principles I believe. Everybody needs to read them and look up all the verses because the verses are what prove that they are speaking the Truth found in the Bible. Read the commandments of Christ in the back. Read the doctrines to be rejected and then read the whole thing again. We need to understand what we're agreeing to and what beliefs we're fellowshiping when we are baptized and partake of the emblems, because there are people that call themselves Christadelphians that fight against the terms of the covenant we agreed to at our baptism. Are we following, or maybe just defending, those which change the terms of the covenant to fit what they feel like believing and agreeing to exemplify, or do we follow through with our end of the vow we made (or will make) to God by standing up for His way? For there are many seducing spirits and doctrines of devils that will make the wide gate and broad way look similar to the straight and narrow, and our own flesh will try to convince us of this as well. *'My brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor*

of God, that ye may be able to *WITHSTAND* in the evil day, and having done all, *TO STAND*.’

“Behold I come quickly”, our Messiah says, “*blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments. Surely I come quickly, Amen. Even so come Lord Jesus!*”

Andrew Kuipers

FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT



July 12

My Dear Mother:

One peculiarity I noticed at the Christadelphian meeting was the absence of the usual collection. I spoke to Mr. Evans about it and he says that Christadelphians never take up collections at a public meeting. They do not think it right to ask people to help support something they do not believe in. “We hire a hall,” sad he, “and invite strangers to come and hear the gospel proclaimed, but we do not consider it good taste, to say the least, to expect those who accept the invitation to help pay our rent. If they become convinced that we have the truth and obey it in the appointed way it will be both a privilege and a duty for them to assist in every possible way in communicating the great blessing to others.” He says they take up a collection at the “breaking of bread meeting” to which the public is not invited, although strangers are welcomed as spectators if they so desire.

It seems to me that they are right in their attitude on this matter although I do not believe the other churches could long exist if such a plan were adopted by them. The members of our church for instance could never raise enough without outside assistance to pay the minister and musical director and janitor and meet the bills for heating, lighting and interest on the mortgage. I know for a fact that many of our heaviest contributors to church expenses are not only not members but do not care a fig for personal religion and only attend church occasionally because it is considered respectable to do so. The richest man in our church, Mr. Stanton, is said to be terribly profane when angry, yet nothing can be done in the church without his approval, and they are mortally

afraid he will leave the church and they will lose his support. Perhaps if our church should refuse to accept outside assistance, and the membership were reduced to only those who were really sincere and spiritually minded we would be obliged to hold our meetings in a hall as the Christadelphians do. Of course, the Christadelphians do not have any salaries to pay, but I do not see the need of a salaried preacher when they have men who can explain the Bible as well as Mr. Evans can.

August 1

My Dear Mother:

Mr. Evans has got into trouble by refusing to join the labor union now being organized in our shop among the workmen of his branch of the trade. The leaders have talked with him several times, but he firmly declines to join. They are now beginning to play mean tricks upon him, such as spoiling his work, calling him "scab" and other opprobrious epithets, and circulating malicious stories calculated to injure him in the eyes of his employer and bring about his discharge.

If they felt strong enough, I think they would strike work in order to get him out. I must ask his reasons for his refusal to join. It is probably something in connection with his religion.

My wife has asked me to not invite him to our house again. She says she "cannot bear to hear her mother's religion antagonized." I am very sorry, but I suppose I must humor her in this matter. she is a good woman and has been a good wife to me, but I do wish she would investigate the teachings of the Bible with me, it would be so pleasant. It seems now as if we were drawing away from each other. Sometimes I almost wish bitterly that I had never heard of the Christadelphian doctrines, but it is too late now. I must go forward, not backward. I can never again be exactly as I was before. May god help me to find the truth.

August 3

My Dear Mother:

Mr. Evans gives as a reason for refusing to join the labor union that it would not be right for him to be a member of "any society or organization which, in principle or practice, violates the law of Christ." He says believers must not resist evil; if smitten on one cheek they must turn the other; they are to return good for evil, and to be harmless as doves. Labor unions are formed on the principle that "union is strength." What is this "strength" to be used for unless to enforce the demands of the union?

Some of those demands may be just, but whether just or unjust, their methods of enforcing compliance are entirely foreign to the spirit of Christ.

A sort of warfare is being waged between labor and capital, and each side acts on the principle that "all is fair in war." Each party takes all possible advantage of the other, and much suffering is caused with no appreciable good results. Christadelphians hold themselves aloof from this strife, and endeavor

to "live peaceably with all men." As for the evils which unionism is intended to correct, it is beyond human power to do so. The coming kingdom of God in the hands of Jesus and his brethren is the divine remedy soon to be applied.

The only objection I could urge against his position, was Paul's declaration that one who does not provide for his own household is worse than an infidel. "If you refuse to join the union," said I, "you may be forced out of your position, and then how can you provide for your own?" "Paul would not advise his brethren to do anything contrary to the teachings of Christ," he replied. "The precept you quote was directed against idleness and improvidence. I would better starve than join a band of men who are capable of employing such methods as they are using against me. Paul say, 'Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.' There can be no question but that their actions are works of darkness, and I would sooner die than have fellowship with them. How could I 'reprove them' if I should join their organization?"

There was no answering such arguments and I retired. I see a new meaning now to Paul's saying that "every one who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Mr. Evans is evidently a man of faith. He often quotes what Jesus said that "every hair of your head is numbered;" "your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all things," and others of like import. He believes that he is doing God's will and work and that nothing can happen to him without God's consent. I wish I could feel that way but I am beginning to feel sometimes that I am not included as yet in God's purposes.

August 12

My Dear Mother:

Our pastor called to see me last evening. He had noticed that I had become rather irregular in my church attendance and suspected that I was "getting into the hands of the Christadelphians" as he expressed it. I said I had not gone so far as that but was determined to know the truth. Also that I was becoming somewhat materialistic in my views.

"Well," he replied, "it all depends upon how you interpret a few little words that occur frequently in the Scriptures. these are life, death, soul, spirit, immortality, etc. Interpret them one way and you inevitably arrive at Adventist conclusions. Personally I am inclined to agree with Kant and others that the visible is the unreal; that which is invisible and immaterial is the most real."

"Then you are a transcendentalist?" I asked.

"Yes, practically," he replied.

"What do you think of the resurrection?" I inquired.

"I do not look upon the resurrection as literally as some do," he replied. "I find it very difficult to believe in the literal resurrection of the material body; in fact, it is to me unthinkable. Look at the grass upon the lawn. A horse eats it and it becomes hair; a sheep eats it and it becomes wool. Why it

does so is an impenetrable mystery. When we depart this life our bodies decay and pass into vegetation, and from that into animal organization, and so on *ad infinitum*. But there is something within us that is invisible and immaterial and therefore cannot die. May not the resurrection mean that rising of the soul into a new state of existence at the period which we call death. Again, if the soul is enjoying bliss in heaven what could be the advantage - how could it add in any way to the well-being of the spiritual being - to reorganize the old cast-off carcass in which we groan being burdened? As one of our hymns beautifully expresses it,

*"Burdened with this weight of clay,
We sink beneath the load."*

"Then you do not believe in the resurrection of the dead?" I exclaimed in astonishment.

"In there literal, material sense of the word I do not," he replied.

I was astounded. I never imagined that a regularly ordained minister of the gospel would deny one of the very fundamental truths of the Bible. I thought I would question him further.

"If people go to a spirit world at death," I asked, "where they are enjoying bliss or suffering anguish, how do you explain Solomon's statements that the 'dead know not anything' 'all their love and envy and hatred are now perished'; and 'there is no work nor device nor wisdom nor knowledge in sheol'?"

"Solomon was a wise man, no doubt," he replied, "but there were some things he did not understand. He evidently judged of things as they appeared to him. Looking upon a dead body he would say, and say truly so far as the body was concerned, 'the dead know not anything.' It is a fact that the ancient Jewish writings contain no evidence of a belief in the immortality of the soul, although so-called heathen philosophers have taught it from earliest times."

"But was not Solomon endued with wisdom from God? Do you not look upon the book of Ecclesiastes as divinely inspired," I demanded.

"No. I look upon Ecclesiastes as simply the expression of Solomon's own wisdom," he replied. "I could not accept it as the work of inspiration, strictly speaking, although it contains many beautiful sentiments. The same may be said of some of the Proverbs, also of the books of Ruth and Joshua and the Songs of Solomon." Probably seeing a look of astonishment on my face he added hastily, "Now do not come to the conclusion that the Bible as a whole is not the word of God and therefore unreliable. It contains much truth - enough for our salvation - but you must be careful not to build up a theory upon the basis of anything Solomon said. Read the New Testament more and trust in Jesus for salvation and you will come out all right." With these parting words and a hearty shake of the hand he departed, leaving me in a peculiar state of mind.

What am I to think? Here is a man duly licensed by the Methodist conference to preach the gospel and he denies the resurrection of the dead and the inspiration of a part of the Bible. I have always felt a great deal of respect for Mr. Wilson and have thought many times that Mr. Evans' strictures on the clergy were unjust but I now feel that my confidence in them has been sadly shaken.

August 15

Mr. Wilson preached today from the text "Secret things belong unto the Lord, but the things that are revealed, unto us and our children." The burden of his discourse was to the effect that we should not seek to pry into matters which are difficult of apprehension. He says there are many things in the Bible which seem to be beyond our grasp, but we should be satisfied with the simple truth that Jesus died to save us from our sin. If we must dive deeper into the things hard to be understood we should invoke the aid of commentators and men who have been ordained to preach the gospel.

I felt that he meant that sermon for me especially, but if he did he missed the mark. I have no desire to pry into things which have not been revealed, but I do want to understand the Bible. As for consulting ordained ministers, my experience so far has not been very satisfactory. I can no longer put confidence in men or in man-made creeds.

W.H. Clough, The Christadelphian Advocate, April, 1901

"Our Father's business must be our everyday concern. We are exhorted to be "always abounding in the work of the Lord." This does not admit of spasmodic or intermittent effort; we must aim at a steady, plodding, whole souled diligence in making ourselves acquainted with our Father's commands and rendering the service He requires. The covenant God has made with us is not a one sided one. He can and will perform His part. He expects us to, and will not be satisfied unless we do ours; and, be it remembered, God will not condemn the agonizing effort to obey His laws; it is the want of attempt, the ignoring of them that will cause His displeasure. We have continually to keep in mind our vow; "All that the Lord hath commanded will we do." How necessary, therefore, that we be always on the alert to maintain the truth in its purity, both in regard to doctrine and practice, in order to bring forth the fruits of faith rather than the leaves of an empty profession."

John Owler, SK, December 1897

AT THE GRAVESIDE OF A BELIEVER



IN Christadelphian publications of old, it was not uncommon for funeral addresses to be reproduced for the exhortive benefit of the reader and as expressions of fundamental Truth. Such provided a sobering reminder as to the sad reality of the death-cursed nature and of the gracious means provided for release from its grasp. The appearance of funeral addresses in early Christadelphian publications also provided sound templates as to the type of comments deemed appropriate for such sad and difficult occasions. Rather than being eulogies and “celebrations of life” emphasizing and exalting the virtues of the deceased, such recorded addresses typically reflect a simple and straightforward expression of the Hope of Israel with the life and character of the individual receiving subdued attention.

The following address (provided here with some grammatical changes) was delivered in May of 2015, at the graveside service of sis. Willye Baldrige. Such is not provided as a special tribute to this individual sister, as many other cherished brethren have fallen asleep in recent years. We provide it for exhortation and exhortive purposes in the spirit of earlier practices. Much of what is contained in this address, including various phrases were patterned and sometimes borrowed directly from graveside addresses of the past that we found especially beneficial in regard to approach and content. This address is far from an example of originality.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Family and Friends;

We are gathered here this afternoon once again faced with the sad reality of death – something in which we are powerless to prevent. We know that due to the disobedience of Adam in partaking of the forbidden tree, that death has reigned over all his descendants for 6,000 years and will continue to do so until the last enemy, death, is destroyed. What great joy is found in the Truth of God’s word at this time of sadness for we know that our sister is going to be ransomed from the power of the grave. The Apostle Paul comforted the Believers with this surety when he wrote to the Thessalonians – “*I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope*” (1 Thess. 4:13) As was prophesied by Hosea in regard to the destiny of His loved ones – “*I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from*

death” (Hos. 13:14). From heaven Jesus declared to the apostle John while he was on the island of Patmos that, *“Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth, yea saith the spirit that they may rest from their labours and their works do follow them”* (Rev. 14:13)

Our sister Willye lived a long and productive life, both in natural and spiritual terms. Her early life was one that we perceive as belonging to a very different and more challenging day and age from that of our more modern and comfortable point of view. She experienced the tragedy of losing a husband at a young age; but also the joys and blessings of motherhood and grandmotherhood. However, even long life in this world is tempered by the Word of God when it is stated that *“Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth as a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not”* (Job. 14:1,2)

Our sister Willye lived and died in faith and hope of rising again from the dead. Jesus is recorded as stating in John’s Gospel (5:28) – *“For the hour is coming, in which all that are in the grave shall hear his voice. And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life.”* She was a life-long student and servant of the Word of God and of the grand Hope of which it declares – that which is contained and promised in *The Things Concerning the Kingdom of God* and confirmed in *The Name of Jesus Christ*. She was the last remaining individual who was in attendance just down the road here, at the 1st Arkansas Christadelphian Bible School. A Bible School whose objectives were and still are the teaching and defense of that Gospel message. One of her fondest memories was of being put on a tree stump at the age of 5 to recite the books of the Bible. That and many other memories of Biblical instruction and experiences there shaped her life. Apart from all other natural concerns that are of no importance now – this defines who sister Willye was – it is what she lived for and it is the hope that she died with.

But, we do not stand at this grave site to celebrate a life lived, for there is only One individual who is vested by God with the authority to perfectly review the lives of his fellow brethren and discern what was important and what was inconsequential in their life – and that is the Lord Jesus Christ at his appearing and at his Judgment seat; when those who are able to give a good account are told by Christ the overwhelmingly celebratory words – *“Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world...”* (Math. 25:34).

But, what we are here to do is to respectfully and solemnly lay to rest a sister who has fallen asleep in Christ, and to honor the terms and authority of the blood of the Everlasting Covenant into which she was baptized so many years ago, and which she now rests silently. She has not perished as the Scriptures describe in regard to the death of the wicked, but due to a specific and special relationship her death is to be understood as a temporary condition.

Therefore, like all the faithful who are listed in the 11th chapter of Hebrews and a whole host of faithful men and women throughout the ages up

to this present time, our sister Willye is not dead in the final sense to be forgotten by God, but sleeps the sleep of death under very special and loving circumstances not to be disregarded by God and His Son. We read in Psalms 116:15 – *“Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.”* The word “precious” carries the meaning of a “heavy price”. The heavy price is found in the sacrificial work of Christ to provide the means of release from the grave. He is referred to as the “firstfruits” of the dead as himself being brought out of the grave by God through the operation of *“the blood of the everlasting covenant”* – a covenant promised to Abraham, later expanded to David and confirmed by Christ’s shed blood. For no one could inherit any eternal promises until the means of escape from the pit of the grave could be provided and eternal life rewarded.

The prophet Daniel foretold of the time of the end, a time that we believe is even at the door, *“when many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life...”* (Dan. 12:2). The prophet Isaiah declared – *“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, and the earth shall cast out the dead.”* (Is. 26:19).

But what reason did the prophets of old and our sis. Willye share that gave them hope that the seemingly inescapable laws of nature might be reversed and that the dead might live again? Their hope was founded in that seed which was promised to Eve who, being both the Seed of the Woman (under the same sin and death stricken nature) and the Son of God would bruise the head of the Serpent – that which would represent sin and death. He overcame the very same sin nature that he shared with all other descendants of Adam through a life of perfect obedience and by submissively submitting to the condemnation of the sin nature through crucifixion and the shedding of his blood. The Scriptures tell us that *“sin brings forth death”*. Christ defeated the sin nature that he possessed by overcoming it and by that sin nature being publicly crucified, he therefore defeated death. By this means, Christ could rightfully say of his purpose *“I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live”* (John 11:20).

Not only did the prophets of old cling to the promise of a seed given to Eve, but righteous men who followed after Abraham also clung to a faith and hope in what the Scriptures refer to as the New or Everlasting Covenant, in other words the very subject matter of what is referenced as the Gospel - or *“the good news concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ.”* This gospel was preached to Abraham himself, as we are told in Galatians 3. Now in Gen. 12:1-3, we find that Gospel or good news that was preached to Abraham – *“Now the Lord had said unto Abraham, ‘Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee and make thy name great... and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.’”* We also read in the 13th chapter that when God brought him into the land of Canaan, He said, *“Lift up now thine eyes and look from the place*

where thou art, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward. For all the land which thou seest to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever.” And in Genesis 22 – *“I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed...”* Paul says in Galatians that that individual seed was Christ. But the promises are not limited to Abraham and Christ, for we read later on in Galatians 3:29 – *“And if ye be Christ’s then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”*

“Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness” (Rom. 4:3). So it was through faith in the Gospel that Abraham was to inherit the promise. Paul says in Romans that *“The promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith”* (Rom. 4:13). Our sister Willye had this faith. So what does this have to do with the hope of resurrection and the future of our dear sister? More on that in just a moment, but always be mindful that Abraham never did receive what was promised to him by God – as Stephen explained in the 7th chapter of Acts that God *“gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet He promised that He would give it to him for a possession...”* (verse 5).

In the 15th chapter of 1st Corinthians the Apostle Paul refers to two distinct classes of people. Adam is the head of one and Christ is the head of the other – *“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”* Those who belong to Adam are under the law of sin and death. The Psalmist makes reference to that class in the 49th chapter, 20th verse – *“Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.”* Isaiah says of those without faith, (26:14), *“They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise; therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them and made all their memory to perish.”* Paul stated in his letter to the Romans (2:12) – *“For As many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law.”* Then Paul continues in his letter to the Ephesians – *“Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.”*

So we are not born naturally “in Christ”, but are born children of Adam, and therefore under the law of sin and death and the condemnation of death associated with that position. But our sister Willye has not fallen asleep related to that law of condemnation. She was under it by natural birth, but she escaped from it through a Divine arrangement provided for that exact purpose, for all the sons and daughters of men who are willing to avail themselves of it. As Paul again states in the 3rd chapter of Galatians – *“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”* In Romans 6:3 it is explained – *“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?”* And as he instructs in the 8th chapter of Romans – *“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in*

Christ Jesus...For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” And John 3:16 – “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

As now having fallen asleep in Christ, sis. Willye has joined a class that is of the highest priority. We are told by the Apostle Paul once again that *“the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: **AND THE DEAD IN CHRIST SHALL RISE FIRST**”* (1 Thes 4:16).

But a resurrection to what? When God placed man on the earth He made everything very good. However man, through disobedience, lost this beautiful paradise and brought everything into a very bad condition. But it will not always be so, as God has promised that all the earth shall be filled with his glory. It is through one man’s perfect obedience to God that paradise is to be restored - and that man is Jesus Christ. This Kingdom is repeatedly and explicitly detailed throughout the prophets. We find recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke and the Acts that Jesus went about every city and village teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God. This Kingdom of God which Christ preached, once existent in Israel but overturned, shall be re-established in unmatched beauty and perfection on Mt. Zion where Christ will reign and be King over Israel and all the earth. We read in Daniel 7:27 – *“The Kingdom and Dominion and the greatness of the Kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and all Dominions shall serve and obey Him.”* It was sis. Willye’s continued hope to be a part of this long promised Kingdom.

Our sister believed and obeyed this gospel and she was persuaded that Jesus would return to the earth. She could say as Job did, *“For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.”* And *“If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.”* Our sister’s probation has ended and we can safely leave her until that day of the Return of the Righteous Judge. All natural cares of the past of our sister have ceased to occupy a position of any importance. **We now look forward in hope and expectation of the certainty of that which is promised.** We ourselves are to be reminded that life is the time to serve the Lord – for as King Hezekiah pleaded to God for his life – *“the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee, they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.”* How vain and petty worldly affairs are revealed to be in the face of death in contrast to those eternal matters, which relate to God’s plan and purpose through Christ.

“He which testifieth these things saith, ‘Surely I come quickly.’ Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20).

A Thomas

EDITORIAL FLYLEAF

CORRECTION



In the last quarter issue of the SK we commented on the existence of the sign outside of the Woodstock meeting in Canada that proclaims “Woodstock Christadelphian Church”. Based upon information we had received it was our understanding that this was a newer development. Though the sign is in fact more recent in nature, another sign was in existence previously (picture at right) that also proclaimed “Christadelphian Church”. So, this is a designation that had been used for some time. Whether new or old, as a group of “called out” ones (Gr. *ekklesia*) - we need to remain separate in deed, thought and signage.

“MUCH DISCOURAGED OF THE WAY”

In our recent daily readings we came across a statement that gives us cause for great pause and reflection every year we read it, and it is that which is stated in Numbers 22:4 - ***“and the soul of the People was much discouraged because of the way.”*** What a telling statement! The marginal rendering (according to Bullinger) of the word “discouraged” is to be *grieved or impatient*.

In the closing days of their wilderness wanderings, Israel had been denied access by the king of Edom to the “king’s high way” (20:14-21) that passed through Edom. Therefore they were forced to turn southward in order to circumnavigate Edom through extraordinarily harsh terrain, which offered very little in the way of water or food.



Thinking that their trial of wandering was nearing its close, this Edomite roadblock to their progress northward would have been a most depressing and utterly frustrating obstacle - made even more vexing by the brutal geography.

Most all of us have experienced the great frustrations of having a goal in sight, or for things to finally be progressing nicely for us after great labor, only to have an unexpected

problem arise or obstacle stand in our way that creates great difficulty and inconvenience. The proverbial phrase - *to have the rug pulled out from beneath us* - is an all too common experience. But how do we react?

Herein lies a great danger. We certainly can understand the impatience and grief of the Children of Israel if we put ourselves in their shoes. Even the

strongest of individuals can be greatly strained under such circumstances. In the case of the Israelites, such grievance and impatience quickly turned to grave error in a complete failure of faith, blame towards God for their inconvenience and a rejection of His blessings. Vs. 5 - *"And the People spake against God, and against Moses, 'Wherefore have ye brought us out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.'"*

Such a declaration in the heat of frazzled nerves is horrifying to us as we view this from the benefit of hindsight. They falsely perceived that they were at a dead end, so to speak. Had they not learned the lesson of Ex. 14:13? - *"Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of Yahweh..."* Was Yahweh understanding of their blame and blasphemy? No, He was not. He sent "fiery serpents among the People." Such was a fitting punishment - to help them realize that their grievance was a capitulation to the sin flesh nature and the death that it brings, of which the serpent represents.

As it applies to ourselves, our probationary walk is one filled with great difficulties and frustrations. As we near the return of our Master (*what should be the ultimate goal of our entire existence*) we see these difficulties increase exponentially as we try to function within a world that has embraced the full measure of fleshly insanity and as we witness the tragedy of a disintegrating and splintering Household. If we are not careful, our flesh nature can blur our spiritual sight to where we see such things as hindrances rather than signs of the nearness of Christ's return, especially when Christ does not return as soon as we expect. Since we are faced with personal and spiritual difficulties it might seem easy to feel justified to indulge in a certain degree of murmuring and self pity, or capitulation to any other passions that arise out of our sin-flesh nature. But there is no justification for any such things by the Believer as our walk through this probationary wilderness journey is to be one of unfaltering **PATIENCE** Rev. 14:12 - *"Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."* (Also, Rom. 15:4; 2 Thessalonians 1:4; Heb. 10:36; 12:1; James 5:7; Rev. 2:2; Ps. 40:1)

The real problem is not so much with external pressures that continually pull at us, but with our own battle with the weakness of sin's flesh in properly reacting and countering life's discouragements and temptations. **Brethren, let us not become discouraged because of the way.** To overcome it, let us be sustained by a daily supply of God's nourishing manna through His Word without loathing, and by a continual remembrance of the patient endurance and sacrifice of the True Manna - The Lord Jesus Christ. As the Israelites were to look with understanding to the brazen serpent lifted up on a pole as a cure from the bite of the serpent, we look to the anti-typical as Christ lifted up on the stake (John 3:14,15) for the condemnation of sin's flesh and the subsequent purification of his flesh - the source of our salvation. With eyes steadfast on these things we will find encouragement in the way. Our promised salvation is not far off, though the way be difficult.

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Back Cover: "No More Curse"

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"The Sanctuary-Keeper", P.O. Box 302, Greenbrier, AR 72058

Bobby Henderson - bobdebhend@aol.com

Aaron Thomas - aaronstaciethomas@gmail.com

www.sanctuary-keeper.com



UPCOMING ARKANSAS BIBLE SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

The Arkansas Bible School activities for 2016 are listed below.

- Spring Gathering - April 22-24 - Adult Teachers - Brethren Sam Dew and Bobby Henderson (already transpired by the appearance of this issue of the SK).
- June Bible School - June 18 - June 25 - Adult teachers - Brethren Don Northey, Mac Briley and Aaron Thomas
- September Gathering - September 2-5 - Adult teachers - Brethren Pat Hamilton and Sid Strickland

To Register for any of the annual activities - contact Brother Bobby Henderson at bobdebhend@aol.com or 501-679-2093.

THE WORLD SCENE

A whole issue of the Sanctuary-Keeper could be devoted to world developments and their application to latter day prophecy. Suffice it to say the activities of Russia continue to be of great interest as they create turmoil on numerous fronts, putting its assumed enemies completely off balance.

- Russia has firmly dug in its heels in Crimea and continues its proxy war in eastern Ukraine - without tangible consequence from the U.S. and NATO.
- Russia continues to provoke NATO (U.S.) naval and air forces who are operating in the Baltic Sea. Numerous and dangerous fly-bys of U.S. ships and bombers continue to play an essential game of chicken with NATO in order to assert Russian dominance in the northern region.
- Russia has stirred up fighting between oil-rich Azerbaijan and Armenia in the effort to move Azerbaijan away from growing ties with the West.
- Russian intervention in Syria created a tidal wave of immigration to Europe which has completely disrupted the European Union.
- The Russian intervention in Syria was originally sold as an attempt to squash ISIS. Russia has paid very little attention to the ISIS threat while squelching the Syrian rebels, and securing Bashar al-Assad's hold on power.
- Russia recently declared that they were ending operations in Syria and would be pulling its military forces out. No such withdrawal has happened with only an increased Russian military build up as the result.
- Russia continues to build up a military presence on the borders of Turkey as tensions continue to escalate between Turkey and Russia over involvement in Syria, and Russian support of an independent Kurdish state.
- The Polish foreign minister recently stated that Russia and not ISIS was the biggest threat to the world.
- Israeli jets recently have had confrontations with Russian fighters. In a news report from the Israeli times (4/22) it has been reported that Russia had fired upon Israeli Air Force planes at least twice in recent weeks. This despite the fact that there are "mechanisms" supposedly in place to coordinate between Israeli and Russian activities in Syria. That Israel must coordinate anything with Russia is quite remarkable, as Russia is now the controlling power in the region, whereas Israel has had virtual free-run over the last few decades.
- Israel finds itself in a very difficult position as both Russia and the U.S. are pressuring Israel to give the Golan Heights back to Syria as part of a broader Syrian peace deal - a conflict that Israel itself is not even involved in. This escalates Israel's tenuous position with Russia to an even greater degree.