

The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No. 111

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Editorial

Dear Brothers and Sisters and Friends, Greetings in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Sister May Lockett will, God willing, be celebrating her 100th birthday on Sunday, 7th May and is hoping to spend the day at her friends house. All the Fellowship wish you a very happy birthday, Sister May, and may our Heavenly Father bless you and keep you, and make His face to shine upon you and give you peace.

This months Circular Letter contains two articles on resurrection and judgement in response to a request for more on these subjects. They are "The Resurrection and Judgement of the Saints" by the late Brother William Richmond, and "How are the Dead Raised Up?" By the late Brother H.C.Gates. Next month there will be two more articles by other writers.

Thank you for all your letters.

One correspondent writes, Dear Mr Gregory, Thank you for sending the Circular Letters of the Nazarene Fellowship... I find them most interesting but truthfully regret that it does not mention at any time the welfare of the animal kingdom; the one subject that is dear to me... When we give serious thought to what is happening to the animal kingdom, cruelty, injury and death in the name of blood-meats, science and sport, it is unchristian, immoral and disgraceful."

I am sure we are all in agreement with the writer of this letter and share his views, for we all deplore man's cruelty to animals and we look forward to the Kingdom age when there will be no ill-treatment of them and we rejoice in the prospect. The article in this issue by our Brother Woodhouse points us in this direction. Unfortunately, in this present day we can only "treat the symptoms" and alleviate suffering to a very limited degree. God made the earth for man's habitation (Isaiah 45:18) and because God's way has been so corrupted by mankind He is about to "destroy those who destroy the earth." In the Kingdom age new laws will be enforced which will "cure the cause" of man's inhumanity, and in the meantime we feel that our Circular Letters should be devoted most of all to the defence and confirmation of the Gospel.

Another correspondent draws attention to a small point in last months Circular Letter where, on page three, and three quarters of the way down the page, we read "...will not die eternally." The point is made that "We can live eternally, but we cannot die eternally." However I am sure we all understand the writer to mean that they "will not remain dead."

With this blessed hope before us let us walk worthy of our high calling.

With Sincere Love to all, in the Master's Service, Russell Gregory.

The Resurrection and Judgement of the Saints

In presenting a few thoughts on these subjects, it is far from our intention to pronounce as aliens from saving truth, those who differ from the views set forth. We wish to show how groundless the charge of heresy is when applied to those who hold the views we advocate. The doctrine of a corruptible resurrection is supposed to be necessitated by what some believe to be the Bible doctrine of judgement, and but for that idea, one text would settle the question, namely: "The dead shall be raised incorruptible." We shall be able to show that such a view is not Bible teaching, but a serious error; our first question is

How are the Dead Raised Up?

Paul's answer is: "The dead shall be raised incorruptible." How plain! It is as plain as our Lord's statement "The meek shall inherit the earth", and needs no more alteration, yet if a believer in corruptible resurrection is asked the question he will not answer in Paul's words, as it would be misleading; nor could we conceive such a person writing a treatise like Paul's 1 Corinthians 15 on that subject. They find it necessary to explain and retranslate, in order to avoid the meaning it would convey to an unbiased reader. Dr Thomas in "Anastasis" page 33, says that 1 Corinthians 15:52 "is not the form of sound words delivered by Paul." Let the reader refer to the revised version, or any other, and say if he is prepared to accept the Dr's translation in opposition to all others. But we have in John 12:1 what is even more conclusive than any translation: "Lazarus whom He raised from the dead." This word "raised" is from the same Greek as the word "raised" 1 Corinthians 15:52. So we have at the grave of Lazarus our Lord's demonstration of the meaning of the word. What took place? Jesus cried "Lazarus, come forth! and he that was dead, came forth, so the coming forth was the raising. Apply this divinely demonstrated meaning to Paul's statement: "The dead shall be raised (come forth) incorruptible," and the question is settled. Dr Thomas, in "Anastasis" page 16, speaks of three stages of the raising process, but in our Lord's raising of Lazarus one only was sufficient. He, Dr Thomas, also says the third stage was the quickening. Now as the quickening is to make alive, and there was only one stage in the raising of Lazarus, we must either conclude that Lazarus was dead after coming forth or that the Dr has two stages too many.

In Matthew 28:1, we read that the two Mary's came to the tomb as it began to dawn on the first day of the week, and the angel said: "He is not here, He is risen." Yes, the disciples not knowing the process theory, said, Luke 24:36, "The Lord is risen indeed", yet the Dr teaches that His resurrection was not complete. Fancy the angel saying: "He is partly risen." Let us rejoice in the angel's glad message, which accords with all Bible statements; and rejoice in hope that according to Paul's gospel the righteous dead will be raised (come forth) glorious, powerful and spiritual bodies.

When brethren teach that resurrection is the gate of life, and the dead are unconscious until the resurrection, they mean by resurrection that which took place at the grave of Lazarus, and that is what the Bible means always; while the theory of a three stage process which ends at the judgement seat, would prove the resurrection of the living and deny the resurrection of the unjust. The Dr, and others, suppose that Paul's statement, 1 Corinthians 15:53: "This mortal must put on immortality" necessitates that a mortal body must first be formed from the dust, at the coming of our Lord. But is it not far more reasonable to suppose that Paul referred to the body he then had, and was not contemplating a process of decomposition and reformation? It might be objected that this would make Paul speak as though he or some of his brethren, then living, would be alive at the coming of the Lord, but that is not a valid objection, for Paul did thus speak, - 1 Thessalonians 4:15, "We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord." The Dr. imagines there is a strong proof for his teaching in Paul's statement 2 Corinthians 4:11, "We which live, are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." On page 29 "Anastasis" he also says, "Is it not evident then that "mortal flesh" must be created, and pre-resurrectional consciousness flashed upon it, that the Saints of Rome and Corinth may experience the life of Jesus in their mortal flesh? No, we reply. It is not evident that Paul was speaking of a body at the resurrection. We know that the life of Jesus was manifested in Paul's mortal flesh in his mortal life. In Galatians 2:20 he says, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Was not that the life of Jesus manifested in his mortal flesh and was not the all-pervading hope and purpose of such a life expressed in 2 Corinthians 4:14, - "Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus"? Did not such a life cause Paul to be always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake; to

stand in jeopardy every hour, - 1 Corinthians 15:30-31? And was he not always delivered unto death in the sense expressed by the words, "The body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life (the life of Jesus) because of righteousness.?" "Walk in newness of life," (Romans 6:4). The Dr. might have truly said, with abundant scripture proof, that the life of Jesus was manifest in Paul's mortal flesh from his conversion to his death; but to say that Paul was speaking of a mortal body to be formed at the resurrection is a statement for which he does not give a single proof.

Was Christ Raised Incorruptible?

I suppose any intelligent brother would be ashamed to quote our Lord's words to Mary as any proof that He came forth mortal. I think that it will be admitted that the words "Detain Me not" is a more correct rendering than "Touch Me not." Then follows the statement "I am not yet ascended to my Father." Some have the presumption to make it read "ascended to my Father's nature." Without that unlawful addition there is clearly no proof of a corruptible resurrection. The words, without the addition, furnish a good proof that the penitent thief did not go to heaven with Christ when he died; but the addition completely destroys that proof, and we cannot honestly quote it with the human addition to prove mortal resurrection, and at the same time take it as it reads to prove that the thief did not go to heaven. There is no Scriptural proof that Christ rose, or came forth, from the tomb corruptible, but there is proof to the contrary. Paul says, Romans 1:4 that "He was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead." We know that He was crucified in weakness, but He was not raised in weakness, else how could He be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead? But if raised in power, as His brethren are to be raised, then the statement is plain, and if the word power did not refer to His physical nature, what did it refer to? He had the power to raise the dead (though He did not raise any if the process theory was true), and still the tempest, and the only weakness He had was physical, having taken on Himself our nature; this may not be a strong proof, but there is absolutely none to the contrary, but in 1 Corinthians 15:20 we have a much stronger proof:

"But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept." If Jesus rose corruptible He was not the first-fruits, others having been raised before Him. But if He rose (or came forth) incorruptible, then He was the first-fruits of that resurrection, of which Paul was speaking. We must either deny that He was the first-fruits, or believe that He came forth incorruptible. To evade the force of this test, re-translation is again resorted to, and "chief-fruits" is substituted for the words "first-fruits", but this is not according to the law and testimony, for first-fruits according to the law, were first in point of time; and if Israel had been commanded to offer chief fruits, then fruits later on, in harvest would have sufficed, which is certainly contrary to the letter, and spirit of the law of Moses.

There is a resurrection taught by Paul: and Christ who was the subject of that resurrection was the first in point of time, and such a resurrection takes place at the tomb, and the "dead" not the living are subjects of it. Paul refers to two resurrections in Hebrews 11:35. The first he mentions is a corruptible one: "Women receive their dead raised to life." How would the three stage process fit the word "raised" in this text? He then shows how some suffered death in hope of obtaining a better resurrection. Better than what? The corruptible resurrection he has just mentioned; what is a better resurrection than a corruptible one? An incorruptible one as only two are possible. David says, Psalm 17:15, "I shall be satisfied when I wake with Thy likeness." That is a better resurrection than awaking without the likeness, and it could not be much satisfaction to David to wake with a corruptible nature. Such is the lot of the unfaithful in order that they may reap corruption.

In Luke 20:35 our Lord speaks of a resurrection for which worthiness is needed, and no worthiness can be necessary for a corruptible resurrection. Such as take part in the resurrection mentioned by Christ do not die any more, which cannot be affirmed of a corruptible one in which just and unjust rise together. We believe that the faithful will rise or "come forth" incorruptible, and that the faithful living will be caught away with them to meet the Lord in the air; and that the unfaithful living and dead will be left for resurrection and judgement afterwards. Revelation 20:5-6 speaks of this special resurrection in which only the blessed take part, and that those who take part cannot die any more. With such a resurrection in view, well might Paul press to obtain it. Philippians 3:11, "If by any means I might attain to the resurrection of the dead." If a mixed mortal resurrection was Paul's teaching, then pressing back would have secured it, as certainly as pressing forward. But it is a resurrection of "them that are Christ's" 1 Corinthians 15:23; "the resurrection of the just", Luke 14:14; "The dead in Christ shall rise first", 1 Thessalonians 4:16. The Dr.

would add: Also the dead out of Christ; just and unjust; faithful and unfaithful. But Paul did not so teach, and we have no warrant for this addition. Also Paul tells us that such raised ones are caught away to be for ever with the Lord. Well may it be said of such: "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust," Isaiah 26:19. But how premature the singing if they had to go before the judgement seat in mortal bodies and wait to know if they were forgiven!

What About The Judgement?

Brother Roberts says in his magazine for August 1877 page 375: "The forgiveness of sins and appearance before Christ at His coming for judgement will not appear incompatible doctrines, when we remember that we are not permitted to know of our forgiveness till then; all our sins before baptism are forgiven then; but the question is about things after." This, though written over 40 years ago, is the teaching of Bro. Robert's brethren today, and this view we admit does necessitate a mortal resurrection. If raised incorruptible they would know their sins were forgiven. The judgement they hold would be forestalled, so we are charged with forestalling the judgement by teaching present knowledge of forgiveness and incorruptible resurrection; we gladly admit that our belief on forgiveness does forestall such a judgement, and that in that respect we are in company with our Lord who forestalled such a judgement by promising His disciples they should sit on twelve thrones. He also told them to rejoice that their names were written in heaven. Paul said "We know we have a house not made with hands." John said "We know when He shall appear we shall be like Him." Our Lord refers to future judgement in the parable of the talents, but He neither mentions saints appearing in mortal bodies, nor telling the story of their lives, nor giving account of sins. If He had taught such a doctrine, Paul would not have known 1900 years ago that his Lord would give him a crown of righteousness. He would have waited to see how matters would turn out at the judgement, and if his account were so good that it secured him eternal life. He might have said "Well done Paul!" but if he believed eternal life were a gift, he might well ascribe all the glory to God. If we are in Christ our aim is not to get our names enrolled in the book of life, but to abide in Christ, so that they may not be blotted out. If believers' names are not written in the book of life when they repented, believed, and were baptised, when are they written? And if not justified then, when are they justified? Paul says, in Romans 6:18, "Being then made free from sin," but Bro. Roberts says: "It is only sins before baptism which we know are forgiven." How do we know such sins are forgiven? Because the word tells us. But the word also tells us, 1 John 1:9, "that if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins," and this applies to every period of our lives after baptism. In 1 John 2:12 he says: "I write unto you little children because your sins are forgiven." In Colossians 2:13, Paul tells his brethren "God had forgiven them all their trespasses," so brethren it is our privilege to have the "Blessedness of the man whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered." What an awful blighting error is Bro. Roberts' theory of judgement! How it dims the glory of the cross of our dear Lord, and brings a dark cloud between God's children and their Father! Such as believe this theory may pity many who hold other unscriptural theories, but few errors are more pitiable than this. If sins committed before baptism were forgiven only, the believer would have a gleam of sunshine then, but all after would then be uncertainty, and one could almost wish he had expired on rising from the water. We know, according to this theory, all would be right then. We have already quoted sufficient scriptural clear testimony to disprove this doctrine of judgement, yet to remove any possible doubt we will refer still further to the law and testimony and show that they speak not according to this word, and let the reader bear in mind that if it could be proved that the saints came forth corruptible it would be no proof that they appeared in that nature at the judgement; also that it is possible to believe that they come forth incorruptible, and yet not comprehend the scriptural doctrine of justification by faith.

Faith and Works

Some have thought that the teaching of Paul and James was contradictory. It is true that we are justified by faith, and also by works; but we are first justified by faith alone from all our offences, by believing on Him who was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification. This is as Paul says, Titus 3:5, "not by works of righteousness that we have done." Also Ephesians 2:8, "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God not of works, lest any man should boast." Paul also says, Romans 5:9, "We are justified by His blood." This takes place when we are baptised into Him whose blood was shed for the remission of sins. Isaiah says in chapter 53, "By His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities." When baptised into the sin-bearer we may sing "to the praise of the glory of His grace who hath made us accepted in the beloved." Justified

then from sin, afterwards our works must justify our faith, and if our faith is living faith, such works will follow. If works of righteousness do not follow, then our faith is dead. If we profess to be the children of God we are not justified in doing the works of the flesh, but if we do the will of our Father in heaven then we justify our profession of discipleship to His dear Son. If we profess to be Christ's we must justify our profession by manifesting the spirit of Christ, otherwise we are none of His, and are not justified by works.

The Two Debtors. Luke 7:31.

This parable of our Lord shows the effect of forgiveness of sin. Our Lord asks Simon "Which of the debtors would love most?" He also says "That where much is forgiven, the same loveth much." The parable was a powerful reproof to Simon, but supposing he had said I was not permitted to know I was forgiven, would that not have justified his lack of love? The woman knew she was much forgiven, therefore she loved much. But supposing she had not been permitted to know she was forgiven, how then, reader, how then? And if that knowledge is withheld from believers till the judgement, then the love it should inspire will be wanting. As love is the fountain from which Christian virtues spring, our growth in grace is seriously crippled, and our life blighted with an awful uncertainty. If our acceptance at the judgement depends on our good deeds out-weighting our bad deeds, then the most conceited will be the most confident of gaining eternal life.

We Must Appear Before the Judgement Seat of Christ.

This we believe quite as fully as our opponents, but we dare not make it read, we must all appear simultaneously, nor dare we say that each individual will give account of good and bad deeds. Some will appear, whose bad deeds are forgiven and sins covered, and if the Judge required them to give account of sins He would be a covenant breaker.

After shedding His blood to confirm His Father's covenant, we are sure He will not break it; Hebrews 10:16, Paul is here quoting Jeremiah 31:33, where the prophet is speaking of Israel's conversion, but the context shows clearly that believers are under that covenant now, and that it is the ground of present confidence of forgiveness, and boldness to approach the throne of grace. Having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." Thus we may draw nigh and thus we may appear at the judgement seat of Christ, when raised incorruptible and "caught to meet Him in the air," and so for ever be with the Lord. In 1 John 3:21 we read "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God." Such believers could say, "We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him." How inconsistent such statement would be if they were not permitted to know their sins were forgiven "until", as our opponents say, they had appeared in full angelic assize, and told the story of their lives, and waited for the verdict. Thank God that such a dreadful picture is not to be found in His word, and it is our heart's desire and prayer that the reader may (if enslaved by such teaching) be delivered from such a yoke of bondage unto the liberty of the sons of God. It is our duty and privilege, if we are believers of Paul's gospel, to beseech men to be reconciled to God, 2 Corinthians 5:20.

But suppose our hearers should ask us the question, "Are you reconciled to God?" If we believe the Dr. and Bro. Roberts' teaching we shall have to answer, "We were some time ago, soon after baptism, but we are not now permitted to know. We know our Lord was made a sin-offering "that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him", 2 Corinthians 5:21, and such was our condition before God, immediately after baptism, but we do not know that it is our condition now; we are waiting till the judgement. When Paul invited men to reconciliation (which is equivalent to forgiveness), he invited them to that relation to God which he describes in Romans 5:1-2, a condition of justification, peace with God, and a standing in God's favour. It was a privilege of apostolic believers to thus stand, and it is our privilege and our Father's good pleasure for us thus to stand every day; justified, reconciled, and having peace with God. As we know not the day of our Lord's return it is essential that we should have this blessed relationship every day. Nor is it essential that we should be perfect in holiness, though this must be our desire and aim, for if perfect, we should not need a High Priest, "who ever liveth to make intercession." By confessing our weaknesses and imperfections and humbly endeavouring to walk with God, with our minds serving the Law of God, though imperfect in ourselves, we are made complete in Him, whom God has made to be unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. In that frame of mind boasting will be excluded, and he that glorieth will glory in the Lord.

When will the Unfaithful be Judged?

Although this heading does not affect the following questions: Will the faithful come forth from the tomb incorruptible? Will they be required to give account of sins and are they permitted to know their forgiveness before the judgement? Yet it will naturally arise, especially in view of the parable of the talents, Luke 19:12-27, - A certain nobleman calls his servants before him for judgement, and such a judgement might, and probably would, be ended in a few hours, and his enemies might be gathered before him, and slain in a few hours, and if the details of a parable have each a counterpart in the truth intended to be conveyed, it would appear to contradict the literal statements we have already quoted, to prove a separate resurrection and judgement of the faithful, though it would not affect the three questions just stated. In Isaiah 61 we have a prophecy, part of which was fulfilled 1900 years ago, (Luke 4:21), and part of which is yet unfulfilled, and yet there is nothing to indicate this long separation in its fulfilment; and if this is the case in a literal prophecy, would it be safe to say it may not be the case in the details of this parable? It would also be difficult to see how the faithful could receive, and the unfaithful be divested of, anything comparable to Pounds or Talents.

The purpose of the parable is well answered without making a judgement, which a nobleman might exercise over a few, or even a few hundred servants, to exactly, in detail, represent the judgement of the vast multitude our Lord will judge. Paul's words, 2 Timothy 4:1, are often quoted to support simultaneous resurrection, and judgement of faithful and unfaithful living and dead. The words "At His appearing" are supposed to contain the proof, but the Revised Version has no such words. Daniel 12:1-2 is also quoted and the supposed proof rests on the words "At that time"; but where is the proof that "time" is sufficiently brief to indicate a simultaneous resurrection? If the unfaithful were raised and judged one day after the faithful, it would not be simultaneous, nor would they rise and stand together, and the word "time" has a much longer duration in 2 Corinthians 6:2. Paul answers our question, and our Lord confirms Paul's answer. In 1 Corinthians 11:32 Paul says, "When we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we might not be condemned with the world", or judged with the world. The word "*krino*" here translated "condemned" is translated "judged" in numerous texts. In Revelation 3:10 our Lord tells the Church at Philadelphia, "That because they had been faithful. He would keep them from the hour of temptation which should come upon the world, to try them that dwell on the earth."

The Judgement of Matthew 25.

Our Lord's teaching here is quoted to support the theory we are opposing, but here it is the nations who are judged, and the nations are no more the household of Christ than the Church is the world. Some would suggest this should read "of" the nations, but in Revelation 7:9 we read "of all nations", so it would read in Matthew 25, if "of all nations." If such had been the fact, then there is another class present, and instead of them being there to be judged, which this scripture is quoted to prove, they are there and are not judged, but the Judge lovingly refers to them as "My brethren", which agrees with Paul's teaching, that they are to appear with Him in glory "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear", and this judgement is "when the Son of Man shall come in His glory." It also agrees with Enoch's prophecy, Jude 14, "Behold, He cometh with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgement." It may be argued that because the "sheep" nations go into life, they must be the saints, but the saved of the nations will go into aeonian life, and will be blessed according to the promise "In Thee shall all the nations be blessed," (Genesis 22:18). In Genesis 49:10, we read, "Shiloh shall come, and to Him shall the gathering of the people be", also that "God will judge the world in righteousness," (Acts 17:31). The gathering and the judgement here referred to will extend over a period of 1,000 years, and though the judgement of the nations, of Matthew 25 will begin with great wrath and destruction, and salvation; yet that judgement may embrace the same period.

It is not only assumed that the nations are faithful and unfaithful believers, but also that the resurrected dead are included in the sheep and the goats, and as the resurrection is not mentioned, it is only an assumption. But supposing we allow assumption No. 1 that the nations are, or include, the household of Christ, and assumption No. 2 that the dead are included; what is the result? It is this: the faithful go into eternal life without either telling the history of their lives, or giving account of their sins; and consequently there is nothing in this judgement which necessitated a corruptible resurrection. In the parable of the talents the faithful give no account, but of their faithfulness, and the judgement is only a judgement of rewards.

They are appointed to reign over cities without first appearing to give account of sins. Their sins were judged on the cross, and resting by living faith on that sacrifice, they are perfected for ever by that one offering. As in the type of the scape-goat their sins are sent away into a land of forgetfulness. Thus the Bible teaching on the judgement is in complete harmony with our views, and neither involves the mortal resurrection, nor saints giving account of sins. The judgement of Matthew 25, and also the parable of the talents, do not in any way involve the first, and clearly disproves the second. But some will ask "Does not Paul in 2 Timothy 4:1 say 'that God will render eternal life to patient seekers'?" Yes, but he does not say that it is a reward for patient continuance, and many will have eternal life who were not permitted to live after union with Christ. Eternal life is a gift and not a reward of works, and our union with Christ is the condition of its bestowal; yet if we forsake Christ, and instead of continuing in well-doing we return to our evil-doing, then separating ourselves from Christ there is everlasting destruction instead; for death is the wages of sin, but eternal life is not the wages of righteousness. Paul says "We are Christ's household, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." What is the beginning of our confidence but the answer of a good conscience when purged from our guilty conscience in the forgiveness of all our trespasses? "Being then made free from sin," Romans 6:18, and this confidence is to be held fast unto the end or we are not the household of Christ. Can we have this lifelong confidence with a life-long uncertainty about our forgiveness? Paul says to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 6:11), "But ye are washed, sanctified, and justified." Was Paul's statement true? or will the Corinthians have to wait till the judgement to ascertain its truth? If we have believed Paul's testimony, and obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine delivered, we may rejoice, and thank God that we are washed, sanctified, and justified and by His grace we may, in that condition, live or die. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord," and if blessed when they die, they must be blessed when they rise. Such need not wait till the judgement to know whether they are blessed, nor whether they are in the Lord.

Believers in Bro. Roberts' and the Dr's. theory of judgement never rise higher than hoping all will be right at the judgement. Let such ask themselves: "What is the ground of their hope of acceptance then? What provision can be made then which does not exist, and is available now? Apostolic believers hoped for the coming of the Lord, but where do we find them hoping for forgiveness at His coming? It is our privilege, and should be our happy experience every night to lay our head on our pillow with the blessed confidence that if our Lord came in the night we could hail His appearance with joy, knowing our justification and acceptance in Him. To realise this we must endeavour to walk with God during the day. Our prayer must be "Nearer my God to Thee," and the nearer we live to God the greater will be our confidence that our sins are forgiven, and that we have received the atonement, Romans 5:11, and like apostolic believers we shall "Rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory", and know something of the sweetness of that fellowship our Lord promised: "I will come in and sup with him," Revelation 3:20; "If a man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him," John 14:23. Some may say this is a very high standard; yes, it is, and ours is a high calling. The theory of judgement we oppose forbids such a standard, and shall we deny this glorious truth of God's abundant grace, or shall we exhort our brethren to rise to it?

Reader, now is the time to know that all is right with our Father in heaven. It is our privilege to "Walk in the light and have fellowship with the Father, and the Son," and know "That the blood of Jesus cleanseth us from all sin," John 1:7. How sad to hear believers, who profess to have come to Jesus and found rest in Him, sing "My heart is pained, nor can it be at rest till it finds rest in Thee." Such words would well become a penitent sinner. Any one with that experience should not go to the Lord's table, but in private prayer to the Throne of Grace, and confessing their sins find reconciliation and peace. Then they may come as members of God's royal Priesthood, cleansed, and clothed with fine linen, and offer the sacrifice of praise. Knowing their sins are remitted they may, with thankful hearts, drink of the emblem of the precious blood, which was shed for the remission of sins. But some will say "we are far from perfect;" true, and the more we strive to live perfectly before God the more we shall feel humbly conscious of it. If we were perfect in holiness we should not need a High Priest, who ever liveth to make intercession for us. Paul's experience, as stated in Romans 7, will be ours, yet if we can say with him "I delight in the law of God after the inward man," we are walking after the Spirit. Paul says for such "There is therefore now no condemnation." Like David we may truly say: "If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me." But if the purpose of our heart is to do the will of God, "Then our hearts will not condemn us, then have we confidence toward God," 1 John 3:21, which would be impossible if we are not permitted to know that our sins are forgiven. If we have uncorrupted Christianity we shall know that our sins are forgiven, and that we are accepted in the Beloved.

The writer of this pamphlet earnestly entreats the reader to prayerfully consider the testimony quoted, also other testimonies of the scriptures. While the religious world ignores or nullifies the teaching of the scriptures on the coming Kingdom, and eternal life, many who believe these precious and all-important truths sadly neglect and misunderstand Bible teaching on repentance; forgiveness of sin; the necessity of an inward change; and a life of fellowship with God. These subjects occupy more of apostolic teaching than any other, and should be the subjects of constant exhortation. Let us not forget that, “without holiness, no man shall see the Lord,” and who can be holy in a Godless world unless he is often at the Throne of Grace. Our Lord tells us to “Watch and pray always, that we may be accounted worthy to escape” the coming judgement. The prayerless professor who does not long for communion with God and His people, and can make himself quite at home with worldly company, has no prospect of being “for ever with the Lord.” Such would have too much of the Lord’s presence. If prayer is a cold heartless duty instead of a blessed privilege, we may be sure our hearts are far from God. Such do not know the Lord, though they may know the letter of His Word, and may, if they do not repent, hear Him say “I never knew you.” Let us make a full surrender of our hearts to God, for He will accept no less, and rest in humble faith on the great Atoning Sacrifice of Calvary, by which alone we are justified from all our offences. Let us glory in the fact that it was not in vain that “Christ suffered for sin, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God.” Those who look for and love His glorious appearing may rest assured that He will appear, not to lay anything to the charge of God’s elect, but to their salvation.

“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you.”

Brother William Richmond.

Let No Man Judge You

Dear Brothers and Sisters, as we consider these instructions in Paul’s letter to the saints at Colosse (Colossians 2:16), we ask ourselves, how can we possibly prevent others from judging us? Especially at this point in history when it seems as if the whole of mankind is pre-occupied with the act of looking at the other man. The King James text says, “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon or of Sabbath days.” Now the word “let” has the meaning of “allow” or “permit”, which would seem to be placing the burden of responsibility on the one being judged. Not to permit anyone to sit in judgement of you in matters of religious observances. Now if Paul had told those judging in these matters to stop, we could easily understand that, but how can we stop others being judgemental? In reality we cannot, for we have no control of what others might do. Therefore we must look to see if there can be any other meaning in Paul’s words. We find that the word “let” can also mean “giving ones consent”, this would mean giving oneself over to judgement. Would anyone be so foolish? Would anyone ever willingly place themselves in a position to be judged of another person? Sadly, the simple truth is yes, for that is what one does every time they join a church or religious organisation. For, sorry to say, all these bodies have their creeds and statements of faith to which one must subscribe to become a member. Joining that church or fellowship means we subscribe to all that they hold to be truth and that we willingly submit ourselves to its laws and voluntarily place ourselves under the judgement of all fellow members, more so the officers or in some cases the founder of the group. One is either judged by this man or by what he has decreed is the truth in all things

The more we study the scriptures and what God has had to say about the man He has created, and more closely observe the motivation forces that move men, the more convinced we will become that there is a root of evil which springs from the natural man that perhaps reflects that for which man was first created “To have dominion”. (Genesis 1:28). We see this manifested in Christ’s lifetime amongst his close followers, when James and John wished to be the greatest. The spiritual man or woman must seek to be servant of all.

The desire for dominion in the hearts of men is not any less today, so let us continue to heed the warning, let no man judge you.

Brother Eric Moore.

Gog's Invasion of Israel - When?

Two Invasions or One?

Most Bible students will agree that the Ezekiel prophecy concerning Gog's invasion and destruction on the mountains of Israel, Chapters 38 and 39, has not yet been fulfilled. In fact history cannot show it to have happened as yet, for it cannot record anything to show that the children of Israel in all lands whither they have dwelt, have acknowledged the Divine reasons for their exile and loss of blessings, or that they have sought the Lord God with all their heart by accepting the principle of faith as exhibited by Abraham and demonstrated by his "Seed" who appeared as the Prophet like unto Moses, but with greater power and ability to speak the Words of God.

No, they rejected their Messiah, the Kingdom of God was taken from them (because its fruits of the spirit were lacking in them) and was given to a nation bringing forth those fruits expected - 1 Peter 2, Romans 9:20-33. Time and again God has said through the Prophets that though the cursings would come upon Israel through lack of faith and obedience, yet there would always be a remnant according to His election of Grace, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel to name but three at the time of the Babylonian captivity; and many years from that time a remnant still existed even to the time of Messiah, and when Paul wrote the letter to Romans. In chapters 9, 10, and 11 he deals very constructively with the subject of Israel after the flesh and Israel after the spirit, showing what constitutes the difference between "descendants" of Abraham, and the "seed" of Abraham and rightful heirs to the promises through "faith and adoption" in Christ the Messiah. It could be a point of interest whether there is a connection with Isaiah 65:15 and Acts 11:26 - however, we need only to accept Paul's statement in Romans 11:25, "That blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved as it is written, "There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob..." (Isaiah 59:20,21). Jesus had read from Isaiah 61:1, and from verse 2, where He closed the book after reading of "the acceptable year of the Lord" and stating its application to Himself "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Jesus left them to ponder this and also the rest of the prophecy from the point at which He closed the scroll or book, the options being that they could accept Him as their Messiah, thus fulfilling Malachi 3:16 & 17, or the time would come when their descendants would return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not. "For behold the day cometh, that shall bum as an oven" Malachi 4. Whichever way we look at it "The day of the Lord", "The day of vengeance", or the coming of the Lord", describes the end of Gentile times and domination; when God's intervention will introduce His Son to judge the world in righteousness, for it is through Abraham and his "Seed" incorporated in Christ that all nations of the earth shall be blessed, but let it be understood that Israel after the flesh are not the firstfruits, but they who are Christ's at His coming. (1 Corinthians 15:22 and 23).

There is much prophesied concerning God's judgement upon the nations in heralding His gathering of those people of the Jews who repent and turn to Him by reason of the law going forth of Zion and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem, and this will also have its effect upon the non-Jewish nations, and from what I have witnessed of the traditions and cults of all these indoctrinated and idolatrous fanatics, it is likely to be some task. Of course, we know it is possible with God to convert them in a flash, but this is not His Way, as the Psalmist has said, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power", therefore through their willingness and example the non-Jewish nations will be converted also.

It appears to me from the prophecy of Joel 3:1 & 2 that before the Day of the Lord in the valley of decision the natural Jews will have been scattered among the nations and the land parted as a result of deceptive action by Edom, the descendants of Esau. (See Obadiah). But God fulfils His Word "Jacob have I

loved and Esau have I hated”, the blessing is ultimately upon Jacob, and Esau the curse and destruction because he sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. Obadiah verses 18-21, and should not have done these deceitful and wicked acts to his brother.

It is also apparent that Tyre, Sidon and the coasts of Palestine are much involved at the present time with the modern State of Israel and it will be of great interest to follow events and the outcome of the present trouble with Lebanon, Syria and the Arabs. We know by common sense that nuclear war is harmful to animal life as well as human, to land and vegetation, so that conventional weapons would be used in the likelihood of a war. So it is then, in Joel 3:9-21, and remember also that Israel was scattered into all nations by God for its rejection of Him and their Messiah, Jesus Christ, but Joel speaks of them having been scattered and sold by certain nations at a later time still. After declaring God’s condemnation upon the scattered of Israel, the prophet Amos, chapter 9, speaks of God sifting, or causing a movement of them among all the nations like as corn is moved or sifted in a sieve, yet not one grain falls to the ground (good grain saved), but the sinners die by the sword (they fall to the ground as the rejecters and rejected). Chapter 9, verses 8-10.

There can be no mistaking the fact that James, the apostle, made reference to this and other old testament Prophets speaking of the same events in Acts 15:13-18, the first priority is to the rightful heirs of the promises to Abraham, those who are Christ’s, Jew and Gentile. Peter speaking of this in the previous verse declares “But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they” (‘they’ being the Gentiles). See also Isaiah 11:10; Isaiah 54:1-5; Hosea 3:5; Amos 9:11; Micah 5:2-5.

The first seven verses of Micah 4 appears to give a preview of what will take place after the fulfilment of verses 8-13, and examples of this seem to pervade the prophetic writings so that the order of sequence is difficult to place. “His book of Revelation is perhaps the best example of this and no one seems to have made a successful interpretation up to the present, not surprising, of course, in view of the fact that John was told to seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered and write them not. Revelation 10:4. In like manner Daniel was told, “Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.” Daniel 12:9 & 10. Thus dogmatic assumptions are out.

The question arises why does God, through Ezekiel, name the “chief prince” of the latter days as Gog the land of Magog as a guard over the other nations assembled under him? Again, why are the nations who are also said to be in like manner gathered by God into the valley of Jehoshaphat not given a name and yet this also appears to be a total destruction in God’s pleading for His heritage Israel? It also appears to be the most accurate fulfilment of Luke 21:24-28, of all the other battles and events spoken by Ezekiel, Daniel or Revelation and the difficulty is knowing where to place Ezekiel 38 and 39 or its necessity, unless it is identical with Joel’s prophecy, which in that case, would prove that Ezekiel’s Gog and John’s Gog of Revelation 20 must be two separate events which some have always believed, probably due to the immense gap of years separating Ezekiel and Revelation, yet now, in our day, we find the gap has lessened considerably. It could lessen further still to the point where both Ezekiel 38 and 39 and Revelation 20 verse 8 are one and the same event. Ezekiel giving more detailed description, thus ruling out the necessity for John having to do so but merely stating the finality of Ezekiel’s description, “and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.” Revelation 20:9. Ezekiel 38:22, 39:6-8.

Now Revelation 16 speaks of Jesus coming as a thief at the time of the gathering of the nations to the battle of the great day of God Almighty, Armageddon, and the marginal reference points the reader to Revelation 20:8 in connection with this event. If, as Dr Thomas says, Joel 3 is Armageddon then Revelation 20:8 cannot possibly be, as it appears to be separated by a thousand years, Joel 3 being at the second coming of Jesus Christ, and Revelation 20:8 toward the end of His thousand years reign in ruling the world in righteousness. Where then can we place Ezekiel 38 and 39? It is obvious Joel’s nations will have the modern weaponry which consists mainly of steel and alloy, but Ezekiel’s Gog nations must have weaponry of predominantly wood construction in order that Ezekiel 39 verses 9 and 10 could be fulfilled where the inhabitants of the land would find it unnecessary to gather wood for fuel or cut down any out of the forests but will have wood to last them seven years. This wooden weaponry position will have resulted from the rule of Christ and his word through Micah 4:3 and 4. But it also seems from the remainder of Micah’s prophecy that those people dwelling in the land of Israel will be under much chastisement for their rebellious

disposition and their idolatrous practices. Some indeed will learn and know the Lord, as in the coming out of Egypt under Moses and Joshua, but as then, many forgot His wondrous works and signs, so it will take much disciplinary measures to convince them though their eyes shall see their teachers and they shall hear them saying to them when in doubt which way to go or what decision to make - "This is the way, walk ye in it." Isaiah 30:18-22. This will take place when a King shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgement and the Spirit poured from on high. "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." (Isaiah 32).

I appreciate what others have said about the Ezekiel 38 and 39 prophecy concerning Gog and on the surface it does read as though God destroys five sixths of this confederacy, but the marginal reference and reading gives a much different meaning and conclusion, and as in Revelation 20. God is instrumental in gathering this vast and innumerable confederacy of nations "the number of whom is as the sand of the sea." Revelation 20:8. "Thou shalt be as a cloud to cover the land..." (Ezekiel 38:9-16). The beginning of chapter 39 is a repetition of chapter 38 but the words in verse 2 according to the marginal reading is "I will strike thee with six plagues, or draw thee back with an hook of six teeth, after I have caused and have brought thee up to the sides of the north upon the mountains of Israel." These six plagues are listed in chapter 38 verse 22 - Pestilence, blood, over-flowing rain, great hailstones, fire and brimstone. In both recorded cases we read of fire coming down from heaven upon this confederacy of nations to render them powerless by death, but not necessarily consuming the implements of war used, because in the case of Ezekiel 39 these are used as fuel for seven years which implies that it was not the modern weaponry we would expect to be in use at, or just after the coming of Jesus. This weaponry would fit more the time of Revelation 20:8 when wars would have been a thing of the past with Israel dwelling safely or confidently, without bars or gates due to the rule of Christ as King, and princes ruling in judgement.

There appears to be two stages spoken of in Ezekiel 37 in reference to God and His covenanted people, a covenant of peace and multiplication in the land with His sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore - verse 26; and then in verse 27 another stage of completion, "My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people." There is a difference between the two; sanctuary meaning "a place of sanctity and refuge, a holy place"; but tabernacle refers to "God dwelling by His Spirit in people" as in 2 Corinthians 6:16, which is applicable now in a limited degree but will apply more fully as in Revelation 21:1-7. It follows then that latter-day Israel, being converted to serve the living God to the final exclusion of idolatry in all its forms, will be God's witnesses to the nations when He magnifies Himself and makes Himself known to all the nations "and they shall know that I am the Lord."

I appreciate what has been said of Ezekiel 39:22 and the question asked as a consequence, "Did not the house of Israel know the Lord before the expiry of the thousand years of Revelation 20:8?" I have no doubt they know the Lord in a limited sense even as in a similar way when their fathers came out of Egypt and their faith tested by many signs and wonders which the majority forgot. Hebrews 12:19-20, "They entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more (for they could not endure that which was commanded...)" Not so the new covenant and its mediator Jesus. Verse 25, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh from heaven." At the time of this great destruction poured upon the heathen Israel will know that this is some great and powerful Being, as in the coming out of Egypt but few of them knew Yahweh the Creator, and a mediator was necessary. What is it then to know the Lord in a true scriptural sense "from that day and forward"? "To know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent, is life eternal." Thus it is from that day or period, and forward, that they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest of them." (Jeremiah 31:31-34). A reading of 2 Corinthians 3:12-18 is most appropriate at this stage. Also Romans 11:23-26.

The appointed Day of the Lord (thousand years), when He will judge the world in righteousness by the man He has ordained and assured all men by His glorious resurrection, all authority and power, will concern both Jews and Gentiles in the application of righteous laws to be observed but will be based on the faith as formerly exhibited in Abraham and his seed Jesus the Messiah. And so will be fulfilled the parable of the wheat and the tares. God's angels will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend for by their fruits they will be known and judged and when He (Jesus) shall have put down all rule and power, Satan having been bruised under His feet. He will deliver up the Kingdom to God even the Father, and God will be all in all.

When Jesus spoke the words concerning the abomination that maketh desolate spoken by Daniel the prophet, He did not make a repetition of Daniel but remarked, "Whoso readeth let him understand." I suggest also that when John spoke of the nations Gog and Magog in Revelation 20:8 he could have been of the same mind. Who reads Ezekiel 38 and 39 let him understand there is no need for me to repeat the details in full other than that Ezekiel speaks of fire from heaven consuming them. After all, in what other book of the Old Testament can we point the finger and say this is Gog's destruction, other than in Ezekiel? Can it be that this is the main reason John reveals the names Gog and Magog because they are nowhere mentioned other than in Ezekiel? I respect other people's views on this being two separate events but keep an open mind myself, but what I have for many years objected to is people being dogmatic in saying Gog is Russia when the scales weigh more toward the Babylonian area where the false prophet holds sway under Islam, whereas Yahweh authorised and predicted only one other Prophet like unto Moses, His only Son the Messiah of Israel who in opposition to the violent element of the Islamic faith, said, "Love your enemies, resist not evil, overcome evil with good, be merciful as your Father in heaven is merciful..."

I conclude then with those advisory words, "Be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy." Isaiah 65. This is our Hope, that joy to see.

Brother Phil Parry.

Leaving Our First Love

The keenest of all earthly desires is that of love. It is earnest longing among humankind that has need of the greatest self-control. The man or woman gripped by it can think of little else than to be with and share the company of the person they love. That is what "first love" means; love that is all-in-all.

If mortals can have this kind of desire for one another's presence, how much more should we desire God, who can do for us infinitely more than any mortal, even more than we can ask or imagine! How much stronger should be our passion for His Kingdom if we are gripped by that divine "first love" of which Jesus spoke.

What does God's word say about true, godly love?

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy; it does not boast; it is not rude; it is not self seeking; it is not easily angered; it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices in the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails." 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. NIV.

Can we bring ourselves to love like this? Do we today love like this, or have we lost the love we once had for our Lord and His service; perhaps the love of the world is eroding this love of the higher things?

Do we really long to serve the Lord; do we really love Him? Or has the service we do become a duty we must do to hide that which is within our hearts? Are we still in our "first love", or do we make excuses?

"Well, you see I had to work late;" "I am too tired tonight;" "You know I had so many other things to do." Is this how we are treating our Lord, are we making excuses, have we lost the desire we once had to our very best for Him? Have we lost our first love?

When night comes do we feel too tired to kneel at our bedside to pray and are we too lazy in the morning to get out of bed a half hour earlier to pray? When we used to spend half the night in prayer! Didn't we once wake in the early hours and feel compelled to tell the Lord how much we appreciated the great things He had done for us? And when things seemed to be going wrong, when we had heartaches, when we had doubts, when we felt we had "let God down", didn't we lay hold of prayer until we had the victory?

Yes, we prayed then; we prayed the thing through. But now, do we still do these things? If we do we still have our first love.

We once sang praises and thanked Him for His goodness as we went about our daily toil, but is our mind now full of other things rather than fixed on the Lord and His interests, do we go all day without giving our Lord a thought? We have something to do for our fellows, but is it for God that we do it or for our own satisfaction and pride of achievement rather than for the Lord?

We are now in the service of the King of kings but do we allow little things to creep into our minds which once we would not have allowed; is the world thus creeping into your life and slowly pushing God out? Are you the same away from home as you are among those of like precious faith? Oh how easily we fool others and ourselves but God is not mocked; we do not fool Him. Christ says, "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil." Revelation 2:2. "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not." Revelation 2:9. But at the same time Jesus said, "Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." Revelation 2:4.

Christ is saying, I can see all your good works and they please me; but you have neglected the love you once had for me. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul makes very plain that without love "I am nothing." This reminds us of the rich young man who had kept God's commandments from his youth, so he thought, yet Christ told him he still lacked one thing. "Sell all that thou hast and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me." Luke 18:22. And when the young man heard this "he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich." This ruler did not understand that Christ was asking him to give up his old life filled with the riches of this world in exchange for eternal wealth.

What does Jesus say in Revelations 2:9? "But thou art rich." We can never imagine the glory, the power, the wonderful blessings that are in store for those who love Him; who are accounted worthy. We may, like Paul, keep under our bodies bringing them into subjection, we may even have done great service for our Lord, but have we still our first love? Now is the time we must make sure we never hear those dreadful words "But I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast lost thy first love."

Brother Harry Laver.

As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment. That ye love one another, as I have loved you. John 15:9-12.

How Are The Dead Raised Up ?

Paul poses this question in 1 Corinthians 15. Apparently there were some amongst the Christians who did not believe in a resurrection, they did not believe that there was any other sort of body than the present human nature. Consequently they had no hope of a future life. Paul represents them as asking the questions "How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?"

Paul had been arguing that there must be a resurrection because Christ had been raised. There was no doubt about that; it had been testified by many witnesses, and if Christ had been raised it was an earnest that his followers too would be raised. It was at this point that Paul represents the sceptic as wanting to know how could the dead be raised and what sort of body do they have at that time. Paul, in his reply, argues that

there are only two sorts of body - the natural and the spiritual. The 'natural' is an earthy body which we now possess and which Adam possessed when he was created. But this body is weak and corruptible, it is not fitted for the coming kingdom and must needs be changed. Paul argues that even in this present order of 'natural bodies' there are differences; one flesh of birds; another of beasts; another of fishes, and this fact shows the possibility of 'sorts' of body. But this argument is not sufficient in itself for these different 'sorts' of body are all corruptible. There is another, and far higher sort of life which Paul calls the 'spiritual', and he shows clearly that this is the type which is put on at the resurrection. This spiritual body he further defines as incorruptible. It is incapable of corruption, it lasts for ever. The question to decide is whether the dead actually rose immortal, or attain to immortality after rising. Are the dead raised with a mortal body the same as when they died, and after appearing before a judgement seat are then changed to immortality? Paul settles the question decisively, he says "The dead are raised incorruptible", there is no need to debate the question further. This is the answer, we have only to accept it just as it stands.

But the objection is often raised that the word 'raised' does not literally mean coming out of the grave, but describes a process which ends in incorruptibility. There are two words in this chapter which are used in connection with resurrection. One is '*anastasis*', which is rendered 'resurrection', and the other is '*egeiro*', which is rendered 'raised'. It is claimed that '*anastasis*', which literally means 'standing up', is used for the action of coming out of the grave and it is inferred that that means in a mortal state. The other word '*egeiro*' is claimed to mean a complete process which starts with '*anastasis*' (standing up) and continues with an appearance at a judgement seat and reaches finality with the change to immortality. But is this interpretation valid? Does *anastasis* mean standing up in a mortal state? We find on comparing other scriptures that it does not. Take for instance the reply of Jesus to the Sadducees, when they asked the question concerning the case of the woman who supposedly had had seven husbands, "In the resurrection whose wife will she be of the seven?" The word for resurrection (*anastasis*) they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are as the angels in heaven - that is, immortal. So we have Jesus himself declaring that those who are the subjects of *anastasis* are immortal. So then, the claim that '*anastasis*' means a standing up in a mortal state is wrong. Again, in Revelation 20, we have it clearly stated that those who live and reign with Christ have been the subjects of the first resurrection '*anastasis*'. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection (*anastasis*), on such the second death hath no power." They are therefore immortal. This is quite plain. It declares that those who rise in the first resurrection actually stand up immortal. There is no justification for the claim that '*anastasis*' means standing up in a mortal state, while '*egeiro*' means a complete process. It is further maintained that the question "How are the dead raised?" is followed by the query "and to (or for) what body do they come?" Not 'with what body'. The claim is made because the passage is in the dative case which requires 'to' or 'for' as the connective. Again we have to ask whether this is valid. Whilst it is true that 'to' or 'for' is right for the dative case this rule is by no means commonly followed when translating into English. In fact, in some cases the use of these words becomes impossible. Take John 12:33, "This he said signifying what death he should die." Literally this should read "to the which death" he should die. Obviously this has to be altered to make readable English and the translators made the choice of "what death" - the word 'what' takes the place of 'to'. So also with John 18:32 and 21:19. In other cases the word 'by' is used, and in others 'in'. The fact is that an English word has to be found which is idiomatically nearest and in accord with the context. In the case of 1 Corinthians 15:35, the translators have chosen the word 'with' to give the proper sense, and it surely has to be admitted that this does fit the question and its context. The enquirer did not wish to know 'to' what body do they come, his concern was whether there could be any other body than the mortal one with which he was familiar, and what sort of body do they have when the dead rise.

The Concordant Version says this concerning the dative case, "the dative case has no English equivalent. It answers the question 'where?' and suggests 'rest in'. Its characteristic connectives are 'in' and 'together'. It is indicated in the sub-linear by prefixing 'to' when no connective is present. As 'to' is not ideal, it is not put in capitals. Other connectives are 'on', 'in' and 'with'.

Paul continues with the analogy of sowing seed and the resulting plant, although, as with all analogies, one must not press details too far, it is quite clear that Paul uses this particular example to force home the fact that the body which comes forth from the earth is not the same as the one which is put in. This is the lesson Paul takes from the example of the growth of plants. "Thou fool" he says, "you do not sow that body that shall be, but bare grain; it may chance of wheat or of some other grain." This is true, as everyone knows. A seed is put into the ground, or cast upon it, but it is not the seed which comes up, it is a plant. In

effect, the seed dies in the ground. (The analogy here does not quite find a counterpart in a man's death, for a man is dead before he is put into the ground.) But from that seed which is buried there springs a new plant "God gives it a body as it has pleased Him, and to every seed his own body." Paul is teaching as forcefully as he can that it is an immortal body which springs up. It is as different as the seedling is different from the seed. "So also is the resurrection of the dead" says Paul. It is like the example he has given, he now goes on to show that there are only two sorts of body, the natural and the spiritual, the earthy and the heavenly, and since he has shown that the body which dies is not the same as that which emerges, there can be only one conclusion. It is sown a natural body, which is put into the ground; it must be a spiritual body which comes out, and so he says,

"It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption.
It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory.
It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.
It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body."

And so from the trend of Paul's argument, from the words he uses and from their use elsewhere, from his analogy of the seed and the plant, we must accept, just as it stands, his assertion that the "dead will be raised incorruptible", and at the same moment, in the twinkling of an eye, we who remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall be changed.

"For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

It must be remarked that Paul, in this chapter, is only dealing with the case of faithful believers. He does not show what becomes of unfaithful ones; neither does he mention a judgement seat for the separation of the good and bad. His mention of a judgement seat in other places, i.e. 1 Corinthians 3:13-15, 2 Corinthians 5:10 must be fitted into this picture in 1 Corinthians 15.

Since Paul is emphatic that the faithful dead rise immortal, any judgement, or tribunal must take place after this.

Thessalonians 4:14-18. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For 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: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: so shall we ever be with the Lord."

This passage must be regarded as a piece of information additional to, but in harmony with that which Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15. It would appear that the Thessalonians were sorrowing over those who had fallen asleep as though that were the end of them. Perhaps their belief was that only those who were alive at the coming of the Lord would continue living and reigning with their Lord. Perhaps they thought that the dead ones would be raised at a later date. We do not know what particular difficulties of belief they had. Paul shows that they had no need to worry. He says that those who are alive and remain unto the Lord's coming will not go before those who are asleep. For the dead in Christ shall rise first. Those who are alive (in Christ) will be caught up together with the risen dead and taken to meet the Lord. This is in accordance with 1 Corinthians 15. Paul there asserts that the dead rise incorruptible and the living are changed instantly. So then, in the Thessalonian passage, when Paul says the dead in Christ shall rise first we must understand that he meant "rise incorruptible." Those who are living are changed to incorruptibility at the same time, all of them together are transported miraculously to their Lord.

Again we must note that Paul does not speak of the unfaithful. He does not show what happens to them. He is speaking of those only who are truly 'in Christ'. We must also note that he makes no mention of a judgement seat for the separation of the good and bad, the view that the dead and the living are conveyed miraculously to meet the Lord for judgement in a mortal state finds no support here.

On the authority of 1 Corinthians 15 we must accept that they are immortal when this takes place.

Revelation 20:4-6. "...and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection, on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with him a thousand years."

This is a very important passage and since it is the last message through Jesus to His followers it must be regarded as the final piece of information on the subject of the resurrection. We have seen from 1 Corinthians 15, and 1 Thessalonians 4, that the faithful dead are raised incorruptible and the faithful living are changed to immortality at the same time. The passage in Revelation tells us in addition that the rest of the dead do not rise at this time. Quite clearly, the first resurrection is confined to faithful believers. Remember also that the word 'resurrection' is '*anastasis*' (standing up) and this again emphasises the fact that these dead ones actually rise immortal. The second death has no more power over those who are the subjects of the first *anastasis*.

Whilst this passage in Revelation only speaks of dead ones, it must, on the authority of 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4, include those who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord. But what of the "rest of the dead"? Who are they and when do they rise? The latter part of the chapter informs us. From verses 11-15 we are given details of events at the end of the thousand years. (This must be so because the narrative has taken us to that time from verse 7 onward). John sees a great white throne and he sees the dead rise from their graves and from the sea. Books are opened, and the book of life is opened and the dead are judged according to what is written in the books. After this there is a second death. Now this is clearly a more general resurrection than that which takes place at the beginning of the thousand years. The first resurrection has no such details as these, for one thing there is no judgement seat. All that take part in the first resurrection are immortal; they rise immortal and cannot be hurt of the second death. (Incidentally, Christadelphians have made two second deaths - one at the beginning and one at the end of the thousand years; but the scriptures speak of only one at the end). It is clear then that the "rest of the dead" are the unfaithful who do not rise at the first resurrection. They are left in their graves until the end of the thousand years. They come forth to a judgement; and have to suffer the second death. The word 'judged' in verses 12 and 13 are not the same in the original. In verse 12 it is '*krino*', which means 'to set right to judge', but in verse 13 it is '*katakrino*' which means 'to judge adversely', to condemn. This would seem to emphasise that this judgement at the end of the thousand years is for the purpose of condemning unfaithful ones. All the unfaithful are dealt with at this time, and not at the time of the first resurrection. Nevertheless, it would seem from the fact that the book of life is mentioned in connection with this judgement that some at least are found written therein, but this could be those who have lived and died during the thousand years. Let us summarise the teaching of this chapter:

There are two resurrections. One at the beginning of the thousand years, and one at the end. The subjects of the first resurrection rise immortal. There is no mention of a judgement seat for them. The wicked do not rise at this time. The resurrection at the end of the thousand years is that of the unfaithful, they have to face a judgement 'out of the books'. The unfaithful suffer the second death.

John 5:24-29. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life... and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

The word 'condemnation' in verse 24 and 'damnation' in verse 29 is the same. The translators have not been consistent, for the same word is also translated 'judgement' in verses 22 and 27. The word in Greek is '*krisis*', and means the process, or carrying out of judgement. The word for judging adversely, or condemning, is '*katakrisis*' but it is striking that this word does not occur in the above verse. So that where Jesus speaks of resurrection of damnation this should read more correctly 'resurrection of judgement'. A fair and consistent translation of these verses would read somewhat as follows: 'For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgement unto the Son... He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgement but is passed from death unto life... and hath given him (the Son) authority to execute judgement also, because he is the Son of man... and (they) shall come forth: they that have done good unto the *anastasis* of life; and they that have done evil unto the *anastasis* of judgement.'

So we have Jesus plainly declaring that the faithful believers will not come into judgement but will come forth to a resurrection of life. But the wicked shall come forth to judgement. The judgement therefore is for the wicked, not the righteous.

Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15 are consistent with this; He shows plainly that the righteous are raised incorruptible - there is no judgement for them to determine whether they are worthy or not.. That decision has already been made. Revelation 20 is also consistent. Jesus, in John 5, shows that there are two resurrections - one to life, one to judgement. He does not say they occur at the same time. Revelation 20 shows they are not. The resurrection of life is the first; it is at the beginning of the thousand years. The second is the resurrection of judgement at the end of the millennium.

Matthew 25. The parable of the ten virgins. This parable is limited in its scope and not much can be gained from it in a doctrinal sense. Its teaching is simply moral. There is no judgement mentioned. The five wise virgins go out to meet the bridegroom. "The five foolish ones simply arrive too late for the wedding.

Matthew 25. The parable of the sheep and the goats. The Son of man is here sitting upon the throne of glory. This probably means that if there is a judgement of the saints it is past. Jesus now has entered Jerusalem and is enthroned in glory. It is nations who are assembled before him and Jesus judges them according to their treatment of "his brethren", it is uncertain whether this means natural Israel or the saints. Whilst it is nations which are thus judged it appears to be individuals who are separated into the two categories. This is indicated by the fact that 'nations' is neuter, whereas 'them' in verse 32 (He shall separate them) is masculine. Thus is justice dispensed, not en masse in national groups, but as individuals. The reward for those who have helped Christ's brethren is to live in the "aeon" and does not necessarily mean unending life, but life in the millennium age. The punishment for those who have ill-treated Christ's brethren is everlasting fire - again not 'unending' but the fire of the aeon. A point to notice is that in this parable there is no mention of a giving account. The two groups are simply separated.

Romans 14:10-13. "We shall stand before the judgement seat of Christ... so then shall every one of us give account of himself to God."

The lesson behind these verses is that we must not judge one another, because Christ is the Judge. The occasion of this exhortation is the presence of some who were vegetarians, they ate herbs. Some were using the occasion to judge others. (It is not clear who were doing the judging, whether it was the herb eaters or the meat eaters). Paul says the matter in itself was unimportant. It is not a matter of departure from the truth. The questions to be decided are when and what is the judgement seat of Christ, and what is the "giving account"?

Regarding the judgement seat it is peculiar that Paul quotes a passage from Isaiah 45 which appears to have little bearing on a judgement seat such as Christadelphians believe in. Here it is:

"I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear."

There seems little support for a 'judgement seat' in this verse, it is simply a declaration that all people will give homage to God and Jesus. Is this then all that Paul means by "standing before the judgement seat"? Is the judgement seat simply a place where all pay respect and homage to Jesus, where the meat eaters and the herb eaters are all on a level and all bend the knee? It certainly appears so, but what about the "giving account"? when and what is this? Hebrews 4:i3 may help us. "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." "With whom we have to do" is rendered in some versions, "with whom we have an accounting", or, "to whom we are accountable." Now if all things are naked and open it is evident that this "accounting" is being done now, as we live our lives, and at death the account is closed. Paul, at the end of his life, could say, "I have fought a good fight: I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

It is evident that Paul knew his “accounting” was finished, it only remained for the righteous judge to give him the crown of righteousness “at that day.” There was no need for a further “accounting” when Paul rose from the dead, neither was there any need for a judgement to determine whether Paul was worthy, Jesus had already judged Paul and Paul knew it. In line with this, Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5, “but we are made manifest to God.” And this is in the same passage where he speaks of us all being “made manifest” at the judgement seat of Christ. The point is that we are manifest to God here and now.

There is another verse which we must examine in this connection.

Matthew 12:36. “But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgement.”

It is so easy, as Christadelphians do, to associate this “day of judgement” with the idea of a judgement seat at the return of Christ. But where is the proof that this is correct? There have been many days of judgement, and it is follow to associate all references to one event. In fact, in this chapter a ‘judgement’ is referred to which is quite probably the judgement of A.D.70 (Verses 41,42 & 45). Might not the ‘day of judgement’ in verse 36 also refer to A.D.70? In view of the fact that Jesus was addressing the “generation of vipers”. A generation which would not pass away till judgement had descended. “Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.” The generation of vipers were speaking evil things and for these “idle words” they would be brought to account. The accounting was the judgement of A.D.70.

1 Corinthians 3:13-15. “Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire: and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon he shall receive a reward, if any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.”

We now come to Paul’s three pronouncements regarding a judgement seat which appear in this letter to the Corinthians. This particular passage has its difficulties, yet it is useful in that it throws light on some other verses relating to judgement. It is clear that rejection is not contemplated here that is, rejection of the believer or the unfaithful. The believers work may be rejected and burnt, yet he himself is saved. Furthermore, he is given a reward commensurate with his works which do abide. So we have the picture of people all being saved but being rewarded differently according to their works which stand the fire of judgement, and abide. Each of these saved ones has the foundation of Jesus Christ and each has built upon this foundation - some gold, some silver, precious stones, and some wood hay and stubble. But all are saved because they are on the right foundation, and presumably, all have faith in the essential things, but their works are of different values, some are good, some are worthless. It is evident that this “day” spoken of is not a judgement for the purpose of separating good people from bad people, but a tribunal for assessing the works of those in Christ, and for determining degrees of reward. This then is an important passage which will help us to understand the remaining references to judgement.

1 Corinthians 4:5, “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts, and then shall every man have praise of God.”

The context tells us that some were judging Paul. Paul says he regarded this of no consequence. He did not even judge himself (This is not a contradiction of that other passage where he says we should judge ourselves; it is quite right that we should examine ourselves, but we have no authority for either acquitting ourselves or condemning others - Paul did not judge himself in this sense). The one who judges is the Lord, therefore none should pass judgement in the Lord’s absence. When the Lord comes He will bring to light all the hidden things of men’s minds and make manifest their motives. The day of which Paul speaks is one of “making manifest”, a time when men will be manifest to themselves and to one another, their motives revealed and their sincerity brought to light. Significantly, the passage ends “and then shall every man have praise of God”. There is no mention here of any being rejected. Each one is praised and rewarded according to the things revealed. This then is not a judgement seat for the separation of righteous and wicked, but a tribunal for the dispensing of rewards.

2 Corinthians 5:10. "For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ that every man may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

The word 'appear' is better rendered 'be made manifest', this making manifest is clearly to our selves and to one another, for Paul, in the next verse, says "but we are made manifest unto God - that is here and now. In other words, the decision has already been made, judgement has already been passed. The Judgement Seat of which this verse speaks is not for the purpose of determining who is faithful or unfaithful, but is for making manifest and for giving of awards in accordance with the things done whilst in the body. The words "judgement seat" do not necessarily mean a judicial bench, or court of law such as is common amongst men. Such a court is necessary for Man's judgement because the judge or the magistrate does not know whether the prisoner before him is guilty or not until he has heard the evidence for and against. But where Christ is concerned there is no need for such a court, there is no need for prosecuting counsel and defending counsel; there is no need for witnesses and sworn statements, there is no need for any 'account' from the person before Christ. Jesus knows beforehand. Although the word 'bema' (judgement seat' is used for a court of law such as "Caesar's judgement seat" there is really no similarity between such a Gentile court and that of Christ. The word 'bema' is also used of the dais or platform from which the judges make their pronouncements and awards in the public games. Christ's judgement seat is similar to this. It is His platform from which He dispenses the awards and makes manifest men's hearts. The word 'bad' ("whether it be good or bad") may give rise to the feeling that some are rejected at this judgement seat. But the word can also be rendered 'worthless', and this would fall into line with the other passages which speak of the works of some which are burned up - they are worthless, but the person himself is saved. So in this case, some things done in the body are good, some are bad and worthless. There will not be a single person at this judgement seat who has done nothing but good and never anything bad. But each one will be dealt with fairly, his good and bad works assessed and then rewarded as the judge sees fit.

Finally, we would emphasise that this tribunal takes place after the subjects of it are made immortal, for Paul has said that the dead in Christ are raised incorruptible and any judgement must take place after this.

Brother H.C.Gates.

Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. Jude 24 & 25.

For The Joy Set Before Us

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:2).

When Jesus was on this earth His mission was to preach the gospel or glad tidings. To the Jew first, then to the Gentiles. "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." (Matthew 24:14).

Jesus, the first-fruits (1 Corinthians 15:20), gave His life for the joy set before Him. What then are the glad tidings which the Master taught? These can be described in a few words. The gift of eternal life on this earth, bestowed upon all those who believe and are baptised. (Mark 16:16). "Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God." (Mark 1:14).

Although the prophets of old spoke of this new order of things to be established on this earth, Christ's approach to this wonderful subject was such that men and women were shown things which they, prior to Jesus' ministry, were ignorant about. In fact, the people said among themselves "What new doctrine is this?"

"And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? What new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him." (Mark 1:27) . But this was no new doctrine because Jesus said "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." (Luke 16:31). It is very evident from the foregoing that the people in spiritually high places had neglected their duty by not preaching the Glad Tidings about the Everlasting Life and the Kingdom of God on earth. In fact, it could be said that the high priests and the people in high places were not really interested in the new order of things to be established, for the simple reason they were quite content with their way of life as it was.

"Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." (Luke 21:26). Any intelligent person, whether young or old must surely be looking at this world in this year of 1989 and asking the question. What is happening to it? There are many who can still remember very vividly the years before the first world war. Young men in both world wars were enlisted to fight and kill. In the first world war, which, to say the least was ghastly, the young men who survived were assured, by a leading politician of the time, that they were coming back to a land fit for heroes.

In the 1920's many thousands of these young men were faced with that which was called the dole. There are many still living who can remember the Jarrow Hunger march down to London. On the other side of society the 'Bright Young Things' of society of that time were throwing expensive parties and having a gay time. In addition to all this, there was an acute slackening off in moral standards. Family ties did not appear to be so binding. In short, standards were changing from the old Victorian Standards, in which, admittedly, there was a lot of hypocrisy yet, compared to the ghastly standards of these days it was, by far, more superior. It was some twenty years after that the second world war was started. Words and phrases were used along with a new technique, referred to as propaganda. The words democracy. Fighting for freedom, along with fighting for Christian principles, were often used to encourage the common people to take part in this great conflict, the second world war.

This was certainly a mile stone in Jewish history. For a moment, try to imagine our thoughts of terror if we were being dragged to a place of torture or the gas chamber. The sufferings and persecutions of these people at that time was indescribable. We must also not forget there were many millions of innocent victims other than Jews who suffered. Brought about by loss of life, loss of loved ones; many thousands being made into awful cripples. Those of us who are getting on in years must surely ask ourselves the big question. Has it all been worth it? Since these terrible wars moral standards have plummeted down to the ultimate. Violence, and a sort of violence which, never in the history of man, has ever been surpassed. This violence along with the moral standards have become a way of life. "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Isaiah 5:20).

These times surely herald that time to which all believers are looking to. "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book of life." (Daniel 12:1).

Having read the foregoing remarks, can any one of us say, I am quite content with this life? Why do we implore God for His Kingdom to come? To say the least, all true believers are not satisfied with this awful and uncertain way of life. If we have not yet directly suffered from this so called civilisation, we must, as Christians, feel for those many thousands who are suffering and we pray for the deliverance of this earth from evil man whose only god is the god of wealth. This is the only god he understands and will go to any lengths, even to the extent of destroying this beautiful planet to try and satisfy his lust for it. Fool man thinks that wealth is the only source of life. (Luke 12:16). How often do we hear "healthy banking account preferred to healthy humans"? We have a recent example of what is becoming an all too common occurrence in the ghastly oil spillage off the coast of Alaska. The effects on wild life and the coast line (part

of man's heritage) is simply catastrophic. When we pray "Thy Kingdom come" we are asking the Creator to hasten the day when these heathen idolaters of the god of gold will be brought to an end, "and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth." (Revelation 11:18).

With the exception of a small minority, people world wide, do not seem to fully realise the serious position in which this planet is. The believer knows from the scriptures that terrible times are imminent. (Luke 21:26). Society world wide is just being made aware of the threat to this planet. A close friend of mine, a professional scientist, told me about a year ago, that this world was facing a very serious threat of extinction of life. A scientific writer has just published a book which confirms what my friend said. They seem to be agreed that the days of life on this earth are numbered. (Luke 21:25). We who are living in these undeniably dark days know these times are a prelude to that which is to come: Everlasting life in glorious surroundings.

Most of us cannot describe our environment as being heavenly. Most of us, when we open our front door are faced with bricks and mortar; especially those of us who live in miles of built up and depressing areas. Wherever we go, for miles in any direction, we are faced with bricks, cement, and very often, motorways full of screaming traffic, spewing out tons of foul poisonous gas. Would this common every day scene fit in with our dreams of the Kingdom of God? The word dream is used because all of us must dream and talk about the future order of things soon to be established.

The many little pearls which are scattered throughout scripture give us clues regarding what it will be like in the new order of things to come. If these pearls are threaded together in an intelligent manner, we cannot fail to get a picture in our mind which no artist could paint. Admittedly, our brother Paul tells us that "now we see through a glass darkly." (1 Corinthians 13:12) but it is obviously clear that Paul, along with all aspects of scripture, encourages intelligent speculation regarding the future order of things to be established on this earth. Our finite minds though creating a wonderful picture through the exchange of ideas, at the very best will fall far short of the actual picture which will be presented to those who, by the grace of God, will actually behold and take part in the new glorious order of things. We frequently ask the Father,

"Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:10). A sincere person uttering these words in prayer to the Father in Heaven has, very obviously got a mental picture of what it will be like in the future order of things on this earth. These mental pictures are brought about by studying the prophecy and listening to talks on this vital and very fascinating subject. It can be said with certainty that all who have taken on the saving Name of Jesus were attracted to the Truth because of the wonderful hope it promised to all. As an example, we have that great man Abraham, the friend of God, and all those people named with him. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." (Hebrews 11:13). At some time in their lives, they were told about the Hope. Further, they did not bottle up this knowledge, but they sacrificed their lives to tell others of this lively hope. Look at Paul's life; it is very evident he considered it to be very important to talk to others about that hope which all worthies of old were praying for, and exhorting us all to be fervent and holding to that faith once delivered to the saints. (Jude 3).

The following are a few thoughts based on scripture. These thoughts are of the millennium period only, because beyond the time when Jesus Himself shall be subject unto the Father (1 Corinthians 15:28) it would be impossible for our finite minds to fully accept the glory of that period. One of the first things Jesus will do when He is established at Jerusalem, along with the saints, will be to assign to the saints certain areas where the task of these saints will be to ensure that the law which goes forth from Jerusalem will be faithfully put into practice. This law will be of such a perfect nature that the days of crooked and biased politicians will be a thing of the past. Gone will be the days when the law always favours the rich man: politicians in high places cheating tax payer, and, in short, not giving value for money. It has become a common practice for people in high places to indulge in the art of weaving and dealing; a very easy way of making a vast fortune if the gamble comes off. Very often we hear of a mere few millions of public money disappearing. The legal profession love these lapses of integrity among these type of individuals because the members of the legal profession make a fortune being involved in these legal cases. Fortunes are made defending or prosecuting these individuals who are no better than the common thief. In the long run, who pays for these expensive trials? We have a glaring example in the American Nixon affair. This impudent

cheat was one of many who was exposed. Notice, this individual will still be living in the lap of luxury. Very often, vast sums of money are wasted on projects which are of no earthly use to the well being of this earth. Knowing the stupidity of man, the only way it could be of any use would be to attain a military advantage and put wealth into the pockets of individuals who promote these potential instruments of war. Here reference is being made to the silly and vain efforts to try and conquer space. This brings to mind man's efforts to satisfy his extreme curiosity when he built a tower to reach to heaven. Notice the words of the Lord; "Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city." (Genesis 11:7 & 9).

The Creator designed this planet for man. If man would, in a proper manner, avail himself of this earth's riches, instead of destroying them, he would find that everything is there for his needs and joy. In the new order of things to come man will be shown the way when it can be said "they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it." (Micah 4:4). Can the common man be assured by words like these in this day and generation when man's hearts will be failing them for fear of the heavy burdens soon to be imposed upon him in the form of unequal taxation? "They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat; for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands." (Isaiah 65:22). These few words say it all. It is perfect socialism: that which man talks about so much but has never been able to achieve because he is so blind. This type of socialism we have in mind can only be established by the divine power which comes from the Father. The efforts of the individual will be channelled by fair government to be used for the community, and not for the very privileged and wealthy. Of course, each individual will have to fairly share their efforts. It would be no use if, say, a number of people were working and certain section were not contributing anything at all. "If a man shall not work, neither shall he eat." (2 Thessalonians 3:10). In the new order of things, there will be just necessary employment. People will be in jobs best suited to their mental and physical abilities. Conditions will be such, that work, whatever type it may be will not be a monotonous and weary experience which has to be endured by many for the sake of paying for the necessities of life. Conditions will be such that it will be a joy to work, whatever the work is. Whether the work is menial or of the type which requires certain extra gifts will make no difference because all work in an efficiently balanced system will be of equal importance. The person with the extra mental or physical gifts depends on the lesser gifted person. Paul put it ideally when he said, in 1 Corinthians 12:16-21, how that all members of the body are dependant on each other. Compare this perfect philosophy with Thatcherism. If a project is not making big fat profits, legislation is soon introduced to bring any unprofitable project to an end. This is why the poor, the aged, are, in her eyes, a liability, and that is why she allows legislation to go through which causes fear and apprehension among many. If Jesus Christ was at the helm would He allow this disgraceful discrimination to go on?

I have in front of me three paper cuttings. The excuse is often put forward that there is not enough money in the financial kitty to go around. This is hard to believe when we read such as the following:- "Uproar as petrol boss gives himself a 48 per cent rise." This self motivated salary brings his pay to a staggering £514,558 a year! Nearly £43,000 per month. This brings to mind the many others who have to choose between an empty belly and a warm bed. It also brings to mind the many youngsters who are driven to very questionable means of getting a living. Another cutting, "Fury over rock queen's 'Blood of Christ' song" because of world wide protest against the blasphemous implications of the tape which was released by Pepsi-Cola. This earned this young woman £3,000,000 for 80 hours of work! And many others receive fantastic sums of money for comparatively little work, when such as the nursing profession, the nurses are being forced into unfair conditions. One cannot help but feel that this awful inequality is bordering on extreme irregularities and makes one think that there is some sort of practice somewhere along the line which is wrong. It can be safely said that this sort of practice will not, along with the greedy people who take part in it, exist in the Kingdom of God.

Life will be far less complicated in those days to come: it will revert back to the times of tranquillity. People will not be racing around in high speed cars and aircraft to get from A to B. God never intended that we should serve this god of excessive speed. If we pause just for a while and ask ourselves the question. Why this excessive speed? Up to the turn of the century, man seemed to manage quite well without it. Some of us can still vividly remember the days before the car was established. To go in a horse drawn trap down some country lane for an outing and a picnic on a nice summers day is an experience which can never be

forgotten. Racing along the roads in a mentally restricted manner with no time to glance at the countryside as we are going along, but focussing ones attention on the roads ahead so as to avoid any disastrous pile up. A well trained horse needs little attention: just a little prompting now and then. The driver and his companions can really enjoy looking at the scenery as they drive along.

The days of the massive population explosion will be a state which will never again threaten the earth. “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away: and these was no more sea.” (Revelation 21:1). It is very evident from scripture that the threat of over population will never arise again. The days of the over populated cities will not exist any more. In their places there will be villages and small towns. Life in these places will be very easy going and relaxed. Because of the understanding of that law which shall go forth from Zion, neighbours in those communities, wherever they may be, will show their love one for another and will not be, as it is now, one man’s hand against another, and certainly not living in disharmony.

Wherever we go in our outings, it will be a joy to behold nature and God’s Creation being allowed to flourish. Wherever we are on this earth, there will be no necessity to travel long distances to see the beauty of the Creator’s works because it will be there on our own doorsteps, wherever we may be. “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them: and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.” (Isaiah 35:1). These are the certainties we can all look forward to and surely it cannot be wrong to dream about these certainties, because, what has this life, at its best, to offer?

Brother Albert Woodhouse.

Revelation 21:1-7

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying. Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And He that sat upon the throne said. Behold, I make all things new. And He said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And He said unto me. It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son.”

Revelation 5:12-13.

“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying. Blessing and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.”