

# The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No 265

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## Editorial

Dear Friends, Brothers and Sisters, Ever since Jesus taught His disciples to pray "Thy Kingdom come" there have been those who have expected Him to set up His Kingdom within their own lifetime.

In Luke 19:11 we read how His own disciples expected His Kingdom there and then: "And as they heard these things, he added a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear." The apostle Paul may also have expected Jesus early return when he wrote to the Thessalonians (1st letter, 4:15-17): "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 (precede) 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: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

But Christianity was to take some unexpected turns during the next two millennia. Very early on superstitions were mixed with Christian truths and within a few hundred years the Church had reached rock bottom in their teaching of falsehoods and this in turn led to many 'harlot daughters' of the "Mother" Church, making weird and wonderful claims with all sorts of contradictory teachings in the name of Christianity. Some teachers denied that Jesus would return to this earth, while others taught that we must make this world a suitably glorious place fit for Him to return to, thus taking away from or adding to the Scriptures, and choosing only the parts which suited them and rejecting the parts which didn't.

Within this diversity there have been some, perhaps only a few, in all ages who have believed that Jesus will come again to establish His Kingdom, however, the temptation to fix the date has been irresistible and regular predictions as to just when it will be have come and gone. This has been especially the case during the last 150 years or so. Such forecasts have proved fruitless and even counterproductive to a firm faith in the Scriptures, and has encouraged scoffers to pour ridicule upon the Word of God, and brings to mind 2 Peter 3:3 - "Where is the promise of his coming, for all things continue as they were from the beginning."

But what of those who accept the Scriptures in all their fullness as the Word of God and acknowledge that “of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.” (Matthew 24:36).

The return of Jesus and the establishment of His Kingdom may take only a very short time but more pages of the Bible are devoted to this one theme than to any other matter in the history of the world, and it is incumbent upon us, therefore, to be mindful of the signs of the times - and this requires our vigilance - “When ye see these things begin to come to pass, look up, lift up your heads, for your redemption (deliverance) draweth nigh.” But what are “these things” that are coming to pass which we should be looking for? Are they the world events we see today?

Let us first of all see how many “comings” of the Lord there may be. Some have suggested two and others say three.

To explain this briefly we turn to Matthew 25:31 where we read of the time: “When the Son of man shall come in his glory and all his holy angels with him.” This apparently may not be His first “coming” for we find that the “holy angels” are none other than the saints as verified in 1 Thessalonians 4:14, “them also which sleep with Jesus will God bring with him” and again in Colossians 3:4 - “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” Prior to this the saints have been resurrected to “meet the Lord in the air and so shall they ever be with the Lord.” We have two separate and distinct events here; the taking away of the elect to be with their Lord, and then at a later time, the coming of the Lord with His elect to establish His kingdom.

I believe there could be a significant interval of time between these occasions referred to as “The day of the Lord” in Zechariah 14:1, during which time God judges the nations, as Jesus suggested by His reference to the time of Noah and the time of Lot. Both Noah and Lot were taken away and protected from the judgments which followed and I believe it will be the same for the elect.

The other “coming” of the Lord as suggested by some is when Jesus reveals Himself to Israel during the time of their troubles when they are over-run by the surrounding nations. This, it is believed, is to give the remnant of the Jewish people hope and encouragement knowing that the Lord is with them, the Lord whom the nation rejected and had crucified. It may be here that the prophecy of Zechariah 13:6 will be fulfilled when “one will say to him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then shall he answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.”

There are so many pieces to this prophetic jig-saw that it is no wonder uncertainty lies over the order of events or how far we may be into these latter-day prophecies. For example, in the 1960's and 70's Lebanon became the Middle East's leading centre for finance, trade and tourism. The capital, Beirut, with a population of nearly 4,000,000 began rivalling London, New York and Hong Kong as a financial trade centre due to the vast wealth of the oil producing nations in the Middle East channelling much of their funds through the city. But then disaster struck; civil war devastated the country which led to interference from Syria and Israel. The Palestinian Liberation Organization moved from Jordan into Lebanon and Syria in 1970, and in 1974 the PLO, led by Yasser Arafat, was recognised by all Arab nations as the representative of all Palestinians. When Lebanon was devastated by war and became impoverished it seemed that Isaiah 33:9 & 10 was being fulfilled, for here we read: - “The earth mourneth and languisheth: Lebanon is ashamed and hewn down: Sharon is like a wilderness; and Basham and Carmel shake off their fruits.” How literal this prophecy has been! And the next verse is remarkable for we are told - “Now will I rise, saith the Lord; now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself.” Surely this three-fold declaration of action by Almighty God could mean nothing less than the end of Gentile times! But that was over thirty years ago and as the years passed by we had to stop and think again. There is more to happen in the Middle East before the end of Gentile times. Maybe we are too impatient and the prophecy “Now will I rise, saith the Lord, now will I be exalted... now will I lift myself up” is taking place before our very eyes.

But for now Jesus exhorts us to “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come... Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.” (Matthew 24:42 & 44).

While in one sense we can understand this “coming of the Lord” to refer to our falling asleep in the Lord when the next thing we shall know is the resurrection when the Lord has come, I believe it is meant primarily to refer to events surrounding His advent; to the events we should be looking for prior to His return - to the time of the end, as the time referred to by the angel to Daniel: “But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.” Daniel 12:4.

This one prophecy alone tells of the present time, for of a certainty people are running to and fro in a fashion and with a frequency and over distances never dreamed of a generation ago; whilst knowledge has been increased dramatically in this age of “Information Technology” and scientific discoveries. It was not long ago that I visited my seven year old grandson’s school; a school of about three hundred children, and there are over fifty computers linked to the website to help further their education. What a vast wealth of knowledge to have on a child’s desk - an incredible amount of knowledge, in such depth, on every subject under the sun. And the availability, diversity and volume of knowledge is set to increase year on year. My grandson showed me how to use the computer, and some of the sorts of things he uses it for in class. But I digress.

Daniel 12:1 tells us that “At that time shall Michael the prince 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.” And this I believe is when the resurrection of the righteous takes place. As Jesus promised in Luke 21:28, “And when these things begin to come to pass, look up, lift up your heads; for your redemption (or “deliverance” as *apolutrosis* is used in Hebrews 11:35) draweth nigh.”

The next verse in Daniel seems to show that the resurrection of the righteous and of the wicked take place simultaneously but it is evident this is not the case for in Revelation 20:6 we read, - “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power.” This being so we must separate the two resurrections even as Jesus divided Isaiah’s prophecy in Luke 4:18 to 21, (see Isaiah 61:1,2), and in this way we can see how the later revelation fills out earlier prophecies.

In an earlier Circular Letter, Brother Eric Cave reported on a lecture by Lance Lambert, a Jew converted to Christianity some 60 years ago. In his lecture Lance Lambert talks of the various “shakings” referred to in prophecy and my mind went back many years to a talk given to the Erdington Christadelphian ecclesia in which the speaker expressed his understanding of Ezekiel 37 where we read of the valley full of dry bones. In his view the scene envisaged in verse 7 - “there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone,” referred to the first world war, the outcome of which allowed the Jews to go back to their long promised land. Then, verse 8, “And when I beheld, lo, the sinew and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them,” - this scene, the speaker believed, referred to the second world war out of which circumstances arose making possible the establishment of the nation of Israel in 1948, but as yet there is no “breath in them.” The prophet continues: - “And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live.” Israel as a nation today has no ‘spirit’ life in them so I believe this is to take place when the nation of Israel is converted and brought back to God - the God of Abraham, the friend of God.

Today we are waiting for the fulfilment of verse 10 - “So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army.” Is this the prophecy of Zechariah 13:6 being fulfilled, when Jesus appears to them? Perhaps so. Ezekiel chapter 38 seems to confirm it for here we are told that God will gather all nations together to battle against Jerusalem such as we read in verses 19 to 23: - “For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; so that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall and every wall shall fall to the ground...” It appears this wrath of God will come in response to the invasion of Israel by “Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal.”

For many years “Gog” was thought to represent the Communist powers headed by Russia as the threat to the Middle East but today it seems more likely to represent the Muslim powers who are becoming an

increasing threat through terrorism in their opposition to Israel and the Western world. Islam's adherents are for the most part, Arabs, and the Arabs claim Abraham to their fathers. They call their 'God' Allah but their Allah is not the gracious God of creation but rather they see forgiveness as weakness and revenge as a duty. The contrast between Israel and the Arabs is the same as between Jacob and Esau. Malachi 1:2,3, "I have loved you, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou love us? Is not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: Yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. Whereas Edom (the descendants of Esau) saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the Lord of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the Lord hath indignation for ever. And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The Lord will be magnified from the border of Israel." This could not apply to any time in history but this situation is now developing as we watch.

Again in Zechariah 12:1-4, we read of Jerusalem - "Behold I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it..." verse 10

This is again repeated and added to in Zechariah 14:2-9, "For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken and the houses rifled, and the women ravished: and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations as when he fought in the day of battle..."

"As when he fought in the day of battle" - I believe this refers to the time of Joshua when the sun stood still, and this we read of in Joshua 10:1-14; the Gibeonites had tricked Israel into making a league with them and when five kings made war against the Gibeonites for making a league with Israel rather than choosing to fight against her, Israel, though having been deceived by the Gibeonites, nevertheless honoured the league she made with them and went to their rescue. Verse 12 - "Then spake Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Ammonites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, "Sun, stand still upon Gibeon; and thou moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies... So the sun stood still... about a whole day..."

Next we read in Zechariah 14:4, "And his feet shall stand that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem... and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst..." Verse 6 is reminiscent of Joshua's day for we read, "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: but it shall be one day which shall be known unto the Lord, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light..." And then in verse 8 we see the kingdom established for we read, "and it shall be in that day that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half toward the former sea and half of them toward the hinder sea... and the Lord shall be king over all the earth."

As I said earlier there are many events prophesied which relate to this time that it is indeed very difficult to be sure how they all fit together, but I believe the outline above gives a fairly good framework into which we can fit other prophecies. For example we can see how Isaiah 10:20 may be placed about the time Jesus reveals Himself on the mount of Olives - "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God. For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return: the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness. For the Lord God of hosts shall make a consumption, even determined, in the midst of all the land."

In Acts 15:16,17 James adds more to this picture where he quotes from Amos 9:11,12 where we read, "After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down: and I will build again the ruins thereof and I will set it up: that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things."

Turning now to Jesus, where in Matthew 24:14-30, He tells us, "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... Then, if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe him not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false

prophets, and shall show great wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect..." Has this time come yet? It may be argued that it has for there are many false teachers, some making great claims and many are deceived. But Jesus assures His disciples that "as the lightening cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together," (Matthew 24:28).

O! How many wonderful prophecies there are, but we will quote but one or two to finish:

Joel 3:16 - "The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel."

And in Haggai 2:6,7 we read, "For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts."

Peace at last!

When we read of mountains and hills in prophecy we can think of governments and rulers as in Isaiah 2:1-22, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the tops of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it . . ."

We finish with the last two verses of the Bible - "Surely I come quickly" said Jesus. "Even so come Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

With Love in Jesus to all, Russell.

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**The following article is taken from "The Christadelphian Lamp" Volume 3 for November 1875**

## **The Powers of the World to Come.**

**Luke 20:35-36**, "*But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.*"

**Hebrew 6:4-5**, "*For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.*"

It will be well to consider first what is intended by the phrase "world to come."

There are two Greek words, namely, *cosmos* and *aion*, which are frequently used in our version of the Scriptures interchangeably for "world" and "age," without due regard to the original. It is for us to ascertain which of these terms is employed in the passages before us. *Cosmos*, implying the earth on which we tread, or the material system, clearly cannot be the word rendered world in the verses from which I have quoted. It is *aion* which has the sense of age or dispensation, so that our texts should read, "the powers of the age to come."

The question might be proposed, what is power? Perhaps the most comprehensive of the various meanings of the word "power," is ability. John the Baptist, when speaking of God's power, says, "He is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." Power may be classed under three heads - ordinary power, extraordinary power, and supernatural or super-human power.

In order to examine this subject, let me commence by the aid of comparison; indeed we can judge of excellence only by comparison, whether we refer to beauty, virtue, or any other thing. We all possess power in an ordinary way; but some possess it mentally, some physically in an extraordinary degree. For instance, we see a man perform an astonishing feat of strength, and we immediately exclaim, what a powerful person! Why do we make the remark? Because we are comparing him with ourselves, or with someone else less powerful than he.

Supernatural, or superhuman power is that which will most concern us in this inquiry. There are almost numberless illustrations of this kind of power in the sacred writing's, from the beginning to the end of the Book.

At the very threshold of Scripture we read that after our first parents had eaten of "that forbidden tree," which brought death into the world and all our woe, \* See footnote the Lord God "drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the Garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life." Flaming sword is evidently figurative language; we can scarcely think of a flame apart from fire, neither can we think of a sword without associating it with the idea of an instrument of destruction: all this vividly pictures to our minds flashes of lightning issuing forth from the Elohim keeping the way of the tree of life.

We have, as will be remembered, another example of superhuman power in the case of Lot. The men of Sodom encompassed the house of Lot and made an assault upon it, desiring to abuse Lot and the heavenly messengers he was entertaining; but the angels pulled Lot into the house and smote the men both small and great with blindness. Then taking Lot and his family they drew them out of the place, and caused fire and brimstone to devour the cities of the plain and their inhabitants.

Again, we read that when Israel had sinned, the Lord gave them into the hands of the Midianites, and he sent an angel to shew Gideon how he should deliver them. Gideon having brought a present of food for the angel, was told to lay it on a certain rock. The angel then put forth the end of his staff and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and fire rose up out of the rock and consumed them.

In the narrative of Manoah and his wife, the parents of Sampson, we have another exhibition of this same marvellous power. Manoah, being visited by an angel of the Lord, wished to detain him while he prepared a kid; but the angel refusing to eat, told him to offer it as a burnt offering to the Lord. "And the angel did wondrously; and Manoah and his wife looked on. For it came to pass when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar. And Manoah and his wife looked on it and fell on their faces to the ground."

These are a few instances of super-human power, as manifested through angels. But we must bear in mind that what we call miracle is simply the natural procedure of those glorious beings.

Time will not allow us to look in detail at the numerous examples of this power to be found in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Book of Kings, but I would just allude to the ascension of Elijah, "by a whirlwind into heaven," the parting of the Jordan by the mantle of Elisha, the multiplying of the widow's oil, the raising of the dead son of the Shunamite, the feeding of a hundred men with twenty cakes, the cure of Naaman the leper, the transfer of the leprosy to Gehazi, and causing an iron axe head to float on water.

God has favoured his servants with this power at various periods in the world's history, but more especially in that epoch known as the apostolic times. In the 6th chap. of Hebrews, mention is made of certain persons who had tasted of this heavenly gift, and were partakers of the Holy Spirit; "they had tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the age to come." The enquiry arises, what was the heavenly gift? I reply, it was the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven; the fulfilment of that good Word of God spoken by the prophet Joel, and a taste of that power which will be fully manifested in the age to come.

Now, the apostles, and many of the early Christians were the recipients of this power. Paul speaking of it, says, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." To the Ephesians he writes; "After that they believed, they were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise," which he declares, "is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased

possession.” And to the Corinthians he says; “God who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” 2 Corinthians 1:22.

We learn from this that among the believers of that day were those really in possession of something which others had not - yes, they differed from their brethren in that they possessed power, super human power, which Paul designates “Holy Spirit,” and tells them it was the earnest of their inheritance; he also gives them to understand that it was a taste of the powers of the coming age. These words of the apostle to the primitive disciples were words written under the dictation of Holy Spirit. We may ask, why did the inspired penman use the expression ‘taste’? Is there any particular significance in it? Let us see.

Suppose a half-famished man comes to your door craving food, and you happen to be dining. You rise from the table, take a small portion of the provisions, a mere taste, and give it to him, enquiring at the same time how he likes it. Would he not inwardly groan while he told you it made him long for a full meal. Now, is there any analogy between this experience and the experience of those who had tasted of the powers of the age to come? Paul was one of those who had tasted of this power, insomuch “That from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.” Listen to the statement of the apostle, He says, “We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption,” that is “the redemption of our body.” And again, addressing the Corinthians, he writes, “For in this (tabernacle) we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.” The question has been suggested, was there any special significance in the fact that the apostle employed the word “taste.” The answer must be in the affirmative, for the term indicates that what they already possessed was a very small portion of that which they were to receive in “the age to come.

And what did they possess? I affirm that they had something in common with the angels, only less in degree, namely, “power,” superhuman “power;” and this power was Holy Spirit and an earnest of their inheritance. It is called an earnest because it was given beforehand as a seal or assurance of that which was to come - even the inheritance. I think it reasonable to conclude that the earnest of a thing must bear some resemblance to that of which it is an earnest. Allow me to offer a simple illustration. A man enlists into the British army for a bounty of ten or twenty pounds; on the day of his enlistment he receives one shilling, usually termed the earnest, that is the earnest of the sum promised which is paid to him at a later period. Is there any similarity between the earnest and the bounty? Undoubtedly there is; they are both current coin of the realm, only the earnest is on a smaller scale. Just so, and the earnest which the Christians of apostolic times had was superhuman power, so that the inheritance is superhuman power in a greater degree. If the inheritance be, as I have heard some allege, so many acres of land with eternal life, then, according to all modes of right reasoning, the early Christians should have possessed a plot of land each, as an earnest of their future inheritance; but not so, for they sold their possessions and “had all things common.” My humble view of the matter is, that the inheritance of the saints in light, the inheritance we are called to share, is authority, or dominion, supported and demonstrated by angelic ability. Our adorable Lord and Saviour has inspired us with this hope, the hope of being equal unto the angels, as we have seen from Luke 20:35-36.

I might ask in what way or manner do we expect to be equal unto the angels? This is a very important question; it is evident that Paul thought so, for the apostle tells the Ephesians he did not cease making mention of them in his prayers, that the eyes of their understanding might be enlightened, that they might know what is the hope of His calling and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. I believe that we shall be equal to the angels mentally and physically - that is to say, equal in power of mind and of body.

If the premises laid down be sound, namely, that the earnest of a thing must be some expression of that which it is an earnest of, then we shall obtain a definite answer to the question proposed.

Did those who had the earnest of their inheritance by the power bestowed upon them, perform anything in common with the angels? Yes. Then they will be equal in power or ability to those glorious beings. Let me give a few instances of this.

When the men of Sodom encompassed the house of Lot and made an assault upon it, the angels, it is said, "Smote the men both, small and great with blindness." From Acts xiii. 8-11, we learn that Paul inflicted the same chastisement upon a "false prophet at Paphos. A certain governor desired to hear the Word of the Lord, "But Elymas, the sorcerer, sought to turn away the deputy from the faith, then Paul filled with the Holy Spirit, set his eyes on him, and said, Oh full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee and thou shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking someone to lead him by the hand." We also read of destroying angels sent forth from God, to cut off the wicked at various times. We are likewise informed of death occurring by the power vested in Peter. I refer to the destruction of Ananias and of Sapphira his wife.

Having brought forward some examples of this power, and shown that it was an earnest of the expected inheritance, and a taste of the powers of the "age to come," the consideration arises whether anyone in the present day possesses this power, this earnest, this taste of angelic ability. My answer is no; it were presumption to lay claim to such power. Yet we are neither orphans, nor comfortless; we all have, or should have, those three graces which were to abide, namely, faith, hope, and charity; and these are of God. Faith cometh by hearing the Word of the Lord, hope is inspired by the promises of Jehovah, and charity is begotten in us by the manifestation of His great goodness. God is love, and he "that loveth Him that begat, loveth Him also that is begotten of Him."

Looking forward to the future, what do we anticipate with respect to our individual selves, in the "age to come?" I reply, perfection, equality with the angels. Man is an imperfect creature, and, moreover, he never has been perfect; when he first issued from the hands of the divine workers he was not declared perfect, but with all the other creatures of God he was pronounced "very good." And, as an animal organization, a living soul of flesh and blood, he was "very good," but flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. The will of the Deity concerning us is our perfection. He has, "through sufferings," made perfect the Captain of our salvation that He might bring many other sons to the same glory. The Lord said to the rich young man "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast . . . and come and follow me." And Paul speaks thus, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but he was pressing "toward the mark for the prize." This prize, I believe, to be the Divine nature, or equality with the angels. Let us then see, by comparison, what we may hope or expect. It appears to me that all the expedients to which man has recourse, are so many proofs of his imperfection. Does he wish to increase his speed in travelling from place to place, he mounts a horse or other quadruped, or invents a locomotive steam-carriage; if he desires to mount upwards, he contrives a ladder, or a balloon; if he wants to remove a heavy substance, he devises some kind of wheeled machine. What expedients too in the shape of vast armaments; and ponderous military engines, are employed for the destruction of our fellow men. Yet one angel could go forth, and in a single night destroy the whole army of Sennacherib, numbering 185,000 men. And the righteous "shall be equal to the angels." How many expedients did the angel require to open the prison doors and release Peter? How many expedients did the angel resort to in order to remove the sealed stone from the mouth of the sepulchre? And the righteous "shall be equal to the angels," mentally and physically - perfect in strength, perfect in sight, perfect in knowledge. What powers of transition too may we not expect with the velocity of angels of light? I do not imagine we shall be irrevocably chained, by the fetters of gravitation to this terrestrial ball. The writer of a recent book, entitled "A Plea for the Habitation of the Planets," gives his threefold reasons, thus - First: All things have been created in wisdom. Second: Wisdom, even in the Creator, is governed by certain unalterable laws; and one of these laws is the adaptation of means to ends. Third: It follows from this that the planets must serve some better purpose than merely lighting up this earth; so he arrives at the conclusion that the planets are inhabited. I cannot agree with the author, but it is possible when we are invested with the "powers of the age to come," that we may explore those glorious orbs. I do not think we shall remain in ignorance of them as now. Well might John write, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be," and well may it be said, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Paul, however, says, "God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." But how much is revealed? Only a part, for the Apostle writes, "We know in part and we prophesy in part, but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. Now we only know in part, but then we shall know, even as we are known." Then shall we apprehend that for which we are apprehended of God,

Brethren, let us hope great things; let us not be contracted in our desires; let us not be straitened in our expectations, but let us hope all things, "For the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. For He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the working of His mighty power."

J.H.

*Footnote \* This view of Adam's sin "bringing death into the world" was commonly held by Renunciationists at this time but within a year it was realised it could not be supported by the scriptures and that our natural death was never the punishment for sin but the consequence of being made corruptible - as is all natural life. - Russell Gregory*

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**Around 400 C.E. Pelagius, a radical dissenter from what is now the traditional view of Original Sin wrote: -**

"We contradict the Lord to his face when we say: it is hard, it is difficult: we cannot, we are men: we are encompassed by fragile flesh. O blind madness! O unholy audacity." We charge the God of all knowledge with a twofold ignorance, that He does not seem to know what He has made, nor what He has commanded, as though forgetting the human weakness of which Himself is the author, He imposed laws upon man which he cannot endure."

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**St. Paul's "Thorn in the Flesh."**

The real character of what St. Paul describes as "a thorn in the flesh" has been the subject of infinite controversy, almost every vicious tendency having been imputed in turn to the great apostle. But it is impossible to suppose that he, who had learned from his Master how to bring his body into subjection should have continued the victim of fleshly lusts, or that so long as these were unsubdued he should not have prayed without ceasing for deliverance instead of merely "beseeching the Lord thrice" that the burden might be taken away.

We have always held that the painful "temptation" or "weakness" to which Paul so often refers had its seat in the eyes, but we have never seen the arguments in support of this hypothesis so ably stated as in Mr. Lewin's elaborate work on the "Life and Epistles of St. Paul," of which a second edition has just appeared.

Our attention is first drawn to the remarkable passage where the apostle, speaking to the Galatians (5:13-15) of a certain bodily "infirmity" from which he suffered, proceeds to "bear them witness that, if it had been possible, they would gladly have plucked out their own eyes and given them to him." In these words Mr. Lewin recognizes a clear allusion to "the thorn in the flesh," and likewise an evident explanation of its true nature. "St. Paul's eyes," Mr. Lewin observes, "were so affected by ophthalmia (a state of constant inflammation) as not only to injure the vision, but also to render him a distressing object to every beholder.

The Galatians were so enraptured in their spiritual deliverer in this, his first visit, that could they by so doing have removed so sad an infliction they would have plucked out their own eyes and given them to him. Unless we suppose the apostle was nearly blind there is no force in the words, "if it had been possible" for it was quite possible for them to pluck out their own eyes, but the impossibility was to give them to him and so restore his vision. The apostle at his conversion had been subjected to the blaze of the heavenly light, and his eyes may ever afterwards have been more or less affected. For a time he was perfectly blind; the scales then fell from his eyes at the touch of Ananias; but a memento of his sinful career still remained. The climate of Damascus is peculiarly injurious to the sight, and almost all the inhabitants suffer more or less

from ophthalmia; and Paul resided there for perhaps three years after his conversion, a permanent affection of the sight may have been contracted.

Many texts may be cited which convey an intimation more or less distinct of the nature of the malady by which Paul was oppressed. When the Galatians had questioned whether his apostleship were direct from Christ, he appeals to his miraculous conversion; and the close of his epistle cuts the matter short by saying, "From henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks (στίγματα, brands) of the Lord Jesus." In other words, 'If any man doubt my apostleship let him but look at me and he will see the marks which the Lord Jesus imprinted on me at my conversion.'

The Greek word refers to a practice well known amongst the ancients, of impressing marks on the forehead with a hot iron. One case in which the custom prevailed was, where the person was devoted to the service of some god, whose name was burnt upon the forehead. Another was where a runaway slave was caught and punished, he being branded with his master's symbol, that on again deserting he might not escape detection. In either of these senses the words of the apostle are full of meaning; for Paul became at his conversion the servant of the Lord Jesus for life, and the loss of sight was the symbol of his servitude.

The other passage in the Galatians referring to the apostle's infirmity is the following, "Ye see how large a letter I have written to you with mine own hand" (Galatians 6:11). From the weakness of sight under which he suffered the operation of writing was always an effort; and his general habit was to employ an amanuensis for the body of the epistle, and to authenticate the letter by inditing with his own hand the closing benediction, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." [Of this he himself informs us (2 Thess. iii. 17, 18), and all his 13 epistles (including the Hebrews) are thus authenticated, as will be seen by reference to the closing verses of the several epistles.] At the time of writing the Epistles to the Galatians he was so deeply concerned in their welfare that, to make the deeper impression; he enforced the doctrines he was expounding by writing them - suffering though he was from ophthalmia - with his own hands. At the same time he apologizes for the large size and inelegance and almost illegibility of his handwriting. "See," he says in "what large characters (not how large a letter, for it was comparatively a short one) I have written unto you with my own hand." They knew his infirmity, and they would attribute the indifferent penmanship to the right cause, and would thence appreciate the zeal that prompted him, when their everlasting interests were at stake, to struggle against such natural difficulties." (p. 187).

In another epistle (2 Corinthians 12:7, 10) the apostle again refers to his besetting infirmity, "Lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of my revelations, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, to buffet me." On this Mr. Lewin remarks that the word "thorn" is peculiarly applicable to ophthalmia. A writer on the subject thus expresses himself, "The pain of ophthalmia, when severe, exactly resembles that of a thorn or pin. I once had it very severely indeed in the West Indies. It made me blind, in a manner, for three weeks, and during that time if a ray of light broke into my darkened chamber, it was like a thorn or pin run into my eye. Like St. Paul, I felt also the subsequent effect for years, namely, a predisposition for inflammation in the eyes."

We have instances in Scripture itself of the application of the word "thorn" to the eye, e.g., in, Joshua 23:13, "They shall be snares and traps to you, scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes." "We can readily imagine how painful such a disorder must have been to one whose life was a constant journey through the open air, and how it must have exposed him to insult and ridicule in the presence of unbelieving brethren." (p. 189.)

Another confirmation of the same view may be deduced from the apostle's conduct before Ananias, when, in consequence of his imperfect vision, he "wist not that he was the high priest" being, guilty of what the bystanders regarded as a liberty, although when informed how the case stood-he immediately apologized. On the whole, we do not think it possible for anyone who has weighed Mr. Lewin's arguments to continue in doubt as to the real nature of the affliction to which St. Paul was a martyr - -

"The Rock"

## Dr Clarke on 2 Corinthians 5:21

*“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”*

“Made to be sin” signifies a sin-offering, or sacrifice for sin, and answers to the *haff chattaah and taff chattath* of the Hebrew text; which signifies both sin and sin-offering in a great variety of places in the Pentateuch.

The Septuagint translate the Hebrew word by *amartia* in ninety-four places in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, where a sin-offering is meant; and where our version translates the word not sin, but an offering for sin.

Had our translators attended to their own method of translating the word in other places where it means the same as here, they would not have given this false view of a passage which has been made the foundation of a most blasphemous doctrine; viz. that our sins were imputed to Christ, and that he was a proper object of the indignation of Divine justice, because he was blackened with imputed sin; and some have proceeded so far in this blasphemous career as to say, that Christ may be considered as the greatest of sinners, because all the sins of mankind, or of the elect, as they say, were imputed to him, and reckoned as his own.

One of these writers translates the passage thus: *Deus Christum pro maximo peccatore habuit, ut nos essemus maxime justi*, ‘God accounted Christ the greatest of sinners, that we might be supremely righteous.’ Thus they have confounded sin with the punishment due to sin.

Christ suffered in our stead; died for us; bore our sins (the punishment due to them), in his own body upon the tree, for “the Lord laid upon him the iniquities of us all;” that is, the punishment due to them; explained by “making his soul” - his life, “an offering for sin; and healing us by his stripes.”

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## **I recently came across this letter written in March 1962.**

**It is part of a letter written to Brother Ernest Brady relating to a meeting convened by about a dozen Nazarene Fellowship brethren and sisters who had invited members of the Torquay Christadelphian ecclesia to meet with them to discuss their respective understandings.**

We quote Bro. Williams: -

“Some 18 members of Torquay came and with 2 from Exeter and our own members made about 30 in all – but NO Barlings although invited. Bro. Rowley outlined the origin of the controversy and showed the “natural” progress Dr. Thomas made as evident from his reasonings in Eureka as compared with Elpis Israel. He demonstrated how at his death Dr. Thomas had reached a spiritual maturity quite remarkable from his early days. He showed that whilst Dr. Thomas was alive R.Roberts adhered to and subscribed to his later conclusions but that after his death he reverted to the earlier teachings in Elpis Israel and insisted on unclean flesh and sin as a fixed ingredient of flesh. He (Bro. Rowley) showed how the Statement of Faith was modified deliberately to include these nonsensical theories and that Edward Turney contended with R.Roberts for the truths brought out in the closing years of Dr. Thomas’s life. The result – the majority followed R.Roberts and a minority Edward Turney.

I (Bro. Williams) followed with the doctrines as it comes from the source and showed how failure to understand is inevitable when people use the scriptures to reinforce their own reasoning instead of allowing it to enlighten them. It is a folly to rear extracts from their setting and use them irrespective of whether or not they apply to the subject under discussion. This is the way of

orthodoxy, leading to belief in a personal devil, heaven-going and the natural immortality of the soul, things they accept without proof and then set about justifying from the Bible.

I took apart Christadelphian “reasoning” in regard to unclean flesh and showed how they take 3 passages in Job 14:14, 15:14, 25:4 and strung them together and say ‘to be born of a woman is to be unclean.’ Hence, they say, since Jesus was born of a woman He must be unclean, etc., etc. This ‘theory’ I said was false and was ‘father of the thought’ that there must have been a miraculous debasement of Adam’s nature from very good to very bad. I explained that flesh is neither clean nor unclean, but neutral in condition and that the flesh we possess to-day is identical in its construction to Adam’s both before and after sin entered. When the Christadelphian-theory was applied to Christ it contradicted all that is revealed concerning Him as Holy, Pure, undefiled, etc., etc. I explained that Adam died a moral and spiritual death on the day he disobeyed (perfectly true of course but perhaps in relation to the Atonement the term ‘legal death’ applies more precisely – E.B) and lived out the predetermined life cycle of 900 odd years, later reduced by God to 120 and then to 70 years, on the same principle that a butterfly can only live so long or an elephant so long. I showed that spiritual death was the death that really mattered and so all Adam’s posterity were dead in trespasses and sins, alienated from the LIFE OF GOOD by the ignorance that was in them and as the result of sin. Man’s will was enslaved, his intellect beclouded, his natural feelings and emotions debased and prostituted and for these reasons he was separated from God and needed the cleansing and enlightenment from above. He was never estranged because he was flesh – this Christadelphian doctrine is an abortion of truth which would make God hideously unjust, for He made Adam what he was- The theory was a negation of the long-suffering, pity and love of God and none could understand it, whereas, on the other hand, as what we know is the truth we could understand it and by it are drawn to God, who stands in the shadows keeping watch over His own. I asked them which they preferred and there was a murmuring of assent to the obvious.

Well, we had a wonderful reception. Many questions were asked, and naturally some concerned other doctrines as e.g. present possession of Eternal Life, the sinlessness of believers from union with the clean and sanctified Saviour and so on. We tried to put the emphasis where it belongs – they must come to Christ with an honest and good heart. Christadelphianism is full of intellectual dishonesty and hypocrisy and there is woeful ignorance as the natural result. Christ does not reveal Himself to His critics. We hope and pray that having sown the seed and shown them the way to reason and the road to follow that God will overrule their circumstances and Christ will so quicken their hearts that they will receive Him as He was, God made visible in flesh, full of grace and truth. By starting from God downward, as opposed to from man upward, the mind is conditioned to accept the truths intended, viz. that the Lord Jesus was the agent of Divine self-expression – infinite love in corporeal and tangible form, as distinct from an abstract theory.”

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### **A Few extracts from the Christadelphian Worldwide Website Forum**

The original post was from Gemma but we start with a post from –

**Robert:** If you are baptised into one Ecclesia, you are a part of the body of Christ. So with that you can go and fellowship any Ecclesia that bears the same beliefs and Faith as your Ecclesia.

**Geoffrey:** Don’t make the mistake of being baptised into the Christadelphian doctrines. If we commit to Christ we are committing to his worldwide church of believers throughout all time. Christadelphian beliefs and doctrines didn’t even exist in the early centuries, and no one would argue that there are no Christians going to be saved from that period. Therefore Christadelphian doctrines are not essential for salvation.

**Linda:** Gemma, it’s a good thing to be baptized into Christ. It is not a good thing to be “owned” by a group because of that baptism. Unfortunately, sectarian Christadelphians have this idea that somehow they have now drawn a person into exclusivity and obedience to the group as a result of baptising them. That is a very high price to pay, particularly when we know that Christ died so that we would be free and by our free will,

belong to him. Also, you are welcome here on this forum whether you are “inside”, “outside”, or hovering wherever.

**Russell:** Gemma, I’ve just come to this thread and read all the way through. (About 70 posts). What has struck me most of all is your wish to be baptised. This is such a good thing and baptism is here for us to accept the love of God and of Jesus Christ. We all need forgiveness and this is what Jesus offers us through His sacrifice.

In your opening post you ask if it is necessary to be baptised into Christadelphia and of course the answer is No. We are baptised into the death of Jesus and we become His.

This baptism brings us into covenant relationship with God through Jesus. The previous covenant with God was through Moses when the children of Israel became God’s people on leaving Egypt.

The night before Jesus was crucified He instituted the new covenant through the shedding of His blood and it is those who are in this covenant who receive the forgiveness which leads to eternal life.

As Jesus says in Matthew 26:28, “For this is my blood of the new testament (or covenant), which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”

This baptism is between you and God and Jesus. To find others who are of like precious faith to meet with is a great blessing indeed.

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*“Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.” - Psalm 24:3-5.*  
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## Things Most Surely Believed Among Us.

Adam was created from the dust of the ground. God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and from this moment on his life was dependent upon the air he breathed. We know from the Bible record that Adam was created according to a pre-arranged plan by the Creator. We learn too that it is God’s purpose to fill the earth with His glory.

Also from the scriptures we know that Adam and Eve, even if they had been obedient, could not have lived in their created state indefinitely because these same scriptures tell us that flesh and blood cannot inherit eternal life. The change to eternal life will require a miraculous change to people’s physical make-up.

There is no suggestion in scripture that Adam’s sin caused any change in his created make-up and only by straining Romans 5:12 can such a thought be arrived at; and neither did it change the nature of animals as has been suggested by some. Mankind, like all animals, live and die just the same as from their beginnings. The physical make-up, both of man and animals, was not designed to live for ever in the state in which it was created, and the scriptures show that such was never intended.

Adam, of course, could not foresee nor understand without experience the severity of life; and forgiveness was something yet to be experienced. Why do some people persist in the idea that because Adam and Eve did not die the same day they transgressed God command that God did not mean a day of twenty-four hours but a period of a thousand years? God never said so. This is man’s idea.

God said to Adam, “in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die, and so far as Adam and Eve were concerned, He meant what He said. But surely we do not think, simply because Adam was on probation and was not told that there would be any deviation from the carrying out of the sentence, that God

would not show mercy and allow Adam and Eve to go on living, especially as they recognised and confessed their sin and sought to cover his nakedness. The couple transgressed, but this transgression did not change their physical make-up, nor make them any more susceptible to death than before – however, there was a change in the legal sense. By this we mean that they were now in the situation which the apostle Paul describes as “sold under sin” where he describes ‘Sin’ as a master, or as a king reigning. Adam was no longer considered a son of God but a servant of sin. Also Jesus said, “No man can serve two masters.”

So now Adam and Eve were under condemnation for their transgression; that is to say, their life was forfeited to sin. In Eden, God provided a sacrifice for their sin and they were allowed, by grace, to go on living. But the sacrifice made for them was only a token and not in itself sufficient to restore them to their former relationship with God. This was to follow later when the Son of God laid down His life for the life of the world.

In time children were born to Adam and Eve but the life they received was the forfeited life subject to the same restriction of being outside the close relationship with God. In other words they were not considered children of God as was Adam at his creation, but alienated, having received the forfeited ‘Adamic’ life. To be alienated in this way has been described by some as man’s misfortune but not in the Bible. Just the opposite. Here we find mankind was placed in this position in order that the faithful may receive a great blessing!

But let us consider the Son of God, “slain from the foundation of the world.” He, Jesus, was closely related to all mankind having been born of a woman in Bethlehem. Jesus was related to the offspring of Adam and Eve but God was His Father and so Jesus was born free of the condemnation passed upon Adam and his descendants because His life came from His Father; He was the Son of God. Life is passed down from father to child. The life is in the blood and none of the mother’s blood ever mingles with the blood of the embryo in her womb. This is the very reason and the only reason for Jesus being the Son of God. Jesus also often referred to Himself as the son of man, for in all other respects He was the same as any other human beings, growing up into adulthood, with the senses and emotions common to all, living as all others and tempted in all things as we are.

It was foretold in Isaiah 9:8, “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given...” referring of course to Jesus, for “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son,” Jesus the Christ to be “our Passover . . . sacrificed for us.”

This was necessary for it required the death of an individual who, though with the same nature of flesh and blood, whilst living a life of obedience to God, did not come into the same category as ourselves as sold under sin, to willingly give Himself, being free from the law of sin and death, to die for Adam and Eve, to buy them back from ‘Sin’ as from a master or king. As Paul says, we are the purchase of His blood.

Surely we must understand that all the sacrificial ordinances from Eden to Jesus Christ pointed to its culminating act, the combined expression of love and mercy, in the sacrifice of Jesus, the Son of God, who alone through the grace of God could restore to man the position of favour and love lost in Eden by Adam’s act of disobedience.

But apart from our natural life which we owe to Christ through God in His foreknowledge allowing Adam and Eve to continue their life, we do not inevitably become associated with the act of love in the death of Jesus.

Jesus was free born in every sense of the word; and, in His love for us He was willing to make the sacrifice for us; His Father could and did allow His only begotten Son to die the death which was Adam’s due. There was no reason for Jesus to die for Himself. He had a life free of Adamic life and He obeyed God in all things. His life was His own and He gave it freely so that we “might have life and have it more abundantly.”

Let us therefore face the true facts as placed on record for us.

We do not blame Adam and Eve for their simple mistake for no one can say they would not have done the same, but it needed only one act of disobedience to the law of sin and death to bring the consequences; this was then followed by the one act of grace by God to forgive them together with the one act of sacrifice of Jesus to restore natural life to all the human race, so that we live our present life by the grace of God and hope for eternal life through Jesus' forgiveness, for we have been bought by Him and are now His.

But do we really belong to Jesus? He bought us along with the rest of mankind, good and bad alike, so it is for us to make our commitment to Christ by being baptised into His death and by this we acknowledge what He has done for us.

God does not grant all and sundry eternal life through the great act of love shown by His Son to the human race in His willing obedience and subjection to the death of the Cross. What He has done is to have placed on record the history of mankind from creation to the present time, at least that part of it which is necessary for us to know, and has shown down the ages the way of salvation through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. It is indeed a recognised fact that all the sacrifices made before Christ, according to the pattern of divine ordinances, pointed to the one culminating sacrifice made by Jesus around whom was centred the divine plan of salvation, and without this one sacrifice all others could have meant nothing.

Salvation is seen in that the punishment due to Adam's disobedience was accepted by Jesus in order to take it out of the way. All the sacrifices for sin of which we read in the Old Testament could never take away sin in this fashion. "The blood of goats and bulls can never take away sin" we read in Hebrews 10: 4 and 11, but they were a type of the great Anti-type – the sacrifice of Jesus. The temporary sacrifices under the law were offered in faith and now that the sacrifice of Jesus has been made, all the faithful before Jesus will also receive the gift of salvation.

These principles show that in the foreknowledge of God, by the one act of His Son, Adam was allowed to continue his life and bring into being at least some of his posterity who would be willing to serve God and through Jesus Christ receive that which was lost in Eden - Romans 8:1-10: -

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sin's flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness."

And what better way to finish than another quotation, this time from Hebrews 2:1-5: -

"Therefore ought we to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will? For unto the angels hath he not put into subjection the world to come, whereof we speak."

Brother E. G. Parry.

## On The Future Age

The subject of Christ's miracles opens up to our minds many avenues of thought, but that which just now invites us, is the light thrown by these mighty works on the æon of the Spirit in which all the ages will close. If in that age the rulers of the Kingdom possessed no more power in "nature" than men familiar with some of her secrets possess now, we might cease to hope for that structural change in society and civilization which now we anticipate.

What is wanted is immense power exercised by consummate wisdom brought to bear in the earth in order for the people to learn righteousness.

Nothing must be beyond the reach and resources of those who are called to the responsibility of sitting upon thrones. No efforts of "obstruction" must be permitted to be successful. A sceptre of righteousness will mean a rod of iron, which while it will be a terror to evildoers will be a praise to them who do well.

Now the miraculous gifts of Christ and the apostles afford us an idea of the power that will be exerted on a world-wide scale by those associated with the King in the Heavenly Control. Those powers were directed both to mastery and ministry. Elymas is smitten with blindness; Ananias and Sapphira are stricken dead; the daughter of Jairus is raised to life again, and the blind men of Jericho receive their sight. Hunger is fed, poverty is relieved, disease is healed and bereavement is averted by the omnipotence of God's free and silently working spirit. When the apostles, filled with this spirit at Pentecost, were enabled to address the Jews in their different dialects, Peter referred to Joel for the explanation of the fact. He identified such phenomena with what is predicted will obtain in the day of Israel's redemption.

Bright prospects for the world expand before us, as we watch the future development of the Spirit powers in the earth. To the eyes of those of the Spirit who will be the 'inspectors' of the earth, human nature will be as transparent glass. If Christ "knew what was in man" of old, more surely will all things in the human heart be known to him and to those associated with him in the age of the Spirit. Knowledge will be accompanied by power. To do any good, we must know what to do and be able to put it in execution. In this present age in respect of these two simple necessities of worthy achievement the "powers that be" are as incapable as children. Not so in respect of "the powers of the world to come." It will be an age of grand and awful energy. When it is aimed to destroy, nothing will be able to parry its lightning stroke; when it is applied to restore and heal, no bruised reed will be broken, nor smoking flax be quenched.

Now, men can not only sin with their hearts, but do much mischief with their hands: then their power to do this mischief will be curtailed. But that is not all. For as evil diminishes, sin will also lessen. Sin produces evil and again evil promotes sin. But when the works and ways of men are directed in equity and truth, and the human day begins to brighten as the consequence of it, then men will begin to cleave to what is good, and virtue will at last out-populate the world. For virtue is strength, and only waits for a fair field to prove its superiority. If it is possible, now, to "overcome evil with good" what victories shall not be won by goodness when its limbs are unfettered and its own sword is put into its hands? Sin prospers now only so long as it can wear the disguise of virtue: hereafter that disguise will be torn away. "The vile person shall no more be called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful." (Isaiah 32:5). Patience is to have its perfect work. If it break down in the middle it is not the real wrought article. Patience may be bent many times, but it will not break.

Author unknown.

*“For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh atonement for your souls” -*

**Leviticus 17:11 -**

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## **EXTRACTS BY ‘ECLECTIC’ - ON EDUCATION.**

**“The Christian Observer,” Oct. 1802, pp. 654, 655**

On this subject I wish to address myself particularly to the mothers for they are commonly intrusted with the most important part of education. The temper and disposition, the habit of obedience, and the first principles of religion, should all be formed during the first six or seven years, when the child is chiefly under the care of the mother.

Women, if they are what they ought to be, seem particularly suited to this task, from the gentleness and tenderness of their dispositions, and the happy art which they possess of gaining affection, and softening authority by kindness. But they are apt to fall into some errors from which I wish to guard them. They do not always consider the absolute necessity of teaching a child obedience from the very first. Before he can speak he should learn this lesson. From infancy he should be taught that nothing is to be gained by passion and crying. This is attended with very little difficulty, if it be done before any bad habits are formed, and custom will soon make it easy to the child; but we often see mothers who never attempt to govern their children till their little passions have gained so much strength that they know not how to conquer them, except by methods which would never have been necessary if they had been taught obedience from the very first. If a child has been accustomed from infancy to do what he is bid, and if his little heart has been gained by the kindness of a prudent mother, her displeasure will be his punishment, her praise will be his reward.

Rough language and blows are almost always proofs that the parent did not know how to govern. It is observed of one sect who have a remarkable command over their passions, that they never raise their voices in speaking to their children, or ever permit them to speak loud to each other. The good effects of this rule will be evident to all who steadily pursue it. The child will attend to the meaning of your words, instead of being frightened with the sound of them; and will soon know that he is governed like a reasonable creature, and not like a brute beast, which has no understanding!

This point being once gained, and the child being accustomed to immediate and ready obedience, without dispute or murmur, it remains that you use this power for his real good. Carefully watch the very first appearance of anything wrong in his disposition, and check it immediately. Carefully guard against deceit. Teach him to own his faults; and when he does so, forgive them; but convince him that they are faults, and must be rooted out. Above all, give him early impressions of religion; teach him to fear God.

ECLECTIC

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## **THE MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN**

**Matthew Chapter 13.**

A careful study of these parables in the light of the other scriptures and called by Jesus “Mysteries” (or secrets) will reveal that the literal Davidic Kingdom to be restored to Israel when Christ returns to the earth is not here being described seeing that event was the subject of many Old Testament prophecies and a constant hope and expectation of the Jews since the Babylonian captivity, but the nation as a whole were looking for a king who would free them from their literal servitude of Rome, being spiritually blind to the prophecies regarding His first advent.

The Old Testament prophets had seen in one blended vision His rejection by His nation and His crucifixion, also His glory as David's son, but had afforded no information regarding the time between these two events when God, by faith in Jesus, would be "raising up children unto Abraham." It had been prophesied of Jesus that He would "open His mouth in parables and utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world." Matthew 13:35. Compare Psalm 78:2.

It may be seen in these seven parables that Jesus foretells the formation and history of the Church from the "sowing of the seed" to the "harvest." He speak of His Church as "The Kingdom of Heaven" in Matthew 16:18,19 and entrusts the "keys" of it to the Apostle Peter and he it was who eventually opened the door of Christian Faith to the Jews first, at Pentecost and to the Gentiles, in the house of Cornelius. Acts 10:34-48.

The parable of "The Sower" is foundational to the understanding of the others, as indicated by Christ (Mark 4:13) and that together with the parable of the Wheat and Tares were interpreted by Himself, taken together they describe the various aspects of the Church true and false through this age. The parable of the Mustard Seed describes its rapid growth from a small beginning - the least of all seeds - to a great place in the earth - Christendom.

The leaven, a scriptural symbol of corruption or defilement, was hidden in "The Three Measures of Meal" - the original Apostolic Church - by a "Woman," probably an allusion to the "Mother of Harlots and abominations of the earth," until the whole was leavened - an apt description of the decline gradually brought about by false teachers as prophesied by the Apostles and which, in their days, were already tolerated.

The "Net" - of the Gospel - which gathered of every kind, good and bad, and in this mingled state they remain in the net in the sea - of mankind - like the Wheat and Tares growing together until the Harvest, when only the angles will be entrusted to separate them. Matthew 13:36-43. "God knows them that are His" and Jesus describes the true Children of the Kingdom, those understanding the truth of salvation through His sacrificial death and have kept the beginning of their faith firm to the end, as the "Good Ground," "The Wheat," "The Good Fish," "The Treasure" and "The Pearl," Himself being the "Merchantman" seeking goodly pearls.

Jesus came seeking and to save that which was lost and "having found one Pearl of great price He goes and sells all that He had and buys it." "We are bought with a price, even the precious blood of Christ." The Pearl is an apt description of the One Body of Christ formed over a period of time hidden inside the oyster being perfected to finally come forth in Glory; likewise the true kingdom is like treasure hidden in a field (or world). Matthew 13:38, which when a man (Jesus) had found. He hideth it - "our life is hid with Christ in God." Colossians 3:3, "and for joy thereof" - Hebrews 12:2, He goes and sells all that He has - His life - to buy that field - Adam and his seed - for the sake of the treasure, for God is the Saviour of all men (in that He redeemed Adam) but especially of them that believe," for they have life eternal - see 1 Timothy 4:10.

Here the Church is depicted as the "Kingdom" in the sense of their being heirs of the future Kingdom of God being by faith "translated into the Kingdom of His dear Son" Colossians 1:13. The Church was a mystery hidden from past ages which was destined to be revealed to His Holy Apostles and prophets. Ephesians 3:5-9; Colossians 1:24-27. It was founded upon their preaching, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Cornerstone. Ephesians 2:20.

Regarding the parable of the Leaven, see also other places where Scripture predicted apostasy:

"For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" Acts 20:29-30.

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the

power thereof: From such turn away..... But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." 2 Timothy 3:1-8, 13.

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears. And they shall turn away their hearts from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." 2 Timothy 4:3,4.

"And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the truth shall be evil spoken of." 2 Peter 2:2.

"For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ." Jude verse 4.

Also see Revelation 17 and 18, etc.

Sister Evelyn Linggood.

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## **THE PERVERTED PARABLE.**

### **The Rich Man and Lazarus.**

#### **Luke 16:19-31**

In spite of the many plain statements of Scripture regarding the utter unconsciousness of the dead, such as "The dead know not anything" (Ecclesiastes 9:5); "The dead praise not the Lord, neither they that go down into silence" (Psalm 115:17); "When man's breath goeth forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish" (Psalm 144:4), this parable is constantly brought forward as demonstrative evidence to the contrary.

Surely this, to say the least, is making a different use of the parable from what our Lord intended.

Besides, it is a fair rule to apply to the teaching of Scripture that those parts which are parabolic, metaphorical, or obscure, must be understood by the light of those parts which are plain, direct, and explicit.

We must not understand parables literally, if, by so doing, we require to make plain, direct, or explicit statements figurative.

Dr. Kitto wisely remarks;

"The rule seems to be, that in parabolical discourses, provided doctrines inculcated are strictly true, the terms in which they are inculcated may be adapted to the prevailing ideas of those to whom they are addressed. If any question arises about the particular circumstances, in such a discourse, the clue for our guidance to the correct interpretation must be sought in those parts of Scripture which speak to us plainly, and not in parables."

Thus, in the parable before us, two dead men are represented as conversing with each other - suffering, desiring, and reasoning; while, in the Scriptures already quoted, we are distinctly told that "the dead know not anything", that in the same day that man "returns to the earth, his thoughts perish."

These direct statements regarding the condition of the dead are not to be understood by the representation given in the parable, but as containing in themselves an expression of absolute truth; while the representation in the parable must be understood in a sense harmonious with these direct statements regarding the condition of the dead.

This we submit, is fair dealing.

No one supposes that the story told by Jotham (Judges 9:8-15) of the trees electing and anointing a king to reign over them is a description of facts; and we read of the blood of Abel crying unto God from the ground (Genesis 4:10), and that “the blood of sprinkling speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.” (Hebrews 12:24). We never imagine that a real voice was heard.

If shed blood is represented as speaking, as well as other inanimate objects, such as mountains breaking forth into singing, and trees of the field clapping their hands (Isaiah 55:12), is it at all wonderful that dead men, who know not anything, should be (for a purpose) represented acting as they were, alive? Surely not.

This is not the only instance in which the dead are represented as speaking. In Isaiah 14:10, the inhabitants of Sheol are represented as lifting up to meet the King of Babylon, and exclaiming with astonishment, Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us? Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee; yet no one would affirm that those thus covered with worms in the grave were at the same time in a state of conscious being; and it requires no great endowment of ideality to perceive the beauty and of the figure.

Let the parable in question be viewed in a similar way and its teaching shall be found, in no degree contradicting the direct testimony of Scripture regarding the unconscious state of the dead.

To understand the parable to be a real description of the condition of the righteous, and the wicked, before resurrection and judgment, is to ignore not only the plain and direct teaching of the Bible regarding the condition of the dead, but also its positive testimony that we “must all appear at the judgment seat of Christ, to receive the things in body, according to what we have done, whether it be good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10).

The Lord Himself taught plainly that it is “At the resurrection of the just” that recompense shall be given to those who are worthy (Luke 14:14), and this truth is strikingly illustrated in His memorable words; “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” (Matthew 7:22,23).

The Day here referred to is evidently the day of judgment, and the parties introduced are represented as being surprised at the fate awarded to them.

But why should they be surprised at their rejection if they had been suffering in Hades ever since the day of their death till they came forth to judgment at “the resurrection of damnation”? (John 5:28,29).

The idea that the wicked dead are punished by the Judge before resurrection and judgement is thus utterly at variance with the teaching of the Lord, as it is opposed to the principles of reason and justice.

Whatever, therefore, be the import of the parable, we cannot believe our Lord used it to teach a doctrine so utterly opposed to His own testimony on other occasions, and at variance with the uniform testimony of Holy Scripture.

Here the matter might be left to rest: but in confirmation of what has been advanced, we submit a few animadversions on the common method of understanding the parable as setting forth a conscious state of disembodied existence between death and resurrection.

The representation in the parable gives no countenance whatever to a disembodied state of conscious existence. By what process of reasoning could we infer the consciousness of a disembodied spirit from the declaration that in Hades the rich man lifted up his eyes, and felt his tongue tormented in a flame, requesting that Lazarus might dip his finger in water to cool his burning tongue?

Besides, the scene of the representation is in Hades - the grave, or state of the dead, where there is neither "knowledge, wisdom, nor remembrance," and where the blessed Redeemer Himself lay for three days (Acts 2:25-30).

The rich man died and was buried, and in the grave he lifted up his eyes being in torments.

Does it not meet all the requirements of the case to understand our Lord as making use of a parable to convey reproof or instruction to His prejudiced auditors, the Pharisees?

According to Whitby, this same parable was contained in the "Gemara Babylonicum," and was probably familiar to the Jews at the time our Lord repeated it in their hearing. His object seems to have been to reprove the Pharisees for their covetousness (see verses 14, et seq.).

While this parable by no fair means can be held to militate against the positive declarations of Scriptures regarding the condition of the dead, it contains strong presumptive evidence against the theory that men exist consciously, as spirits, between death and resurrection.

Observe that the rich man is represented as pleading that Lazarus should be "sent from the dead" to warn his brethren.

From the answer given it is assumed that in order to do this Lazarus would require to "rise from the dead" (verses 27-36).

This certainly does not favour the notion that at death the soul, or men proper, only bursts the cerements of his chrysalis covering and soars forth unfettered to the exercises of nobler and transcendent powers, capable of performing far more arduous duties than that of carrying a message of warning to men in the flesh.

Having never ceased to live such a person had no need to rise from the dead to perform that service.

The spirit mediums manage such affairs otherwise, though unfortunately for them and the philosophy which sustains them, the words of the living God proclaim them "deceiving and being deceived."

Brother William Laing.

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## **PROOF OF THE GENUINENESS OF THE SCRIPTURES**

The manuscripts are innumerable. They belong to all ages and are very ancient. They have been kept for centuries in distant parts of the world, under the custody of opposing sects and in circumstances that made extensive or important alterations impossible.

The possessors of these M.S.S. deemed them of the highest value, and professed to live under the influence of the truths contained in them. Copyists preserved them with the utmost reverence, counting every letter of every book and registering every title of the law.

How remarkable, how decisive as an evidence of Devine care that while all the libraries of Europe and the world containing copies of the Sacred Scriptures have been examined, all ancient versions extant compared, the M.S.S. of all countries from the 3rd to the 16th century collated the commentaries of the Fathers again and again investigated, nothing has been discovered, not even a single general reading which can set aside an important passage hitherto received as genuine.

This negative conclusion that our Bible does not essentially differ from the Bible of the Primitive Church is indeed ample recompense for all the labour and time which has been devoted to these pursuits.”

Origin unknown.

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“Finally, “brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” - **Philippians 4:8**