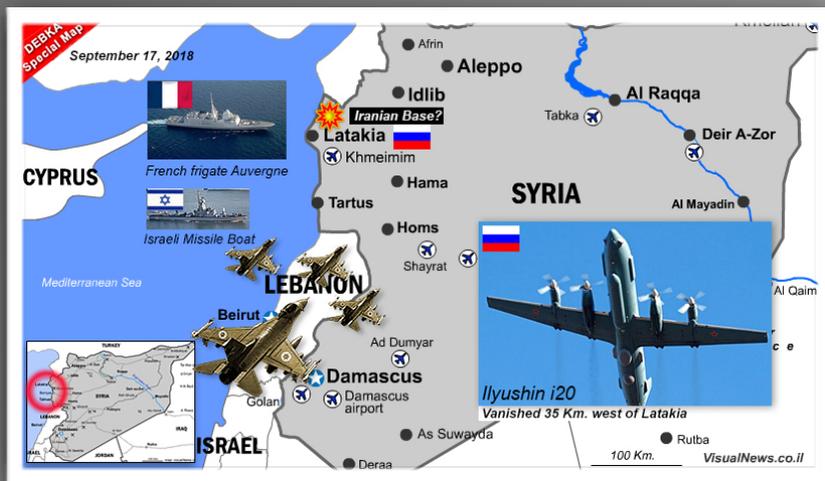


# ISRAEL vs. RUSSIA



ALL of our readers are no doubt very aware of the latest incident between Israel and Russia, when on September 17th a Russian IL-20 spy plane was shot down by Syrian “friendly fire”. This took place in the wake of an Israeli attack on a Syrian Armed Forces facility which manufactures lethal weapons that were about to be transferred on the behalf of Iran to Hezbollah forces in Lebanon. It appears that Israeli fighter jets were already back in Israeli airspace when Syrian surface-to-air missiles were mistakenly shot at the Russian surveillance aircraft, killing all 15 on board. The incident took place exactly 45 years to the day when the Soviets had given Egypt and Syria the go ahead to attack Israel, which began the Yom Kippur War in 1973.

Russia has chosen to blame Israel for the episode, claiming that Israel had only given the Russians a 1 minute warning prior to the attack, giving the surveillance plane no time to land before Syrian defenses were set off. Russia has threatened Israel with the right of full retaliation, while at the same time both countries have been working (as a matter of appearances) to defuse the situation. Though, Russian media continues to promote an anti-Israel narrative to the Russian people.

Clearly, the continued and expanding Russian military presence in Syria is an extremely significant development in the End-Time prophetic picture. Russia continues to extend its control over the former Seleucid (King of the North) territories with control of Istanbul/Constantinople still a matter of future but certain development. Russia claims to remain on friendly terms with Israel, while at the same time doing all it can to bolster Israel’s enemies and activities, including the ever increasing presence of Iranian influence and military activity within Syria itself and just north of the Golan. Israel finds itself in an increasingly difficult position as they try to counter the military efforts of Iran and Hezbollah, while at the same time balancing a tenuous and complicated relationship with Russia whose geo-political interests have nothing to do with the security of Israel and are only kept in check, for the time being, by U.S. counter measures in Syria and the Mediterranean. Israel finds itself caught in the middle of a struggle between Russia and the U.S over critical influence and control in the region - the continued strife of Daniel 11. (SK)

## THE SANCTUARY-KEEPER

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



## STEPS TO OUR DESTINY

also

Post Modernism

The Conversion of Jethro

The Babylonian Empire

Apocalyptic Visions of Glory

Things New and Old from the Treasures  
of the Spirit



# THE SANCTUARY - KEEPER

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

*"Ye shall keep the charge of the sanctuary, and the charge of the altar"*

*Num. 18:5*

*"Ye are...an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices."*

*I Peter 2:5*

*"Thou hast kept My Word and hast not denied My Name" - Rev. 3:8*

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## **"POST - MODERNISM"**

*"Behold, the fear of the LORD, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." JOB 28:28*

**A**S we watch society around us continue to fall into madness, we are continually amazed as to the degree of depravity in thought, speech and action that continues to be displayed by general society, popular culture, religion, the media, in the workplace and in the political world. Just when you think it can't go any lower, any more lawless, any more perverted, any more shocking, any more delusional, any more corrupt, any more unjust, any more apathetic, any more blasphemous - it in fact does with almost each passing day. More and more often we have to take a deep breath and remind ourselves of the extremely important admonition found in the Psalms - *"Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb"* (Ps. 37:1,2). The Psalm goes on to command us, for the sake of our own personal peace of mind and

eternal welfare, to “TRUST, DELIGHT, COMMIT & REST” in Yahweh. And then finally - *“Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth”* (37:8,9).

Christ commands us to *“let not your heart be troubled”* and rightly so, but yet what is all around us can be so very troubling as we have it pushed in our faces on almost a daily basis - whether in the workforce, in the schools and universities, in the grocery store, in the news we hear, see or read and even the neighbors that might live around us. We are informed by the Spirit through the apostle Peter that Lot was *“vexed with the filthy conversation (conduct) of the wicked - for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds”* (2 Peter 2:7,8). Though recognizing such evil, we cannot be overwhelmed by it.

The spirit of our Age has often been described as the Spirit of Humanism. A dictionary definition of “humanism” is quite to the point - *“A system of thought that rejects religious beliefs and centers on humans and their values, capacities, and worth.”* This seems to be a fairly accurate assessment of a worldview that has roots among the Greek philosophers; was contended against by the Apostles in their time with the rise of the Gnostics; was revived in earnest by the “Age of Enlightenment”; was brutally applied by the French Revolution and which has accelerated in earnest during our own times. Essentially, humanism can be described as a secular alternative to religious conviction as a means of reaching a *good, moral and self-fulfilling life*. Without God, though, we know that the principles of “good” and “moral” are without meaning.

But there is another label/descriptor that has been around for several years that we perceive may be even a better expression of the spirit of the times in which we live. It is called “Post-Modernism”. We sense that it is very closely related to the idea of Humanism but by its very definition provides an even more detailed explanation to the level of degeneracy and moral insanity that we are seeing all around us. Before we define it we wish to quote from a book we found and read several years ago called - *“The Postmodern World - Discerning the Times and the Spirit of Our Age.”* It was a book that we read with some reluctance but was recommended by a fellow believer as the book is written for the purpose of explaining some of the trends that are influencing mainstream religious belief. The writer states:

*“To many persons, it is a strange word, one whose reference they do not understand. Yet the phenomenon to which that big word*

*refers is much more familiar than most people think, for it is a label for characteristics of everyday life. Postmodernism is a particular way of looking at life, a set of ideas. It is perhaps more correctly referred to as "postmodernity," a characteristic of our culture that is gradually coming to distinguish much of human activity."*

## Postmodernism

Simply put, postmodernism is a movement that came about in the mid 20th century that called into question and/or rejects everything that had come before it. It completely rejects the norms of the so called "modern age" and anything else that preceded it. **It targets objective reality, morality, truth, human nature, reason, language, social progress and overall value systems.** As should be no surprise to the Believer, its proponents came out of French Academia and philosophy. It is essentially a spirit of chaos - what was right before is now wrong and wrong is right, up is down, etc., etc. Wikipedia states the postmodern approach was adopted in the 1980's and 1990's by a "variety of academic and theoretical disciplines". In other words, western universities (already compromised by humanistic thought that rejected God) bought into it hook, line and sinker. This helps us to understand why Western universities have become the centers of radicalized thought and moral corruption rather than institutions of "higher learning".

The fact of the matter is that the "postmodern" spirit is found in EVERY corner of the culture that we find ourselves. IF ONE IS PAYING ATTENTION you will be able to perceive that it constitutes the very foundations of how the world around us thinks and acts. IF ONE IS PAYING ATTENTION you will also be able to perceive that it has influenced the very way that those of the Household think and act in many ways as well.

## Characteristics of Postmodernism

So how do we identify what is called "postmodernism"? It promotes the following concepts in its ideology:

### **#1 TRUTH IS NOT SOMETHING THAT IS OBJECTIVE AND THAT WHICH CAN BE UNDERSTOOD.**

Essentially, what truth is for one individual may be different for someone else. So therefore, there can be many different versions of truth or no truth at all. The philosophy sees Truth is a matter of

opinion or simply interpretation, but certainly not something that can be understood as an absolute. Opinion is given higher value than knowledge or Truth.

We understand this to be a spirit of confusion. Those with their own agendas and ambitions can easily use this to their advantage to undermine the arguments of their enemies and influence the weak minded to their own point of view or action. The book quoted from previously makes the observation: *“In a postmodern scheme, each person’s truth is truth for him or her, and to suggest that one is attempting to persuade another person of one’s own truth is a rejection of that person or a mark of disrespect. From disrespect, says this view, comes hatred. Almost every view is to be tolerated, the only exception being a view that insists upon its own absoluteness”* (p. 16,17; emphasis added).

We hear this in a world that is crying for “tolerance” towards everything except for what they deem as the “intolerant”. Immorality and delusions of everything imaginable are embraced and celebrated under the banner of “tolerance” while those who stand opposed, based upon once commonly understood absolute principles, are deemed as “intolerant” and “haters”.

Have we not seen this very ideology play out in recent years within the Household? With the rise of cries for more “tolerance” and “inclusion” as it involves doctrinal and moral error and compromises, we have seen intolerance towards those who view the Truth as a matter of doctrinal and moral absolutes. Those who stand opposed and unwilling to compromise are viewed as “unloving” and condemned for “setting up fences” (among other choice descriptors) due to their “disrespect” to the views and actions of others.

Many pertinent verses come to mind here, but one that we are all familiar with emphasizes the point of the ABSOLUTE nature of the Truth and what our relationship to it should be - *“Buy the truth and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding”* (Prov. 23:23).

## **#2 REJECTION OF ORGANIZATION, STRUCTURE AND ORDERLINESS**

We have seen this in the rejection of respect for experience, societal order and authority. This has come to characterize business, education, the family, and religion. This can simply be described as a “casual” and disrespectful spirit that pervades the attitude and actions of essentially everything around us. Instead of parents/adults being the authority figures demanding the respect of the youth - they now are on an equal if not subservient position to the whims of the young.

Businesses and experienced managers struggle to keep young employers on task or engaged due to the lack of respect that the younger generation has towards authority and necessary structure for productivity. In education, teachers become the servants of their students with structure and authority in education now viewed as harmful to student interest and personal growth. Churches provide casual or “contemporary” services for their parishioners filled with rock music and motivational presentations. For society in general everything has to be “fun” while organization, structure and orderliness are viewed as oppressive.

What might seem as a silly point but yet a very pertinent symptom - we also see this casual spirit in dress as well. “Casual Friday’s” in the workplace (as well as casual throughout the week); the once business-like dress of doctors and nurses exchanged for pajama like “scrubs”; people out in public in flip-flops, hanging shorts exposing more than one wants to see, pajama bottoms and whatever else once reserved for only the home; as well as a “come as you are” in regard to dress for those who still attend “church”.

In relation to the Household, this rejection of organization, structure and orderliness can be seen in part by what Yahweh referred to through Jeremiah as a rejection of “the old paths”. The old ways are viewed as too rigid, too restrictive and something that “pushes away the young people”.

Order and structure can be taken too far by man whether in the world or the Household. But a postmodern attitude and worldview that rejects the value of such to embrace a self-pleasing approach of slothfulness, disrespect and apathy fails to realize and appreciate on the most critical and fundamental level that God Himself demands adherence to the organization, structure and orderliness He has put in place. *“For God is not a God of confusion, but of peace, in all the congregations of the saints”* (1 Cor. 14:33, Diaglott). If this cannot be understood and practiced in the little and more common things of everyday life, how can the so called “Believer” truly understand and practice it in matters that involve our eternal salvation?

### **#3 LESS CONCERN FOR ABIDING BY LAW**

Whether in the world or within religious circles, in the postmodernism view of things there is less concern for abiding by laws/rules. Such goes along with what was mentioned in the last section regarding the rejection of organization, structure and orderliness. This has to do with the natural tendency of man to resist constraint by anything that would

not allow him to follow the whims of the flesh. The postmodern excuse for this attitude is that, *“We are more interested in people than in rules.”* Yet the irony is that laws typically are created for the general welfare of a people or community. God Himself has established His laws and commandments for man as a restraint of the evils of sin’s flesh. Such is for man’s own good and eternal welfare and not for the purpose of oppression.

Among religious communities in recent years, including Christadelphia, adherence to moral as well as organizational laws or rules has become negatively deemed as “legalism”. It is considered moral to simply disregard laws or rules that one finds inconvenient, when in fact at the heart of the matter is a personal desire to do what one wants to do without restraint. Laws, whether civil or moral, then fall under the category of what is deemed “situational ethics” - interpreting the adherence or rejection of law/rules based upon opinion and convenience rather than according to absolute moral standards.

But we know that the Believer is to live by an absolute moral standard. Christ stated quite clearly - *“If ye love me, keep my commandments”* (John 14:15). Down in the 31st verse of the same chapter he goes on to declare - *“I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do.”* Obedience to Divine Law is at the very center of our service to God and His Son.

As part of our obedience to God and what should be built into our characters is that we have also been commanded to *“be subject unto the higher powers ... whosoever therefore resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God: they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation”* (Rom. 13:1,2). (This, of course, applies only as long as man’s laws and enforcement do not interfere with or undermine God’s laws. *“We ought to obey God rather than men”* Acts 5:29.)

#### **#4 LACK OF COMMITMENT**

Postmodernism is also characterized by a lack of a sense of commitment. This is nothing new in the history of man, especially as it relates to man’s commitment to God, but it does find a welcome home in the postmodern mindset. The Apostle speaks of this as one of the evil characteristics of men in the “last days” as “trucebreakers” (2nd Tim. 3:3). Adam Clarke comments that this word means - *“those who are bound by no promise, held by no engagement, obliged by no oath; persons who readily promise any thing, because they never intend to perform.”* Nowhere else is this as clearly demonstrated than in the institution of marriage. The concept of committing to “until death do us part” has been replaced with a divorce rate around 50% in the U.S.

alone. Marriage is not seen as a permanent arrangement, and many other couples resort to co-habitation without marriage as a way for an easy exit of the relationship if so desired.

Commitment to jobs, friendships or to duty of any kind does not fit the postmodern mindset when a rejection of the organization, structure and orderliness of the past is viewed as acceptable.

Within the Brotherhood itself, we are to understand the degree of commitment that is expected of us in our service to our Heavenly Father - a commitment that the Scriptures deem as “faithfulness”. Israel failed in this regard and was deemed as a harlot due to her spiritual adultery/unfaithfulness towards God. The very symbol of the Apocalyptic Harlot symbolizes the grotesque failure of what was once the Christ Ecclesia to hold fast to Truth and Righteousness.

We are under the most solemn of Covenants, ratified by the shed blood of Christ. Regarding this commitment Christ simply stated - *“But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved”* (Matthew 24:13). In Romans 12:1,2 the apostle Paul pleads with the believers - *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”* In Hebrews 3:5,6 - *“And Moses verily was faithful in all His house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; But Christ as a Son over His own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.”*

We live in a world where benefits and reward are desired, but without making the necessary commitments that are necessary.

### **#5 EMOTION OVER RATIONALITY**

One of the hardest aspects of the postmodern mindset for us to stomach is the elevation of raw, instinctual emotions over simple rational thought and action. We just read in Romans that our commitment to God was our “reasonable” or “logical” service. It isn’t merely a commitment entered into based upon emotional impulse, but one that is according to a factual basis and a profound appreciation and love for those facts. First the fact of God’s existence, and His plan and purpose and then the appropriate emotions of love and gratitude built upon such a rock foundation.

Emotion is a critical part of our existence. Without it we would be nothing but heartless robots. But, we live in a popular culture that is willingly led completely by its emotions in an uncontrolled fashion (known as “emotional incontinence”) which are put on full public display as a way to garner the envy or sympathy of others, as well as to stir up a destructive mob mentality for a desired end. There is nothing sincere about it as it is used to gain attention. Such are emotions which are led by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life - a sand foundation and based on no substantive reason. It is like an addiction to a drug - the animal instincts must be enflamed in order for the desired feelings of uncontrolled rage, sadness or euphoria to be achieved. It is not sincere emotion as it is manufactured and overdone. It is extraordinarily shallow but works like putty in the hands of those who wish to manipulate others to the backing of their own will and agenda.

Out of this spirit of emotionalism comes a grotesque spirit of compromise as no one is to be offended, no one is to have their feelings hurt. Therefore morality itself is no longer viewed as an unmovable and unbending value. People and their feelings are more important than rules. Yet there is great hypocrisy in the spirit of emotionalism as those who are postmodern in their thinking are not afraid to offend those who value moral absolutes. Again, they are intolerant of those they deem as intolerant.

In regard to the control of ourselves and its natural emotions that would lead us astray:

- James 1:19 - *“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”*
- 1st Thess 5:6 - *“Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.”*
- 2nd Timothy 1:7 - *“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind (self discipline or control).”*
- Proverbs 25:28 - *“He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.”*
- Proverbs 21:23 - *“Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.”*
- Proverbs 16:32 - *“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.”*

To us the man-made labels of “post-modernism” and/or “humanism” are essentially the same spirit - a spirit of the flesh (lust of the flesh, lust of the eye and the pride of life) and a spirit of our Age that is in complete rebellion against God. It continues to bring mankind down to a degree of self-debasement, confusion and debauchery unparalleled by any other age of our history except for the days leading up to the Flood. But there is something interesting about so called “postmodernism” that is extremely subtle and that in fact can invade OUR very own thinking. We might even see that it provides explanation for the confusion and degradation of the Brotherhood in these end times. So, though we might be disgusted by the evils we see thriving around us, we also might be ourselves infected with the thinking that has led to this deplorable state of “civilization” so called shortly before the Master’s Return.

It would be easier if one could simply go off and isolate their self in a cabin in the woods, turn off all forms of news and communication and quietly wait for the Lord’s return. But, this is not what we have been called to do, and there is a critical development to our Faith in these end times that would be missing if we simply were to hide from or ignore what is happening. True, substantive and deeply rooted faith and peace can only come in facing the adversities put before us and understanding what we are up against and the Strength and Power that we are to rely upon. We are to completely reject the wickedness of our Age and separate ourselves from any participation with it, but yet we must understand what it is so that it does not deceive us as well.

*A Thomas*

“Hallowed be thy name.” The name of God is hallowed in the sense that it is perfect and cannot be marred by the misconduct of His creatures. However, we pray for the time when there will be a full recognition of the power, supremacy and righteousness of God among His creation, both spiritual and natural. That time is the millennial kingdom for which we pray. When we pray for the hallowing of Deity’s name, we pray for the time of His kingdom in which men will reciprocate the Almighty’s love - the immortals on a more personal basis and the mortals on a more obedient - and faith-demonstrating basis....”

“The prospect of such a glorious age and of a time when men and women will respect and serve their vindicated Creator of heaven and earth should help keep us faithful firm unto the end. The distractions around us must be relegated, we must truly see this kingdom through the eye of faith, and we must discipline ourselves in subjection to the commands which we have covenanted to obey.”

*Jim Stanton, “Thy Kingdom Come - The Hope of Israel”, 1985*

# STEPS TO OUR DESTINY

**W**HAT is the meaning of the title “Steps to our Destiny?”

Briefly, it is this: All born of a woman, from the cradle to the grave, embark on a journey leading to a final destination. For those who never come out of



Adam and into Christ, this journey of life has only one possible ending, briefly comprehended in the words of Genesis 3: 19: *“Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”* In other words, eternal death. Those who have taken on the saving name of Christ however, when they rise from the baptismal waters, begin a new journey altogether. This journey is admissible of two possible endings; those of course being eternal death AND eternal life. It is to this journey or path that our remarks will be directed. First let us establish a basic premise. In this journey, or race as Paul also terms it in I Cor. 9: 24-27, there is no “standing still”. From the moment that we arise from the waters of baptism, we are moving either forward or backward, upward or downward. The words of Jesus in Luke 9: 62 should be sufficient to prove this point: *“No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God.”*

What is meant by STEPS to our destiny? The answer is that there is a logical progression to our journey which we will call steps. There are five of these steps which are as follows:

- 1) **THOUGHTS**
- 2) **WORDS**
- 3) **ACTIONS**
- 4) **HABITS**
- 5) **CHARACTER**

The first four; thoughts, words, actions, and habits, actually form our character which is the fifth and final step. We'll elaborate more on that when we come to consider more fully that final step, but it is worth saying initially that it is our CHARACTERS, with all that implies, which the Righteous Judge will essentially be judging at his return. Let us proceed to look at these steps now in the order presented.

## 1) Thoughts

The first step is our **THOUGHTS**. Originating in that most wondrous of all the internal organs, our brains, thoughts are the motivating force for all that we say and do. If we start with a good thought, we have laid a firm foundation for our upward path. A bad thought, allowed to take hold in our minds (and this is important) will just as surely lay a slippery foundation for the downward path. Our thoughts are also unique among all the steps in that they are our own as regards to the rest of mankind. They are discernible only by our Heavenly Father, His Son, and the holy angels. Hebrews 4:12 is one of many verses which prove this to be true. Isaiah 55: 7-9 provides the following exhortation for us: *“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”*

Because we, like the apostle Paul, are *“carnal, sold under (or in bondage to) sin”* as he states in Romans 7:14, we know that unwanted, unbidden thoughts will assail us at every turn. He further tells us that the source of all such thoughts is *“the law of sin in his members”* in Romans 7: 23, and in our members as well. Paul explains to us in Romans chapter 8 the vital necessity of winning this warfare (for it IS a constant, lifelong battle for us) between the thinking of the flesh and the thinking of the Spirit. Romans 8: 5-7: *“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.”*

Even our Lord Jesus, being tempted in all points like as we are (Heb. 4:15) was not exempt in this matter. Witness the 40 days temptation in the desert in which he was tried in all three aspects of sin-in-the-flesh: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (I John 2:16). Nor would these thoughts have permanently deserted him at this time we may be sure, despite his victorious refutation of the thinking-of-the-flesh. BUT until the very end of his ministry he never allowed a thought he knew to be contrary to his Father's will to take root in his mind.

In our warfare with our carnal minds we must look to our Lord's example. To say that this is not an easy task is an understatement. Nevertheless, we have the same basic weapons with which to conduct this fight as did he, albeit on a lesser scale. These essential weapons are 1) the holy, written, inspired Word of God and 2) the power of prayer. If we neglect either one or both of these we are left with no ammunition, and worse yet, no desire to "resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

For those on the upward path, we cannot do better than quote Brother Robert Robert's preface to his "Bible Companion" regarding the all-important position that the daily reading and study of the Scriptures should have in our race for eternal life. *"Salvation depends upon the assimilation of the mind to the divine ideas, principles and affections exhibited in the Scriptures. This process commences with a belief of the gospel, but it is by no means completed thereby; it takes a lifetime for its scope, and UNTIRING DILIGENCE for its accomplishment. The mind is naturally alien from God and all His ideas (Rom. 8:7, I Cor. 2:14) and cannot be brought at once to the Divine Likeness. This is a work of slow development, and can only be achieved by the industrious application of the individual to the expression of His mind in the Scriptures of truth."*

The other pillar in our defense against unwanted fleshly thoughts is prayer. Its power, importance and necessity are amply taught in the Scriptures from beginning to end. Consider Paul's words in I Thess. 5:17: *"Pray without ceasing."* Paul is telling us that prayer must become a HABIT for us, in all circumstances of life, good and bad, not simply when we feel in the mood to pray.

The Psalmist wrote in Psalms 119:59: *"I THOUGHT on Thy ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies."* What is an ideal verse to sum up what our thoughts should be centered on? Philippians 4:8: *"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."*

The word "think" here is the Greek "logizomai" from whence we derive our word "logic". Strong's has: "to take an inventory, esteem and reason". We can readily see that much more than just a quick, passing thought is meant here. We must dwell on these fruits of the spirit for only by so doing can we expel those inevitable, fleshly thoughts at their very inception BEFORE they can take root.

Conversely, for those on the downward path, having failed to avail themselves of familiarity with the Word of God through regular reading and study and likewise with habitual prayer, they will find themselves in the position described by Psa. 94:11: *"The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity."* Many other verses such as Jeremiah 17:9:

*“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”* prove beyond any doubt that vain, fleshly thoughts, allowed to rule our thinking, form just as sure a foundation for those on the downward path as do dwelling on those things quoted earlier from Philipians for those on the upward path.

## 2) Words

The second steppingstone to our eternal destiny is **WORDS**. Words are an enormously powerful tool which we can use for good or for evil. Once they leave our mouths, they can never be taken back which is truly something to ponder. For those trending on the upward path, let's look at a verse which focuses solely on the good and positive aspect of the spoken word. Proverbs 15:29 reads: *“A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth, and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!”* Ecclesiastes 5:2 is a verse which beautifully sums up our Heavenly Father's instruction to His children on the proper use of our tongue. It says: *“Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.”* Also in Ecclesiastes 10:12 we read: *“The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious, but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself.”*

James devotes an entire chapter to the power of the tongue for good or evil, but the focus is clearly on its unbridled use as an unruly evil. In James 3:5-8 we read: *“Even so is the tongue a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth. And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: but the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil; full of deadly poison.”* The Lord Jesus pronounces the importance that words carry as they relate to our eternal destiny in Matt. 12: 35-37: *“A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, that every idle word that man shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.”* The word for “idle” here is the Greek “argos”, and signifies lazy, useless, and barren.

For those on the path trending upward, the good thoughts with which they have attempted, to the best of their ability, to supplant their natural, fleshly thoughts in step one, should have resulted in a manner of speech well-seasoned and pleasing to Yahweh. Certain it is however, that no one except the Lord Jesus has ever bridled their tongue perfectly. There are many examples in the Scriptures of righteous individuals seeking forgiveness in prayer for hasty, ill-advised words they

have spoken. We must never presume that forgiveness will be extended to us when we speak foolish, idle, or hurtful words. Keeping the tongue in check, which involves taking the precept “think before you speak”, seriously is always the best course of action and the clear Scriptural teaching. Psalms 34:13 tells us to *“Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.”* Paul in Ephesians 4: 29 tells us to *“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.”*

What about those on the downward path? Let us establish this fact: an unbridled tongue is characteristic of the world in general. How much more true is this today as we witness a permissiveness of speech, casually accepted as the norm by those in the world around us, on an unprecedented level? Such language should have no place in our daily speech, but the individual trending downward, having let fleshly thoughts take control to begin with, will be susceptible to the daily inundation of vain language to which he or she is subjected. It is certain to creep in and become a part of THEIR vocabulary. While he or she through much practice, may become quite proficient in cleaning up their speech in the presence of other believers, where it really matters - in the ears of the Righteous Judge - they will be held accountable as we read in Matthew 12 previously.

### 3) Actions

The third step to our eternal destiny is **ACTIONS**. What do we DO with the precious time allotted to us? Actions are the logical outgrowth of our thoughts and words and form the core of our probationary walk. It is truly what we have done, or failed to do, that will determine our destiny. The following is but a sampling of Scripture to prove this point: II Cor. 5:10: *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things DONE in his body, according that he hath DONE, whether it be good or bad.”* The Diaglott uses the word “performed” here for “done”. Romans 2:6: *“Who will render to every man according to his DEEDS.”* Psalms 62:12: *“Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy: for thou renderest to every man according to his WORK.”* Ecc. 12:14: *“For God shall bring every WORK into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”*

In putting our hands to the plough from the reference to Luke 9:62 earlier, it is easy to see from this analogy that a continuous exertion of effort plus a lifetime of labor in His service, is meant. But our Lord also tells us in Matt. 11:30 that his yoke is easy and his burden is light. When we pause to consider the immense magnitude of the reward, even eternal life, the truth of this verse becomes apparent.

In the scriptures we see the word “works” used many times as descriptive of actions. As this word relates to the actions of believers in

the New Testament, it must be pointed out that in its most comprehensive sense; it includes our thoughts and words as well. Words spoken to edify, comfort, or encourage are obviously a part of our good works. But the special point of emphasis is on actions. There are 118 occurrences of this word in the New Testament, but only one Greek word is used in all cases. It is “*ergon*” and Strong’s states: “to toil as an effort or occupation: act, deed, doing, labor, work.”

James delivers a powerful instruction to us in one short verse when he says in James 1:22: “*Be ye DOERS of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*” James further tells us that good works are a necessary outgrowth or result of our FAITH. In James 2: 14-18 we read: “*What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works.*”

Hebrews, chapter 11, that wonderful chapter enumerating the faithful men and women of Old Testament times, is essentially a list of righteous ACTIONS based on a great FAITH in the promises of Yahweh. The valiant deeds they accomplished, inspire us when we read this chapter, especially considering the magnitude of the adversity they faced. But the times in which we live are admittedly quite different from Biblical times. Just as dangerous, perhaps more so, but most would probably agree that the challenges we face today are more of a mental, and less of a physical, nature. Most likely, none of us will have a chance to perform a good deed on the scale of slaying a Goliath or stopping the mouths of lions. Nor is it necessary. Our Lord beautifully illustrates this truth at the conclusion of his address to the twelve apostles prior to sending them forth. We read in Matt. 10:42: “*And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.*” These are very encouraging words for those on the upward path. By them we know that the humble daily, weekly and monthly routine tasks we perform in the functioning and maintenance of our ecclesias are written into the Book of Life on our behalf by the Righteous Judge.

For those on the upward path here are two excellent scriptures, both very familiar to us, to consider:

1) II Tim. 3:16-17: “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good WORKS.*”

2) **Matt. 5:16:** *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good WORKS, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”*

What about those on the downward path? Let's recap their position at this point. In step one they have failed to curb their fleshly thoughts allowing them to take root in their minds. This formula for failure has spilled over into step two, resulting in an unbridled tongue. Whether this manifests itself in offensive, foul, or generally inappropriate language, or idle, useless, or barren chatter, consider now how prominently it plays a part in their actions. There are several comprehensive lists of the “works of the flesh” in both the Old and New Testaments we could consider. Let's look at Gal. 5:19-21: *“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in times past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.”* There are 17 works listed in these three verses and believers are capable of committing ALL of them, as is readily apparent from the concluding phrase *“they which DO such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.”*

We mentioned how the tongue can play a role in many of these works. We would submit that in each of the following it certainly does: uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, and envyings. In certain others on this list, the commandments of Christ require us to submit to a higher standard than the physical act itself. Specifically these would be adultery, fornication, and murders. Matt. 5: 27-28 reads: *“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”* Fornication, being the equivalent to adultery for the unmarried believer, should be included here. Additionally, a believer may commit spiritual adultery by *“leaving his or her first love”* for the friendship of the world. As for murders, I John 3:15 has this to say: *“Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.”* The word “hateth” here is the Greek “miseo”, Strong's #3404, and signifies to detest or persecute, but also to LOVE LESS. Further proof of this concept can be found in Matt. 5: 21-22.

Back in the list of Galatians 5, the last two works listed are drunkenness and revelings. We would suggest that those who blithely post pictures or videos to social media of themselves consuming alcoholic beverages in a party-like atmosphere should take a long, hard look at what they are doing in the light of this verse. They are certainly not “abstaining from all appearance of evil”.

Individuals on the path trending downward can and often do pray for forgiveness for their sinful works, but our Heavenly Father's mercy and forgiveness is less certain at this point, and even when it is extended there are usually consequences. We think of Esau in the sale of his birthright to Jacob. We know this was a very impulsive act prompted by his natural hunger, but we also know the disastrous consequence it had for him. Hebrews 12:17 reads: "For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."

Judgment based on works is the divine method of dealing with those in covenant with Him. It was so from the very beginning in the Garden of Eden and it will continue until ALL judgment has ceased, and that will not take place until the final accounting at the end of the 1000 years. In the messages to the seven ecclesias in Asia Minor found in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, the phrase, "I know thy works" is used seven times, and the word "works" fourteen times. In the judgment at the end of the Millennium found in Rev. 20:12-13 the phrase, "according to their works" is used twice; once in each verse.

### 4) Habits

The fourth step to our eternal destiny is **HABITS**. Habits are actions repeated on a regular, consistent and usually daily basis. From the moment we wake up in the morning to when we fall asleep at night, our actions mostly consist in performing the many habits we have acquired over time. Here the point must be made that most of these have no real bearing on our eternal salvation; things such as what we eat and drink down to the countless little habits we could just as easily characterize as mannerisms. On the other hand those big, important habits, for good or bad, have everything to do with our eternal salvation.

For those on the upward path we have made mention of the two most important good habits of all; studying the Word of God and prayer, in our consideration of the first step: that is, controlling our thoughts and channeling them in the proper direction. These two good habits are the pillars they have built into their daily life upon which all other good habits are built. Those trending upward consider them to be as indispensable to their spiritual life as eating and drinking is to their natural life.

But for those on the downward path, we all know the truth of the adage: "bad habits are hard to break". One who has acquired any number of bad habits; again we're talking about the important ones having a bearing on eternal destiny, is in a very precarious situation. He or she may be battling feebly against the current at this point, or more likely, may be so hardened in their errant ways as to be completely unwilling or unable to repent. We think of King Saul's visit to the witch

of Endor as a good, though sad, example of one who had reached such a low point in his life.

For the final time, mention is going to be made here of those two good habits we have stressed so much, daily study and prayer, and of course this begs the question: why would these be brought up in connection with bad habits? To answer this we must consider the phrase “sins of omission” with which we are familiar. Though not a Scriptural phrase it most certainly is a Scriptural principle. This omission was considered in step one for those on the downward path but we re-emphasize it here. They have OMITTED these two essential good habits in their daily lives, and all the consequent bad habits they have acquired over time are traceable back to this fatal flaw.

## 5) Character

We have now reached the fifth and final step in the journey to our destiny which is **CHARACTER**. What is character? One dictionary defines it as “the combination of mental characteristics and behavior that distinguishes a person”; in other words our thoughts, words, actions, and habits. It is the final stage in our development. It is quite simply, who we are. In the eyes of our Heavenly Father there are only two types of characters, pleasing and displeasing. Those on the upward path have formed characters which are pleasing in His eyes. Abundantly throughout the Scriptures, but most especially in Psalms, we have verses which speak of the Father's special care, protection, comfort, and love for the righteous.

*Psalms 34:15-22: “The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all. He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken. Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate. The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.”*

These are very encouraging, uplifting verses for the righteous, but they are also illustrative of a most basic scriptural truism: the goodness AND severity of Yahweh. This is shown in the inclusion of verses 16 and 21 in this generally positive set of verses.

So for those on the upward path, to use Paul's analogy of running a race, the finish line is clearly in sight now, at this final stage of their development. They have allowed the Master Potter to mold their characters, as only He can do, into what He can use in the furtherance

and consummation of His glorious plan and purpose for this earth upon His Son's return and judgment of them as worthy to be so blessed. Though pleasing, their characters, however, are certainly not unblemished. Only One had a perfect, spotless, unblemished character and that was the Lord Jesus. Those striving to be like Him must be busy in polishing off the rough edges in their character now, meaning every day, until His return. Phil.3:14 reads: "I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." We know that the prize Paul is speaking of is eternal life in the glorious Kingdom of God.

And finally there are those on the downward path who have reached the final step in THEIR destiny, which is to await the dreadful news that their names have been blotted out of the Book of Life. There is no hope for repentance or forgiveness for them at that point. Why can we be so emphatic upon this? Let one verse from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament answer. Prov. 28:9: "*He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.*" John 9:31: "*Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth.*"

In conclusion please consider I Cor. 3:10-15 which reads: "*According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 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.*"

Our final scripture to consider is Rev.22:11-12: "*He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.*" Though assuredly possessors of imperfect characters and in need of His mercy at that great day of His appearing, may we be counted among the "righteous and holy" class of Revelation 22:11 and so attain our destiny-life without end in His glorious, everlasting Kingdom.

*Rick Pine*

# THE CONVERSION OF JETHRO

**W**ITHIN the entirety of the Scriptures there are many Brothers and Sisters that were given special titles by Yahweh or Yahshua in recognition of their faithfulness. For example, Moses was “*my servant*” (Numbers 12:7-8), David was a “*man after His own heart*” (1 Samuel 13:14), Daniel was “*a man greatly beloved*” (Daniel 10:11) and John was “*that disciple whom Jesus loved*” (John 21:7). We would like to focus on another such title in order to introduce our topic of study. This title is “*Friend of God*”.



There are only two men in the Bible who are given the inspired title of “*Friend of God*” as a token of their faithfulness. The first name that will come to most minds is Abraham, the father of the faithful. In the 23rd verse of James Chapter 2, the inspired author states, “*Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God*”. Abraham was thus the first man to be given this Divine Title which, more appropriately in Abraham’s time, was the “*Friend of El*” because the patriarchs knew God by the title of El Shaddai (see Exodus 6:3).

So what about the second man titled “*Friend of God*”? Here we turn our attention to a man named Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses. The

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name Jethro means “*His Excellence*” and, as we’ll find, this was a name well given as this man was greatly deserving of respect and honor. We know that Jethro is his actual name and not a title because it is used 10 times in the Scriptures and, most importantly, Jethro refers to himself by this name in Exodus 18:6 where “*he said unto Moses, I thy father in law Jethro am come unto thee.*” Yet what about the title of “*Friend of God*”? In Exodus 2:18, where we are introduced to the man for the first time, the Scriptures give Jethro the title of Reuel, meaning “*Friend of El*”. Why would this title be given and inserted by Moses as he was moved by the Holy Spirit to record these events many years later? Why was Jethro considered as Reuel, the “*Friend of God*”? We would like to explore that question through a series of articles, starting with this one on “*The Conversion of Jethro*”.

As mentioned before, Jethro first comes onto the scene in Exodus 2 where a weary Moses saves Zipporah and her sisters from some evil shepherds, chasing them off from a well, and then continues to water their flocks. This highly typical scene (of Jesus and His Bride) is a topic for another day that is well worth studying. In any case, as Zipporah and her sisters rushed home that day, full of excitement, they reported the good news to their father, a man who was about to play a major role in the life of Moses. “*And when they came to Reuel their father, he said, How is it that ye are come so soon to day? And they said, An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and also drew water enough for us, and watered the flock. And he said unto his daughters, And where is he? why is it that ye have left the man? call him, that he may eat bread. And Moses was content to dwell with the man: and he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter*” (Exodus 2:18-21).

In these verses we are introduced to the man Jethro, the man titled Reuel or “*friend of El*”. The Scriptures do not give much background about the man other than that he was the priest of Midian as recorded in verse 16. However, this is an important clue to his heritage. Turning to Genesis 25:1-4, we will see that Jethro must have been a direct descendant of Abraham through Keturah’s son Midian. If we look back at Moses’ own genealogy in Exodus 6, he was the great-great-great-great-grandson of Abraham, or the sixth generation following the father of the faithful. With these things in mind, Reuel was most likely somewhere around five generations after Abraham. No doubt Abraham would have taught the Truth to all his children and though many would depart from the faith, it is entirely possible that elements of the Truth survived through this family. However, we firmly believe that it was only *now*, through Yahweh’s hand, that the whole Truth was about to be brought

back to the family of this man. The fact is we simply do not know how much Jethro knew at this point. Whatever be the case, he was involved in the worship of El Shaddai to some level, and Yahweh (not anyone else) directed Moses to this man and his family. This was not a time and chance meeting. You might say that there was suitable good ground here.

In terms of character, Exodus 2 and 3 show that Jethro was a man of great hospitality who ruled his household well in the fear of EL, whether he understood the whole Truth or not. There is never any mention of a wife, so it is quite possible that he was a widower now raising his seven daughters alone. In addition to being the priest of his family, he was a shepherd by trade like so many of the patriarchs of old. Day by day he took care of his flock, developing great wisdom thereby. As the events of Exodus 2 show us, he was “*given to hospitality*” which the Apostle Paul stated was a characteristic of a true elder in 1 Timothy 3:2. Yes, he took in the man Moses, and finding him of suitable character and courage, gave him his oldest daughter Zipporah (who must have been quite taken by her saviour at the well) to be his wife. Overall then, we have the picture of an older wise man who ruled his house well and, fearing EL (though perhaps not understanding the Truth in its entirety), willingly took this young man into his home where they would develop a deep bond over the next forty years.

While it is certainly interesting to think about, the details of the forty year sojourn of Moses with Jethro are slim to none. These would be days of growth for both men, but, since this was also a time of probation and preparation for Moses, it was destined to come to an end. Moses would soon be called to the Mountain of God to commence his greatest work. After some encouragement from Yahweh, it was time to go. Exodus 4:18 states, “*And Moses went and returned to Jethro his father in law, and said unto him, Let me go, I pray thee, and return unto my brethren which are in Egypt, and see whether they be yet alive. And Jethro said to Moses, Go in peace.*”

With these simple words, Jethro disappears off the pages of Scripture for a time. There is no doubt that he, along with many in the ancient world, would hear of the miraculous plagues done in Egypt, thus strengthening his belief in the EL of Abraham. In time, Zipporah and her sons were sent back to Jethro’s care by Moses, who probably intended to keep them safe and out of the way. Zipporah would no doubt give her father a full report of the goings-on in Egypt. Thankfully, we are not left to guess regarding Jethro’s reaction to the plagues and the exodus

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itself, because Yahweh has seen fit to record the details for us in Exodus 18:1-12 as follows:

*“When Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father in law, heard of all that God had done for Moses, and for Israel his people, and that the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt; Then Jethro, Moses' father in law, took Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her back, And her two sons; of which the name of the one was Gershom; for he said, I have been an alien in a strange land: And the name of the other was Eliezer; for the God of my father, said he, was mine help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh: And Jethro, Moses' father in law, came with his sons and his wife unto Moses into the wilderness, where he encamped at the mount of God: And he said unto Moses, I thy father in law Jethro am come unto thee, and thy wife, and her two sons with her. And Moses went out to meet his father in law, and did obeisance, and kissed him; and they asked each other of their welfare; and they came into the tent. And Moses told his father in law all that the LORD had done unto Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, and all the travail that had come upon them by the way, and how the LORD delivered them. And Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which the LORD had done to Israel, whom he had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians. And Jethro said, Blessed be the LORD, who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh, who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the LORD is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them. And Jethro, Moses' father in law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God: and Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father in law before God.”*

The verses before us provide the Scriptures' greatest look at the man Jethro, “His Excellence”, and his full conversion to the way of Truth. In verse 1 it says that he “heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel his people”. Hearing, we know is the first step to understanding something and believing it. If you never hear, how can you understand? If you never understand, how can you believe? Romans 10:17 states it this way: “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Here we see that the word of God helps us hear, the first step to developing faith. Jethro had heard about the awesome events that transpired in Egypt, but soon he would receive the full faith-forming details as Moses, following an emotional reunion, would most

certainly fill Jethro in on all the details of the plagues, the travail and the deliverance of Yahweh. In so doing, Moses used his mouth for *“that which is good to the use of edifying”* that would *“minister grace unto the hearers”* (Ephesians 4:29), a great example to us of how we should be using our tongues. Indeed, it is our responsibility to have our mouths full of the good of the Truth to the edification and ministration of grace unto anyone who would care to hear. Moses did just that. He edified his father-in-law in the things of the Truth and, to Jethro’s credit, his ears were wide open to hear the word of God.

So what did Jethro do once he heard the news? From Exodus 18:9-11 we read, *“And Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which the LORD had done to Israel, whom he had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians. And Jethro said, Blessed be the LORD, who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh, who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the LORD is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them.”* These are critical verses to understand as they highlight the process of repentance. First of all, Jethro rejoiced. This is a characteristic that naturally follows the development of faith in one’s heart. Romans 5:11 records, *“...we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.”* Likewise the Apostle Peter speaks of the principle of joy, even through tribulation, in 1 Peter 1:6-9: *“Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”*

Yes, joy is a characteristic that should be held by all the faithful. We should joy at Yahweh’s goodness even if we haven’t seen these things with our very eyes. Jethro did not see the plagues in Egypt, but he believed them with joy from the mouth of Moses. So too, we have not seen the atoning works of Jesus, but we believe with joy in their truth and efficacy as spoken through the words of Scripture. We also look forward with joy to a day yet future: *“Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away”* (Isaiah 51:11).

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Returning to Exodus 18, what exactly did Jethro rejoice in? Verse 9 states that he “*rejoiced for all the goodness which Yahweh had done to Israel*”. Simplifying this statement a bit, he rejoiced for “*the goodness of God [which] endureth continually*” (Psalm 52:1). In Romans 2:4, the Apostle Paul exhorted his listeners that “*the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance*” and how true this statement is. When a man or woman in Adam learns the Truth as sown upon good ground, they will receive it with joy in their heart for all of the goodness of God as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. This is something which should never be under appreciated as truly Yahweh is good and His mercy towards us endureth forever. Thus the goodness of God should lead us to repent of our sins and change our ways before Him as stated in Romans 2:4. And what if we refuse Him? “*Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off*” (Romans 11:22). Putting all of these verses together, Jethro certainly learned that the goodness of God is continual. It leads to repentance as had been shown in quite a stark contrast to God’s judgments that had been poured out on Egypt to affect the salvation of Israel.

What was Jethro’s response to Moses after considering all of these faith-building facts in his mind? His exclamation is worth reading again from Exodus 18:10-11: “*And Jethro said, Blessed be the LORD, who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh, who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the LORD is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them.*” What beautiful words came from the lips of the priest of Midian! First and foremost, it is important to notice that Jethro now recognizes Yahweh as deliverer, greater than all of the false gods of Egypt. It is also important to note that this was the first recorded time that Jethro had ever used the Yahweh Name in reference to God. As a descendant of Abraham and the priest of Midian, he had only ever known God by the name El or El Shaddai, as we can see in Exodus 6:1-3. Likely having been enlightened by Moses, Jethro now confesses his belief in Yahweh as the One True God. Remember that he had worshipped El as the priest of Midian, and now he realized the true El was Yahweh the God of Isra-El!

And so Jethro exclaims in Exodus 18:10, “*Blessed be Yahweh*”. The Hebrew word here for *blessed* is *barak*, a primitive root meaning “*to kneel or to bless God as an act of adoration*”, etc. It is thus a declaration of Yahweh’s sovereignty, that all should kneel in reverential adoration to Him. And why? Because as Jethro mentions multiple times,

Yahweh is the deliverer. In the Hebrew, this word simply means “to snatch away”. Yahweh had indeed snatched away His people from the grips of wicked Pharaoh in Egypt, and He has also given us Gentiles a hope of being eternally snatched away from our greatest enemy in the darkness of Egyptian times, that being death. We think of the Psalmist’s exclamation: “*Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine. Our soul waiteth for the LORD: he is our help and our shield*” (Ps 33:18-20). From the New Testament we read: “*Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, [Jesus] also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage*” (Hebrews 2:14-15). Yes, just as Moses had been sent by Yahweh to be a deliverer of his people, the prophet like unto Him, Jesus Christ, was likewise sent for antitypical work as deliverer. Moses could only deliver the people from Egypt, whereas Jesus ultimately will deliver his saints from the darkness of eternal death itself.

Returning to Exodus 18, we find that an amazing event occurs immediately following Jethro’s speech and declaration of faith. In Verse 12, we see that he brings a burnt offering and sacrifices for God. This action shows the faithful recognition of Jethro that none can come to Yahweh but by a sacrificial covering, something that had been taught to his ancestors, the patriarchs of old. Thereby Jethro would come into covenant relationship, typifying our connection to God through the sacrificial offering of Jesus Christ who “*hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour*” (Ephesians 5:2). See also Hebrews 10:5-14.

Just as Jesus gave himself as a sacrifice to God, all who come to Yahweh through this sacrifice must in turn dedicate themselves to be living sacrifices in their own right. If we, like Jesus, desire to be delivered from death eternally, we must not only be associated with him, but also manifest him in our own bodies as living sacrifices until he come. This is clearly stated for us in Romans 12:1-2: “*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*”

## THE CONVERSION OF JETHRO

It is clear that Jethro now understood that Yahweh was the deliverer and that deliverance is associated with sacrifice. However, there was one more critical principle that he was about to discover and enjoy as *“Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses’ father in law before God”* (Exodus 18:12). What is the critical principle that we were just referring to? Fellowship. Jethro now is welcomed into fellowship after his confession of faith and association with the sacrifice. Though Moses and the other elders are there, Aaron is specifically mentioned as the precursor to Jesus, the great High Priest. The breaking of bread is thus symbolized by this fellowship meal, much like their common ancestor Abraham’s time of fellowship with Melchizedek so long before, as recorded in Genesis 14:18-20. Ultimately, let there be no doubt in our minds, these two events clearly prefigure the Memorial Service of Jesus Christ. Yes, when every believer makes a declaration of his faith and is baptized into the saving name of Jesus, he is, in turn, welcomed into fellowship and partakes of the Memorial meal, following the commands of Matthew 26:26-29 until Jesus comes again to eat and drink anew with his faithful Brethren in the Father’s Kingdom.

There is still much more than could be said about Jethro. For now, though, may we ever appreciate the lessons that Jethro learned as he became a true *“friend of God”* like his forefather Abraham. Jethro had been a priest of Midian throughout his life, worshipping the Supreme Ail, or El Shaddai of his fathers to some extent. He provided an open and welcoming home for Moses, a place where Yahweh could suitably train and prepare that man for the great work that was to come. We often think of what Jethro did for Moses, but we’ve also seen what Moses did for Jethro. By divine providence, no doubt, Jethro was given more perfect knowledge of the Way of the Tree of Life. He heard the news of the plagues and Israel’s mighty deliverance from Egypt with an inquisitive heart. He had an open ear as his son-in-law, Moses, gave him all the details of Yahweh’s Salvation. Thankfully, his hearing ear led to a faithful heart. Therefore, we have just read of his confession of faith including an acknowledgment of Yahweh as the One True God and Deliverer. We have seen him as he offered sacrifice and came into the covenant, and then was welcomed into fellowship with the family of God. We hope that this account has strengthened you in some way; for each of us who have been baptized has followed a similar path - confession, baptism, and fellowship. So now may we all, like Jethro before us, walk as living sacrifices, ever looking for the day when our deliverer from death will be here at last and we can eat and drink anew with him in the Father’s Kingdom.

*David Bryan*

# THE BABYLONIAN EMPIRE

## *Successor of the Assyrians*

**I**n a previous Sanctuary Keeper issue, an article was presented regarding an introduction to Nebuchadnezzar's Image. The article covered the Assyrian empire's rise and fall and complete destruction. This was the beginning of



the Kingdom of Men that would lead to the return of Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God. That first Kingdom came to power 900 years before the birth of Christ. The last of the kingdoms of men will continue 2000 years after the birth of Christ. This is a vast amount of time. This tells us that God has established a long-term plan to bring about the events that will be perfect for the return of His son and the establishment of His Kingdom. While we look for the return of Christ to be very soon, we should not be discouraged if it does not occur when we believe it should. God will send His Son back only when the time is exactly right and all nations are stationed appropriately. *“For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.”* (Heb. 10:37) We must keep in mind the bigger picture and what the point of studying all this is: the end result. Dan 2:44 - *“And in the days*

of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a Kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the Kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms (which Kingdoms? The ones we are studying about) and it shall stand forever.” As we study the details of this prophecy don’t forget about God’s ultimate objective. Each of the significant events that occur during the time periods of the kingdom of men is a chess move by God to steer the nations in a particular direction so that they remain on a collision course with His final purpose.

We ask our readers to look up and read Dan 2:37-38, 4:10-16, 7:4.

Babylon succeeded the Assyrian Empire. Assyria finally fell for their wickedness and for touching God’s people. Despite their wickedness, despite God using Assyria as his instrument of punishment against his people, it was still wickedness and an abomination before God for anyone to come against his people and touch the apple of his eye (Zech. 2:8). Assyria was a beast of the earth, brutal, vicious and uncaring of the things of God. It was not only because of the brutality with which Assyria treated God’s people, but also with the way they treated God (2 Kings 19:10-13). These were very blasphemous people, animalistic, without regard to anyone or anything holy. So God put them down by the hand of one who could be made to respect that which is holy.

Consider 2 Kings 20:16-18, Jer 24:8-10, 25:8-11. As we can see from these passages, God’s people were to be punished for the same reason that Assyria was punished. God’s own people refused to listen to His words and obey them, so God sent the Babylonians. Now according to the prophecy of Daniel’s first beast, the lion was not as bestial under Babylonian rule as it was under Assyrian rule. Does history agree with this? Yes it does. As we will read, the Babylonians were certainly interested in the benefits that the land of the Fertile Crescent could supply. They were very interested in building up their kingdom and making it something worth living in rather than going out to conquer again and again and again as the Assyrians had to. In short, the Babylonians were easier masters to live under, though they were still masters.

To demonstrate their kindness in comparison to the Assyrians, let us read 2 Kings 25:6-7. Consider the actions the Assyrians would have taken in comparison to this. The Assyrians would have flayed the sons and would have made something from the skin and then severed the king’s head and put it on display in Nineveh. Here, the sons were slain, but not with the significant torture as the Assyrians would have done. The King’s eyes were put out without any more torture than having to

watch his sons die; if that even registered as emotionally damaging to a king such as Zedekiah. He was then brought to Babylon to live out his days (Eze. 12:13). This was far more merciful treatment than he and his people would have received from the Assyrians. Yet, the Babylonians still maintained the animal side of the lion as demonstrated by these horrific actions. On one hand they seemed merciful in comparison to the Assyrians, but on the other they were quite barbaric in relation to how we ought to treat one another in Christ. The greatest example of a man's heart being placed in the beast comes from Nebuchadnezzar himself (Dan 4:34-37). However, as it is foretold earlier in the same chapter, the heart of the beast would return to this creature and it would be put down for returning to the ways of its ancestors.

So onto the history. How did the Assyrian fall make way for its more humanistic cousin, Babylon, and what became of Babylon?

## 626 - 605 B.C.

In 626 Nabopolassar, a Chaldean, rebelled from under Assyrian rule. Nabopolassar (concurrent with Josiah, Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim) who had named himself king in Chaldea, took Babylon in 626 amidst confusion and angst in the Assyrian Empire following the death of Ashurbanipal in 627 B.C. If we remember, Ashurbanipal was the last strong king of Assyria. He had setup one of his sons as co-ruler with



*Cylinder seal of Nabopolassar, from Babylon.*

him in 630 B.C. After Ashurbanipal's death, one of the army generals named himself king, but this co-ruler quickly put down his rebellion in 625. One of Ashurbanipal's other sons took Babylon and named himself king there but the native Chaldean tribes revolted under the lead of Nabopolassar. Nabopolassar seized the throne at this time and in naming himself king of Babylon he began the Neo-Babylonian Empire. For the next three years while the two sons of Ashurbanipal fought between themselves over who would rule the Assyrians, Nabopolassar settled into the city and consolidated his position. In 623, the son who had named himself king of Babylon defeated and killed his brother at Nippur of Babylon. This allowed him to now focus his power against Nabopolassar. Hampered by the civil war and unrest in Assyria, the Assyrians could not overcome Nabopolassar, and so they fought for 7 years. In 619 Nabopolassar took Nippur, a major Assyrian hold in

## THE BABYLONIAN EMPIRE

Babylon. In 616 Nabopolassar was still in control of a large portion of southern Mesopotamia. At this time Assyria had lost control of all of its colonies that had taken advantage of the internal strife in Assyria and had broken free from its rule. Nabopolassar attempted to attack strongholds in Assyria in 616 B.C. but was unsuccessful due to the remaining strength of Assyria. All the while, the king of Assyria was unsuccessful against Nabopolassar due to the civil wars being fought in his own country. Assyria, essentially, tore itself apart from the inside out. In 615, Cyaxares, ruler of the Medes, Persians and Parthians, attacked Assyria and took key cities. In 614, Cyaxares, in accord with the Scythians and Cimmerians, took Assur, a major Assyrian strong-hold. Nabopolassar had no confederacy with these armies, or any part of these victories. In 612, Nabopolassar, finally making a league with Media, Persia, the Scythians and the Cimmerians, took Nineveh and killed the king, the son of Ashurbanipal. The army general then became king and was extended a peace treaty by Babylon, but he rejected it and fought his way out of Nineveh, lodging in Harran. This city was taken in 608 B.C. by Nabopolassar and his allies, and in 605 B.C. the last of the



*Remains of the defenders of Nineveh*

Assyrians were defeated at Carchemish. From 609-605 B.C. Nabopolassar and his son and successor, Nebuchadnezzar II, drove the Egyptians, Greek mercenaries and Assyrian remnants from Syria, Asia Minor, Northern Arabia and Israel. At the end of his reign, Nabopolassar had secured most of Assyria, though the northern reaches were held by the Medes. However, the Babylonians did not seem to be bothered by this at this time and spent their time rebuilding in southern Mesopotamia.

We have some details on Babylonian culture that are pertinent to how they were viewed as a kingdom and why they succeeded in a way the Assyrians did not. Babylon quickly went back to its ancient roots for practice of tradition and law. 900-1200 years prior to this time the Babylonians had an empire that only lasted for the time period of one of its kings. His name was Hammurabi. Hammurabi was an Amorite who



*Figures at the top of the stele "fingernail", above Hammurabi's code of laws.*

had extended his rule over Mesopotamia. Hammurabi built a great legal system to govern his country and its evidence is found in a statue with inscriptions called the Hammurabi code. This code consisted of 282 laws that ranged from how to deal with theft and injury to wages paid for certain professions, to liability for a product (such as a house that later collapses), to family relationships and one that addresses judges who make an inaccurate judgment. One of the biggest surprises in the code is that it suggests the presumption of innocence in the accused and that two parties may present evidence, indicating that some form of court was in place. Consider this as laying the foundation for humanism and the elevation of mankind. Without God in the mix, man can govern himself. This is the system that Babylon was striving to return to.

They brought back the old Akkadian languages even though Aramaic was the every-day tongue in the land. They brought back much of the Sumero-Akkadian culture as well. Expressions from 1500 years prior were brought back in Akkadian inscriptions along with words from the long-unspoken Sumerian language. Even the manuscripts were adjusted in appearance to look like they were from an older time. Art work and certain architectural finds were treated with great respect and even worshipped. While these were fleshly things that the Babylonians were striving after, consider a lesson that we might learn from them that is best phrased by Jeremiah 6:16 - *"ask for the old paths..."*. The Babylonians were striving to learn from their past when there was a successful Babylonian empire, to restore that and to build on it. This is a lesson from which we can learn; one that Jeremiah says Israel rejected. They came by that honestly (1 Kings 12:6-11). This is the behavior that Israel had been exhibiting since they came out of Egypt. Instead of following God and promised success, they chose to follow the flesh and guaranteed disaster.

Babylon superseded the Assyrians deportation strategy by primarily taking the ruling class and nobles from the land. They were generally

treated well and some if not many were given roles of leadership or advisor-ship within the Babylonian kingdom after being educated in Babylonian custom. This led to greater peace amongst the nations they conquered. Their own people were advising the king on matters relating to their own culture which led to better treatment of the people and thereby greater satisfaction amongst the subjects. This means of using people from all nations and cultures to advise the nobles of Babylon is what caused it to become the seed of the Image Empire and the kingdom of men. It used people of all religious backgrounds. If the Babylonians were anything, they were superstitious concerning gods. They did not want to offend any god and thereby they set out to understand and respect them all. This caused them to bring in and incorporate many different kinds of religions into their world, even if they did not worship them. Nebuchadnezzar is a great example of this as he certainly was aware of who the God of Israel was, though he did not worship him exclusively. This is the base element that developed thousands of years down the line into "*Mystery Babylon the Great, The Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth*" as recorded in Revelation 17. This new empire of Babylon became a nation growing and expanding not only in territory, but also in agriculture, economics and art. Large tracts of land were opened up for cultivation. Peace (as unseen by the Assyrians) and imperial power made it possible to provide the resources to expand irrigation systems and build an extensive canal system. Large estates were setup as payment for government officials. Entrepreneurs were brought in to run the estates, from which they took a cut from the income while locals were bound to the land and worked as well as paying rent to the land owners. City life also grew dramatically during this time. What made this period of Babylonian history (world history) so much more successful than prior epochs? Again we would point to their ability to learn from history, at least in the years of their first two kings: Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar.

### **605-562 B.C.**

Nebuchadnezzar II (concurrent with Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin or Jeconiah and Zedekiah) made a marriage with the daughter of the Median king, solidifying an alliance and making peace with the Medes, despite the Medes possessing land north of the Babylonian controlled territory. Nebuchadnezzar was the longest reigning king of Babylon, ruling over it for 43 years. Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Cimmerians and Scythians, former allies during the battle of Carchemish where they defeated the last of the Assyrians. The Egyptians had asserted dominance over the Levant region following the fall of Assyria (II Kings 23:30-34 occurred in

609 B.C. Josiah was killed, Jehoahaz took his place, Necho captured him and took him to Egypt, setting up Jehoiakim in his place) Nebuchadnezzar pushed the Egyptians back across their borders soon



*An engraving with a royal inscription of Nebuchadnezzar II*

after the battle of Carchemish (Jer. 46:2 This happened in 605 B.C., the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign) 2 Kings 24:6-7. The time of this push by Babylon against Egypt began around 605 B.C., directly after the Egyptian defeat at Carchemish. II Kings 24:1. Jehoiakim was his servant three years. When Nebuchadnezzar attempted to push into Egypt proper and failed, the Israeli and Phoenician territory became unstable and revolted (II Kings 24:1). Jehoiakim changed allegiance back to Egypt and Nebuchadnezzar went back into the region to subjugate the people. This second subjugation appears to have been around 598 B.C., three years after

Nebuchadnezzar went to fight against Egypt.

Please refer to 2 Chron. 36:5-10, II Kings 24:1, 10-16, Dan 1:1-2. The common line from each passage is that the vessels from the house of God were carried away. However, these do not all relate to the same event. Daniel was likely taken to Babylon in 605 when Jerusalem changed allegiance to Babylon after Egypt was defeated at Carchemish. After a few years of battling Egypt, Babylon's empire was a bit uneasy and there was rebellion in the Levant region including Judah. Babylon did not make it to besiege Jerusalem for a few years but several nations plagued Jerusalem with battle as seen in 2 Kings 24:2. During the siege it would seem Jehoiakim died. Likely as an attempt at peace, his body was thrown over the wall to the Babylonians as seen in Jer. 22:18-19. This was seen as a victory over Jehoiakim as it is interpreted in 2 Chron. 36:6. The siege did not stop with Jehoiakim's death. As the siege went on, Jehoiachin decided to surrender and came out to the Babylonians as recorded in 2 Kings 24:12. At this time Zedekiah was set up as king of Judah as stated in 2 Chron 36:10. Initial contact with Jerusalem occurred around 605 B.C. while the next contact did not occur until 598 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar puts it this way: "The seventh year (of Nebuchadnezzar-599 BC.), in the month Chislev (Nov/Dec) the king of Babylon assembled his army, and after he had invaded the land of Hatti (Syria/Palestine) he laid siege to the city of Judah. On the second day of the month Adar, (16 March) he conquered the city and took the king

(Jeconiah) prisoner. He installed in his place a king (Zedekiah) of his own choice, and after he had received rich tribute, he sent (them) forth to Babylon.” The next major military campaign of Nebuchadnezzar was also against Jerusalem and began in 590 B.C., or the 9<sup>th</sup> year of King Zedekiah’s reign ending in 587 B.C. in the 11<sup>th</sup> year of his reign (2 Kings 25:1-2). This was despite King Nebuchadnezzar making Zedekiah swear by God his submission to Babylon (2 Chron. 36:13). This time Nebuchadnezzar would raze the city and carry away every one of power and prominence that could revolt from under him. II Kings 25:1-12, II Chron. 36:11-21. After Jerusalem, from 586-573 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar turned his attention to Tyre which expressed joy at the defeat of Jerusalem, thereby incurring the wrath of God which was expressed through a war with Babylon (Eze. 26:2,7). Following the war with Tyre, Nebuchadnezzar turned to Egypt as depicted in this historical account from Babylonian writings: "In the 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar, king of the country of Babylon, he went to Mitzraim (Egypt) to wage war. Amasis, king of Egypt, collected [his army], and marched and spread abroad" (Eze. 29:17-20). After this campaign against Egypt, Nebuchadnezzar returned to Babylon to rebuild. From this time on he focused on his city and his kingdom with fewer wars being waged. He completely rebuilt Babylon, which had been devastated in the last years of the Assyrian empire. He constructed temples with great care and hanging gardens as well. He built a stone bridge to connect the two sides of the city as well as an underground passage.

In 562 Nebuchadnezzar died and his son Amel-Marduk reigned for two years (562-560). He is called Evil-Merodach in Scripture (Jer. 52:31-34). He made changes in policies that were apparently unpopular, with the elevation of Jehoiachin from prison likely being one of them. This earned him an assassination by his brother-in-law and successor, Neriglissar, in 560 B.C.

Neriglissar (560-556): This king campaigned against Cilicia who had threatened Babylonian interests and was a more stable ruler than his predecessor. He is mentioned as a Babylonian prince in Jer. 39:13. Neriglissar’s son, Labashi-Marduk, took the throne in 556, but was deemed unfit to rule due to his very young age and was murdered in the same year he ascended to the throne.

Nabonidus took the throne in 556 (reigned 17 years until 539). There are no writings that give him claim to the throne by blood. He stated himself that his heritage was insignificant. His mother was likely a temple priestess. However, based on what is written about his son in Daniel 5, it may be that this king was actually a child of



*Nabonidus in relief showing him praying to the moon, sun and Venus (British Museum)*

Nebuchadnezzar's. On the other hand, the root for the word "father" is also translated as "forefather". It is not always applied literally, but could be figurative as well. In other words, in referring to his "father, Nebuchadnezzar", Daniel may have just been relating Belshazzar to Nebuchadnezzar as a prior and founding king of the Empire over which Belshazzar was now regent. Nabonidus took great interest in the city of Harran and some have suggested that he was actually of Assyrian heritage because of this. His reign was most notable for his excavations and he has been called the first archeologist. He excavated a few temples in

different cities and spent time restoring them to their former glory. He also attempted to date artifacts he found in order to try to guess the age of a particular temple, although he ended up being off by some 1500 years.

His biggest mistake as a ruler seems to be that he moved several Babylonian gods from their places of worship into Babylon which caused unrest amongst the people and gave Cyrus the ability to spread propaganda throughout Babylonia, claiming Nabonidus was unfit to rule.

Nabonidus was away much of his reign and he allowed his son Belshazzar to rule in his stead. Belshazzar had led Nabonidus' armies and performed well, but was a poor politician. Before Cyrus invaded, Nabonidus came back to Babylon and left Belshazzar regent while he himself marched an army to meet Cyrus. This army was quickly defeated and Cyrus continued to march on Babylon.

Belshazzar returned the heart of the beast to the lion (Dan. 4:16), excised the heart of the man and exhibited the same attitude the Assyrians had towards the God of Heaven and Earth. If he did truly have Assyrian blood in him through his father, then this comes as no surprise. This earned Babylon its downfall by the hand of the Medo-Persian

Empire. This conquering was prophesied only hours before it occurred (Dan 5:25-31). Thus the Babylonian tree of Daniel 4 was hewn down in 539 B.C. after occupying only 65 years of the image empire.

Perhaps it was the already dominating power of Persia that is behind the writing of “UPHARSIN,” or, “PERES” on the wall. PERES being an obvious allusion to Persia, but Media still being a fading power causes Daniel to make mention of them as well. Cyrus the Great had already subjugated Media, but their alliance was peaceful and upon the downfall of Babylon Cyrus allowed Darius, the last Median king, to take the throne. Darius was already an old man at this time and for this gift he gave his daughter to Cyrus as a wife with the Median kingdom as her dowry upon Darius’ death. This was likely already going to take place, so the custom was a bit redundant and unnecessary, but culturally relevant all the same.



*Relief of Cyrus with traditional Egyptian head gear*

Lord willing - the next article in this series of historical depiction of the Kingdom of Men will focus on the Medes/Persian Empire.

*Paul Kuipers*

**NOTE** - *Our readers should realize that the various historical reference materials used for the events in this article may have differing dates depending on the source of information. The intent of these articles on the ancient beginnings of the Kingdom of Men is to show how God rules in the Kingdom of Men and how He brings all events to align with His Plan and Purpose for His creation. - SK*

Thus the Lion-Man became the symbol of the Kingdom of Babylon so long as the government continued in the family of Nebuchadnezzar; which with all its faults was more human than that which it succeeded. - Exposition of Daniel, p. 11

# APOCALYPTIC VISIONS OF GLORY

*“Worthy Is the Lamb”*



## *Revelation 5*

### **Review & Introduction**

The 5th chapter of Revelation is a continuation of the Apocalyptic vision that is revealed in the 4th chapter and which was considered in our last installment of this series. To briefly summarize, we considered:

- A throne set in heaven, with one sitting upon the throne represented by the stones of jasper (spirit) and sardine (flesh) - in other words Deity manifest in the flesh through the instrumentality of Christ.
- A rainbow (the sign of The Everlasting Covenant, and the process of redemption through its colors) surrounding the throne which gave off an emerald like hew. As green is representative of vegetation, we see the spiritual refreshing of the coming Age and the ending of the Gentile drought in regard to the accessibility of Truth to nourish the nations. Such will be the result of the spiritual rains of truth, righteousness and blessing that will fall upon the earth at that time.
- Along with the vision of the throne are included the symbol of the Twenty Four Elders (those who share with Christ the priestly and administrative duties during the Millennial Age.)
- We also see a “sea of glass”, representing the nations at peace under the feet of He who sits upon the throne.

## WORTHY IS THE LAMB

- There are what is referred to as Four “beasts”, or as better translated - “Four Living Creatures”. Here we find another representation of the Cherubic figures described in the Old Testament. As we find it here, it is another representation of the glorified saints; but in this application the saints in fiery, military manifestation subjecting the nations to a peaceful end.



In the 8th verse of the 4th chapter the Cherubic figures cry out *“Holy, holy, holy, LORD God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come”* (vs. 8). In others words *“Most Holy”* is in reference to Christ who putting off the flesh through sacrifice, resurrection and and gaining immortality has passed into this Most Holy state. He has passed through the 3 stages of that which was represented in the Tabernacle - the courtyard, the holy place and then through the veil into the most holy to be in the very presence of the Heavenly Father in the perfected condition. He is here revealed with the title of Yahweh Elohim of Armies, or *“he who shall be mighty ones of armies”* in regard to the subjection of the world (Isaiah 6:3).

The symbol of the Twenty Four elders cry out - *“Thou art worthy, O LORD, to receive glory and honour and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created”* (vs. 11). Those fully enlightened see in the glorified Christ the perfect manifestation of the Father mentally and morally in regard to purpose and righteous character, as well as physically in regard to nature. Due to his purpose and the plan of God and his ability to overcome the sin flesh nature to ascend unto the right hand of his Father - he is truly

worthy. He is not simply worthy to “receive”, but as the original word for “receive” indicates - to “TAKE” the glory and honour and power that is reserved for him as the Promised Seed of the Everlasting Covenant. This creation that he is responsible for is the spiritual creation, the new heavens and a new earth of the Millennial Age. This is indicated in Colossians 1:16 *“For IN Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created IN Him and for Him.”*

Our series continues to be titled “*Apocalyptic Visions of Glory*”, and though the future role of the saints finds reference in the 5th chapter, the vision of glory of this chapter takes a more comprehensive look at the glory ascribed to Christ as the *slain Lamb* and the honor due him as the *“Lamb slain from the foundation of the world”* (Rev. 13:8). It is this aspect of the vision that we will focus upon in this 5th chapter.

## A scroll with seven seals

Here the vision continues, but we are now introduced to a scroll (Greek - *biblios*) sealed with Seven Seals. We understand this scroll to contain events that were to transpire as they related to the Ecclesia and the Roman habitable - soon to begin transpiring shortly after the Apocalyptic record was given to John in 96 A.D. There is a difficulty in this portion of the vision in that we see those things that are not to be manifested until the Millennial Age described as if they were in existence then. From our vantage point, almost 2,000 years after the Apocalyptic vision was revealed, much of what is contained in the Seven Sealed Scroll has already been unsealed. Yet, the future symbology of the Twenty Four Elders, the Beasts as well as the Christ-Throne are all seen in the vision to be concurrent with the initial unloosing of the seals. But, from our vantage point looking back, the majority of the seals have already been unloosed, and we still await the future manifestation of the saints in their redeemed priestly/administrative/and military roles in the Kingdom Age So - past, present and future all seem to be blended together with one another in this vision.

So why are the redeemed and glorified saints indicated as present for the presentation and unloosing of the scroll whose contents would begin to unfold in world events at the end of the 1st Century A.D., and almost 2,000 years before the glorification of the saints is to be a reality? It will help us to remember that God reveals things *“that be not as though they are”* (Rom. 4:17). We also understand that the comforting words that are being revealed are for the sake of the saints - 2nd Cor. 4:15,

*“For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.”* The vision itself is directed towards a final end, when Christ is surrounded by his redeemed saints and the entire world itself gives homage to Christ as King as well as his sacrificial role as the Lamb of God. At that time the contents of the Apocalyptic message will no longer be transpiring history but fulfilled history. It is only then that all of this can be looked back upon as an entire picture and with full appreciation and understanding of what was and what will be. In revealing His Plan and Purpose through symbolic language, God is not limited by time constraints. He also is not limited to describe His plan and purpose by one or two symbols. Such is perfectly sensible in that we also see varying symbols used to represent the same characters, but yet with different characteristics emphasized. The Elders and Living Creatures both point to the redeemed saints, but with different points of emphasis regarding their future roles. In this 5th chapter we also see Christ represented by three different symbols - 1) He who sits on the throne, 2) The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, and 3) A Lamb that has been slain.

But again, our focus is upon the worthiness of the Lamb, who in this chapter is given homage by three specific groups - all who sing songs of praise and blessing.

### “Who is worthy?”

The question is asked in verse 2 - *“Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?”* In other words, who is worthy to reveal and set in motion the various events that lead to the final manifestation of God’s Kingdom on earth - Eden restored? The answer by the angel making the declaration was quite frank (verse 3) - *“no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.”* (All things surrounding the completion of God’s Plan and Purpose were dependent upon Christ’s victory over the sin flesh nature - a mission that all others were unqualified to fulfill.)

This was extraordinarily distressing to John, as we are told that he wept. He was one, as described by Christ in his beatitudes, who *“hungered and thirsted after righteousness.”* When the Apocalyptic visions first began to be revealed to John, we are told that he was *“in the Spirit on the Lord’s day”* - or in other words in deep contemplation of the glorious events and circumstances that would accompany Christ’s return to the earth. This indicates to us how extremely important these matters were to John. John’s whole focus was on future things,

*“seeking first the Kingdom of God.”* (How much do we “hunger and thirst” after these very things? - a lesson to soberly consider.)

But comfort was provided this faithful Apostle! - *“Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book and to loose the seven seals thereof.”* Christ is represented as both the **“ROOT and OFFSPRING of David”** - Rev. 22:16. How can this be? Christ is also referenced as David’s Lord, when in fact Christ was his offspring (Psalm 110:1; Matthew 22:44). Christ is the epicenter of all that David was promised and all that he hoped for. Everything that David hoped for comes from God’s promises, and it would be through a Promised Seed (promised to Eve, Abraham as well as David) that God would manifest Himself and provide the confirmation of the Everlasting Covenant and the means of future salvation so that their Hope might be realized. This “root of David” would prevail in overcoming sin’s flesh, and therefore would proceed in his role of carrying out his appointed mission to not only overcome the Diabolis in his own nature, but continue to carry out the role in the subjection and the destruction of the Diabolis for his brethren and in its various manifestations - individually, politically and ecclesiastically. All future destruction of the diabolos influence to the very pinnacle of the destruction of death itself is dependent on this individual.

This leads us to yet another symbol that is immediately introduced. Though still speaking of the same individual we have reference to him who *“stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.”*

This is of course Christ, in sacrificial representation. But please note that the Lamb **STANDS**. This is he who overcame the power of the sin flesh nature by being “holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners” to receive **resurrection and immortality**. This is he who is found worthy to unseal the scrolls. He is the great victor of sin’s flesh in his own self - opening up the way of salvation to all others who connect themselves with his sacrifice through faith. John the



baptist declared that he was the “*lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the kosmos*”. Peter proclaimed to the believers that they were not redeemed by silver and gold, “*but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*” (1st Peter 1:19). And then there is Revelation 13:10 where Christ is referred to as the “*Lamb slain from the foundation (Strong’s - conception, founding) of the kosmos.*” There is no great mystery here as to the application of the symbol of this Lamb to Christ, but there is great mystery for the Apostate world as to his nature and the meaning of his sacrificial work - he who was both Son of Man of the Adamically condemned sin’s flesh nature, but also Son of God and the manifestation of Deity in both character and purpose.

In *The Apocalypse Epitomized*, it is pointed out that the term “lamb” (Greek “amnos”) is used at least 28 times in the book of Revelation in relation to Christ. This “lamb” (to name a few examples) is represented as *the centre of divine rule on earth* (Rev. 5); *the means of divine love and salvation* (Rev. 7); *the means of victory for others* (Rev. 12); *recorder of the book of life* (Rev. 13, 21); *conqueror of the beast* (Rev. 14); *conqueror of the Papal confederacy* (Rev. 17); *the bridegroom of the saints* (Rev. 19); *the foundation stone of the New Jerusalem* (Rev. 21); and *ruler of the Coming Age* (Rev. 22).

There is also mention here in this symbol of the Lamb of seven spirits, but there is only one Spirit or source of power that emanates from God. Here we see Spirit in sevenfold manifestation, or that of completeness. The Seven horns represent power - or the absolute power deemed unto Christ by God. The seven eyes is the ability to see - so we see here perfect spiritual discernment (Isaiah 11:3).

## “He came and took the book”

The Lamb is seen taking the scroll out of the hands of he who sat upon the throne. The Lamb takes the scroll from the King. So, in a sense, Christ takes the scroll from himself. In natural terms this seems to be an impossibility, but when speaking symbolically all things are possible in order to express the clear and detailed spiritual lesson being conveyed by Deity.

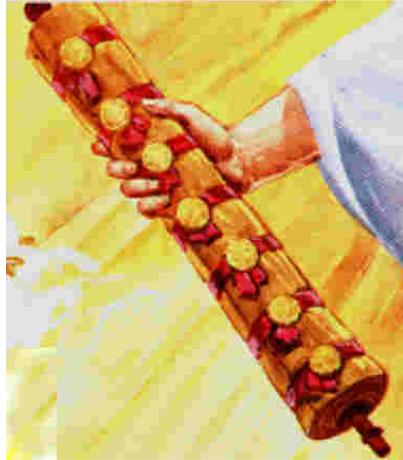
One is Deity manifest in the flesh, and the other of Christ in sacrificial manifestation. The Lamb indicates victory over sin’s flesh, while the King demonstrated the means of that victory through the manifestation of God through His Son. Christ was prophetically referenced as Immanuel - *God with us* (Isaiah 7:14). And we read in 2nd Corinthians 5:19 that God was “*in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.*”

There could be no victory of sin's flesh; there could be no salvation without the intervention of God upon the affairs of man. God is in fact the source and provider of salvation to the fallen Adamic Race, through the means of His Son (Isaiah 59:16). The life, glory and power that Jesus receives comes only from the Father. A similar relationship exists in Daniel's vision of chapter 7 where the "Ancient of Days " and "The Son of Man" both apply to Christ.

## “They Sung a New Song”

Therefore, as a result, we have a “new song” sung by the four beasts and the twenty four elders - again, this being a representation of the saints. Here, the prayers of ages of saints are answered. A “new song” is sung - not in regard to time but in regard to quality or significance.

It is not until all of these things are entirely fulfilled that the glory of these things can be fully understood and appreciated. As a matter of knowledge, we have these things revealed to us now, but it is not until they are fully realized and experienced through the blessing of immortality received that the true depth of appreciation and understanding can be realized by the saints: ***“Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and***



***hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation: and hast made (“madest”) us unto our God kings and priests\*, and we (they) shall (actually present tense) reign on the earth.”***

Not until Christ is in the earth again will these things be fully realized as a matter of fulfilled fact - but they are spoken here as though they were already experienced some 2,000 years ago. But at that time, when these things are fulfilled experience, the worthiness of the Lamb and the benefits of his sacrificial work will be fully comprehended as a matter of real and tangible experience.

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\* “priestly kingdom” or a “kingdom of priests”

## WORTHY IS THE LAMB

The angels then are spoken of as declaring the worthiness of this Lamb. Though they have no role in the leadership of the future Age, they will play a partial role in the initial return of Christ to this earth. This will be the realization of their 6,000 year part in both the creation of the Earth and man in its initial Eden state, and the initial stages of Eden restored. So, they have a vested interest in the completed work. They join the Living Creatures and Elders to proclaim - *“Worthy is the Lamb That was slain to receive (take) power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”*

Then, knowing that we are speaking of yet a complete and future fulfillment, we are told in the 13th verse that *“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.”*

It is not until the end of the millennium that this is fully realized. This is of course not literal, but speaks of that day when the *“knowledge of the glory of the LORD fills the earth as the waters cover the sea.”* Then and only then will the work of the Lamb be complete, when all sin and death has been completely abolished; and when the work of Christ, as God manifest has put all enemies under his feet. Then, with his work complete, he turns the Kingdom over to his Heavenly Father.

Truly - *“Worthy is the Lamb!”* May we be so blessed and filled with so great a joy to be able to recite this glorious song, being made unto our God *“a priestly kingdom”* to reign on earth!

*A Thomas*

## RULING BY DIVINE RIGHT

The rulers of that Age will not reign by hereditary descent, nor by universal suffrage, but by “Divine Right”, which is not the case with present kings, who only rule by Divine permission. Instead of being mortal and fallible, the future rulers will be immortal and infallible; and they will have for their head one who “For the joy that was set before him, endured the cross”, and “despised the shame”, and has since become “the Captain of their salvation”. Then can it be said that *“The Kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever”* - (Rev. 11:15).

J.J. Andrew - *“Jesus Christ and Him Crucified”*

# THINGS NEW AND OLD FROM THE TREASURES OF THE SPIRIT



By F.R. Shuttleworth

## REFERENCE TABLET No. 20 *THINGS JEWISH*

- The Bible is wholly a Jewish book, the New Testament as well as the Old Testament.
- Jesus and the apostles, as well as Moses and the prophets, were all Jews. - (Rom. 1:3; Phil. 3:5)
- The adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the law, and the service of God, and the promises, are all intensely Jewish. - (Rom. 9:4)
- The past Old Testament kingdom of Moses and the future New Testament kingdom of Christ are equally Jewish. - (Isaiah 2:1-4; 9:6,7; Matt. 2:6)
- The hope of the gospel is Jewish - (Acts 28:20; 26:6; Gal. 3:8)
- Salvation is of the Jews. - (John 4:22)
- The promised land is Judah's land. - (Isaiah 26:1; Acts 7:4,5)
- The heir of the world is a Jew. - (Psalm 2:7,8; Rom. 4:13)
- The future universal government of the world will be Jewish. - (Isaiah 24:23; Zech. 14:9-16)
- The promises of eternal life, inheritance, and glory, by a resurrection from the dead, are all in the line of a Jewish family. - (Gal. 3:16; Acts 26:7,8)
- Gentiles aspiring after eternal salvation in the kingdom and age to come, can only become heirs by adoption into the family of Abraham. - (Ga. 3:21)

- Gentiles who are aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, are without Christ, and without hope, and without God, and, therefore, Atheists. - (Eph. 2:12)
- The restoration of the Jewish Theocracy in the hands of the Messiah and the twelve apostles is the only hope of the world - (Matt. 19:28; Acts 1:3-6; 15:16; Mic. 4; 5:2,7)
- Gentiles can only be saved by becoming Jews inwardly by the faith of Christ and Abraham. - (Gal. 3:9; Rom. 4:16)
- Through the fall of the Jews, salvation is come to the Gentiles, while the receiving of them will be life from the dead. - (Rom. 11:12-15)
- Yahweh's inheritance, when He chooses Jerusalem again, is Judah, in the Holy Land. - (Zech. 2:12)
- Yahweh's eyes are on the Jews' land from the beginning of the year to the end of it. - (Deut. 11:12)
- The Jews' land is the glory of all lands, and the best geographically situated seat of universal government in the world. - (Ezek. 20:6; 48:35; Jer. 3:17)
- The Jews' land is only to be trodden down until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. - (Luke 21:24)
- The Jewish nation is the eternal nation, and Jerusalem the Eternal City, since Yahweh will make an utter end of all other nations. - (Jer. 30:11; 46:28; Psalm 2:9; Dan. 2:44)

## REFERENCE TABLET No. 21

### *CHRIST'S STANDARD*

- Christ's standard of love is to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and your neighbor as yourself. - (Matt. 22:37)
- Christ's standard of knowledge is to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He sent.
- Christ's standard of perfection is to be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect. - (Matt. 5:48)
- Christ's standard of forgiveness is seventy times seven. - (Matt. 18:22)
- Christ's standard of meekness and truth is himself. - (Matt. 11:29)
- Christ's standard of goodness is God. - (Matt. 19:17)
- Christ's standard of life is that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceeded out of the mouth of God. - (Matt. 4:4)
- Christ's standard of brotherhood is the doing of his Father's will. - (Matt. 12:50)
- Christ's standard brethren and sisters, to whom he will give the kingdom are:
  - The poor and contrite in spirit

- They that mourn and weep
- They who are meek and lowly
- They who hunger and thirst after righteousness
- They who are merciful and tenderhearted
- They who are of a pure heart and mind
- They who are peacemakers
- They who are persecuted for righteousness sake
- They who are falsely reviled and evil spoken against. - (Matt. 5)
- Christ's standard of judgment is according to every man's work. - (1 Cor. 5:10)
- Christ's standard charity is longsuffering, kind, non-envious, non-boastful, non-inflated, non unbecoming, non-selfish, non-suspicious, non-hasty, non sympathetic with iniquity, rejoices in the truth, covers all things, believes all things, hopes for all things, endures all things, and, withal, never fails. - (1 Cor. 13)
- Christ's standard of friendship is that men do whatsoever he commands them. - (John 15:14)

*August, 1872 - The Christadelphian*

## EDITORIAL FLYLEAF

We have enjoyed time this summer at our annual fraternal events, such as the Arkansas Bible School, the September Gathering (at Martinville, AR) and for a few - the Mt. Sherman, KY Gathering. We have appreciated excellent classes, lectures and discussions with those of like precious faith. It is imperative that we continue the never ending struggle of maintaining both our individual ecclesial lampstands as well as our collective lampstand, though we are a remnant scattered about.

We have and continue to tread a most difficult path in the attempts to preserve the "old paths", according to "the straight and narrow way", in these very evil days of doctrinal and moral confusion as well as Laodicean apathy. We have not been promised an easy way, and as we near the return of our Elder Brother, considering the examples of the faithful of old (e.g. Hebrews 11), we should not expect it to get any less difficult. Did Noah give up? Clearly not, as he continued to grow in favor before God in the midst of a perverse generation. This is the necessary trial of our faith. How will we respond to the challenge? - With despondency, despair or even petty strife? If we know we have THE TRUTH, let us move forward with renewed courage and strength "for the joy set before us." - S.K.