

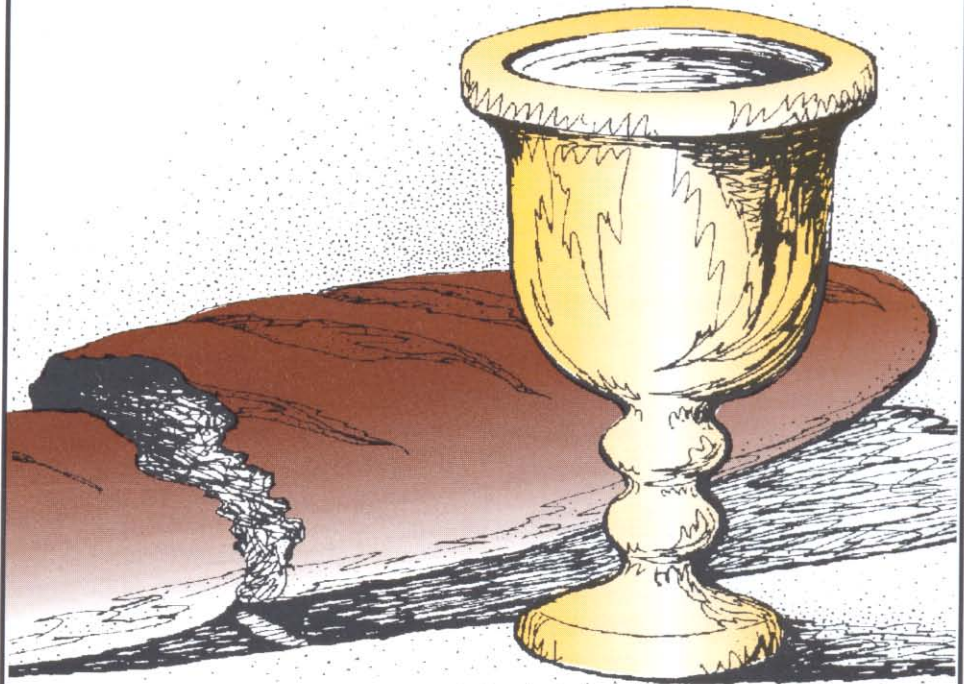
Latter Rain

Magazine of the Christian Israelite Church

Winter/Spring/Summer 2000 (No. 24)

*"...Moses gave you not that bread
from heaven; but my Father giveth
you the true bread from heaven.
For the bread of God is he which
cometh down from heaven, and
giveth life unto the world"*

John 6:32,33



Eat and Drink to Live!



From the Inkhorn...

This edition of Latter Rain looks at Relationships. One article considers how an understanding of The Trinity can give us a glimpse of how we should treat each other whilst the next establishes a basis for a personal relationship with God. Paul felt a responsibility because of the relationship he had developed with the Thessalonians, and that article challenges us to share our beliefs with others. Debug Your Bible gives some background history about Israel - the man and the nation. In this we see God's Power exalted and it confirms God's overall direction in world events. Perhaps not unexpectedly each article contains a Christian Israelite perspective bringing out some aspects which may not normally be thought about.

We trust that in reading and studying the issues raised each will be challenged to examine and enhance their personal relationship with God.

We apologise for the lateness of this issue, and hope that future issues will follow on time.

Index

God Like Relationships - The Trinity as a Basis for a Relationship Model	2
Hymn No. 100	5
Food to Live By - The Bread of Life	6
Psalm 110	9
Relationship and Responsibility - A Study in 1 Thessalonians	10
The Responsibility is with Israel	13
It's All in the Name	14
Puzzle Page	16
Debug Your Bible - Israel - A History	17
Statement of Belief	23
Expand Your Bible - Relationships	24
God Is Love	25
John the Baptist	26
Vegetarian Recipes	28

*"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees,
hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint
and anise and cummin, and have
omitted the weightier matters of the
law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these
ought ye to have done, and not to leave
the other undone"*

Matthew 23:23.

God Like Relationships:

The Trinity as a Basis for a Relationship Model

- both Temporal and Spiritual

Many of us have a concept of, or try to understand, the theological aspects of the relationship between the Beings of the Trinity. However there is a more 'human' element that can be gleaned from examination of these relationships. This article looks at these relationships and what we can learn from them.

God created mankind to form a relationship with Himself; life is based upon relationships, and these can mirror our faith by reflecting the relationships shown by the Father, Son and Holy Ghost towards each other. The basis of man's relationship with God and with others, ideally, should be based upon that reflected in the triune nature of God, and it is when humanity departs from this type of relationship that problems occur. With the rise, especially in the twentieth century, of humanist beliefs, and many people believing in the power of the self, Christian belief has taken a battering. Gradually, however, the wheels are turning, and humanity is now starting to understand where it has gone wrong, deviated from the preferred course, and lost the focus. It is when humanity attempts to reflect the glory of God by actively demonstrating, through the indwelling of the Power of the Holy Ghost, an empathy and understanding for others over and above self, that society can become more fruitful, prosperous and contented.

The concept of the Trinity is unique to Christianity – no other religion or culture in the world has a triune God. The Trinity is "above reason but not beyond it". The plurality of the Trinity is not inconsistent with Unity; but rather the Trinity works so completely effectively because its unity is gained through diversity of function for each aspect. To an observer, the Trinity could be said to be based on 'mutual grace' relationships between the entities – which 'mutual grace' should be the objective of our relationships in this world. Mankind was created to have relationships; God Almighty is a relational God and as such expects to have a relationship with His creation. Mankind should

mirror this aspect of creation by each person not isolating themselves or cutting themselves off from others, but having a relationship with their family, friends and environment, all the time reflecting some of the original creation edict to be in relationship with the Creator and His creation.

God Almighty is manifest as Father, Son and Holy Ghost – all dwelling and co-existing together in *agape* love, for the mutual betterment of each other. *Agape* is the Greek word used for a special type of love. It is self sacrificing, giving love, never self centred, always radiated outward to another party. Man was created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27) prior to the Fall, and as part of that image, 'male and female created he them', dual spirits, co-existing together in peace and harmony. Unfortunately, mankind chose a different path to that which God had directed, and as a consequence of the Fallen condition lost that original dual naturedness (male and female co-existing as one) and became 2 separate entities, with individual minds. Still, the basis of this identity, male and female, continued to mirror the original creation to some extent, ie. each male and female are still made up of three parts: spirit, soul and body.

Father, Son and Holy Ghost exist in this relationship of *agape* love where the welfare of the other parties over rides their concerns for themselves. Just think of the implications if Christians could understand and grasp the true nature of this relationship and reflect it in their everyday lives. If all Christians could experience the *agape* love as demonstrated within the Trinity in which they believe, and as shown to humanity most explicitly in the actions and gifts of Jesus Christ, then we would not have the problems with poverty, starvation, famine, etc., that many nations experience today. Granted there are small pockets of believers who help those less fortunate than themselves, but, when you look at the number of nominal Christians in the world today, and then the number actively helping and aiding those less

fortunate, there is still vast room for improvement. Unfortunately, one of the results of the Fall was that humanity was left to make its own decisions, and whilst the Bible is there as a guideline, ultimately the decision is left up to the individual. By understanding the special relationship within the Trinity, and accepting that we were originally made in the image of God, we see that putting others above self was and should still be part of our very nature.

The triune nature of God, though, has a definite order (Father, Son and Holy Ghost) which does not embrace subordination, but rather that each mutually exists because of the other, although each has a specific purpose and function which the other aspects respect and honour. The work of the Son showed and reflected the glory of the Father with the Power of the Holy Ghost, thus showing the necessary and effective combination of the aspects of the Trinity to achieve God Almighty's purpose.

Philippians 2:4,5 tells us *"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus"*. Jesus Christ took on the form of a servant, not a leader. Even amongst His own disciples, He washed their feet and demonstrated the humility and love which He wanted them to understand and adopt. But what did they do, they argued and wrangled amongst themselves over who was the most important, who would sit at Jesus Christ's right hand, etc. How frustrated Jesus must have been, but He didn't let that deter Him. He kept demonstrating meekness, humility, understanding in the hope that eventually they would understand the role of the 'servant' and adopt that function for themselves.

The early church demonstrated this type of humility – in Acts 4:32 we are told that *"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common"*. The early community realised that individually they could achieve little, but as a group working together with joint resources, they could accomplish a lot more. The early Church based its fellowship and belief on stewardship –

actively demonstrating the lesson that Jesus Christ wanted us to understand of servanthood to others. Frank Martin in his book *War in the Pews* says, "Ask judges how lawbreakers are best rehabilitated, and they will inevitably cite community service. When we're helping others – focussed on the needs and feelings of others instead of our own desires – we're happier and more content. And we're growing spiritually and emotionally as well." Teaching people to give of themselves is a lesson in humility and servanthood, but also in the gift of giving comes a lot of satisfaction for helping someone other than yourself.

In much the same way family life is also a reflection of the Trinity. Traditional families are made up of a father, mother and children, and within this relationship each member should have as their chief concern the welfare of the other parties, ie. the father's concern and love for his children and his wife, the wife's concern and love for her children and husband, and finally the children's respect and love for the parents that have raised them in a loving environment. Families work when they reflect this part of the nature of the Creator, and families fail when self centredness, greed, etc., prevail and members of the family become concerned with their own pleasures and their own advancements. This comparison between the Trinity and the family makes even more sense when the Holy Ghost is looked on as The Mother, a female spirit. The Holy Ghost can be seen as the nurturing, protective aspect of God which Jesus referred to as *"The Comforter"* (John 14:16 and 15:26) which temporally can be associated with the 'female' aspect of the Trinity. (See in addition passages such as Isaiah 66:10-13.)

The Church, as the body of Christ as well as the family of God, is one place that should always reflect the divine nature and personality of the Trinity – unfortunately many do not understand the concept, or blindly ignore it, thus creating conflict within the pews of many congregations. Churches are there for the glory of God, not man, and when they reflect the glory of God, they work, but when they reflect the glory of man, they spiritually suffer a slow and painful death.

Experience has shown that for a Church to be successful and to continue growing, leaders within the Church should not be authoritarian, or dictatorial, but rather adopt more of a servant attitude than they had had as basic Christians before they became leaders. The greatest lessons in leadership and humility were demonstrated to us by Jesus Christ, the High Priest. All Christians, and Church leaders in particular, whatever religion it may be, should emulate this type of servanthood in the administration of their duties and their service to the Church. Very often leaders are seen to adopt an authoritarian or dictatorial style that makes it unpleasant for members of the congregation – many members of congregations have left churches because of other members' strict adherence to "traditions" (some not even biblically based) and other less important elements of teaching or theology. Experience has shown that effective leaders are always listening to the people – the heart beat of the body of Christ – and including their concerns in the decision making process. The Church, as an organisation, is like a living, breathing organism, not a stone or brick structure. As a living organism, if a Church is not growing it is sick – and when something is sick it requires healing or fixing. So too with any church group (and all churches collectively form The Church) at a local or corporate level.

As the temporal manifestation of the Body of Christ, the Church should be actively reaching out to the world with an overriding message of hope and compassion as well as any additional specific message God has given to a particular group. Christians in this world should actively demonstrate God's mercy and grace to an unbelieving world around them. Churches should be active in evangelising, that is spreading the message to those who do not know it, taking seriously the words of Matthew 28:19-20: *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen"*. This applies both to the message of salvation

as well as the hope of redemption. It couldn't be stated much more clearly, and as 'active' members of the Body of Christ we should be encouraging non-believers to come to know His message and His Love, and also be prepared to share any deeper understanding that God has given us with interested believers.

For churches to be effective ministers to Christ it is absolutely essential that members within the congregations of these churches love one another. Jesus Christ Himself gave this essential ingredient as being vital to followers in His Name, *"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another"* John 13:35. Taken the other way, this means that if we don't love other members of the Body of Christ, the Church, then we can in no way claim to love Christ, or at least expect to develop a relationship with Christ because we have failed at the first step. We must actively demonstrate the love as manifested in the Trinity to become members of the Body of Christ and allow God's Power to transform our lives and our faith to conform with His standards and ideals. Believers must refocus their thoughts, not on themselves, but on the spiritual development and physical needs of other members of the Church.

The Church should also mirror within its walls the same commitment as is demonstrated in the Trinity. The Church's commitment to its many facets and endeavours should be just as deep and pronounced as the commitment shown between the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. In the book *War in the Pews* Frank Martin uses the following example, "I once heard someone describe the difference between *involvement* and *commitment*. 'It's like when you order bacon and eggs for breakfast', he began, 'You know that the chicken is involved in the process, but the pig – he's committed!'" How many of us can say the same for our Church lives, are we actively demonstrating God's Will and Christ's presence in our deeds, actions and motives? Many of us need to take a good hard look and perhaps change some of our ideas or ways of doing things. As a community we could benefit greatly by looking at the Trinity and the unity yet diversity of its components. This gives a

lesson in understanding and appreciation of each individual's talents and the diversity between members, yet showing the essential unifying relationship each individual has when they become members of the Church.

Thus the lessons to be learned from considering God as being a Trinity are significant for society at large, and even more significant for individual believers. We, as Christians, must mirror the mutual grace relationships as seen within the Trinity, to be effective agents on this earth for the spreading of God's Word. Christians must keep their focus outwards, not on themselves, for only then are they attempting to do the will of the Creator and live for the betterment of others. Christians must help those less fortunate than themselves to manifest the example of Jesus Christ with the message of humility and servanthood that accompanies this life style. Jesus Christ came and showed us how to live. He came in the image of "*sinful flesh*" (Romans 8:3) thus

allowing that mankind could better have a relationship with Him, and also that mankind could better see and understand (if they wanted to) how to live their lives with His blessing. We were created to be in relationship with our Creator and His creation, and this relationship should be based upon mutual grace, not on selfishness. It is when relationships are taken on this mutual grace understanding that peace, contentment, fulfilment, etc., become part of our lives, for we have then adopted the lifestyle and attitude we were meant and created to have.

Bibliography

Frank Martin, **War in the Pews, A Foxhole Guide to Surviving Church Conflict**, 1995, InterVarsity Press.

Millard J. Erickson, **God in Three Persons, A Contemporary Interpretation of the Trinity**, 1995, Baker Books.

Notes as taken during 1998 Conference "God the Trinity & Australia Today"

Hymn 100

(John 6:31-35; Romans 8:16,17; Matthew 7:14.

**I am the true and living bread,
Christ Jesus in the gospel said,
To nourish Isr'el day by day,
While walking in the good old way.**

**Christ Jesus trod that narrow path
Which leads man out from dreaded death,
Which to the anointed was revealed,
To be possess'd when Isr'el's seal'd.**

**Still Isr'el feed, that they may grow
In grace and stature here below,
Till to Thy fulness they attain,
And in that glorious state remain.**

**Heirs of their God, and joint-heirs made
With Jesus Christ, the Living Head;
Immortal life receiv'd from Thee,
Who art the true and Living Tree.**

Food To Live By -

A Personal Relationship

*"For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world....**I am the bread of life:** he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.... Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. **I am that bread of life.** Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world"* John 6:33, 35, 47-51 (emphasis added).

An Appropriate Analogy

Here we have the topic of the 'bread of life' covered in John chapter 6 on what must have been for Jesus a very busy day. Not only busy physically, but also exhausting emotionally. Jesus had just performed the miracle of the 5 loaves and 2 fishes with the feeding of the 5,000. We all remember this story, not least for the fact that only 1 small boy, amongst 5,000 people was prepared to try to share his lunch. He can't have been the only one in 5,000 who had some food, but he was the only one there, including the disciples, who had any faith that Jesus could do anything with this bread and fish to solve the dilemma – the feeding of the hungry. Allegorically it is a prelude to prepare us for what is to come - the bread (loaves) multiplied out of all proportion with the meat (the fish) to show spiritually the power of God through Jesus Christ upon believers and what was to come with the spread of Christianity. It is also a sign of the lack of charity amongst the audience – they were prepared to take from Jesus what they wanted (miracles, healings, etc.) but were not prepared to share of their own. As a day, it must have been very disappointing for Jesus. His disciples (Philip and Andrew) had shown their lack of faith in questioning His ability to feed the masses, even though God had fed Israel in the wilderness for 40 years when coming out of Egypt. Their doubt must have wounded Him deeply – then suddenly shining through this gloom came one small

voice of belief and faith.

Later He walked on water before the disciples on His way to Capernaum, again having to deal with His disciples' lack of faith and understanding of knowing who He was. The multitude had kept following Him, hoping to see more of His miracles – the same multitude that He had fed earlier, were still demanding attention, more miracles, more healings, more food. Jesus tells them in no uncertain terms that the multitude is seeking Him for the wrong reasons - he is not a travelling sideshow. They are seeking Him for physical sustenance, but what they require and need is spiritual sustenance – spiritual bread, not physical. *"Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."* John 6:26, 27.

What is the Bread?

Thus the background is laid to gain an understanding of what is meant by the 'bread of life' and how to obtain it. How many of us in our association with Jesus Christ continue to look for physical signs of His presence, rather than for a spiritual filling which comes from the indwelling of God's Power, or God's influence within our hearts. Here is a lesson for all of us, that we must seek with an open heart, for a closer relationship with Christ, not reliant upon

The Bread of Life

physical miracles and manifestations, but rather on a peaceful existence for our spirits in a troubled world.

Disappointingly, the people were looking for signs with which to prove Jesus' authority and power. They had preconceived ideas on what the Messiah should be, and do. Jesus did not meet with any of these preconceived ideas. From His birth onwards there was going to be nothing about this man that was going to conform to what was expected. Instead of a militant Messiah, here was a man saying that you should love one another, even your enemies. Many of the themes were alien to the mainly Jewish listeners present.

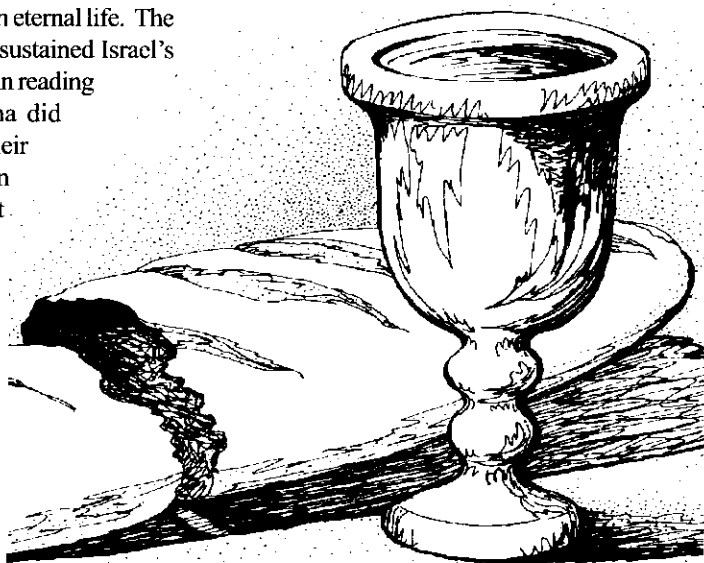
Jesus used references to the Old Testament to convey the intensity of the meaning of what he was saying. He reminded the listeners of the importance of the manna that God had given their ancestors when they were travelling in the wilderness. Jesus made His point quite clear – it was not Moses who gave the Israelites the manna on which they survived; God was the provider of the manna (Exodus 16:15; John 6:32). But, He points out, Israel of old did not obtain life from the manna. We have to eat of (believe in) the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to obtain eternal life. The manna from heaven may have sustained Israel's physical life, but as can be seen in reading the Old Testament, the manna did nothing to sustain or nourish their spiritual appetite. Building on this analogy, Jesus tells us that we are given the opportunity through Him to eat of the living Bread and have everlasting life.

Who may eat the Bread?

So to whom was Jesus talking? In this passage, he was speaking predominantly to the Jewish people that were following Him. However, the important thing here, is that the message of the spiritual

bread was clearly offered to all who would hear and believe in Him. His reference later to the offering of His blood would have been another familiar point for the Jews of His time as it related to the sacrificial lamb that was such an important part of the Passover Feast, at which the blood of the lamb was shed for the sins of the people. Those listeners with spiritual understanding would have understood perfectly the significance of what Jesus was saying. Christians have also realised and will realise the importance of this statement and the sacrifice of Jesus as being the fulfilment of many Old Testament prophecies.

In Genesis 14:18 we read about Abram's encounter with Melchizedek, after he had gained victory in battle. How did they celebrate? See if this sounds familiar - *"And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God"*. As early as Genesis we have the symbolism of the bread and wine, a prelude to what would generally become known as the Eucharist, where the presence of the High Priest as intermediary between mankind and



God is represented – thus the concept of communion rather than being new, is found to be more ancient than we might have expected. The New Testament continues this theme, but this time the High Priest that mediates between God and us is Jesus Christ. Jesus presented Himself as the ‘bread of life’ that whosoever eats of this bread, not physically, but by faith, would receive eternal life. Jesus, although sinless, was just like you and I; God intended it that way as stated in Romans 8:3 *“God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh”*. He was not in the likeness of God, but in the likeness of ‘sinful flesh’.

You will also recall that Joseph (who is often held as a foreshadow or type of Jesus) in the time of famine gave the families of Egypt *“...bread in exchange for horses...”*. Joseph saved both the Egyptians and the Israelites from physical hunger (Genesis 47:17) as Jesus Christ would save the world from spiritual hunger through partaking of His sacrifice.

The Passover Meal

The scene with Melchizedek and Abram was also a foreshadow of what later became known as the Last Supper. Just as Abraham was chosen to mediate between God and His people, the 12 apostles were chosen to convey the message of the saving and redemptive power of Jesus Christ to the world. At the Last Supper (Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19) Jesus took bread and wine and offered it to the twelve for them to have *“in remembrance of me”*.

One aspect of this has always been a concern. There would have been more believers at this stage than just the 12 (for example Mary Magdalene, Martha, Lazarus, etc) who on occasions had demonstrated greater faith than the disciples had demonstrated up to that time. Why weren't the others invited to this last meal - evidence of their devotion was in many ways clearer than that of the disciples? The answer may lie in the fact that this was not a meeting for the world but rather this was a meeting between Jesus and His chosen apostles – the spreaders of His Word and Message. Just as Abraham had taken bread and wine with his High Priest, so the apostles had to take bread and wine with the High Priest of the New

Covenant - Jesus Christ. They had to partake of the sacrifice of Jesus before the crucifixion and resurrection so that they would understand what was happening when these events occurred. Even though Jesus had told them what was going to happen, they showed their doubt and scepticism - after all how many of us in their situation would have believed Him? *“For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners”* Luke 7:33-34.

The fact that the Apostles partook of physical bread and wine was only as a figure – note that the physical manna did not help Israel spiritually - rather it was symbolic. We are not trying to quench a physical hunger and thirst but a spiritual hunger and thirst which is a type of the physical. Look at the power of the Spirit of God working through the Apostles after the Resurrection as compared with before - the spiritual bread and wine will work miraculous changes in all who partake of it. As Jesus said in The Lord's Prayer, *“Give us day by day our daily bread.”* Luke 11:3.

Day by Day...our Daily Bread

Whether you believe in taking communion physically is not the point being considered here. Some churches do place more emphasis on the physical aspect of this rite whilst others emphasise the spiritual. Each approach is right in itself to God, so long as the ritual does not overtake the spirit of what is being done and remembered. The Christian Israelite Church is one Church that places the emphasis on the individual believer's own relationship with God. Who can tell anyone else how they should eat and drink?

1 Corinthians 11:20-28 appears, on first reading, to be contradictory with regards to eating the Lord's Supper. However, on reflection, Paul is telling the Corinthians that when they come together in one place to eat and drink, this itself is not the Lord's Supper. Then Paul goes on to detail what he received by direct revelation from Jesus Christ in regards to His last meal; *“For I have received of the Lord that*

which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come". Firstly readers are being told not to eat physically for the Lord's Supper, then they are given what many accept as a Commandment to physically eat of the bread and wine. It would appear from this that Paul is not speaking about a physical re-enactment of eating of bread and wine, but rather a spiritual imbibing of the spirit. If the cup is the New Testament then the bread should symbolise the Old Testament. With the advent of Jesus Christ, the leaven - which causes the bread to rise and grow which was not available at Old Testament times - can now be baked in the bread.

The Imperative to Eat

The bottom line is that we are all offered this 'bread'. All we have to spiritually is eat of it

- or believe in the sacrifice of Jesus - and we will gain spiritual life. Physically we can eat of it through obeying the instructions of God in the Scriptures leading to a life of obedience to His commandments. As Jesus said "If a man keep my saying he shall never see death" John 8:51, and "...he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever" John 6:58.

Unfortunately we don't have forever to make up our minds and commit ourselves to a belief in God and to the acceptance of the atoning value of His great gift to mankind - His Son. If we don't eat food physically, we will die, so too we must eat of this spiritual bread now, in this life, to gain eternal life - either in the resurrection or without death at Jesus' return. We cannot wait until we have entered the next to make up our minds, for then it is too late to set our goal! The sooner each takes the step to make the Power of Christ through Jesus an acknowledged and ever present part of our lives, and seek to grow in this relationship by regularly feeding on (eating of) the Word of God, the more meaningful our lives in this world will be, and as well, our eternity will be guaranteed.

Psalm 110

*The Lord said unto my Lord,
 Sit thou at my right hand,
 Until I make thine enemies thy footstool.
 The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion:
 Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.
 Thy people shall be willing
 In the day of thy power,
 In the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning:
 Thou hast the dew of thy youth.
 The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent,
 Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.
 The Lord at thy right hand
 Shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath.
 He shall judge among the heathen,
 He shall fill the places with the dead bodies;
 He shall wound the heads over many countries.
 He shall drink of the brook in the way:
 Therefore shall he lift up the head.*

Relationship and Responsibility

- A Study in 1 Thessalonians.

In this article we are going to look at the reasons why Paul wrote this first of his letters. Paul had established the Church at Thessalonica under great hardship, and now felt a responsibility to develop his relationship with the believers. We will look at the issues he was addressing in the light of the culture of the time, and hopefully gain a greater understanding of, firstly, the hardships and difficulties which Paul endured and overcame, and secondly, how much easier it is for most of us today to be Christians without the fear of persecution as has been faced by so many of our brothers and sisters in the faith over the centuries. However, in many countries even today, the persecution of Christians is still practised regularly, making the issues in this epistle not just pertinent in the 1st century, but pertinent to any Christian reader since it was written.

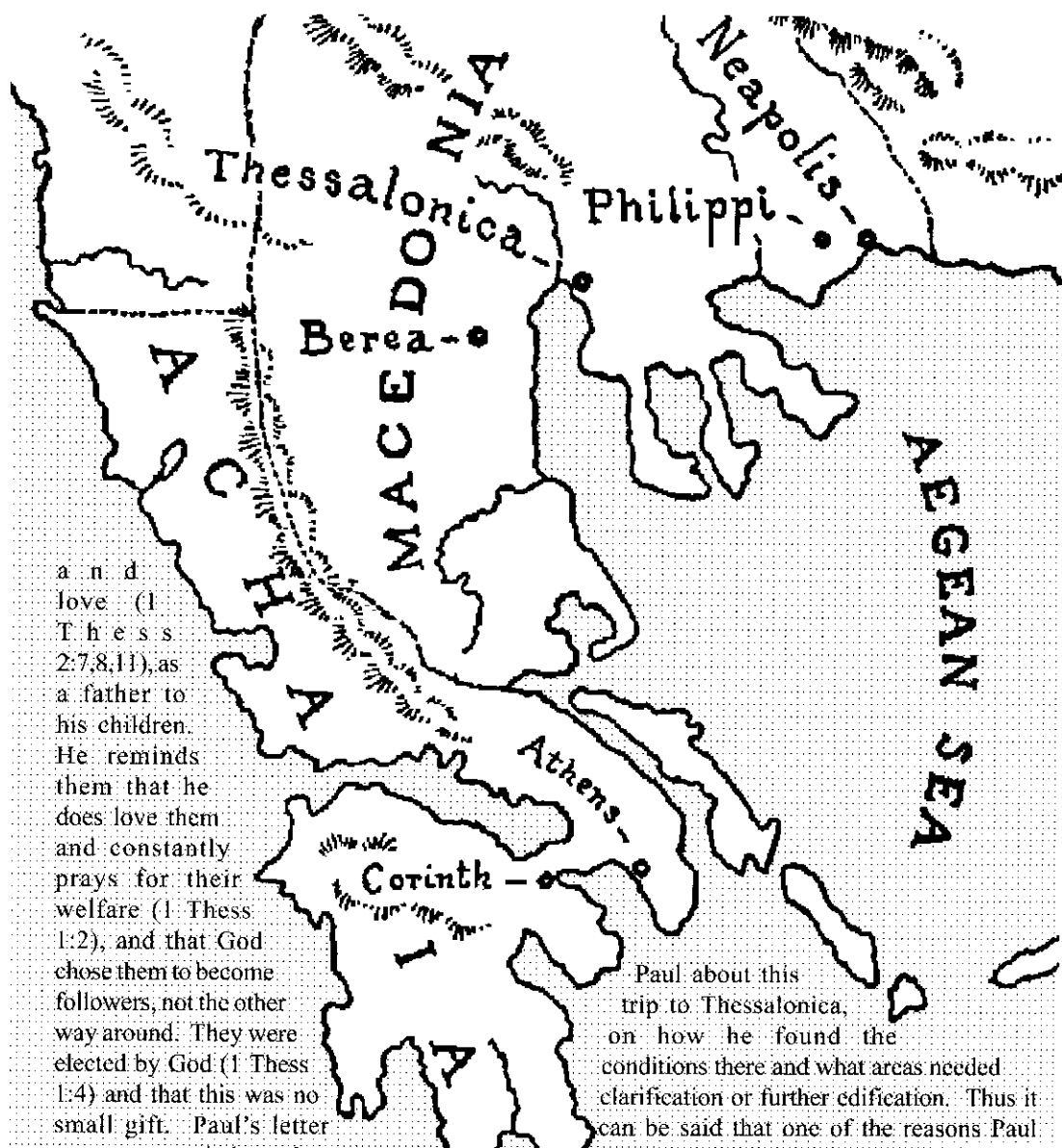
1 Thessalonians is a paracletic (counseling) letter designed to encourage and comfort. The letter was written to console and encourage, urging the Thessalonians to stand steadfast even when they were being persecuted (1 Thessalonians 1:6-7; 2:14-16; 3:4-10; 3:13-18). According to K.P. Donfried, "the overarching message of 1 Thessalonians is that God has chosen, elected, the believers in Thessalonica and that they, because the Gospel had been proclaimed to them in all power, have responded positively and joyfully, despite persecution, to this Word of God". "Moreover, from an epistolary perspective, 1 Thessalonians is what can be described as a 'thankful letter', in which 'approval is expressed, encouragement is given, and gratitude is shown". The three main themes of this epistle are: church government and organization; sound doctrine; quality of Christian living.

1 Thessalonians is, if not the earliest, one of the earliest of the Pauline Epistles - the only other epistle purported to possibly be earlier is Galatians. 1 Thessalonians is said to have been written from Corinth around 48AD-54AD, although some historians find justification for dating it as early as 41AD.

The letter relates to activities very early in Paul's ministry. From reading 1 Thessalonians with chapter 17 of the Acts of the Apostles, we can gain an outline of Paul's travels and where Thessalonica figured in his mission ventures. Strategically, Thessalonica was the bridge between the east and the west both in location and belief. Thessalonica was a Greek *polis* (city) in the early Roman Empire, and was also the Roman capital of Macedonia.

People from different regions came together to trade at Thessalonica. Religion in this area of the world was based upon the Greek gods and goddesses, which form had been adopted by the Romans from early times. Establishment of a Christian base here was very important and difficult.

Acts 17:1-10 supplies a summary of events that culminated in Paul's hasty departure from Thessalonica and the subsequent persecution that the Thessalonian converts would have endured. Paul had spent three Sabbath days with the Thessalonian Christians, and on the face of what he had fled from, he was obviously concerned, not only as to the welfare of the new Thessalonian converts, but also as to how clearly he had explained and elucidated the message of salvation through Jesus Christ, and the Parousia. *The Parousia* referred to the belief in the return of Jesus. Jealous Jews (1 Thess 2:14-16) had made Paul's life difficult whilst he was there and he was concerned how the new converts were faring in the face of stiff and often violent opposition. Thus he encouraged them to hold fast to the Lord despite the opposition (1 Thess 2:13-16). It could well have been these same Jews that were goading the converts by belittling and humiliating Paul in his absence. Another reason for the writing of this letter would be for Paul to defend himself against these spurious characters and their baseless accusations. Paul reminds them that it was this same types of people that goaded and persecuted Jesus Christ when He was in this world. "He doesn't care for you" seems to have been the Jewish catchcry. Paul's letter is full of parental concern



and love (1 Thess 2:7,8,11), as a father to his children. He reminds them that he does love them and constantly prays for their welfare (1 Thess 1:2), and that God chose them to become followers, not the other way around. They were elected by God (1 Thess 1:4) and that this was no small gift. Paul's letter serves as a reminder to these converts of these matters.

After leaving Thessalonica, Paul traveled to Berea and then on to Athens, gaining many converts on his travels. Whilst Paul was in Athens he sent for his co-workers in the faith, Timothy and Silas, who had stayed on in the city of Berea. After the general strife and discord that had occurred in Thessalonica, Paul was concerned about their welfare and so sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to see how the situation was and to report back to him. 1 Thessalonians, we presume (with much evidence within to support the idea), was written in reply to the letter or report that Timothy sent

Paul about this trip to Thessalonica, on how he found the conditions there and what areas needed clarification or further edification. Thus it can be said that one of the reasons Paul wrote this letter to the Thessalonians was in

reply to a report by his co-worker to the situation there, addressing particular areas in which many had voiced confusion and misunderstanding.

The report that came back from Timothy was a 'mixed bag' of good (1 Thess 3:6) and bad. The converts were holding strong, but there were areas of confusion particularly in regards to the *parousia* (the Second Coming), and the timing of this event, that were causing problems. Some members had died, either as a result of the persecution or from physical causes, and families and friends were concerned as to the state of these deceased believers and what would happen to them at Christ's return (*parousia*). An

understanding of the society of the time helps to realise why this was such a problem. Recent archeological discoveries reveal that the pagans of Thessalonica believed that 'after death no reviving; in the grave no meeting again'. Paul's letter attempts to put their minds at ease as he directly explains the Second Coming in more detail showing them that no one 'loses out' as such, all believers will be recognised and rewarded in Christ (1 Thess 4:13-17).

They had also, somehow, arrived at the conclusion that they did not have to perform any temporal labour because the second coming was so close. This would have placed great strain on the community at large with more people being in need of charity and assistance than was normal (1 Thess 4:11,12). This situation not only strained relationships economically but physically and emotionally as well. Paul addresses this issue by exhorting them to be self-sufficient, relying on nobody but God through Jesus Christ. They must earn their own wages and be subject to no man for their daily needs.

There were also problems with persecution, some of which could be attributed to the political situation at the time and the decided step these converts had taken to move away from pagan worship, idolatry, etc. Given the social and political climate of Thessalonica, the new converts would have had no easy task of adhering to their new faith. Under Roman rule, Thessalonians would have adopted the Greek gods and goddesses and the deities attached to that - there were even household deities to the hearth (*Vesta*), the store cupboard (*Penates*) and to departed ancestors (*Lares*) which were considered very important and actively worshipped.

On the Political scene, the Roman Empire had lost the Emperor Gaius Caligula in January 41AD whose level of sexual depravity and immorality is well recorded by historians for all to see. He was famous for phrases such as, "Kill him so that he can feel he is dying" and "Bear in mind that I can treat anyone exactly as I please". (Ref: *The Caesars*, Allan Massie.) Sexual debauchery, homosexuality, bestiality were all the order of the day from the Emperor down and society was spiralling downhill with

it. A new Emperor in Claudius may have quelled the more violent and lascivious side of his predecessor, but morally and sexually the empire stayed much the same.

The message Paul gave to these people would have been like chalk and cheese to the lifestyle they had been living. Many of the cults at the time had sexual practices totally opposed to the way as preached by the apostle Paul. Not only was it a massive change in lifestyle, but also a moral and ethical change, which was diametrically opposed to anything they had known or practised before. Paul realised that it would be difficult against this backdrop to live as Jesus Christ had demonstrated, but he exhorts his readers to stand firm as they have the greater prize. Paul addresses this issue by requesting that the Thessalonians abstain from fornication (1 Thess 4:3-7) and fraudulent dealings (which of course would include adultery, etc) and live a life of holiness, pleasing unto God.

As can be seen with the example of the persecution of Jason, many of the Thessalonians were intolerant to change, and saw many of the Christian ways as anti-Caesar and anti-establishment or against the status quo of the time. In a culture where emperors became gods and oaths of loyalty were given to various rulers

**This is my
commandment,
that you love
one another
as I have
loved you."**

-John 15:12

through intermediary gods such as Zeus, Aphrodite, etc., to adhere to Jesus Christ as your one and only saviour and king would have been not only breaking the law of the land, but tantamount to a form of blasphemy or traitorship. Paul knew that this change or adjustment in lifestyle would be fraught with dangers and wanted to reassure the converts of his abiding love and concern for their welfare, both spiritually and physically.

In chapter 5 Paul writes on how to live a holy life, what attributes a Christian should have and display, blanketed by the greatest commandment of all - "to love one another" (1 Thess. 4:9). Paul tries to leave the Thessalonians with the basic precepts of Christianity to apply within their community so they might grow and mature spiritually in Christ. Within the pagan atmosphere, of which they were socially a part, these principles would help them to adhere to their faith and strengthen each other in times of adversity and tribulation. He also reminds them again that they are in his prayers and are his chief concern. Thus Paul's letter shows encouragement and spiritual support to the Thessalonians even though he cannot be present physically.

As was noted at the beginning of this Study, most of the issues Paul raises are just as applicable today as when they were written. For those in Western societies the physical persecution is not as difficult, but the pressures to conform to godless mores in society are much stronger.

Paul's exhortation in Chapter 5 verses 23 and 24 still summarises the hope held by many believers today, and especially by members of the Christian Israelite Church: *"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."*

Is this also your prayer for your life – to be in the world but not of the world and to be kept alive till Jesus Christ returns?

Bibliography

- Boyd, Robert T.**, *Paul the Apostle, An Illustrated Handbook on His Life & Travels*, World Publishing, USA 1995.
- Boyd, Robert T.**, *World's Bible Handbook*, Iowa City, Iowa, World Bible Publishers, 1991
- Cornell & Matthews**, *Atlas of the Roman World*, 1982, Equinox Ltd.
- Demarest, Gary W.**, *Mastering the New Testament*, 1, 2 Thessalonians, 1979, Word Publishing.
- Donfried, K.P.**, *The Early Paul, The Thessalonians Correspondence*, edited by Raymond F. Collins, 1990, Leuven University Press.
- Massie, Allan**, *The Caesars*, 1983, Book Club Associates
- Morris, Leon**, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* revised, NICNT, Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Coy., 1991
- Vine, W.E.**, *Expository Commentary on 1 & 2 Thessalonians*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997
- Introduction to the Thessalonians Correspondences Review and Expositor*. 96 (1999)
- King James Version Bible.*

The Responsibility is with Israel

"And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends. Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones. And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God" Zechariah 13:6-9

It's all in the Name

What is your name? Yes, you have a Christian name and a Surname, haven't you? How did you get these names? Well, your Mum and Dad chose your Christian name because they thought it a good name, or, because they liked its meaning. There are names that mean "A gift of God" - perhaps your name means this and because your Mum and Dad believed you to be just that, they chose it for your name, or, maybe your Christian name has some other lovely meaning. Now, think of your Surname - this is your because it is your Dad's last name - if his name is Smith, then your Surname is Smith.

Your Church has a name too - what is its name? We read something about this in the Bible where it says, "*One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob, and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel*". God told us through the prophet Isaiah that these three groups of people would exist in the world today. Now, who are these people - are you one of them?

The first says, "*I am the Lord's*". Jesus said, "*Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well, for so I am*" John 13:13. The boys and girls who say they are the Lord's are Christians because they believe in Jesus Christ, and that He died on the cross for them and though they die, they will live again as angels when Jesus comes again. This group belong to all Christian churches.

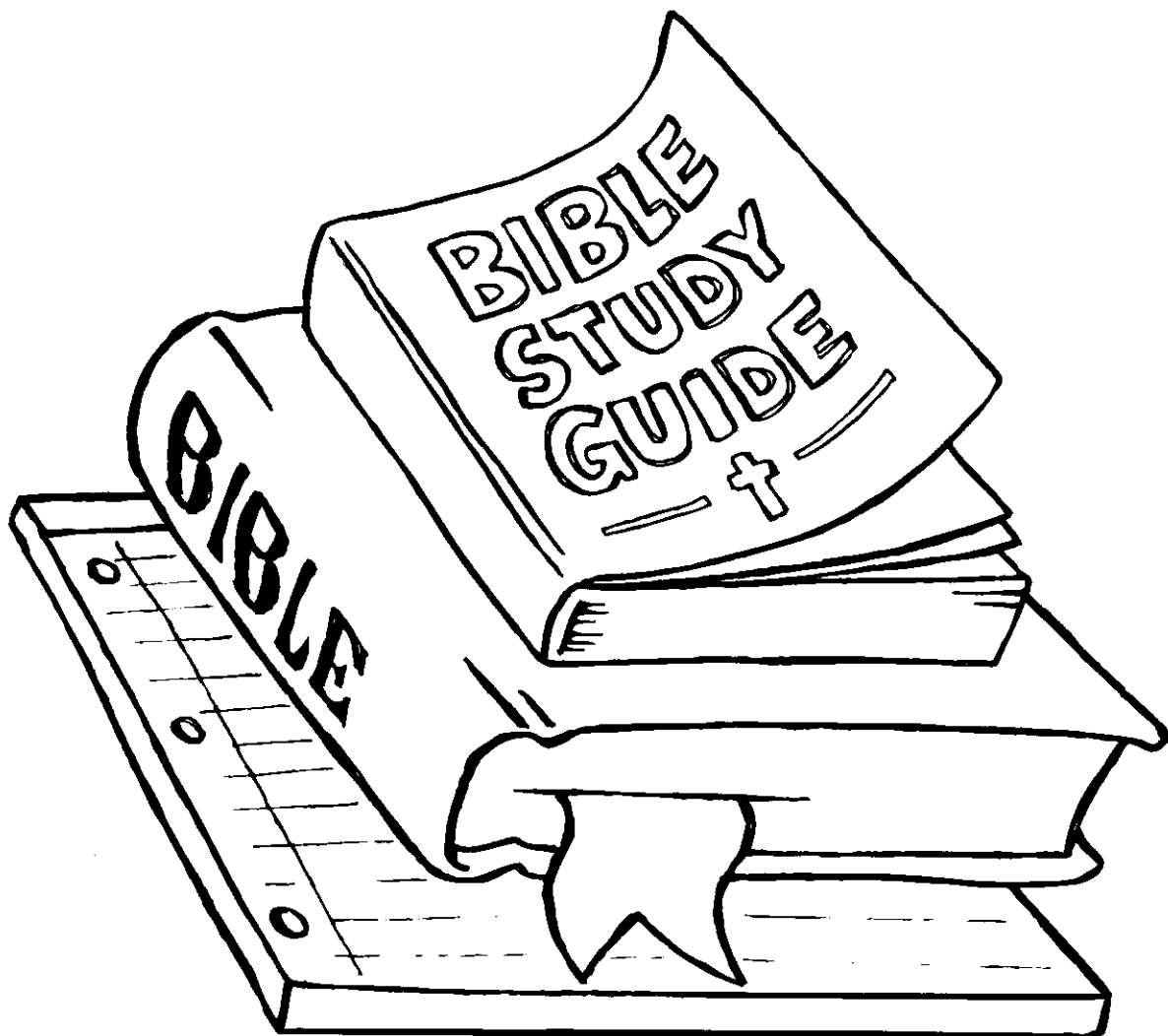
The second group of people call themselves "*by the name of Jacob*" and are descendants of Jacob (whose name was changed to Israel). These people are Jews and although they do not believe that Jesus is the Son of God, they do believe in God and follow the teachings of the Old Testament with its laws.

Now we come to the third group of people who "*subscribe with their hand unto the Lord, and surname themselves by the name of Israel*". So we see that these people also say they are the Lord's, so they are Christians, but as well as this they have the surname of Israel which tells us they believe in the keeping of the Laws of God. We

believe this group of people is known as Christian Israel - they combine the two faiths.

The Bible tells us of a greater reward that will be for those who want this closer relationship with God. Christian Israel ask for God's help, and that He will take away the sin from their bodies so that they will be able to do God's Will and so receive the many promises God has made to Israel. Jesus said, "*Be ye therefore perfect*" - He was and Christian Israel strive to follow His example.

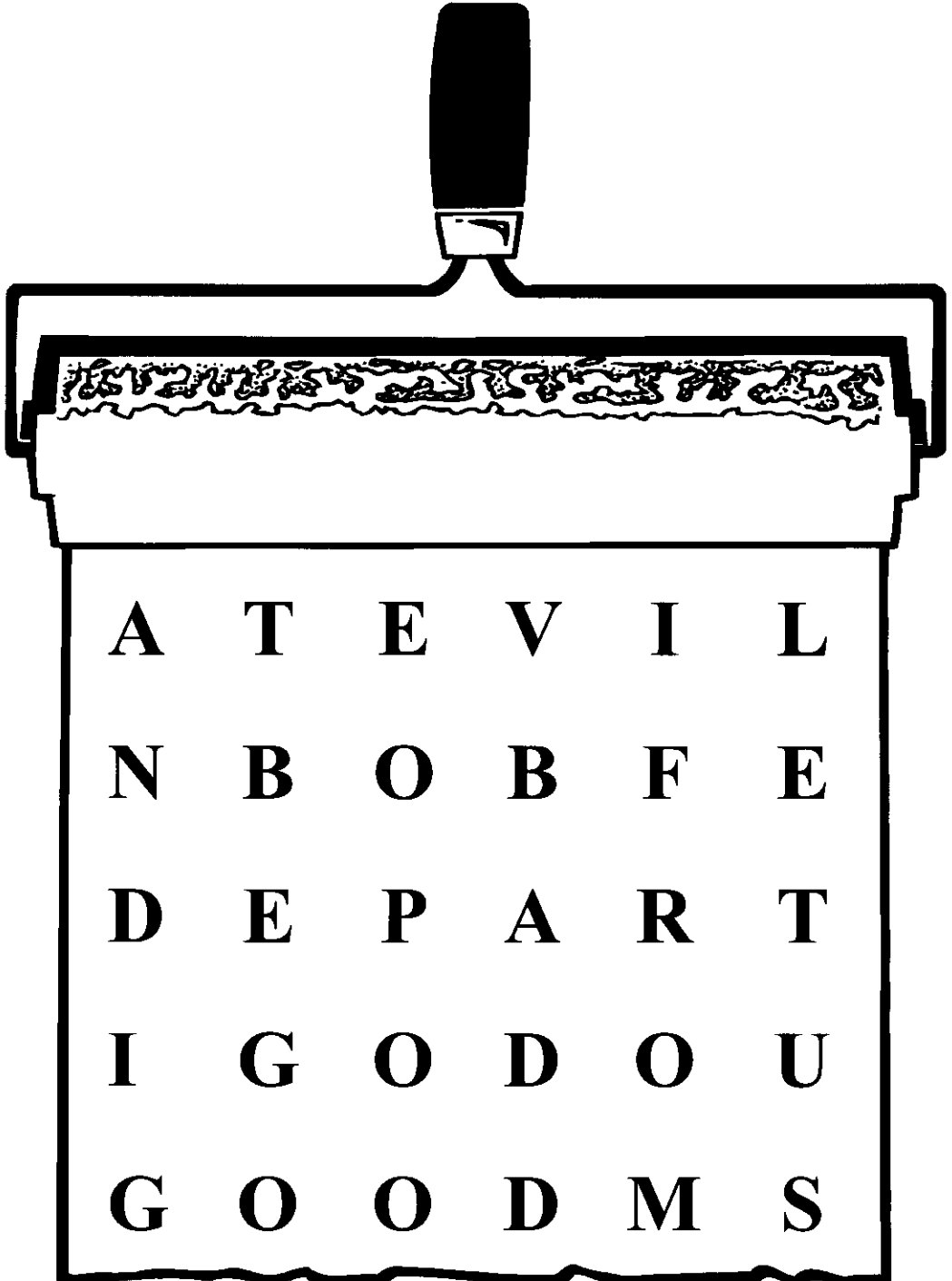
God has given us all the freedom to choose for ourselves in what way and in what church we serve Him. So my dears, choose well.



Puzzle Page

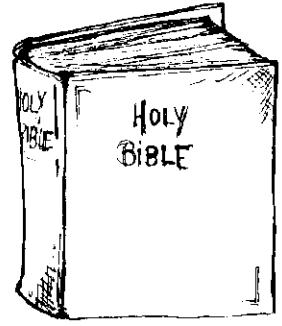
Depart from evil, and do good. Psalm 37:27

Find the words of the memory verse in the word search puzzle below.



Debug Your Bible:

Israel - A History



This is the first in a series of articles that will cover the history of Israel. This article looks at the birth of the Nation of Israel, the period of slavery in Egypt and the deliverance of Israel from Egypt on the way to the Promised Land. Future Debug articles will cover the history of Israel as a unified Nation, the division into two Kingdoms and the captivities and dispersion of the Northern Kingdom of Israel - the 10 tribes commonly referred to as the Lost Tribes of Israel, and the captivity of the Southern Kingdom – the 2 tribes who have continued their identity as “the Jews”.

To better understand what happened to Israel it helps to backtrack on some of the History to an understanding of the politics and social norms and customs of the time. There has been a trend in recent times, for theologians to write off the Bible as just a collection of anecdotes and fables. Through these articles we hope to show readers that many archaeological discoveries are proving and substantiating history as recorded in the Bible. Some of these discoveries in themselves are amazing. A time line is included in this article as a visual aid to the times to assist in understanding when the different events occurred.

Where Did “Israel” Come From.

The literal history of Israel started in Genesis 32:28 and 35:10,11, “*And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed*”, “*And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob, thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel. And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins*”. So Jacob’s name was changed

to Israel and he was given God’s promise that he would father a great and numerous nation. Jacob had 12 sons and at least 1 daughter (Dinah).

Israel’s sons with their mothers were:

To Jacob’s wife Leah:

Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar,

Zebulun

To Jacob’s wife Rachel:

Joseph and Benjamin

To Leah’s handmaid, Zilpah:

Gad and Asher

To Rachel’s handmaid, Bilhah:

Dan and Naphtali

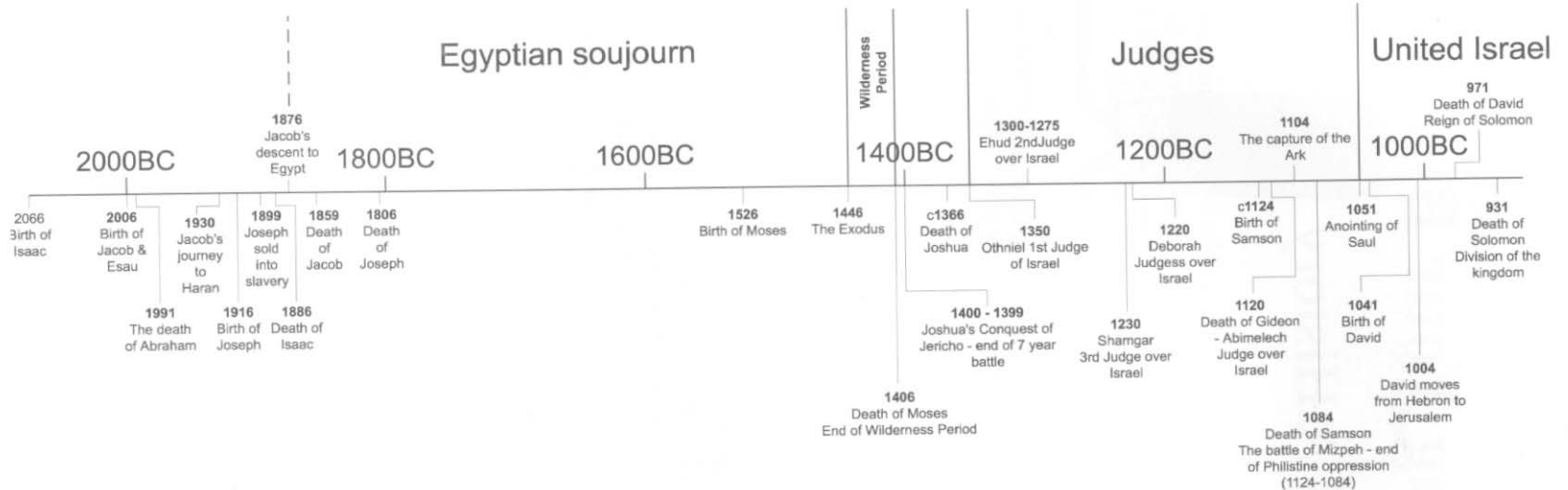
The city of Shechem which rises to prominence in future articles was established about the time Jacob left Padan Aram and returned to Canaan to eventually dwell in Shechem. After the rape of Dinah by Hamor’s son, also called Shechem, Levi and Simeon took revenge on the Hamorites by killing all of the males in the town, Hamor and Shechem included. Jacob left this place and travelled south to Bethel (which he named for here he had seen the presence of God) and then further south toward Aphrath (or Bethlehem). It is at this point in the journey that Rachel dies and Jacob places a memorial stone in her name. Jacob then moves on to his father’s homeland at Hebron. It is while Jacob is living here that his favourite son, Joseph, is taken by his brothers and sold to a group of Ishamelites, as a slave. Joseph is only 17 years of age. Chronologically the year would be c1899BC.

Joseph Receives the Birthright

We know from Genesis how successful Joseph was in Egypt and of his close alliance with Pharaoh. Jacob eventually had to take his entire family down to dwell in Egypt due to famine. In due course Jacob (Israel) aged, and wanted to pass his blessing and birthright to

History of Israel: 2000BC - 1000BC

18



his heir. The word birthright used in the Bible comes from the Hebrew word *bekorah* meaning status of a first born. Due to various indiscretions the structure of the Sons of Israel had changed, and Israel chose to pass the blessing and birthright on to Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh.

"And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near unto him. And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the firstborn. And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth" Genesis 48:13-16.

The Younger Greater Than The Elder

And so the firstborn status was altered whereby Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh were blessed by their grandfather, but with this blessing Jacob also swapped the boys' positions - the elder become the younger and the younger the heir of the birthright. Thus Ephraim the younger became the elder. This process should sound familiar for it is similar to what happened between Reuben and Joseph, and Jacob and his brother Esau.

Symbolically there must be something here - the younger son overtaking the elder son. Joseph, in particular is often seen as a type of Jesus. Remember that Adam is referred to as the son of God, "...which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God" Luke 3:38 and in 1 Corinthians 15:45 Paul tells us, "...The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam (Jesus Christ) was made a quickening spirit". Thus Adam is referred to as the 'son of God' and Jesus as the latter (younger) son of God, which must make Adam the first son and Jesus the second. So as with Esau and Jacob, Reuben and Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim we see a type of the 1st and 2nd Adam where the younger son

(Jesus) gains the birthright and the blessing over the elder (Adam); Jacob, Joseph and Ephraim being figurative of He who was to come, Jesus Christ. Also, in all cases cited, the one that lost the birthright did so from their own actions (Adam, Esau, Reuben) - the focus was not where it should be (on God).

Israel's Blessings To His Sons

Israel blessed his family and told them what would befall them in the last days. The blessings according to the tribes are listed below, starting with Joseph who was given the birthright:

Joseph - was accorded the status of firstborn and gained the birthright because of his elder brother Reuben's sinfulness. He was also the eldest son of Israel's beloved wife, Rachel. His blessing from Israel was as follows:

"Joseph" ...is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall: the archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:) even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb: the blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren" Genesis 49:22-26. *"Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow"* Genesis 48:22.

The two sons of Joseph were

1. **Ephraim** - he inherited the birthright so thus is accorded eldest son status. *"...shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations...and he set Ephraim before Manasseh."* Genesis 48:19. Thus in the eventual lineages, Ephraim will inherit his father's birthright.
2. **Manasseh** - *"...he also shall become*

a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations." Genesis 48:19. Thus in the eventual lineages, Manassch will take the place of Dan, who, it would appear from the list in Revelations chapter 7, was disinherited. This also was the second portion promised to Joseph.

Reuben - *"...thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power: unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father's bed; then defiledst thou it: he went up to my couch"* Genesis 49:3,4. Reuben was the firstborn, but he defiled his father's bed, and his birthright (or firstborn status) was given to Joseph (and then to Ephraim).

Levi - shared the blessing with Simeon because of their harsh treatment of the Ammonites, *"Instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel; I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel"* Genesis 49:5,6. Levi had no temporal inheritance in Israel but had the inheritance of working in the Tabernacle of God. The Levites were given scattered cities among the tribes (Joshua 13:33; 21:1-45) in which to perform their Priestly duties. When Moses took a census of the children of Israel to aid them in going to war he was commanded not to include the Levites in this census, *"Only thou shalt not number the tribe of Levi, neither take the sum of them among the children of Israel"* Numbers 1:49,50. They were set aside for the work and service of the tabernacle.

Simeon - same as for Levi. When the lands were divided up, Simeon was such a small tribe that they were not given a separate portion of land, but a part of Judah with whom Simeon appears to have joined (see 1 Chronicles 4:23-43).

Issachar - *"...is a strong ass couching down between two burdens: and he saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear and became a servant unto tribute"* Genesis

49:14,15.

Zebulun - *"...shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he shall be for an haven of ships; and his border shall be unto Zidon"* Genesis 49:13.

Gad - *"...a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last"* Genesis 49:19.

Asher - *"...his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties"* Genesis 49:20.

Naphtali - *"is a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words"* Genesis 49:21.

Judah - *"...thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt (remember Jesus Christ rode the colt of an ass into Jerusalem - Matthew 21:2) unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine and his clothes in the blood of grapes: his eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk"* Genesis 49:8-12.

Benjamin - *"...shall ravin as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil"* Genesis 49:27.

Dan - *"...shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward. I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord"* Genesis 49:16-18. Dan is not mentioned in Revelation 7:4-8 where it lists the number of the sealed of Israel to total 144,000 (12,000 from each tribe). Dan's exclusion may have been because of the idolatry they practised - see Judges 18:30,31: *"And the children of Dan set up the graven image: and Jonathon, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land. And they set them up Micah's graven image, which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh".* Dan

did receive an allocation in the initial distribution of the land, and there is no record of this being taken away, except that there is no reference to Dan in Revelations.

These blessings given by Jacob to his sons are full of symbology. As we later look at where these tribes of Israel went, we will refer back to these blessings and it will be a surprise to many to see how prophetic Jacob was.

Power Over The Egyptian gods

The tribes of Israel would stay in Egypt for about 430 years before Moses would lead them in The Exodus across the Red Sea into freedom. For a long period of time there is very little mention of what happened to Israel in the Bible - it is like the Dark Ages for Israel. Until the time of Moses we know practically nothing of what was happening to the tribes of Israel during their stay in Egypt.

Moses was called by God to deliver Israel from Egypt, and event which served to display the power and might of the God of Israel. Ten plagues came upon Egypt before Pharaoh would release Israel. The ten plagues that preceded the Exodus are interesting to look at. Each one of the plagues was specifically designed to discredit a specific Egyptian deity, thus establishing God's supremacy above the Egyptian gods beyond all doubt. The following list shows which Egyptian god was rebutted by each of the plagues.

Plague No. 1 - Water to blood - against the Graeco-Roman god *Nilus*, the sacred river god, in Egyptian he was known as *Hapi*, the Nile River god. This god had particular association with the annual flooding of the Nile which Egyptians relied on for their crops. He was believed to live in caves near the Nile cataracts with his retinue of crocodile gods and frog goddesses.

Plague No. 2 - Frogs - against *Heket*, the Egyptian goddess of childbirth and protector of the dead, who was represented by a frog. Regarded as the mother of gods.

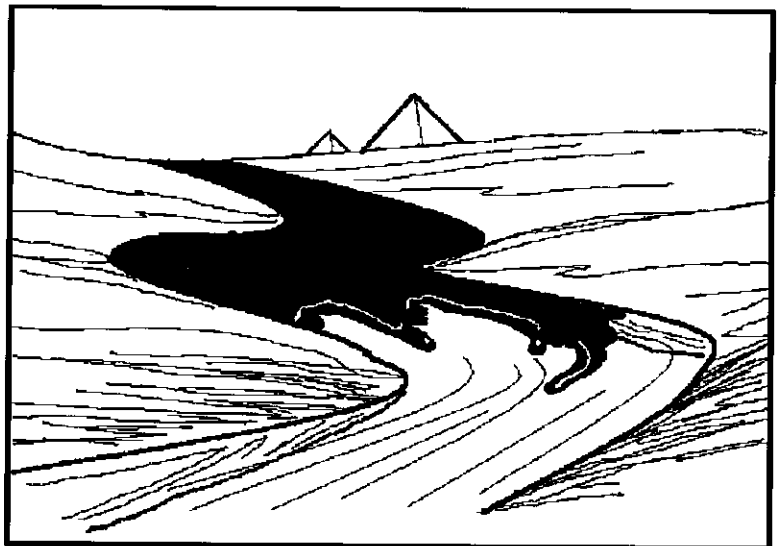
Plague No. 3 - Lice (Gnats) - against *Seb*, the Egyptian earth god - represented by a goose - it was believed that Seb imprisoned wicked souls, so they couldn't ascend to heaven - hence the Egyptian fear of burial under soil.

Plague No. 4 - Flies (Beetles) - against *Khephera*, the sacred scarab. The scarab is a type of dung-beetle common throughout Egypt. The scarab's habit of planting eggs in dung symbolised to the Egyptians renewal, rebirth and resurrection. The rolling of the dung into a ball by the scarab was seen as representing the sun with the scarab pushing the sun across the sky and giving mankind the day and night. Khephera was seen as a protector of the Sun guiding through the heavens each day and bringing it back each morning.

Plague No. 5 — Murrain (Plague) - on Egyptian cattle - against *Apis*, the symbol of fertility represented by a bull, and *Hathor*, the mother and sky goddess, represented by a cow.

Plague No. 6 - Boils on man and beast - against *Typhon*, the evil-eye god.

Plague No. 7 - Hail - against *Shu*, the god of the atmosphere or sky - Egyptians credit him with the separation of heaven and earth, and *Seth*, the god of chaos and the embodiment of hostility and evil, who manifests himself in wind and



storms.

Plague No. 8 - Locusts - against *Serapis*, who Egyptians believed was lord of the underworld and the protector from locusts.

Plague No. 9 - Darkness - against *Ra*, the sun god - the most important of the Egyptian gods and god of the pharaohs.

Plague No. 10 - Death of the firstborn of man and beast - against *Ptah*, the god of life or their creator god. (1)

Interesting isn't it when looked at in this light! God's judgment was pretty effective to shatter the Egyptians' confidence in their own gods. Interestingly the progression seems to go from lesser god to greater god of the Egyptians. No wonder the Egyptians wanted to give the Israelites presents and valuable gifts when they left. And remember that none of these plagues came on the Israelites where they dwelt in the land of Goshen.

The Exodus and Journey To The Promised Land

The Exodus occurred in April, 1446BC under the leadership of Moses. Ron Wyatt, an acclaimed American amateur archaeologist, conducted 3 expeditions to the Red Sea. During the last of these expeditions (in 1993) they discovered chariot parts found at a depth of 600 feet, four, six and eight spoked wheels and skeletal remains of horses and men, scattered over the sea floor. One of these wheels has been retrieved and presented to the Antiquities Director in Cairo. Mr Wyatt and his six-member diving team, after seeing the evidence in the middle of the Red Sea, concluded that the whole area was a massive graveyard (2).

Thus, after the Exodus, the tribes of Israel wandered for 40 years, before they entered into the Promised Land. When they tried to hasten this, they suffered the worst for their actions, and eventually just had to wait for God to deliver them. It was whilst in their Wilderness Period that they were fed manna from heaven and quails (Exodus 16:4). The place where this first happened was, interestingly, called the Wilderness of Sin (Exodus 16:1).

Also whilst in the wilderness Israel had another encounter with Baal worship - the moulding of the golden calf (Exodus 32:4). The calf was the sacred image of Baal and as such

would prove a great danger to Israel's faith and faithfulness. Plague No. 5, as outlined above, the plague on the murrain, was sent to counter the Egyptian deity that worshipped the cow. The Israelites would have been familiar with this deity from their long sojournment amongst the Egyptians, and would have also seen God's power and judgement on it. It is interesting to note that nevertheless the Israelites still succumbed to idolatry of this Egyptian deity.

Today's Application For Us

When we look at these events we see the mighty power of God at work in the world around these people, and a lack of recognition of what God was doing. Is it much different today? As we wander through the wilderness of sin encompassing our planet can we look beyond the everyday events to see God's power working towards the return of Jesus Christ and restoration of the planet itself to how God had created it? Remember through unbelief only 2 of those who were above 20 years of age when they left Egypt made it to the Promised Land. Does our unbelief prevent us from seeing what God is doing in the World generally and for each of us individually today? God has promised to deliver us from evil, and then to take the evil out of us if we believe in Him to prepare us to enter the Promised Land (our bodies) to dwell there with Him in all eternity.

In the next issue we hope to briefly cover the period of the Judges, why Israel felt the need for a King and why that Kingship or nation became divided. Subsequently we will look at the Northern Kingdom (Israel) in particular to see what happened to this nation, how it departed from God's ways and the eventual dispersion of the people in 723BC. Who knows where these people are to-day? The Bible contains many prophetic promises and blessings to these people which have not yet been fulfilled. Where are their descendants to come forward and claim the valuable inheritance?

Bibliography

- (1) Sellier, Charles E & Russell, Brian, *Ancient Secrets of the Bible*, Dell Publishing, 1994.
- (2) Gray, Jonathon, *Ark of the Covenant*, printed for Jonathon Gray, 1997.

Statement of Belief

The Christian Israelite Church beliefs can be fully supported by the Scriptures. Here is an outline:

We Believe

- * In God Almighty creator of all things (Genesis 1:1).
- * In the existence of Satan, the Devil, in whom God allowed iniquity to be placed (James 2:19; Ezekiel 28:14,15).
- * That God created a spirit-existence in which the devil manifested evil and caused some of the spirits to rebel against God (Isaiah 14:12-14; Jude 6)
- * That God created our physical world, to which each person comes with a body and a soul made alive by a spirit from the spiritual creation (Luke 9:55; Genesis 2:7).
- * That God gave His people instructions on the way they should live, which instructions were "for their good always" (Deuteronomy 6:24).
- * That all have sinned and come "short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23; 2 Corinthians 5:19).
- * That God has reconciled the (whole) world to Himself through the sacrifice of Jesus (John 3:16,17).
- * That through belief in the sacrifice of Jesus believers are counted as righteous before God, and can be assured of the resurrection of their souls (a Spiritual body) at Jesus' return (1 Timothy 4:10; 1 Corinthians 15:44).
- * That there will be a small number who will fully prove their faith by a work of true obedience to God's instructions and will thereby receive the prize of the highest calling of God, the redemption of spirit and soul and body - this living mortal Body made Immortal without seeing death (1 Thessalonians 5:23; Revelation 14:1-5; Hebrews 11:39,40).
- * That Jesus Christ will return to this earth again, subdue the power of Satan and reign forever and ever (Revelation chapters 19 and 20)
- * That the return of Jesus Christ is near and we are living in the period described in Scripture as the latter days (Matthew chapter 24; Mark chapter 13 and Luke chapter 21)
- * That there are promises in the Scriptures especially to Israel - God's chosen people (1 Peter 2:9).
- * That although Israel of old did not accept the challenge of spiritually being God's peculiar people, a remnant of their descendants will come forward in the latter days to fulfill the obligations and receive the promises (Revelation 7:1-8).
- * That the Mission of the Christian Israelite Church is to awaken the lost ten tribes of Israel to this special inheritance to be the physical Immortal "Bride of the Lamb" and to be the vehicle for the task of bringing them all together at God's appointed time (Matthew 10:5,6; Revelation chapter 19).

We believe that God is the absolute Judge and Arbiter and that we as His servants have an obligation to respond to what He puts in each heart, and that whilst we seek to proclaim and discuss our beliefs, we have no right to contend with other people about them.

Expand Your Bible:

Relationships



How is your relationship ... ?

During the year our Church celebrates Pentecost (also known as Whitsuntide). This is a yearly celebration and as our celebration extends over several days we usually choose a 'theme' to help direct our thoughts. In 2000 the theme was "How is your relationship?"

On first thought this seemed rather a strange theme - rather open ended perhaps. However when it was put personally, "How is my relationship?" the question became much more real.

My second thought was, Okay, with whom was this relationship that I had to query? The most obvious and important one, and one that applies to everyone, is, of course, the relationship we have with God.

It is rather hard to analyse this particular relationship because we get mixed up with what we would like it to be like, what we imagine it to be and what it actually is. Then we look at the ideal - the relationship that Jesus Christ had with His Father, God. How do we see our relationship? How does God see it? How does it compare with the ideal?

In the Bible there are many relationships mentioned. One of the most well known of these is the friendship between David and Jonathan, "...the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David..", and even though Jonathan knew that by protecting David he would lose his own heirship to the throne, his loyalty and love to him did not waver. See 1 Samuel 18:1-4.

The story of Ruth and Naomi is a relationship of love and devotion. Ruth left her people, her country and her ideology to follow Naomi, her mother-in-law, and support her in her sorrow and need. Ruth's devotion is expressed in the beautiful words, "*Whither thou goest, I will go...thy people shall be my people*

and thy God, my God" Ruth 1:16. What a blessing was bestowed on Ruth for her love and loyalty and through her to Naomi as well.

Adam and Eve had a wonderful relationship with God. In the cool of the evening God would visit the garden of Eden and talk with them. All of this was spoiled when Eve listened to Satan rather than the instructions given by God and did not remain obedient to God. As ever happens, we drive a wedge between God and us.

In Exodus 33:11 we read that the Lord spoke to Moses "*face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend*" - what a great relationship. Moses shared his worries, his doubts, his hurts and his aspirations with God. He trusted in God's mercy and goodness to deliver him and the Israelites from danger.

From his youth, David had a wonderful faith and relationship with God. "*I come to you in the name of the living God*" he stated fearlessly to Goliath as the giant towered above him. David was pursued, persecuted and hunted day and night by a jealous king Saul. But during this time he wrote many of the beautiful Psalms which tell of his recognition of God's greatness and omnipotence. Unfortunately as David became important in the world, gaining power and riches, his relationship with God was not as pure as it had been (even though it was still very close). One of David's great disappointments was that he was not permitted, because of his warlike career, to build a temple for God. See 1 Chronicles chapter 28.

Jesus' apostles all had a special relationship with Him - even though each one was different, and as they got to know Him each relationship grew and changed.

Peter was perhaps the one whose reactions would be closest to ours. He admitted

that Jesus was the Christ and from then on his love and admiration for Him grew, as did his understanding. But also his lack of understanding was also evident. It was only as he felt the influence of the Holy Ghost at and after Pentecost that his relationship with the Lord, and through this his relationship with God, really developed.

Throughout history many people have done great things, in many cases based on their relationship with God and the desire to live a life patterned on Jesus Christ and His Love for humanity - His desire to relieve suffering and to help underprivileged people. Mother Teresa's work amongst the sick and poor is a prime example of a wonderful relationship with God.

Every relationship, be it with God, with the Lord Jesus Christ, with a family member or a

friend, takes something we don't always want to give - time. Time to talk and time to listen. Both of these aspects along with respect, sincerity and love, are necessary. In a relationship with God these are all essential elements of prayer and meditation.

To have a good relationship with God great temporal deeds do not have to be done. A life lived in love and with a desire to serve God - to love our fellow man and help those in need - this is the basis of a good relationship.

We should always bear in mind the words from Philippians 3:14,13; *"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus ... always reaching forth unto those things which are before..."*.

So...how is your relationship ...?

God is Love

The sun, the source of heat and light,
To radiant day turns darkest night.
The flowers in colours bright and fair
Delight our eyes, perfume the air.
These gifts are given from above
For God is Love.

Refreshing rain falls on the ground,
That water may for us abound.
The golden grain, grown in the fields,
Provides our bread, from flour it yields.
These gifts are given from above
For God is Love.

The moon and stars at their great height
Like evening lamps light up the night.
Sweet sleep, when tired eyelids close,
Our strength renews by calm repose.
These gifts are given from above
For God is Love.

Our parents, brothers, sisters dear,
The friends who share our life while here,
The Comforter, Who guides our ways
Our thoughts to higher planes doth raise.
These gifts are given from above
For God is Love.

Now all these blessings on you pour
Yea, more than these, from out His store,
His only Son He gave for you
That you might have that life anew.
All gifts are given from above
For God is Love.

G.C. Hughes

John the Baptist

John the Baptist was the son of Zecharias and Elizabeth (Elizabeth was Mary's cousin). His conception was announced to Zecharias by the angel Gabriel (Luke 1:13) at which time Zecharias was struck dumb, not to speak again until the child John was named. We are told in Luke 1:15 that John was filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb and that he was sent from God (John 1:6-8). When Elizabeth was 6 months pregnant with John, the angel Gabriel visited Mary (the mother of Jesus) and informed her that the Holy Ghost would come upon her and the power of the Highest overshadow her and she would bear the Son of God (Luke 1:35). Mary visited Elizabeth and stayed with her for 3 months. The Scriptures tell us that the child in Elizabeth's womb leaped at the sound of Mary's voice and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost (Luke 1:59). So even as a child in the womb John recognised the mother of the Messiah and perhaps knew that she was carrying the Son of God. Mary would have left Elizabeth just before the birth of John.

John had a special calling to Israel for Luke tells us that *"...many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God"*.

From his birth to the baptism of Jesus little is known of John's life. Luke condenses this whole period of John's life into one verse, *"And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel"*.

Many times in the New Testament a comparison is made between John the Baptist and Elias (Elijah) of the Old Testament. There are the obvious reasons. Firstly, the Jews had been looking for the return of Elias the prophet and John the Baptist fitted what they expected. Secondly their Spartan and non-worldly choice of attire (camel's hair) and thirdly their particular dietary requirements.

An angel foretold that John the Baptist would be *"filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God."*

And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Still fresh in the minds of the Jews (and Israel) was the words of the prophet Malachi when he said, *"Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse"* Malachi 4:4-6 (emphasis added).

Water held a special importance in the life of John the Baptist. Ever since Genesis 1:2, water has held a special importance in regard to rebirth, or new life. Originally it was the rebirth of the earth from chaos into order. The flood of Noah brought destruction to a corrupt earth, but also a rebirth into a new relationship with the Creator. Deliverance from Egypt was achieved through Moses' parting of the Red Sea, with the children of Israel walking through the water to a new life on the other side, and a new relationship with God. Elijah emulated this Mosaic passage when he was called to be taken up to the Lord (2nd Kings 2:8) *"Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground"*. Elijah parted the waters of the Jordan River to go on to his new life, his immortal life with his body, when he was swept up on *"a chariot of fire, and horses of fire...and went up by a whirlwind into heaven"*. John the Baptist used water in the Jordan River to baptise people into a new life, for repentance and forgiveness of sins, for rebirth. Throughout the Bible water has been a strong link in our relationship with God for its regenerative properties and cleansing abilities.

As with Elijah, the influence of a

malevolent female spirit also manifested itself in the lives of both of these men. In the case of John the Baptist his experience with Herodias, which experience lost him his life and his head and with Elijah we have his experience with Jezebel. The similarities between the two prophets were marked and noted by Jewish believers of the time.

John recognised that Jesus was the Christ, *"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water"*. John 1:29-31. As we know, Jesus was baptised by John in the river Jordan. When Jesus was baptised He went up out of the water and the heavens were opened to him and John saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon Jesus and a voice from heaven saying *"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"* (Matthew 4:16,17; Mark 1:9-11; John 1:32). John came as a forerunner to Jesus Christ, *"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light"*, and later *"He came unto his own, and his own received him not"* (John 1:6-8). A prelude of what was to come, even in the case of John the Baptist.

John the Baptist was imprisoned by Herod, the local tetrarch of Judea, for condemning the incestuous union he had made in marrying his brother Philip's wife, Herodias. During his confinement John appears to have experienced great doubt and disillusionment. He sent out his disciples to ask of Jesus whether He was the One. *"And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues,*

and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight. Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me" (Luke 7:19-23). Offended in the sense used here means 'doubtful of'. So Jesus knew that John had doubts as to who He was. Jesus reassures John's disciples so they may reassure him and Jesus then proceeds to talk about John the Baptist. John's concerns were based on the physical, Jesus' concern was with the spiritual and the preparation for the Kingdom.

John's doubts are not unexpected but serve as a warning for believers - here is a man, cousin to Jesus, who recognised whilst in utero the mother of Jesus, who witnessed the ascent of Christ on Jesus at His baptism and the opening of the heavens, descent of the dove and the voice proclaiming the Sonship of Jesus, and yet still held doubts as to who Jesus was and whether He was really the Christ. *"Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he"*, because he that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven would have accepted the basic precept of Christianity - Jesus Christ as Messiah and Saviour.

John was beheaded in AD28 - his head was the prize awarded to Herodias' daughter for her dance before Herod. He may well have died without accepting Jesus Christ as His Saviour even though He had baptised the Messiah and witnessed many great things through and of Him. John, though, is still described as a 'man of God' and had a necessary purpose to bring to Israel the Messiah and baptise Him with the Spirit of Christ and the Holy Ghost (Jerusalem Above), opening the way for the commencement of Jesus Christ's ministry on earth.

Vegetarian Recipes

Vegetable Pasties

Crumble Topping:

100g butter or margarine
175g wholemeal flour
100g cheddar cheese, grated
50g mixed nuts, chopped
2 tbsp sesame seeds

Base:

675g mixed root vegetables (parsnip, swede, turnip, potato, carrot)
1 large onion
50g butter or margarine
25g wholemeal flour
225g tomatoes
300ml vegetable stock
142ml milk
3 tbsp parsley, chopped
salt and pepper to taste

Rub the butter into the flour until the mixture resembles fine crumbs. Add the cheese, nuts and sesame seeds.

Chop the vegetables, then melt the butter in a large saucepan and saute the onion until transparent. Add the prepared vegetables and cook over gentle heat, stirring occasionally, for 10 minutes. Stir in the flour, then add the remaining ingredients. Bring to the boil, reduce the heat, cover and simmer for about 15 minutes, until the vegetables are just tender. Transfer to an ovenproof dish. Press the crumble topping over the vegetables and bake in the oven at 190degC for about 30 minutes, until golden. Serves 6.

Vegetable Slice

Pastry:

1.5 cups wholemeal plain flour
1 tsp vegetable salt
1.5 cups wheatgerm
125g butter or margarine
1/3 cup of water

Filling:

1 large potato
1 red pepper
1 tsp mixed herbs
1.5 tbs tomato paste
salt
1 tbs oil
4 zucchini
1 green pepper
1 onion
1 carrot

Pastry: Sift flour and salt into bowl, return husks left in sifter to bowl. Add wheatgerm, lightly mix with flour. Rub in butter until mixture resembles coarse breadcrumbs. Add water (up to 1 tablespoon more water may be needed). Mix to a firm dough, and turn out on to a lightly floured surface. Knead lightly. Divide pastry in half, roll out half to fit greased 28cm x 18cm (11" x 7") lamington tin. Cover evenly with filling. Roll out remaining pastry to fit tin, cover filling. Trim edges, and bake in moderate oven 30-40 minutes or until pastry is cooked.

Filling: Peel onion and potato and chop finely. Peel carrot and grate coarsely. Chop red and green peppers, slice zucchini. Combine vegetables with mixed herbs and salt. Heat oil in pan and lightly cook the vegetables for 1 to 2 minutes. Add tomato paste, and mix well. Cool.

If you will be visiting one of these areas over the next few months or would like to contact our group, please feel free to attend one of the following meetings at the church addresses shown. All are welcome.

- Melbourne** Regular service held each Sunday afternoon at 2:30pm.
Singleton Regular discussions each week at 11:30am with the exception of the first Sunday of the month when there is a service at 11:30am.
Terrigal Special services and studies as advertised. Sunday morning discussion groups held at 11.15am when possible.
Sydney Services/discussions every second Sunday at 6:30pm. Please call to confirm Meeting Sundays.

For further information please ring or write to one of the following contacts:

AUSTRALIA

Melbourne

Church: 193 Fitzroy Street,
Fitzroy, Victoria. 3065
Ph: 03 9416 0807
Write: 193 Fitzroy Street,
Fitzroy, Victoria. 3065

Terrigal

Church: Cnr Terrigal Drive & Serpentine Rd,
Terrigal, NSW. 2260
Write: Lot 5, Bembooka Road,
Greenpoint. NSW. 2251
02 4365 1974

Singleton

Church: Cnr Bishopgate Street and
Goulburn Street,
Singleton. NSW. 2330
Ph: 02 6571 1269
Write: PO Box 127,
Singleton. NSW. 2330
Ph: 02 6572 2741

Windsor

Church: 340 Macquarie Street,
South Windsor. NSW. 2750
045 772 190
Write: 114 Morilla Road,
Wilberforce. NSW. 2756
02 4576 3264

Sydney

Church: 196 Campbell Street,
Darlinghurst. NSW. 2010
Ph: 02 9331 5625
Write: 66 Mintaro Avenue,
Strathfield. NSW. 2136
Ph: 02 9642 4555

Kempsey

Church: 10 Marsh Street,
Kempsey. NSW. 2440
No Phone.
Write: 6 Seaview Street,
Bonny Hills. NSW. 2445
02 6585 4495

USA

Indiana

Write: c/- Mrs. M. Shafer,
4502 Shafer Drive,
Lafayette, Indiana.
USA. 47905
Phone: 317 589 3221
Church 1204N Rural Street,
Residence: **Indianapolis. USA. 46201**
Phone: 317 632 4746

Web Site:

www.cichurch.asn.au

email:

rgray@cichurch.asn.au