

THE BIBLE MAGAZINE



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BAPTISM

**THE REASON FOR IT,
AND ITS MEANING.**

“These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”— Revelation 7:14.



Editorial & Subscriptions

Publishing Editor: Paul Billington
Phone: (519) 449 3446
Phone/Fax: (519) 449-3660

Editorial Address:
The Bible Magazine
LPMPO Box 21047
84 Lynden Road,
Brantford, Ont. Canada.
N3R 6B0

e-mail:
Editor@biblemagazine.com
Subscriptions

North America

As Editorial address Above

United Kingdom

Mrs. A. Barnes
1 Woodrow Lane
Catshill, Bromsgrove, Worcs.
B61 OPS

Phone/Fax: 01527-832639
uk.subs@biblemagazine.com
For Books & Videos (U.K.)

Mrs. Judith White,
23 Brookvale Drive,
Thornhill, Cardiff, S.Wales.
CF14 9EG

uk.order@biblemagazine.com

Australia

Aleck Crawford
6 Ingomar Court,
Hallett Cove,
South Australia 5158.
au@biblemagazine.com

Phone: 08-8381-3616

Christadelphian Scripture Study Service
Local Representatives.

New Zealand

Mr. D Archer
11 Hampton Hill Road,
Tawa, Wellington, NZ 6203

Phone: 232-6192
nz@biblemagazine.com

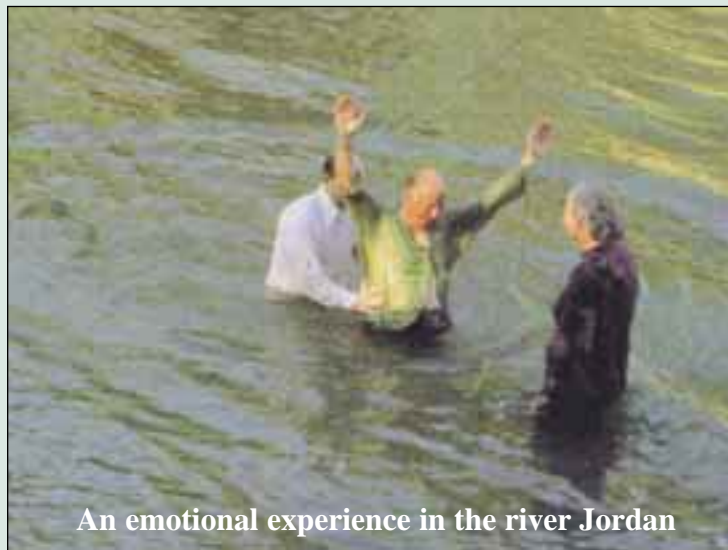
South Africa

Mr. E. Duckworth
Box 1606
Pinetown,
Natal 3600

Phone: 31-722230

LOCAL INFORMATION

Cover Story



An emotional experience in the river Jordan

Doctrine

True Baptism is Not just an Emotional Experience

The Need for Right Understanding Before Baptism

It is all too easy to get carried away on a wave of emotion which does not fulfill the requirements of Scripture prior to true baptism. Without a proper understanding of the Truth of the Gospel, immersion is not valid.

PAGE 12. Paul Billington looks at the vital and important act of baptism into Christ, discussing its meaning and significance for the believer. The issues and changes that are involved in baptism can sometimes be over-simplified — but to do so is of no help or value to the subject of it.

PAGE 3. A rare copy of *The Investigator*, a paper edited by John Thomas in 1843, contains a candid and logical reply to a question about the soul.

PAGE 9. Matt Drywood considers what the role of believers will be in the future kingdom of God upon earth. His focus is upon their role as priests “after the order of Melchizedec.”

Christendom Astray

PAGE 6. Frank Abel confronts the question of Confession. Do we need to confess sins to a priest in order to obtain forgiveness? This has been a well-worn subject over centuries, but we need to be reminded of the sound Scriptural reasons for rejecting a doctrine that is as popular as ever today.

Commitment

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Editorial

PAGE 16. Our Editorial in this issue revisits a subject that has been discussed before, that of the Authority of the Bible and how Bible prophecy is so relevant to it. To ignore or corrupt this aspect of Bible Truth will inevitably weaken our vision of the future and faith in the Book as a whole.

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Creation

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WRITTEN OVER 100 YEARS AGO

A LIVING “SOUL”

Is the soul matter or spirit? Is there any thing separated from God and matter—if not, I should like to know, how it is possible for the immortal Spirit to be annihilated?

Who propounds these questions we know not. They were left at our office for solution, and in the spirit of investigation we reply according to the information we believe we have derived from the scriptures of truth.

The first question is—Is the soul matter or spirit? To aid us in the determination of this we must “search the scriptures” for the definition of a human* soul; for that is the kind of soul, we presume, the querist has reference to. This definition, we would naturally expect to find in the history of its creation by Moses. To his writings then we turn. In the first chapter of Genesis he testifies that “God created man in his own image; male and female created he them.” And after he had made them, he declared them to be “very good.”

But from what materials did the Lord God create this very good man and woman? Moses says, that “He formed man, the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a Living Soul” ch. 2:7, but as to the woman, the Lord God “took one of Adam’s ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib he made a woman” v. 21-23. And when sentence was passed upon Adam, because he disobeyed the law of God, the Lord said “out of the ground thou wast taken; for dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return.”

From this we learn, that the ‘very good’ man of chapter 1, and the “living soul” of chapter 2:7, were made from the dust of the ground and so formed as to reflect the Image of God. Man is, as a whole, a living soul; and a living soul is a living man. Let it be observed, that it does not say, that man became an ever-living soul nor an “immortal soul” either; but simply a “living soul” or man.

This Living Soul, Moses informs us, sprang from the ground and derived its vitality from the atmosphere; for after the Lord God had organized man from the dust, “he breathed into his nostrils the breath of lives”—for so it reads in the margin of the polyglot. Why was this styled by Moses “the breath of lives?”—Manifestly because it sustains the lives of all animals as well as man, who respire it through their nostrils. “The breath of life” is common to the whole animal kingdom, as the following quotations from Moses prove;—“I do bring the flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh wherein is the breath of life”—ch. 6:17; “and all flesh that moved upon the face of the earth died: all in whose nostrils was the breath of life... both man and cattle”—ch. 7:22.

That by “a living soul” is to be understood a “natural body,” Paul teaches in his letter to the Corinthians. He affirms “there is a natural (or animal) body;” and this he proves by quoting the words of Moses, namely, “the first man Adam was made a Living Soul”—ch. 15:45. But if natural body and living soul do not mean the same thing, then Paul failed to prove his affirmation;—but he did prove it, and this nobody denies; hence the phrases are synonymous. And living soul, natural



John Thomas Replies to a correspondent in THE INVESTIGATOR in 1843.

body, animal, living creature, man, human soul, all signify one and the same thing.

The first query, then, is answered. If dust, ground, and breath of life or the air, be matter, then ‘the soul’ is matter; but if they be ‘spirit’ then ‘the soul’ is spirit; but upon what you mean by spirit in opposition to matter, I cannot tell; therefore am unable to say, whether ‘the soul is what you call spirit or not. I leave it with the ratiocinators upon “entity and quiddity” and the “ghosts of defunct bodies” to split hairs upon abstractions; for myself, I have neither time nor taste for such matters.

The second question speaks of the “Immortal Spirit.” What are we to understand by this? The phrase occurring to my mind having the nearest affinity to it, is the “Great Spirit.” Whoever read of the Great Spirit being annihilated, or reduced to nothing? But, perhaps, the querist means by “immortal spirit” what the heathen philosophers Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato and their Disciples in these times still characterised my mythological traditions—term the “immortal soul;” and which they describe as a something in every man, woman, and child, which when the body becomes defunct, lives in heaven beatifically, or wails and gnashes its teeth (?) in the dark and torrid dungeons of the damned. I confess that concerning such a phantasm I know nothing, for I find no such thing either in the scriptures of truth or in the records of the discoveries of modern science. The phrase, “immortal soul” is not to be found in the Bible; and therefore, we argue, the idea it conveys is not there



John Thomas in the 1830's

either.

But, we presume, the querist wishes to be informed if ‘the soul’ be matter or spirit, whether that soul is immortal? The material of which the soul is made does not affect the question one way or other. He that could form a ‘living soul’ of the dust, could endue it with life forever. But the question is not could he, but *did he make man immortal?*

To this we reply, that “God made man “upright”—he made him “very good” and “in his own image after his likeness;” and when what follows is attentively considered it will be perceived that, *the mortality or immortality of man was not a congenital attribute of his nature, but were qualities acquired upon certain conditions.*

Moses tells us, that the Lord put the Living Soul whom he had formed, in the garden eastward in Eden—in this garden there were among others, two remarkable trees. One is styled the Tree of Life;—

* Human from *humus*, which signifies the *ground*; the soul is so termed because it came out of the ground. It is generally derived from *humanus*, but this is of the same family as *humus*—the latter being the primitive, and the form or the derivative.

THE MEDIA & THE INTIFADA

“The media influences not only how events in the Middle East are perceived, but how they unfold as well. I’ll never forget a visit to Hebron a few years back. Nothing much was going on that day. But I found a score of television cameras set up in the city center almost as if it were a sound-stage. One got the impression that this wasn’t just so that the cameras would be there when the next disturbance broke out, but that a disturbance would break out there because the cameras were there to film it.” *Wall Street Journal*



By Dave Billington. Brantford, Ont.

Journalism is the presentation of facts concerning current events in the world. Journalists are supposed to report what is taking place on the ground without partiality. The news is something that we should be able to trust. This however is often not the case and the media can be hijacked by regimes and organizations that wish to deceive the public. Joseph Gobbels was Hitler’s right hand man in the task of harnessing the power of the mass media to control society.

Even large corporations have public relations specialists that are trained in the exercise of putting a spin on news, skewing the meaning in the company’s favour.

It seems that the very best universities in Canada from which to get a degree in public relations are Catholic run institutions, such as Mount St. Vincent University in Nova Scotia. This is not without significance when we consider how the Church has managed to get itself off the hook in situations such as abuse

scandals in Newfoundland. These were originally covered up by the Church. Today that situation is repeating itself in the eastern United States and elsewhere.

The Catholic Church has actively encouraged its members or lay people to become involved in the mass media and acquire public relations positions. This is what Pope Paul VI had to say on the subject on December 8, 1975:

Lay people, whose particular vocation places them in the midst of the world and in charge of the most varied temporal tasks, must... exercise a very special form of evangelization. Their primary and immediate task is not to establish and develop the ecclesial community this is the specific role of the pastors but to put to use every Christian and evangelical possibility latent but already present and active in the affairs of the world. Their own field of evangelizing activity is the vast and complicated world of politics, society and economics, but also the world of culture, of the sciences and the arts, of international life, of

the mass media.

In Revelation 16:13-16 Jesus Christ tells us that directly associated with the time of his return, are teachings or policies coming from religious and political spheres that gather the nations to Armageddon. The nations are deceived and it seems as if believers are in danger of being deceived also, for they are warned to keep their garments. These deceptive forces are seen behind the Palestinian uprising today, and it is a peculiarity of the False Prophet (Rev. 19:20), who belongs to a false Christian system with world wide reach the Catholic or universal Church.

To a person who watches events in the Mideast closely and critically reads various media sources, a certain bias will be quite apparent. Here are just three examples:

¥ When a sniper lines up his sights on a ten month old baby’s head, shooting and killing Shalhevet Pass, while cradled in her mother’s arms in the Judean city of Hebron, the *Washington Post* headline reads: Jewish Toddler Dies in West Bank (March 26, 2001)

A LIVING “SOUL”

the other, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. In this garden Man, the Living Soul, stood related to these two trees. They were both accessible to him. But he was forbidden to eat of, or even to touch the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil; and why? Because he would incur the penalty of Death or Mortality if he did. This tree, then, was to him the Tree of Mortality. Now, if death were the penalty of disobedience, who will be so obtuse as to affirm, that before the Man transgressed, he was mortal? If he were mortal, why threaten him with death if he ate thereof? But let us beware of jumping hastily to the conclusion, that because he was not inherently mortal, therefore he must have been immortal. This by no means follows.

From Genesis chapter 3 we learn, that the Tree of Life had the property of conferring Eternal Life upon the eater. “Behold,” said God, “the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the Tree of Life and eat and live for ever, therefore he drove out the man.”—Here we find that Adam was expelled from Eden, that he might not become immortal

by eating of the Tree of Life. Who then will be so unreflecting as to affirm, that he was created immortal? If he were immortal, why drive him from Eden that he might not become so?—No; when Adam was first placed in Eden he was on probation; Immortality was in the Tree of Life—not in his body; and Mortality was in the Tree of Knowledge, not in him.

The conclusion is, that God made man “very good,” a free and noble being, dependent only upon his goodness, and susceptible of either mortality or of immortality. For the sake of knowing evil as well as good and that he might be as gods, he chose mortality. Having thus become a mortal, he was expelled from the garden, and subsequently entailed upon his descendants “all the ills to which flesh is heir.” We are his offspring, and therefore mortal—in us, as yet, there is not immortality at all.

If man had been created immortal, and had eaten of the Tree of Knowledge, what would have been the consequence? He would have lived forever the hapless sufferer of all the evils of the present system of the world. Why did God drive out the man from the garden? That he might be prevented from eating of the Tree of Life, and thus perpetuating his unhappy existence in a state of good and evil. If God expelled him to prevent so great a catastrophe

as this, did he drive him forth to involve him in a greater by perpetuating his being through the endless duration of ages in pure evil—in unmitigated torture? Surely not! And if a man be devoid of immortality, upon what principle can he obtain it? The scriptures teach, that *Immortality is a gift of God*, and to be obtained only by *obedience to the Law of Faith*. What then becomes of the unconditional salvation of all men? It is the “baseless fabric of a vision” which is doomed to leave “not a wreck behind.”

The annihilation of an immortal is an absurd notion. That which is deathless cannot cease to be. An Immortal man cannot be annihilated; for were it so, then, it would be proved that he was not immortal. Not believing in the doctrine of the annihilation of matter, we feel no interest in defending it. To annihilate is to reduce to nothing; when the unjust are the subject of “death ending in death,” they will not be reduced to nothing; but resolved into the pristine elements of human nature: “dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return:” there was a time when man was not; there will be a time when the wicked will be as when the dust of the ground was unformed by the plastic hand of Deity—to this will they be reduced by violence, but nowhere is it said, to nothing. ■

¥ When at least 20 Israeli teenagers die and 5 times that are wounded in the Dolpharian Disco suicide attack the Associated Press headline read: Explosion Kills *Bomber* in Tel-Aviv (June 1, 2001)

¥ When 3-500,000 Israelis attend the Jerusalem I pledge rally, CNN reports: Jerusalem protest *against* U.S. peace plan draws thousands (January 8, 2001)

The purpose of a news headline is to draw the person in, to captivate the interest of the viewer and cause them to read the story. Experienced professionals write news headlines and put a lot of thought into them. Why then would they produce a headline that reads: Toddler Dies in West Bank? This only leaves the viewer wondering if there was a bad case of the flu and does little to create any interest. It is almost as if they *don't want you to read the story!* The second headline above is self explanatory. The third not only plays down the amount of attendees at the event Jews are not supposed to want to keep Jerusalem united it also takes what was a positive event and turns it into a negative.

Not long after the Intifada began in the Middle East, worldnetdaily.com ran this piece concerning the media's reporting of the events:

The information coming out of Israel these days is heavily influenced by the political imagination of reporters and columnists and cameramen who have flocked to the scene from the four corners of the earth to cover this latest installment of violence in the ongoing Middle East conflict, writes Fiamma Nirenstein, who writes for the daily *La Stampa* and the weekly *Panorama*. They tend they are expected to place those clashes within an agreed-upon framework: the framework, roughly, of David (the Palestinians) versus Goliath (the Israelis). It is not just that we are talking about a profession, the world press, that is almost entirely uniform in its attitudes, she writes. The truth is that Israel, as the Jewish state, is also the object of a contemporary form of anti-Semitism...

One of the first shocking events that happened to Israel's people, shattering their dreams of peace through the OSLO accords, was the lynching of two reservists who strayed off their path into a Palestinian area. Many will remember the striking image appearing on newspapers the next day, of a man with bloody hands leaning from a window, after stabbing one of the men. Footage filmed by an Italian company was broadcast on foreign television networks around the world. There was one problem. For once this served Israeli interests and someone decided that it was not right. The

“...it would be quite apparent to all journalists; that if they wanted to sell images, have their stories published and keep their jobs, they would have to report within the agreed-upon framework.”

following was written by Amos Harel, *Ha'aretz* Correspondent, and agencies:

The manager of the Italian Television company in the Palestinian Authority areas, Ricardo Christiano, was returned Wednesday to Italy by his employers. The government press bureau announced Wednesday that Christiano's journalist card has been temporarily suspended. The announcement came after an apology was made Monday by Italian television to the Palestinians for filming the lynching on two Israeli reservists in Ramallah last week.

From this point on it would be quite apparent to all journalists; that if they wanted to sell images, have their stories published and keep their jobs, they would have to report within the agreed-upon framework. But the question arising from these quotes is this: Who conceived of the agreed-upon framework?

To really answer this we have to understand that there is another organization that has an

interest in Jerusalem, besides the Palestinians. An organization that has tried to take possession of Jerusalem many times over the centuries from the crusades until our time. We recently came across this quote from the *New York Herald* of 1877:

The latest programme for Palestine is not Jewish, but Papal occupancy. The Jesuits of Europe, adds Dr. De Hass, are dissatisfied with the condition of things in Italy, and there is a movement on foot to make Jerusalem the head of the Latin Church. Commissioners have been appointed to negotiate for the territory... money is being collected for the erection of a magnificent palace for his Holiness on Mount Zion, to which the wealth of the Vatican is to be transferred. There the successor to Pius IX, is to be installed, and the City of the Great King is to be the future head of the Pontifical See.

What makes us think that the Roman Church is not trying to take control of Jerusalem today, by making it an international or universal city?

Before the Intifada began the Vatican held a Jubilee of Journalists on June 1—4, 2000. The Vatican newspaper: *L'Osservatore Romano* reported that there were 7000 media professionals and their families in attendance from every continent of the globe. A video conference from the event was broadcast live to four major cities around the globe. What other organization has this kind of influence worldwide in the media? Has a reputation for anti-semitism and wants to get its hands on Jerusalem? No wonder Yasser Arafat is a frequent visitor to the Vatican and has signed a covenant with them.

BBC Arabic Service correspondent Faid Abu Shimalla summed it up very well. As reported by By Douglas Davis in London:

A senior BBC correspondent in the Gaza Strip is reported to have told a Hamas gathering that journalists and media organizations are waging the campaign shoulder-to-shoulder together with the Palestinian people.

NEWS COMMENT: PRESIDENT BUSH'S VISION FOR PEACE

As this issue of *the Bible Magazine* goes to print news is just coming in of a remarkable speech by U.S. President Bush, in which he has called for the removal of Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat. “*For the sake of all humanity, things must change in the Middle East*” he said.

The President outlined his vision of “peace and security” and an eventual agreement involving a new Palestinian leadership, Israel, Egypt and Jordan.

“As we move toward a peaceful solution, Arab states will be expected to build closer ties of diplomacy and commerce with Israel, leading to full normalization of relations between Israel and the entire Arab world.”

Named enemies of peace “seeking the destruction of Israel” were Hamas, Islamic

Jihad, Hezbollah, Iran and Iraq. Syria must choose the right side in the war on terror he said. What the consequences might be for these terrorist groups and their sponsors was not spelt out in this speech, but one has to assume that some means of curtailing their activities is under consideration.

Recognising that “there may be setbacks in this process,” President Bush left no doubt as to the intentions of the present U.S. administration: They are standing behind Israel—and not surprisingly when we note the statement made in *TIME* magazine (July 1st, 2002) that “36% of Americans believe that the Bible is the word of God and is to be taken literally,” and that “36% of those polled who support Israel say they do so because they believe in biblical prophecies that Jews must control Israel before Christ will come again.”

Add to that the Jewish vote itself and Sept. 11th last year, and it is not difficult to see why the U.S. President has taken the position that he has.

Set backs there may well be, but at first sight this speech indicates the most serious and determined U.S. policy yet, that could move events towards that “dwelling safely” situation described by Ezekiel (38:8,11 and 14).

As Malcolm Hoenlein—an American Jewish leader has said: “The real key now is the implementation and sustaining it over time.” A final status on borders and upon Jerusalem could take considerable time to agree upon—even when terror stops. It may never be agreed—Meanwhile Israel is re-occupying the mountains of Israel (Ezek 38) as well as Judah (Joel 3) where the presence of regathered Jews is required.

RECONCILIATION

DO YOU NEED A PRIEST TO FORGIVE YOUR SINS?

CONFESSION BOXES AT ST. PETERS IN ROME

By Frank Abel. *Shelburne, Ont.*

More deadly than cancer, more prevalent than heart disease, more crippling than arthritis, sin is the world's greatest enemy and every single human being on this planet is afflicted by it. The only remedy for it is a process called forgiveness. The question of who can forgive sins—and how—is fundamental to every group claiming to be Christian. The biggest and most influential group itself claiming a monopoly on forgiveness, is the Roman Catholic Church. According to them only a priest with the authority of Rome can forgive sins. If their claim is right, then other Christian groups should waste no time in converting to Catholicism. If their claim is wrong, and their priests cannot forgive the sins of others, then the Roman Catholic Church with all her pomp and glory is nothing but a cloud without water. My contention in this article is that the latter of these alternatives is true. That is, that a Roman Catholic priest cannot forgive your sins at all, and that those who think otherwise are being duped by a very clever operation to win converts and make captives.

Is the Roman Catholic Church the Mother of the Bible?

Basic to the question of whether or not a Roman Catholic priest can forgive your sins, is where does a person turn to find the answer. There is no question about what answer a priest will give, but *where does he get his answer from?* This is a vital point. Catholics are taught that the Roman Curia is the supreme authority on these matters, and further, that the Church is

the mother of the Bible.* If the Roman Catholic Church gave birth to the Bible, then certainly, they have the last say on this matter, and if you accept this claim as being valid, then Catholic authorities have you where they want you — just listen to them and be told what to believe.

The scriptures can provide an answer to this claim and they challenge the reader: “believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God” (1 John 4:1). That is, don't just accept everything you hear, ask a few questions and consider the answers. Here are a few starters:

‘ Don't just accept everything you hear, ask a few questions and consider the answers. Here are a few starters. ’

1. When 6000 years ago Adam and Eve disobeyed the commandment and subsequently hid in shame awaiting the reaction of God, where was the Curia of the Catholic Church? When the Elohim set out the terms of Reconciliation and explained them to Adam and Eve, what part did the Catholic Church play?
2. The gospel, or good news of the Bible was preached to Abraham 2000 years before the Christian era began (Galatians 3:8). Where was the Roman Catholic Church then?
3. The Bible declares that the Jews, not

Catholics, are the custodians of the “oracles of God” (Romans 3:1,2). Where was the Pope when the “Law of Moses” was written and who protected the law during the centuries before history knew anything of the Roman Catholic Church?

4. The Old Testament, which contains 60% of the books of the Bible, was first written in Hebrew, not Latin. So how could the Latin Church be the mother of the Bible?
5. The Roman Catholic Church has in its history, placed the Bible on its own Index of forbidden books, they have burned thousands of copies of it, as well as those who dared to translate it, own it, or even read it. They presently show disdain for it, teaching for doctrines things that are utterly opposed to it, and instead of upholding its lofty moral principles, are bringing reproach upon it by a priesthood riddled with corruption. Some mother!

The Roman Catholic Church is not the Mother of the Bible and now we would like to show you that neither is it the Child of the Bible.

Teaching of the Catholic Catechism

“1461 Since Christ entrusted to his apostles the ministry of reconciliation, bishops who are their successors, and priests, the bishops' collaborators, continue to exercise this ministry. Indeed bishops and priests, by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders, have the power to forgive all sins “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

“1495 Only priests who have received the faculty of absolving from the Authority of

* (The Faith of Millions, by J.A.O'Brien, (1958)

the Church can forgive sins in the name of Christ.”

These articles of the Catechism, make it clear enough — the Vatican believes its authority to forgive sins rests in the teachings of the Lord through a process otherwise known as apostolic succession. The mixing of things that are supported by the Bible and things that are foreign to it make it difficult for a person to see the difference. The Bible however, never uses the expression ‘apostolic succession’ neither does it suggest that any power or authority would be handed down through a line of men starting with the apostle Peter. In fact, the apostle Peter specifically warned the elders of the Christian community against this concept when he wrote (1 Peter 5:3) “Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.” The idea behind the word translated ‘lord’ is a ruler, and Peter would have none of it. The elders of each congregation were to be examples to the flock, that is shepherds, with a genuine interest in feeding the flock. The Catholic church however, decided to disregard the instruction of the apostle Peter, and so now the Pope reigns over the Catholic Church with absolute authority.

Roman Catholic Priests do not possess the Holy Spirit!

The Bible provides another test to check out the claims being made by the Roman Curia. Consider the following quotation from John 20:22-23.

“And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.”

Catholics believe that these words of the Lord were not limited to the apostles then present, but were transmitted through the many generations of mankind by apostolic succession, to the present pope, and through him to the present line of bishops and priests. Central to the understanding of these words of the Lord, is that those who were given the power to remit and retain the sins of others would also have the discerning power of the Holy Spirit. By the mighty deeds that the apostles were able to do, people were sure they had the gift of the Holy Spirit. Consider 2 Cor 12:12

“Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.”

The association is easy to make; anyone claiming to be an apostle, or claiming to get their authority from an apostle in order to forgive sins, should also be able to demonstrate that he has the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus Christ set the standard in this when he associated the power of the Holy Spirit and the ability to forgive sins in the following words. (Luke 5:23-24)

“Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man

hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house.”

If it was just as easy to say, “rise up and walk” as it was to say, “thy sins be forgiven thee”, where can you find a priest today that can follow the Lord in this example? Even the Pope is powerless to demonstrate the possession of the Holy Spirit in this way. If therefore, these men cannot heal after the manner of the Lord, neither can they forgive sins after the manner of the Lord.

The apostle Peter (supposedly the first Pope) demonstrated that he could do mighty works openly, and before a multitude of people, such that even his shadow was able to heal people. Consider the following quotation:



A confessional box in St Peters; this one for those who prefer a Jesuit priest

“...they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one” (Acts 5:15-16).

Amongst all the priests, all the bishops, all the archbishops, all the Cardinals, and even the Pope himself, there is not a single person in the Catholic church that is possessed of that power. Why not? Neither then should we believe that any of them possess the authority to forgive sins of other people, the two go together.

The Qualifications of a Priest:

The Old Testament first reveals God’s will

concerning a priesthood when God separated the tribe of Levi, and certain of his sons to officiate as priests. These priests did not forgive sins, they made the required atonement, or officiated as God required, but it was God who forgave the sins. Priests were given a specific role to play in the actions of reconciliation and God required that people come to Him through the priest, or as we find later in the record, through any man that was held in esteem by God. In the days of Israel there were many times where the priests were not righteous, or available when needed, and it was in times like this that God illustrated the essential character of the priesthood.

God Wanted Righteous Men

Jeremiah was told by God:

“Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it” (Jeremiah 5:1).

Here the situation was desperate and the qualifications that God was looking for was that of a man that executed judgment, and sought the truth. However, if he had been able to find a man with these qualifications, the man could not by himself forgive the sins of others — God would listen to his prayer on their behalf.

Similarly in the New Testament, consider James 5:14-15,

“Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the ecclesia; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.”

There was no formal priesthood, neither was it needed, and neither is one needed now.

The Only Sins Mortal Priests Can Forgive

The Roman Church would have us believe that sins can be divided into two categories, mortal and venial. Mortal sins, considered by them to be more damaging, are the sins you must confess to a priest. The Bible however, does not make that distinction about sins and lends no credence to the idea that only a priest can forgive the worse type of sins. Martin Luther, while he was still a Catholic Priest made the following point amongst the 95 theses that he nailed to the church door in Wittenberg.

“The Pope cannot remit any guilt, except by declaring that it has been remitted by God and by assenting to God’s remission; though to be sure, he may grant remission in cases reserved to his judgment.”

The point was made well — even the Pope can only forgive those who sin against himself, he is powerless to forgive those who sin against God.

Consider the plain teaching of Jesus Christ

who instructed everyone to seek forgiveness by directly requesting it from God.

“And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil” (Luke 11:4).

Then he went on to say in Matt 6:14-15,

“...if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

These instructions of the Lord say nothing of a priesthood, but they are very clear in limiting human authority in forgiving sins (priest or not) to those that sin against us.

Must You Confess Your Sins To A Priest?

If a priest does not have the authority to forgive your sins, then neither is there any sense in confessing your sins to an official of a church. Those who do not recognise this fact will start to pay a big price for their ignorance.

The Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church is emphatic about this, going far beyond a simple confession of one's sins, into a systematic probing of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Consider this article of the Catechism:

1456 Confession to a priest is an essential part of the sacrament of Penance:

“All mortal sins of which penitents after a diligent self-examination are conscious, must be recounted by them in confession, even if they are most secret and have been committed against the last two precepts of the Decalogue; for these sins sometimes wound the soul more grievously and are more dangerous than those which are committed openly.”

The following, however, is an example of what a former priest had to say about the confessional:

“...I do not exaggerate when I say, that for many noble hearted, well-educated, high-minded women, to be forced to unveil their hearts before the eyes of a man, to open to him all the most secret recesses of their souls, all the most sacred mysteries of their single or married life, to allow him to put to them questions which the most depraved woman would never consent to hear from her vilest seducer, is often more horrible and intolerable than to be tied on burning coals.

“More than once, I have seen women fainting in the confessional-box, who told me afterwards, that the necessity of speaking to an unmarried man on certain things, on which the most common laws of decency ought to have for ever sealed their lips, had almost killed them! Not hundreds, but thousands of times, I have heard from the lips of dying girls, as well as of married women, the awful words; “I am forever lost! All my past confessions and communications have been so many sacrileges! Shame has sealed my lips and damned my soul” (*The Priest, the Woman, and the Confessional*; Chiniquy;

ISBN: 0-937958-03-4).

Concerning confession, the Bible says the following:

“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16)

These words are easy to comprehend and say nothing in support of article 1456 of the Roman Catholic Catechism. It is at this point that the authority issue becomes critical. That is, what do you believe? If you have been convinced that the Roman Church is the mother of the Bible, you will likely side with the Church's official view. If however, you see the Bible as having the greater authority, you will recognise that the Roman Catholic Church is not even a child of the Bible, rather it is on a power trip to control and captivate their membership.

Read the Bible, study its precepts, be aware of its teachings and be a partaker of its liberty, as the Lord said, “the truth shall make you free” (John.8:32).

Does a priest have the Authority to assign Penance?

If a priest does not have the authority to forgive sins, nor the right to hear confession,

“ Is not the probing in the priest's questions needed for the very fact that he is totally dependent upon the one confessing to be telling the truth? This was not the case for the apostles who had the Holy Spirit. ”

then certainly his ability to exact judgment must be questioned. One of the obvious problems relating to penance lies in a priest's inability to know if a person is telling the truth. Is not the probing in the priest's questions needed for the very fact that he is totally dependent upon the one confessing to be telling the truth? This was not the case for the apostles who had the Holy Spirit. The apostle Peter did not need a confession from Ananias, or Sapphira to know they were guilty, so why do priests, claiming to be acting with the same authority of the apostle Peter, require a confession from sinners today?

Former Catholics have also mentioned that they made up stories about things they had done wrong, in order to deflect the Confessor's attention from other things. What kind of justice could there be in assigning penance in that case? Surely, without the Holy Spirit power to operate as it did in the first century, this whole process is a mockery of justice.

Does a Priest have the Authority to make Eternal Judgment?

One further area that needs examination is not least in being last. According to the following statement from the Catechism, the

Roman Catholic priest is able to remit eternal punishment.

“**1496** The spiritual effects of the sacrament of Penance are:

- (a) reconciliation with God by which the penitent recovers grace;
- (b) reconciliation with the Church;
- (c) remission of the eternal punishment incurred by mortal sins;
- (d) remission, at least in part, of temporal punishments resulting from sin;
- (d) peace and serenity of conscience, and spiritual consolation;
- (e) an increase of spiritual strength for the Christian battle.

Part (c) of the above article needs Biblical examination, as this claim puts the whole idea of their concept of reconciliation in proper focus. If a priest can forgive one's sins and remove eternal punishment, then the priest's authority has been elevated to that of Jesus Christ himself. This conclusion not only applies to Catholic priests but also to any religious leader who proposes to know the mind of the Lord concerning another's eternal fate and flies in the face of much Biblical opposition.

The apostle Peter in pronouncing judgment against Ananias and Sapphira gave no hint that their guilt in the matter of lying to the Holy Spirit, or his judgment of it, would have eternal consequences. (Acts 5:3)

The apostle Paul, who possessed all the Holy Spirit gifts went further. He wrote to the Corinthians:

“But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord” (1 Cor 4:2-5 NKJV).

The apostle would not pronounce an eternal judgment concerning himself because as he says, it was the Lord's prerogative to make such a judgment, not his. Although in his personal estimation he was innocent, and that estimation being made with the Holy Spirit of God, yet he would not pronounce that all his sins were forgiven and consequences removed. How is it then, that the priests of Rome believe they can do so?

The apostle went on further, “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God” (1Cor 4:4-5 NKJV).

What is being done by the Roman Catholic priests in this matter of forgiveness, is due to their presumptuous and reckless assumption of authority and in clear violation of the teaching of the Scriptures. Their judgment is coming! (Revelation 17, 18)

Our warning to all Roman Catholics is, be certain, your church and your priest have deceived you, your sins are not forgiven!



The Order of Melchizedek

By Matt Drywood (Hamilton, Ont.)

Solomon tells us that: “Where there is no vision (perception), the people perish (are made naked):” (Prov 29:18). Ask any athlete what helps him to achieve a medal in his given sport and he will tell you “goals”.

Increasing our Vision

What better way to increase our vision then, than to understand the future role believers will have in the kingdom age. Ezekiel chapters 40-48 outline some of the wonderful activities in the land of Israel after the return of Christ to the earth. Presently, the believer is in preparation for the future age, as 1 Cor 15:46 tells us: “first that which is natural: and afterwards that which is spiritual.”

In Ephesians 2:19-22 we read:

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto *an holy temple* in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”

In the kingdom age this principle will be repeated in relation to all peoples, in a “House of prayer for all nations.” — Isa 56:7

A Changed Land

All nations will be “shaken” prior to God’s glory filling this future house (Hag 2:6,7). But Israel’s geographic condition today can not accommodate this “House of Prayer,” and so changes will occur when earthquakes will reshape the land (Zech 14:4, 10). The existence of a fault line today that passes from east to west, through the Mount of Olives, indicates the volatility of this area. The areas between Geba and Rimmon (see map below) will be made into a plain (the Hebrew is

arabah in Zech 14:9). Details are given as to the parts of Jerusalem that will be raised in order to accommodate the newly erected altar for sacrifices in the future temple (Zech 14:10). So we see a land “lifted up” for all to see: “Beautiful for situation (elevation), the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great king” (Christ, in Psalm 48:2).

Isaiah 2:2 tells us that this house will be prepared “in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.” Why would people want to go there? Because of the great peace promised emanating from the “city of peace”, Jerusalem— see Isa 2:3,4.

We have the pure word of God, represented by “living waters” flowing from Jerusalem “healing” the Dead Sea and making it habitable for fish (Zech 14:8). Fishermen will even be able to fish from Engedi to Eneglaim (Ezek 47:8-10).

The Spiritual Type

This “river of life” will also have a figurative aspect:

“And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” (Rev 22:1-2).

This water of life can be likened to the



word of God. As Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well, "...the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14).

The tree (wood) of life, bearing twelve manner of fruits can be likened to the saints, who from the river of life, or word of God, have borne fruit in the service of God. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations; this signifying that those who are selected for the kingdom will have the task of teaching the mortal populations of the world.

A Failing Priesthood

Since early in the history of Israel, God's purpose for his people Israel was revealed to Moses:

"Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel" (Ex 19:5-6).

So it is that when we come to examine the role of the saints in the future, it is seen in a *new priesthood* as explained in Ezek 44.

The failure of the Levitical priesthood is described in Mal. 2: 4-8:

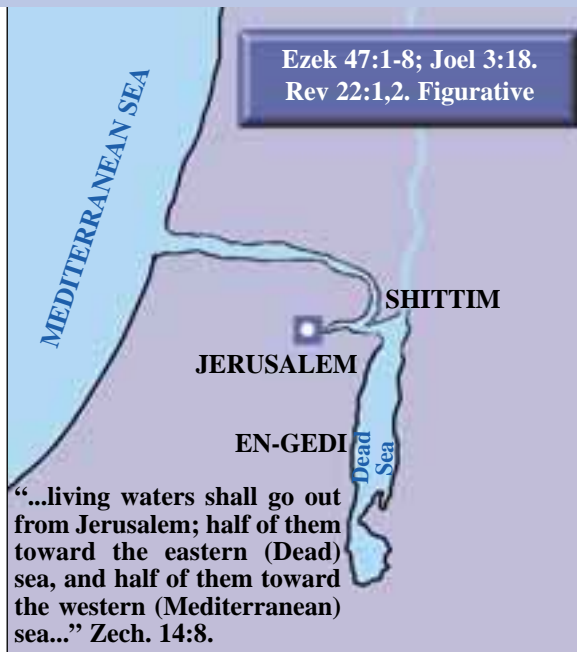
"And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the LORD of hosts. My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name. The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity. For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts."

Prophecy of the Faithful Priest

A comparison of the sons of Levi with the sons of Zadok (found in Ezekiel 44) can be seen foreshadowed in 1 Samuel 2. Eli the high priest and his sons, Hophni and Phinehas, angered God. His sons were wicked and corrupt and Eli did nothing about it.

"Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house...And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house: and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever." (1 Sam. 2:31, 35).

Who is this faithful priest? We are told that God will build him a "sure house". The Hebrew word is "*banah*," meaning "family." He will walk before God's anointed forever. We can see the future sense of this prophecy in those who



are faithful, for they will walk before Christ forever in the kingdom.

In 1 Kings chapters one and two, we can see who the faithful priest spoken of in 1 Samuel 2 was. When Adonijah conspired against David and tried to become king, we see that Abiathar the priest followed Adonijah, while Zadok the priest was "not with Adonijah." He remained faithful to David, God's anointed:

"So Solomon thrust out Abiathar from being priest unto the LORD; that he might fulfill the word of the LORD, which he spake concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh. And the king put Benaiah the son of Jehoiada in his room over the host: and Zadok the priest did the king put in the room of Abiathar." (1 Kings 2:27, 35).

Zadok then, was the faithful priest spoken of in 1 Samuel. Abiathar was removed from being priest unto the LORD and Zadok took his place.

Now in Ezekiel 44, we have two classes of priests. The first are the sons of Levi, and are to be compared with Abiathar.

"...they (the Levites) ministered unto them before their idols, and caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity; therefore have I lifted up mine hand against them, saith the Lord GOD, and they shall bear their iniquity. And they shall not come near unto me, to do the office of a priest unto me, nor to come near to any of my holy things, in the most holy place: but they shall bear their shame, and their abominations which they have committed." (Ezek. 44:12,13).

The Levites, like Abiathar, weren't faithful. Therefore, the LORD will not allow them to

come near unto Him and have the office of a priest *unto Him*, just as Abiathar was removed from being a priest unto the LORD. Instead, the Levites have the task of ministering unto the people:

"This chamber, whose prospect is toward the south, is for the priests, the keepers of the charge of the house" (Ezek. 40:45).

Compare this with verse 46 where the sons of Zadok are keepers of the charge of the altar, and come near to the LORD to minister unto him.

"But I will make them (the Levites) keepers of the charge of the house, for all the service thereof, and for all that shall be done therein." (Ezek. 44:14).

The sons of Levi are mortal.

We read: "And when they go forth into the utter court, even into the utter court to the people (this refers then to the sons of Levi). Neither shall they take for their wives a widow, nor her that is put away: but they shall take maidens of the seed of the house of Israel, or a widow that had a priest before." (Ezek. 44:19,22).

We know from the New Testament that in the kingdom the saints will not marry or be given in marriage:

THE TWO ORDERS OF PRIESTS

<u>LEVITES</u>	<u>SONS OF ZADOK</u>
Went Astray. Ezek.44:10	Kept the charge of my Sanctuary. Ezek. 44:15.
Ministers in the Sanctuary, having charge at the gates. Ministering in the house. Ezek. 44:11.	Enter into the Sanctuary. Come near to the table. Ezek.44:15,16.
Slay the Sacrifices for the people. Ezek. 44:11.	Offer unto Yahweh the fat and the blood. Ezek. 44:15
Stand before the people to minister unto them. Ezek. 44:11	Stand before Yahweh to minister unto Him. Ezek. 44:15
Come not near to any of the holy things, nor to Yahweh. Ezek. 44:13.	Come near to minister unto Yahweh. Ezek. 44:15.
Keep the charge of the house. Ezek. 44:14.	Keep the charge of the altar. Ezek 40:46.

"...AND ZADOK THE PRIEST DID THE KING PUT IN THE ROOM OF ABIATHAR"
1 Kings 2:27,35.

"For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven."— Matt. 22:30

The sons of Zadok are immortal saints that minister to God and have the service of the altar.

The Faithful Priesthood

The divinely appointed priesthood through

the Levites did not live up to their high calling. They were to administer the Law, which was designed to separate a people unto God, but that Law was only a schoolmaster leading up to Christ (Gal 3:24). So the writer to the Hebrews asks:

“If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec (“Melchizedok”—king of righteousness), and not be called after the order of Aaron?” (Heb 7:11).

By believing and following the commandments of Christ we can become heirs to the same salvation that the Lord Jesus Christ has received (Heb 1:14). Therefore, we should strive to follow after the order (Gk.: “taxi” fashion, arrangement) of the “king of righteousness,” as it is stated in 1 Pet 2:9,

“...ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”

God’s covenant and purpose has not been cancelled due to the failure of his chosen people. In His foreknowledge God had provided a means of salvation for those who respond in faith. This was done by sending his only begotten Son, Jesus of Nazareth, born to Mary. He was of the royal line of Judah, and heir to the throne of Israel (Lk 1:32). The resurrected Jesus was the first of a new creation, the last Adam, born out of death by the power of faith. By his sacrifice he had opened up a new and living way to God whereby men and women of faith could receive remission of sins and enter the family of faithful Abraham by adoption. Jews and non-Jews could embrace the Abrahamic faith by:

1. Faithfully believing God’s word
2. Repenting of their sins
3. Seeking forgiveness
4. Being baptized, symbolizing a burial with Christ and rebirth to a new life
5. Living faithfully & obediently thereafter

Thus the nation will have a new priesthood who will complete the work that the Levites failed to do.

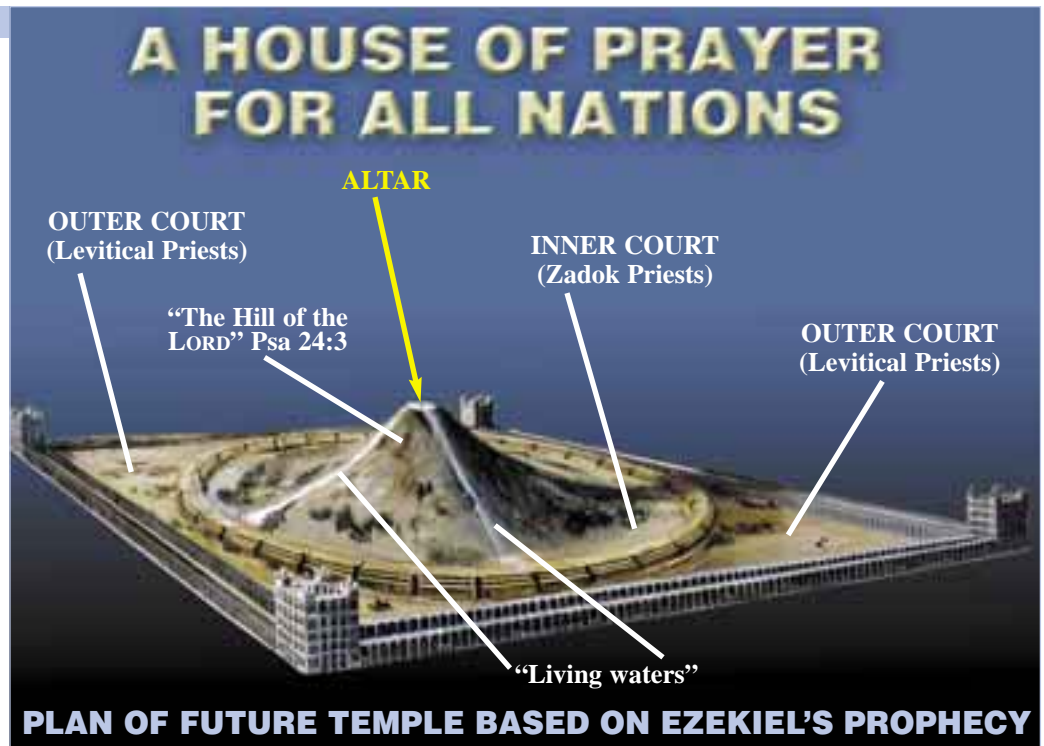
Distinguishing Features of the Sons of Levi

As we have pointed out, the sons of Levi will be mortals—“they shall bear their iniquity” (Ezekiel 44:12,13). Luke. 20:35-36 tells us immortals don’t marry— yet these Levites do so— Ezek. 44:19-22.

Distinguishing Features of the Sons of Zadok

Because of their faithfulness the sons of Zadok will occupy a higher position than the sons of Levi. They will minister to Yahweh. (Ezek. 40:46; Ezek. 44:15, 16).

“And the chamber whose prospect is toward the north is for the priests, the keepers of the charge of the altar: these are the sons of Zadok among the sons of Levi,



which come near to the LORD to minister unto him.” (Ezek. 40:46).

“But the priests the Levites, the *sons of Zadok*, that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, they shall come near to me to minister unto me, and they shall stand before me to offer unto me the fat and the blood, saith the LORD GOD: They shall enter into my sanctuary, and they shall

come near to my table, to minister unto me, and they shall keep my charge” (Ezek. 44:15,16).

Hopefully, this will help us to increase our vision of the future role of God’s faithful servants in the kingdom age as revealed in the Bible. May we be a watchful and prepared people, ordering our lives to be true “sons of righteousness.”

BIBLE MAGAZINE NOTICE BOARD

BRANTFORD PROPHECY DAY (Canada)

Saturday October 26th, 2002, at the Branlyn Community Centre, Brantford. Registration 9:30am.

Class #1. Europe & the Jews: the lessons of History. Speaker: Michael Ashton. (U.K.)

Class #2. Middle East Turmoil: A Sign of our Time. Speaker: Geoff Henstock (Aust.)

Class #3. Europe’s Attitude to Israel: Where is it leading? Speaker: Michael Ashton. (U.K.)

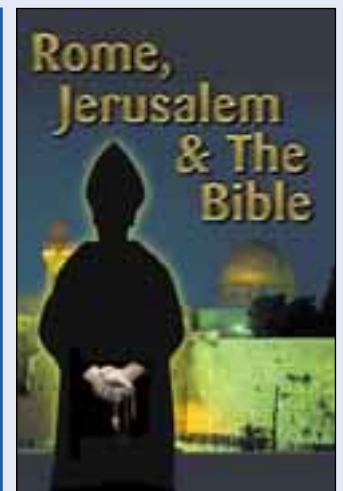
Class #4. Middle East Miracle & The Coming Messiah. Speaker: Geoff Henstock (Aust.)

RUGBY MILESTONES PROPHECY DAY (UK)

Saturday February 22nd, 2003, at the Benvue Hall Rugby. Full details in our next issue God willing.

ROME, JERUSALEM & THE BIBLE Exhibition

This exhibition is booked for Mississauga West (Sat. Sept. 14); Hamilton Ewen Rd (Sept. 7); Montreal (tentatively Aug. 31st). Arrangements are also in process for Simi Hills California, West Houston Texas, and Phoenix Arizona. Contact local Christadelphians for further and final details.



THIS NEW 55 PAGE Book by Paul Billington looks at the truth behind current events in the Middle East and the connection they have to the Gospel. Supplies are available from usual Bible Magazine agents or book sales. See the inside front cover of this issue for addresses and phone numbers. Price is in your local funds, payable to your agent.

UNDERSTANDING THE REASON

BAPTIS

“These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”—Revelation 7:14

By Paul Billington (Brantford, Ont.)

When Jesus Christ instructed his immediate disciples about their mission he told them: “Go ye into all the world and *preach the gospel* to every creature. He that *believeth* and is *baptized* shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15-16).

These instructions were straight forward. First, the disciples must preach the gospel, or good news. The account in Matthew 28:19 uses the word “teach,” which is really the same thing—and this preaching or teaching work is what we see the apostles engaged in through the book of Acts. As can be seen from this account in Acts, the teaching produced *belief* in the hearts of some, whilst others either rejected or dismissed the good news imparted to them.

Those who did believe were then baptized in accordance with Christ’s original instruction. There were no exceptions to this. Peter is quite specific about it saying “Repent, and be baptized *every one of you* in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” (Acts 2:38). In Acts 8:12 we are told that “both men and women” were baptized. Also, in writing to Christian believers in Corinth, Paul says they were “*all baptized* into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free...” (1 Corinthians 12:13). There was no such thing as an unbaptized Christian—and for very good reasons.

God is Righteous

The apostle Paul stated a fact when he wrote, “...all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). This has always been so as he says again in chapter 5:12, “...as by one man (i.e. Adam) sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that *all have sinned*.” This

takes us back to the judgement pronounced by God in Genesis 3:19, and by which man was sentenced to return again to the dust of the ground. Adam’s disobedience to the commandment of God was “sin,” and that act of rebellion placed him in a condition before God that required a just response. Rebellion against God brought death, and if we think about it we must surely admit that there could be no alternative—and that goes for all of us because as Paul says, “all have sinned.”

Our experience of human nature—starting with ourselves—confirms that none of us are worthy of anything except the death sentence that was passed upon all. Human history with its cruelty and its crimes, its war and bloodshed, surely testifies to the fact that God was right. God is righteous and we are “sold under sin” (Romans 7:14). Try as we might, we cannot escape our weakness—we resist only to fall. That is the condition we find ourselves in.

Now baptism—burial in water—is a public demonstration and declaration which acknowledges this condition, that it is worthy of death—that it *deserves* to be buried. This act declares that God is right. Consider this in connection with the work of John Baptist in Luke 7:29-30.

“And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, *justified God*, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers *rejected the counsel of God against themselves*, being not baptized of him.”

Even Jesus himself submitted to this baptism, saying “...for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness” (Matt. 3:15). Indeed, it declared that God was righteous. This is the frame of

mind that God desires.

Knowledge Required

Jesus had told the eleven disciples to “preach the gospel to every creature”—that is, to “teach all nations” about it (Mark 16 and Matthew 28). To *teach* is to give information, to communicate or instruct. The subject to be taught or communicated was *the gospel*.

A certain knowledge of the gospel then, was necessary so that a person may believe it—for it is impossible to believe in something unless we know about it. As, Paul puts it: “...how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Romans 10:14). There is no such thing in the Bible as “blind faith;” the first Christians *knew* what they believed, and why—their faith consisted in an “assurance of things hoped for” and was founded upon “*evidence of things not seen*” (Hebrews 11:1).

It is necessary then that the *true* believer be sufficiently equipped to answer the question: What is the Gospel? He or she must be able to explain what the Good News is about. *This*

“...baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ...” 1 Peter 3:21

IS FOR:

M

shed their robes,
on 7:14.

knowledge is the key to remission of sins, for it is “He that believeth and is baptized” that shall be saved from sin and death.

To understand what the Gospel is about, and what it was the disciples taught, it is useful to study the book of Acts. Here, various expressions are used in order to describe the content of what was taught. In summary, they taught “the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 8:12). Two aspects of the gospel are identified here, but they cannot really be considered in isolation from each other—and they may be contained in terms such as “preaching the word” (8:4), or preaching “Christ” (verse 5), or preaching “the gospel” (verse 25) and preaching “Jesus” (verse 35).

From Acts chapter one we learn that Jesus, after his resurrection, spent some 40 days “speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (verse 3). The disciples, having listened to these things wanted to know: “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” (verse 6). From this it is obvious that they understood the kingdom of God to be the kingdom of ISRAEL (compare 1 Chronicles 28:5). Related to this fact is the identity of Israel’s king or Christ (for the word “Christ” means an anointed one or king, in Hebrew it is Messiah). To preach Christ therefore, is to teach that Jesus of Nazareth is the king of Israel as Nathanael claimed in John 1:49. He is “the king of the Jews” (John 19:19), and will return from heaven to restore all things as required by the prophets (see Acts 3:20-21).

But there are other things concerning the name of Jesus Christ



Baptism follows a public confession of faith in “the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ”—Acts 8:12.

which are also gospel, or good news. Namely, that the One Offering or sacrifice of Jesus was the all-sufficient covering for sins for all generations, past, present or future. This good news was that true and abiding forgiveness of sins was attainable *only* through the Name—and baptism into the Name of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12; Acts 5:31; Acts 10:43).

These things form the central core of the gospel which is to be believed—although there are other matters which have to be understood and believed also that we have not detailed here.

How Much Knowledge?

This question can appear to be a difficult

one sometimes—but it will largely disappear if we approach the matter from the right direction. It is important that we appreciate that our state of mind is just as essential as is the amount of knowledge. Where there is a right attitude of mind, other questions will usually solve themselves.

It is not so much a question of what men look for, but rather of what God is looking for—and what He requires in a person is a strong desire and a teachable spirit—See Isaiah 66:2; Proverbs 2:1-5; Jeremiah 29:13. Let these verses be consulted and they will reveal the frame of mind that God looks for, as expressed in Isaiah 55:7,

“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the

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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.”

In this desire to learn from God’s thoughts there will inevitably follow a growth in knowledge. As a person desires to please God and to embrace the things that He has promised, there will be that eager quest to learn. The person will want to know as much as possible—not as little as is needed. He will not be seeking salvation by the skin of his teeth! To begin with, the amount of knowledge and appreciation involved will vary according to age, capacity and other factors in the individual.

There is sometimes a natural reluctance on the part of those who teach the Truth to others to show fully what God requires of us. They do not want to offend or to “put off” the student, but we must remember that salvation is offered upon God’s standard and it is a grave mistake to think that we can lower it. The Truth will not offend those who have the right frame of mind. Paul could say: “I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:26-27).

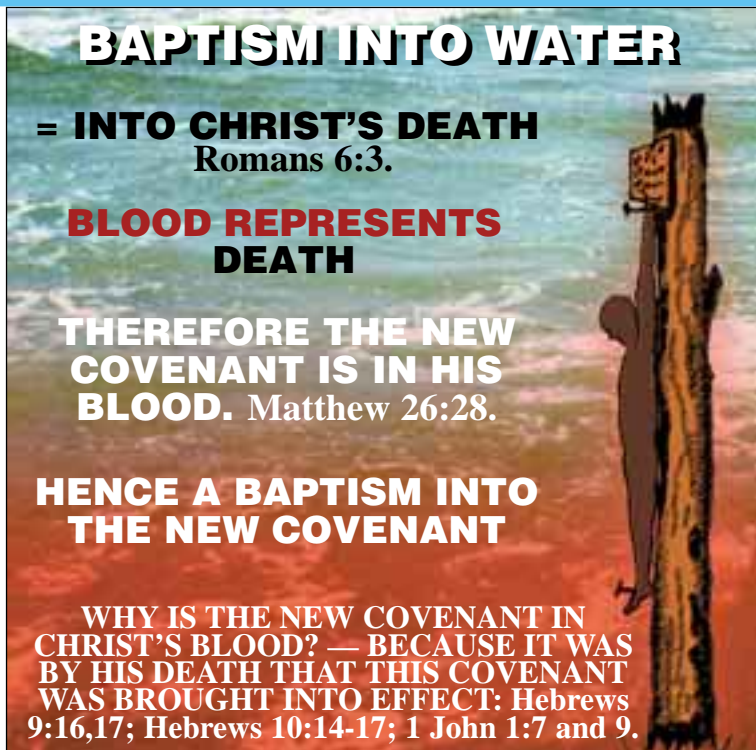
God knows that a person will fall far short of His standards—especially to begin with, but He does require that His standards of righteousness are humbly acknowledged from the beginning. Where this is the case He is willing to forgive sins and account faith for righteousness. Thus a humble and teachable frame of mind must remain in the disciple after baptism. This is essential.

Baptism into Christ

Baptism involves many things, and the more that a subject of it understands before entering the water, the better will he be able to appreciate his new position afterwards. This in turn can provide a spiritual strength to assist the person in their new life. On the other hand, over-simplification of this most important step can lessen its effect upon the individual in terms of his commitment and devotion. Inadequate preparation at the beginning results only in a shallow faith—or as the parable of Jesus expresses it, “no depth of earth” and consequently “no root” (Mark 4:5-6 and verses 16-17). This will invariably end in failure. It can come about when a person is (understandably) over-anxious to obtain salvation, or when the instructor is over-eager for converts. Patience and diligence is the wiser course.

This will be appreciated more fully when we realize that the act of baptism (i.e. immersion in water) is of no value if the level of faith and frame of mind is not acceptable before God. It was with good reason that Jesus told his disciples to teach first, and only when belief was confirmed were they to proceed with baptism. “If thou believest *with all thine heart*” was the qualification stated to the eunuch by Philip in Acts 8:37.

Let it be understood that sins are forgiven at baptism because it is a baptism *into Christ*. In



BAPTISM INTO WATER
= INTO CHRIST'S DEATH
Romans 6:3.
BLOOD REPRESENTS DEATH
THEREFORE THE NEW COVENANT IS IN HIS BLOOD. Matthew 26:28.
HENCE A BAPTISM INTO THE NEW COVENANT
WHY IS THE NEW COVENANT IN CHRIST'S BLOOD? — BECAUSE IT WAS BY HIS DEATH THAT THIS COVENANT WAS BROUGHT INTO EFFECT: Hebrews 9:16,17; Hebrews 10:14-17; 1 John 1:7 and 9.

other words it is a means whereby a man or woman may enter into the Christ covenant Name, called elsewhere the New Covenant in his blood. This concept is not a difficult one to grasp—but we must beware of getting tangled up in its terminology. Scripture uses many different phrases and figures in order to convey the idea and to illustrate it, but we must be careful to grasp the idea itself and not (as many do) see only figures. Baptism *into Christ* involves taking on his identity (which is called his name, his blood, his death, his life and so forth). The Name or identity of Christ is what he *is*, in every respect. When we are baptized into Christ we become partakers of him—we take on his Name (just as a woman takes on her husband’s name in a marriage). We become as it were “members” of his body. The apostle says that “...as many of you as have been baptized *into Christ* have *put on Christ*” (Galatians 3:27). This is the idea to get hold of—that of putting on Christ. The Greek word used in Galatians is *endusis* which has the idea of being invested or clothed upon (see *Strong*). Literally the idea is that of putting on Christ as a garment, to cover our own naked shame. His character covers us. This can only happen where there is an understanding of, and a belief in the character that is called Jesus Christ. We can only come to know this Jesus Christ in the real sense through what has been written of him (see John 17:20). In becoming part of him in this sense, our sins can be forgiven (Peter uses the phrase “blotted out” in Acts 3:19) for Christ’s sake.

A Covenant Relationship

We must also understand and appreciate that our relationship to Jesus Christ can only be established upon the basis of “the New Covenant in his blood”—see Matthew 26:28. Many Bibles will carry a marginal note here

pointing out that “testament” and “covenant” carry the same meaning.

When an individual enters the waters of baptism *in faith*, he sees that he is figuratively entering into Christ’s death (Romans 6:3-4). In another figure he is about to wash his robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb—Revelation 7:14. The “blood of the Lamb” and the “death of Christ” are of course the same thing. To enter into this sacrificial death requires a participation in it in some way—and a life in Christ will involve being a partaker in his sufferings—see 2 Cor. 1:7; 1 Peter 4:13; Acts 14:22. This

tribulation, suffering and trial is necessary to form and develop character. As Christ endured it—and represented us in so doing (Hebrews 5:7-8), so we too must expect it in some way and in some measure:

“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness” (Hebrews 12:6-10).

The part of the believer in this is to humbly accept what the Lord sends whilst co-operating in faith. If we share his death, we will also share his resurrection.

Perfection of conscience before God comes when sins are covered at baptism, but this is only the beginning. Perfection of character is the objective of the life in Christ—not that we can ever attain to absolute perfection, but there must be movement towards a substantial degree of conforming to God’s will and God’s standard. While this develops there is the constant need for sins to be covered, that conscience may continue in the “perfect” state.

All this is the work of the New Covenant—it is God’s work in us. In Hebrews 10:14-17 it is written.

“For by one offering he hath perfected *for ever* them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Spirit also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant

that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

Our participation in this New Covenant that is set before us in the Name of Jesus Christ commences with baptism. His is the Covenant-Name into which we are—or can be—baptized.

A "Body of Sin"

As we stated near the beginning of this article, all men (and women) have sinned—our condition is such that we cannot entirely escape the weakness and waywardness of our nature. The apostle Paul speaks for us all when he says (Romans 7:15) "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing..." We understand this to say that there is no inherent "good" (in terms of the Divine standard of righteousness) in our nature. Jesus says much the same thing when he says: "the flesh profiteth nothing" (John 6:63). We possess what Paul calls a natural body in 1 Corinthians 15:44, rendered in the New English Bible, an "animal" body—c/p Ecclesiastes 3:18. As such, men are driven by their basic instincts which are at work in their members creating various desires or lusts. This is a real physical principle at work in us. It is popularly known as SELFISHNESS.

Men however have faculties—and therefore the capacity for receiving moral standards—that animals in general do not. When God imparts to man certain standards of moral behaviour—as He has done through various teachings and commandments, this in effect, invites man to live on a higher plane and introduces him to a quality of life that is far above that of beasts. But it also makes him conscious of any disobedience to those teachings and commandments—thus Paul says: "I had not known sin, except through law" (Romans 7:7). And again in Romans 3:20, "by the law is the knowledge of sin;" for says John "sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 4:4).

These things are fundamental in our existence, because as Paul says, all have sinned. Human beings in general are described as all "under sin" (Romans 3:9). Every believer *feels* this acutely. This has been the case ever since Adam first sinned. As Paul says:

"...by one man's disobedience many were made sinners..." (Romans 5:19).

They are "made" sinners. The word is *kathistemi*, which *Strong* tells us has the meaning: designate, constitute or appoint etc. *Vine* prefers "appointed" sinners. Others include "declared." *Parkhurst* has "to be constituted sinners... to be treated as such." The sense is surely clear enough.

Accounted Righteous

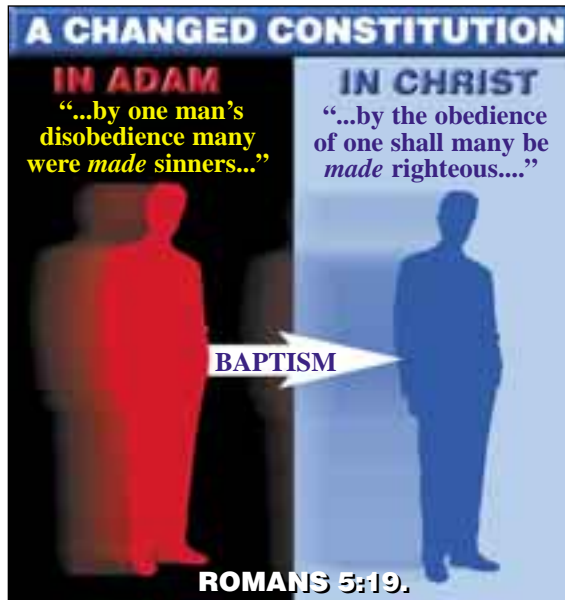
The sorry state that we thus find ourselves in, it is surely a relief to read on in Romans 5:19 and discover that, "by the obedience of one shall many be made (constituted) righteous." This *constitutional change* is yet another result

of our baptism into Christ.

When a man or woman comes to understand and believe "the word of the truth of the gospel" (Colossians 1:5), it generates within him a powerful influence termed by Paul "the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16). The result is what we call *faith*. The apostle sets before us the example of Abraham who believed God's promises:

"He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead."

In James chapter 3:6, we read again: "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." When faith in the gospel is imputed or accounted to someone for righteousness, it places them in a different category to mankind in general. They are *sanctified* or set apart—they are *saints* and not "sinners." The reason for this is that being



instructed by the Truth revealed, they seek to live on that higher level of behaviour which they see described in Scripture and exhibited or demonstrated by Jesus Christ. They become associated with Christ in putting him on through baptism, and so as Paul wrote: "by the obedience of one shall many be made (constituted, accounted) righteous." Their sins are covered over by "the blood of the everlasting covenant"—which is the New Covenant in Christ's blood—Hebrews 13:20-21; Matthew 26:28 and 1 John 1:7—and the high principles of God's righteousness are written in their hearts and minds (Hebrews 8:10-12).

It is important to realize however, that this process can only be maintained by the constant and continuing intake of God's Word into the

mind. If this is neglected, the appetites of the lower nature will soon come to dominate the individual once again—see 2 Peter 2:20-22.

"...Out of the Gentiles"

Our final point in this article arises from what has been explained above, and concerns what we call *separation*. This is a necessary consequence of the changed condition following baptism, and it requires the *complete* severance from the political and institutional associations of this present order. As we have it expressed in Acts 15:14, God did visit the Gentiles, "to take out of them a people for his name."

The example once again is that of Abraham's case. As a citizen of Ur in Chaldea, "he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance...he looked for a city which hath (moral and spiritual) foundations," whose architect is God—Hebrews 11:8-10. The idea of a "city" is not a collection of streets and buildings merely, but of a *society*; an organized social system. Abraham—and every true believer since—has looked for such a social arrangement based upon the principles of Truth and righteousness. The present world order is ruled by beasts (Daniel chapter 7); by animal men whose self-interest and corruption is so apparent in our day. The "saint" or separated one can have no part in such a system—and conversely, those who live, move and have their social being in that world of corruption would never fit into the city which God has designed.

This new city of God is to be established in Jerusalem and will be called THE CITY OF TRUTH (Zechariah 8:3; c/p Young's Literal translation). It will be inhabited by a society of people whose lives are governed by the truth of God—a Holy City community. Not only do Christ's saints look for such a city, they also "seek a country" (Hebrews 11:14); one of heavenly origin (verse 16). This is ISRAEL.

Israel is a country—the *only* country ever to have received its constitution and its laws from heaven. This will be the Kingdom of God in the future, and so at baptism the saint takes on this citizenship. Before baptism, says Paul to Gentile believers at Ephesus, "Ye were without Christ, being *aliens* from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." He then tells them: "But *now in Christ Jesus* ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh *by the blood of Christ*" (Ephesians 2:11-13). This making nigh, is the result of baptism into Christ.

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Eph. 2:19).

This new citizenship does not permit any involvement with the politics of this world—it just is not compatible. *Separation* then is an essential characteristic of those who truly look for that better country at Christ's return.

THE BIBLE'S AUTHORITY & THE PROPHETIC WORD

From time to time issues arise which are of sufficient importance that they deserve to be re-visited and re-emphasized. Certainly, the authority of the Bible—the fact that this really is the Word of the Living God—is one such matter. We live in a world where many claims are heard in respect to religious authority, be it the Koran, the book of Mormon, the Watchtower society, the magisterium (teaching authority) of the Roman Church, or the evangelical Christian who believes he is guided by the Holy Spirit. Many of these will say that they accept the Bible *as well as* their own peculiar oracles, though it is to be noted that in some cases only a specially doctored version of the Bible is accepted.* But the Bible has its own in-built safeguards and is the *only* source of knowledge concerning God and His purposes available at present upon earth. This Book, the Bible was given by inspiration of God in the writers and is consequently without error throughout, except such as may be due to errors of transcription or translation.

It is reasonable that men and women should ask for the evidence of this—and a careful reading of this “book of the LORD” (Isa. 34:16), shows us that God has provided the necessary evidence. He did so when the apostles of Christ originally delivered their message by preaching, and He has provided it in their writings also.

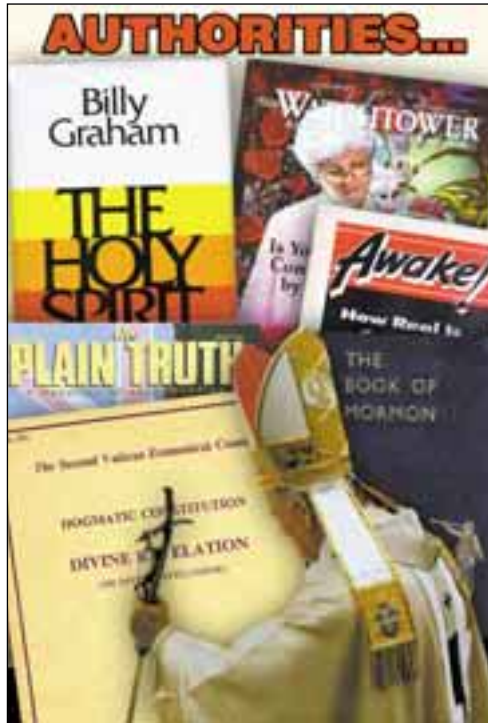
Confirming the Word

In the first century A.D. when the Lord Jesus Christ commissioned his disciples to preach the gospel, he promised to assist them by confirming their words with open signs. We read of this in Mark 16:20,

“And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.”

These signs were various, some of which are indicated in the previous few verses (17 and 18). Several times in the New Testament we are told about this evidence which the apostles were able to demonstrate. For example, we read in Acts 2:43, “...many wonders and signs were done by the apostles...” Again in chapter 5:12, “And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people...” The apostle Paul reminded the believers at Corinth:

“Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in



signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds” (2 Corinthians 12:12).

These signs and wonders then, provided evidence of a supernatural source—it gave their words the stamp of Divine authority. But the evidence was not merely external, it was even contained within the message itself. When Jesus promised “the spirit of truth” to his disciples (that is, the Comforter, helper or holy spirit—see John 14:26 and 15:13) he said that it would bring all things to their remembrance, would testify or witness of him, guide them into all truth and “*show you things to come.*” So part of the inspired message that they would deliver would contain what we call prophecy—it would inform of future happenings.

We have written of this in *The Bible Magazine* before (especially Vol. 14, issue No. 2 and page 18), and it is worth revisiting that article again now.

Evidence for Truth

There is no one who can confirm his words today as the apostles did with signs and wonders which were clearly miraculous. Attempts to mimic and fake these signs and wonders are made by some religious leaders, but there is *never* a clear, independent and reliable witness to verify the act as genuine. This is quite different from what we find in Scripture when even the religious authorities who opposed the apostles had to admit the

evidence. In Acts 4:14-16 this is recorded:

“And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; *and we cannot deny it.*”

The evidence for the Truth today does not come from signs and wonders being performed by evangelical pastors or Roman priests, it comes from the Scriptures themselves; from the writings of Moses, the prophets and apostles of Jesus Christ. The Bible *itself* is the miracle that is before the world today—and though men have set themselves the task of discrediting the Book with their yarns and tales about unrecorded happenings of long ago—artfully spun on the web of theory and guesswork—it remains what W.E. Gladstone once called “The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture.” As the religious leaders of the Jews made the Word of God of none effect by their traditions during the time of Christ (Mark 7:13), so today some churches repeat that error by placing their traditions on an equal footing with Scripture. It seems incredible that supposedly intelligent men in their ranks cannot perceive this simple parallel.

Nearly 250 years ago, the case was well described by Thomas Newton of Bristol. In 1754 he wrote:

“Men are sometimes apt to think, that if they could but see a miracle wrought in favor of religion, they would readily resign all their scruples, believe without doubt, and obey without reserve. The very thing that you desire, you have. You have the greatest and most striking of miracles in the series of scripture-prophecies accomplished... And this is not a transient miracle, ceasing almost as soon as performed; but is permanent, and protracted through the course of many generations. It is not a miracle delivered only upon the report of others, but is subject to your own inspection and examination. It is not a miracle exhibited only before a certain number of witnesses, but is open to the observation and contemplation of all mankind; and, after so many ages, is still growing, still improving to future ages. What stronger miracle therefore can you require for your conviction? or what will avail, if this be found ineffectual? Alas, if you reject the evidence of prophecy, neither would you be persuaded though one should rise from the dead.”

Such is the evidence that is before the world—and if Newton could write those words in 1754, what would he say today when so many more prophecies have been fulfilled? The

*Footnote: An example is the New World Translation used by Jehovah's Witnesses, but equally crafted versions are used on a growing scale, called by John Paul II “ecumenical translations.”

end of the Turkish empire, the fall of the pope's temporal power, the events that have befallen the Germanic Holy Roman 'Reich,' the regathering of Jews and the forming of their national home—and many other events commented upon in this magazine from time to time—all are the fulfillment of Scripture prophecies which Newton could only anticipate in a still developing future.

No man could predict the future course of world history as the Bible has done. This phenomena demonstrates a faculty that is *supernatural*. Jeremiah wrote:

“The prophets that have been before me and before thee of old prophesied both against many countries, and against great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of pestilence. The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the LORD hath truly sent him” (Jeremiah 28:28-29).

Bible prophecy *has* come to pass! It is the divine stamp which gives the Bible an authoritative voice—here is a notable miracle that is manifest to all, and we cannot deny it—Acts 4:16.

A Compelling Authority

In order to enhance a religious authority that is in competition with the Bible today, a first step must involve neutralizing the evidence of Bible prophecy. This “miracle” must be concealed somehow, especially because a correct understanding of it both exposes the false as well as establishes what is true.

Human nature is so obstinate and hardened in unbelief sometimes, that even notable miracles fail to make an impression. There are those supposedly religious people who would have us believe that Bible prophecy has no importance or value, and certainly no relevance to personal salvation. It is sometimes asked: What has foretelling the future got to do with salvation? The fact that Scripture tells us that “Where there is no vision (R.S.V. prophecy), the people perish” (Prov. 29:18), doesn't seem to connect with some people. That it *is* a necessary ingredient to a spiritual diet ought to be clear enough from the fact that there is so much prophecy in the Bible. To remove prophecy from a man's faith is like taking vision out of Hebrews chapter eleven. There would be no evidence of things not seen (verse 1). Noah would not have been moved or motivated by God's prophetic warning “of things not seen as yet” (verse 7), and those who died could not have seen afar off those gospel promises (verse 13). Such faith would be bankrupt and void of substance.

Such would be the result of taking away “from the words of the book of this prophecy” (Rev. 22:19). It removes the principle evidence that God has provided and so destroys faith. With the authority of the Bible thus

undermined, other authorities stand ready to step into the vacuum thus created, and lead men and women astray.

Sowing Confusion

The most insidious and damaging attack upon the authority of the Bible comes from those who not only deny the importance of prophecy, but proceed to meddle with the plain and obvious meaning of it. Their re-interpretation of prophecy injects a neutralizing agent at the very point between the prophecy and its accomplishment in history. The evidence of fulfilled prophecy is in this way removed, leaving behind an array of competing speculations that provide only doubt and confusion. The uncertainty that overtakes this aspect of Bible teaching soon spreads to other subjects, so that faith becomes vague and without clear direction.

There are, of course, details which are obscure. But these *are* details! There were details of Old Testament prophecies which remained obscure until the Spirit of Truth revealed their true import through the inspired apostles of Christ. There are no doubt other

“Not only does the Bible provide evidence of the supernatural but it also issues a challenge to other would-be religious authorities: “...Let them... show us what shall happen...”

matters which will be made clear when Christ returns in the near future. These do not affect the main prophetic pattern however—and this pattern is not given by men; it is given by God through the Scriptures themselves.

History Foretold

Two prophetic themes stand out in the Bible as having a clear reference to the unfolding of history. The first concerns the Jewish people, and the second has to do with the flow of history which is related to Gentile powers. These two streams establish the pattern by which we can understand God's purpose.

The story of the Jews and of Israel is one that stretches over many centuries. In the simplest of terms this may be expressed in the destruction of their nation, their scattering and survival among the nations—and then their final restoration and cleansing. All of this was foretold in the law and the prophets and it is endorsed by the New Testament. It is a *continuous* story in the sense that its progress (sometimes at a standstill by appearances) could be identified during any age of history.

They have been and still are God's witnesses as He declared through the prophet that they would be—Isaiah 43:8-11. If evidence be needed for the authority of the Bible, one only has to look at the prophecies concerning the Jews and place it alongside their history.

As to the second theme concerning the development of Gentile history, the pattern is clearly set out in the prophecy of Daniel. To take it no further back than Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon (approx. 600 B.C.) the pattern is one of successive world powers. Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar:

“Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory... Thou art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron...” (Daniel 2:37-40).

These Gentile powers are identified in the prophecy of Daniel itself. Babylon was taken by the Medes and Persians—chapter 5:30-31. The Medes and Persians were defeated by the Greeks—chapter 8:20-21 as seen in the context of that chapter. Out of this Greek-goat power developed one which would take away the daily sacrifice and cast down the sanctuary, holy place or temple—undoubtedly the Romans. Other parts of Daniel's prophecy show that this fourth (Roman) power would become divided (e.g. chapter 2:41), which it was some three centuries after Christ when the empire was divided between east and west and then sub-divided into separate sovereign states following the barbarian invasions (see Daniel 7:24). Other details follow but the main pattern is established—a succession of Gentile powers until they are at last demolished and replaced by the kingdom that God will set up for His saints—Daniel 7:26-27.

It is this general pattern of an unfolding purpose that forms the framework of Bible prophecy and which provides the remarkable evidence that we have spoken of. Not only does it provide evidence of the supernatural but it also issues a challenge to other would-be religious authorities:

“Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and *shew us what shall happen*: let them shew the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or *declare us things for to come*. *Shew the things that are to come hereafter*, that we may know that ye are gods...” (Isaiah 41:21-24).

This is a challenge that no other authority can answer. The Bible alone has these credentials; here *alone* do we find such a theophany.



Daily Bible Reading Practicing it Today

By Fred Crawford (Victoria, B.C.)

In a busy and challenging world there is a vital need, often neglected, to draw our families around the Word of Life, and to diligently consider its message

In the last issue of the *Bible Magazine* we considered the vital need to have sufficient oil—the Word of God—in our lamps (or mind vessels) in order to be able to enter Life Eternal and the Kingdom of God. The section of Scripture that we used to establish the principles involved was the parable of the ten virgins found in Matthew chapter 25; verses 1-13. Please can you open your Bible and read this passage again.

It is one thing to establish divine principles regarding any subject, including this one; but it can be quite another matter to follow through in *action*, or put into practice what we know we should be doing! “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

This second article is an attempt to deal with the *practical application* of the principles involved—because we are human—and because we live in a very busy and rushed society. Therefore because we are human in our ways and thinking, including excuse making—and because we do find ourselves with so much to accomplish each day of our lives and not enough time to do everything; this aspect of our subject is of great importance. We cannot escape the power of Christ’s message about not having sufficient oil in our lamps; we do not want to be found unready to meet our Lord—for his message has a very sad and terrible ending for those who are unprepared—no place in God’s coming Kingdom!

We have the *choice*—we have the *time*. We have the *opportunity* to be *wise* followers of Christ Jesus, or we can become foolish in our attitudes. May we have the wisdom and the strength to be among the *wise* in this matter of filling our minds with the Word of God on a daily basis!

Every Day...?

We begin our consideration with the question that has been sometimes asked—“Where does it say in the Bible that we must read the Bible daily?”

Turning to God’s Word we do find that we should read God’s Word daily. In the words of Jesus himself found in the well known Lord’s prayer (Matthew 6:11), we are taught to pray:

“Give us this day our daily bread” (the Luke account renders “Give us day by day our daily bread—Luke 11:3).

While we understand “our daily bread” to refer to our natural food, we must recognise the far greater meaning is to our “spiritual food”—Give us this day (or day by day) our *spiritual* daily bread. Jesus declared “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35, 48).

Turning to Deuteronomy 8:3 God makes it clearly known that the matter of *living*, which is a *daily* experience, is not confined to just the eating and absorbing of natural food; it also requires partaking of and absorbing the Word of God. We would never dream of failing to provide our natural bodies with *daily* food, so why would we think that our spiritual man is any different—it also needs daily food. Psalm 1:1-3 describes the blessed man; showing that he has a constant association with the Law of the Lord.

Another passage of Scripture that is worth our attention is Acts 17:10-11 where we find that there were those who “received the Word with all readiness of mind and searched the

Scriptures *daily*” in their quest to know the truth concerning certain things.

Consider these words of a disciple of Christ named Robert Roberts, who had this to say:—

“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 is by no means completed thereby; it takes a life-time for its scope, and untiring diligence for its accomplishment. The mind is naturally alien from God and all His ideas (Rom. 8:7; 1 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 means which God has given for the purpose; viz., the expression of His mind in the Scriptures of truth. Spiritual-mindedness, or a state of mind in accordance with the mind of the Spirit as displayed in these writings, can only grow within a man by daily intercourse with that mind, there unfolded. Away from this, the



WE HAVE THE CHOICE, WE HAVE THE TIME: 24 HOURS DAILY

mind will revert to its original emptiness. The infallible advice then to every man and woman anxious about their salvation is — *read the Scriptures daily*. It is only in proportion as this is done, that success may be looked for. The man who sows sparingly in this respect, will only reap sparingly. Much spiritual fructification is only to be realized in connection with fructifying influences of the Spirit in the word...

“An indiscriminate and haphazard reading of the Bible is unprofitable, and soon ceases to be interesting; straight-forward reading from Genesis is also objectionable. A little read every day from various parts of the word has been found experimentally to be practicable, attractive, and profitable.”

Having seen that the reading of God’s Word on a systematic daily basis is essential to a person’s spiritual wellbeing and eventual salvation we now wish to briefly comment on some of the problems that cause us to fail to achieve this ideal, and what we can do about them.

Readings not done due to being too busy

This is a very common experience in life, but one that we cannot afford to allow! The two problem areas here are **1.** Wrong priorities, and **2.** Poor time management. Imagine yourself standing before Jesus Christ at the Judgement and saying, “I just didn’t have the time to do the Bible readings.”

This dilemma can be solved by establishing a firm priority—“*We do the Bible readings in our home.*” There are those who live by this priority and are to be commended for it. Added to this is the matter of time management. There *must be time set aside* for doing the readings. We are aware of today’s very busy and hectic lifestyles—especially where children are involved—but God gave each one of us 24 hours in each day and he gave us time to *work out our salvation* in each of those 24 hour periods. It is up to us to see to it that our priorities are right and our time managed to the end that there will be time set aside to read the Living Word of God—daily. *It can be done.*

Readings missed due to being too tired

Again both problem areas mentioned above apply, namely: wrong priorities and poor time management. Without a specific time period in place readings will be left to the last—too late in the evening when we are so tired.

But imagine our priorities when in a day the following all get done: three meals eaten, news watched, newspapers read, dishes washed, floors cleaned, car washed, grocery and other shopping done, laundry attended to, children’s needs and activities looked after, lawn cut, garden worked in, phone calls made, hobby worked on, home improvements undertaken,

magazines of the world read, running errands... the list is endless! All these things can and do get done, but are we making time and reserving energy to fill our minds with the oil of God’s Word? If we are not doing so then we can and *must* do something about it!

Readings not done due to watching T.V. or being at the computer

We now have *serious* wrong priorities and serious mismanagement of the time God has given us!! Just imagine standing in the presence of our Lord (who gave his whole life for us!) and informing him that our use of God-given time and opportunity included *endless* hours of absorbing the *offerings* of the world: Filling our minds with the filth and trash of Hollywood in which one can very often vicariously sin against God’s laws, leaving our minds unable to absorb divine things!

Contemplate informing Jesus of the “*wealth*” of worldly information and

which can lead to a loss of eternal life. Jesus teaches the absolute necessity of radical action in removing the vehicle through which serious problems can come into our lives.

Now we know we do not pluck out our eye literally—rather we remove what the eye sees. In this case the T.V., video systems or computer (monitors)—if they prevent us taking in God’s Word which we need for “*life*” on a daily basis.

The other passage to consider is 1 John 2:15-17— where we find the apostle John giving powerful instruction in succinct form:

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

Read this passage very carefully and think about its message. While doing so ask yourself what the entertainment industry—and the advertising that goes with it—is all about. Be honest and you have your answers. Endless hours of time wasted and minds so filled with the *stuff* of the world where the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life are fully exploited. And the Word of God pushed out and forgotten!

Readings left undone on the basis that “I do Bible study.”

This is usually heard from those who have speaking duties. Just two points to counter this way of thinking:

1. No amount of study can ever replace reading *all* of God’s Word. Our study is a human work. God’s Word is divine and infallible. Our studies may centre around certain aspects or subjects—whereas God’s Word is *complete*.

2. This is a poor example for the family. No father should leave the readings to the mother and family; as head of his household a father needs to be there on a daily basis leading and guiding— it is his responsibility to nurture their spiritual lives.

I do not get anything out of doing the readings

This is a sad and serious confession to have to make—that God’s divine Word of truth has little or no meaning for us. To remedy this frame of mind will require serious soul searching. Remember the parable of the wise and foolish virgins; to fail to fill our minds with the oil of God’s Word; to fail to absorb the meanings, teachings and lessons of that Word and thus grow thereby, is to *perish!*

The Word of God can become thrilling, fascinating, informing the mind that is exercised in it.

It is no use in “Just doing the readings”—when for example tired or rushed.

There are two points to consider here:



knowledge we filled our minds with from the web and internet (which is of no use to him whatsoever— we just didn’t have time for getting around to picking up the most precious gift in our lives and absorbing what it had to offer!

The answer to this serious dilemma, if it exists in our life dear reader, is to be found in the instruction of Jesus himself and in the words of the apostle John. First, consider Matthew 5:28-30,

“But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.”

The instruction given here by Jesus is to deal *swiftly* and *decisively* in *removing* that

NOTE THE WORDS OF THE WISE!

“Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.” Proverbs 8:33,34.

“...he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God.” Deuteronomy 17:19.

Psalms 127—“Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it.” Here is a powerful admonition for both parents and children: If God and His Word are not the basis in building our lives, we are wasting our time. What good are high marks, academic achievements, sports achievements, university degrees—when little or no time is given to the greatest education known to mankind? The principle is (Proverbs 22:6):

“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

“ If getting the readings done daily has proven to be a challenge—never give up! Keep trying various ways to make it work, because it is vitally important that we fill our minds with the Living Word of Truth on a daily basis. ”

The duty of *parents* is emphasized here: to train up, to teach, to instruct, to lead by example from infancy on. This has to be on a daily basis.

To leave our child’s spiritual instruction to a Sunday School (no matter how good that instruction may be) or to a youth group, is simply to starve our child spiritually.

There must be a daily diet of spiritual instruction in our homes. Hear the words of the apostle Paul to Timothy:

“But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that *from a child* thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:14-15).

And the words of Paul to the Ephesian saints (ch. 6:4):

“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

Bible readings provide excellent opportunity for divine instruction, with parents teaching lessons out of the readings.

You may choose to do only one reading with the children when they are young, but make it one that lessons are going to be taught from. As they grow older do all three readings, with them included.

Encourage children to ask questions and ask the children questions. Make them think and listen during readings. Make it a time to deal with matters of daily life that are on their minds. But a word of warning is needed here—Do not be “overbearing” at the readings! Children “grow” at different rates and balance must be used. They must experience the “discipline” of having to do the readings—but the readings must not become something they dread.

Moving on to some final points regarding the daily Bible readings—

- Read all of the Bible—Old Testament and New Testament! God’s Word is complete and we must not fall prey to doing just the chapters we like—we must go beyond reading “Bible stories.”

- Much discussion over the years has taken place in regard to which reading programme to use—and there are different programmes or methods available. Our emphasis in these articles has been to encourage *daily Bible readings* and each person or family must decide what works best for them.

Having said that—we strongly recommend “*the Bible Companion*” schedule that has been in use for decades among Christadelphians. With this the Old Testament is covered once, and the New Testament twice during one year—with three sections of Scripture being covered each day.

If getting the readings done daily has proven to be a challenge—never give up! Keep trying various ways to make it work, because it is vitally important that we fill our minds with the Living Word of Truth on a daily basis. There will be times when readings get missed—may they be very few.

You, dear reader, may be alone or in circumstances where you are the only believer in a family, and doing the readings may be difficult. May you have the *strength and conviction* to find a way to read God’s Word as often as you can for you will be blessed in doing so.

Bible readings should always commence with a prayer in which we give thanks to God for such a blessed opportunity and in which we seek his blessing upon our understanding of what we read—and to put into practice what we have learned. We trust that what has been presented will be of help to all of us as we live out our lives in the 11th hour prior to the coming of the Bridegroom. May we be among the wise, who with oil in their lamps were ready to meet the Bridegroom when he came and go in with him to the marriage.

Please read Matthew 25:1-13 again!

firstly and very important, we must not adopt the attitude and thus the habit of “just doing the readings.” The mere reading of black words on white paper in a mechanical fashion will not bring about any effect in our minds and lives. We receive no credit in Heaven for doing the readings—the reading of God’s Word must produce light, action, faith, works in one’s life. Further, the readings should be accompanied with discussion (unless you are alone); meditation and prayer, looking up answers to questions and so on.

However, while this may be the ideal, life does present us with many situations and challenges—and the ideal is often not possible to be carried out—therefore we still “just do the readings” if that is all we can work in, for this is still superior to not doing them at all! We may choose to just do two of the readings or even just one—this is far better than leaving God’s book closed completely for all that day.

Readings not done because of the children’s activities

This can be a challenge in a society which places such high emphasis on children and their rights and needs—alas only to bring serious consequences in many cases.

Again we must ask ourselves what is our priority with our children? To allow all of the activities they may be involved in (and which we may become involved in) is to court disaster. Let us note the wisdom and instruction of Scripture. Deuteronomy 6:1-7, has this to say to us:

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”

God’s covenant people were instructed to be very familiar with his commandments, statutes and judgements and to do them; which would bring blessings.

Now note carefully this instruction regarding children: “Thou shalt teach them *diligently* unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house.”

God knew the great importance of instructing children in His Word, and we need to know it also. Daily Bible readings are the time to read God’s Word and instruct our children from that Word in our homes. The age old argument (when children are in school) that they have homework to do, must never be allowed to set a standard of not doing readings or of not including the children in the readings. Yes, school work must get done—*after* readings are done. Again it is a matter of priorities and time management

There are two beautiful Psalms about family life—we note the opening statement of

MILESTONES UPDATE

Events continue to unfold in line with Bible prophecy as understood over many years. India, the U.S., Europe, the Vatican and the Middle East...

By Don Pearce RUGBY, UK.

In the three months since our last update many small steps have been taking place which point to the situation described by the prophets where the final conflict divides nations into a northern camp and a southern camp (for example, Daniel 11:40-45). For many years during the last century the conflict was seen as an East-West split. Russia was pitched against Western Europe and the U.S. How that situation has changed in the past few years! The talk now is of Europe and Russia integrating together, and the focus of the conflict of interests has moved to the Middle East. America and Britain have great interests in the Middle East and this often puts them at odds with the rest of Europe and Russia. Bible students have long seen that this indeed will develop to create two opposing powers operating in the Middle East. The King of the North and the King of the South — a matter we looked at in the September 2001 issue.

Several things have happened recently to consolidate that picture. Russia is increasingly integrating with Europe. Europe and the Vatican are growing in their hostility to Israel. Britain and America are reinforcing their links with the southern Middle East countries. Another player emerging in the news recently is India. Her links to Israel — and now Egypt, are very interesting.

India and Pakistan — two nuclear powers

Recent headlines have highlighted the tense stand-off between these two powers over their claims to territory in Kashmir. Both countries possess nuclear weapons. The potential for overwhelming casualties is enormous and provides a doomsday scenario with the threat of millions dead in this densely populated region.

Our interest however, is in the developing power of India and the role that she may play in the future. Looking at the Middle East-Asia map (right) one can see what a strategically important place she occupies. Close to Iran, the Persia of Ezekiel 38, she guards as it were, the eastern approaches to the Gulf region. The US has perceived her importance in the growing Middle East tensions and over the past year or two and has switched allegiance from Pakistan to India (See *Milestones 2001*). India was a very important part of the old British Empire, and although that has long gone, Britain and India still have very strong ties — Britain is still the largest investor in India.

India seems to have been the source of the ivory apes and peacocks brought back by the ships of Tarshish in the days of Solomon — an eastern Tarshish power (1 Kings 10:22). It seems a reasonable scenario that India will be part of the “young lion” countries opposing the actions of Europe and Russia in invading Israel (Ezekiel 38:13).

India and Israel

Both countries gained their independence from the British at virtually the same time (1947/48). Both are democracies. Both have a “problem” with Moslem extremists. In recent years this has brought the two countries together and for the past 12 years they have co-operated militarily. Although India traditionally



sided with the Palestinians, that has now changed and she now supports Israel. During the current intifada, Arab countries have been dismayed that India has not supported them “The growing strategic ties between India and Israel has become a source of deep concern to the Arab states” (*Arabic News* 18-03-02). According to *Debka*, the Israeli intelligence web site, Israel is helping the Indian army to set up early warning stations along the disputed Kashmir border to pick up military movements from the other side. The *Debka* report also spoke of “another secret military co-operation agreement (that) provides for a joint Indian-Israeli naval presence in the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean approaches to the Persian Gulf.”

Pakistan is fearful that Israel is showing the

Indians how to attack nuclear installations. They remember the success Israel had in bombing to extinction Iraq’s nuclear reactor 21 years ago.

India’s closer ties with the US

“Continued and increasing military technology transfers and co-operation with India may sour Pakistan’s willingness to assist the United States in its war against terrorism. While the hunt for Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda members is the short-term goal of the United States — with Pakistan’s co-operation remaining vital — in the long run Washington hopes to see its interests in the region better served through fostering a strategic relationship with India” (*Stratfor Int. Service* 22-04-02).

In early May, India and the US held their first joint army war games. U.S. Special Forces worked with Indian para-commandos in training for air-borne assaults.

“After decades of estrangement, India has been working on closer military ties with the United States. Both nations have agreed to share intelligence to tackle terror networks.

Just last month, India bought eight long-range, weapon-locating radars from U.S.-based Raytheon Co, marking the first major weapons deal between the two countries in recent history. India typically buys Russian military hardware.

U.S. and Indian troops are also planning a

joint mountain-warfare exercise in Alaska, the first time Indian troops will take part in war games on U.S. turf” (*Stratfor Int. Services* 05-05-02).

India, Egypt, Britain and the US

Egypt is the locale of the Biblical King of the South, so it is interesting to see not only Britain and the US heavily investing there but now India is increasing her trading with these countries.

India has considerable investments in Egypt, ranking number 12 in investing nations. Leaders of both countries are seeking to boost the two-way trade between their two countries. Figures for 2001 showed a considerable increase in trade over 2000.

Britain has heavily invested in the Egyptian oil and gas industries, and is

committed to further investments to the tune of \$5bn over the next five years. BP (British Petroleum) alone has invested \$12bn over the past 30 years. Oil and gas products account for 40% of Egypt's present exports. Just in the last 30 months there have been 30 new discoveries of gas and over 50 new oil discoveries, creating many thousands of jobs for young graduates (*Arabic News* 26-3; 27-3; 12-4).

America also invests heavily in Egypt — at the end of May a \$60m investment into an export oriented industrial scheme close to the Suez was announced. The US gives \$2.1bn in foreign aid to Egypt every year.

Israel and the Palestinians

At the time of writing our previous update, Israeli troops were in Jenin and the Palestinians were occupying the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. In both situations Israel was receiving a bad press throughout the world — the British press had a field day. Israel was accused of terrible massacres in Jenin with “hundreds” brutally killed by troops. In Bethlehem they were accused of causing the occupation of the church which is considered a special “holy” site by the Christians.

The reality was quite different. Israel had taken great risks in order to minimise casualties. They had even helped in getting the wounded to hospital. Indeed they had offered to obtain badly needed supplies of blood, but these were turned down because it was “Jewish” blood! Israel had also operated with great care to avoid damage to the church in Bethlehem. When the troubles were over and the facts verified, there seemed to be little effort by the media to let readers know the true position. When the extent of the desecration by the Moslem occupiers of the church was revealed, there was a strange reluctance to condemn it. The mud thrown at Israel was left to stick. Israel however was able to gather much intelligence data, showing the personal involvement of Yasser Arafat in the suicide bombings.

Europe, the Vatican and Israel

Europe and the Vatican were loud in their calls for Israel to stop her actions in Jenin and Bethlehem. It was interesting to see the great efforts that went into bringing an end of the Bethlehem siege. According to the *Debka* report 27th May:

“None of the parties to the Church of Nativity settlement in Bethlehem has reason to be proud of the text cooked up by four intelligence agencies — the American CIA, the British MI6, the Vatican's Opus Dei and the Israeli Shin Beit. It was designed to end Israel's 36-day siege of the shrine, extricate the terrorists harbored there and remove Israeli forces from Bethlehem after they quit the other six



Michel Sabah (Latin Patriarch) with Yasser Arafat

Palestinian cities entered for Operation Defensive Shield.

“As a result, 123 individuals were to have left the church, including 39 murderous terrorists directly responsible for hundreds of Israeli deaths and injuries. Thirteen were to be flown to Egypt and wait there for the US administration to talk Italy, or some other government, round to granting them asylum; 26 to the Gaza Strip and the rest go free. At the eleventh hour, however, the Italians stalled, bitter about the “patronizing Anglo-American” who made their arrangements without bothering to consult with Rome or even discuss the details.”

According to other reports Italy had indeed been consulted, but had then had cold feet. It had all the hallmarks of a clever negotiating ploy. Let your opposite number think the deal is in the bag, then create a problem, and extract more concessions, as the other party is anxious to close the deal. Whatever, the 13 most wanted terrorists are now dispersed around Europe, not as prisoners but under observation with their freedom only somewhat curtailed at the moment. Europe must be pleased — it looks as if Israel was outflanked. The involvement of the Vatican's Opus Dei — the Vatican's equivalent of the CIA was just another interesting piece of the jigsaw puzzle. The number of visits that Yasser Arafat has made to the Pope has been remarked on before — it only makes sense if they are working together. In spite of the present Pope's protestations of regret for the past misdeeds of the Roman church, there is little love for Israel. If God's Kingdom is the Roman Church, and God's representative the occupant of St Peter's chair, then a revival of the state of Israel is an embarrassing anachronism. God has cast off his people, their chance has gone — and so it

seemed for 2 millennia. Israel revived, back in their land, and a number of Jews, albeit a small number, looking for the Messiah to come doesn't sit well with church teaching. The “Hope of Israel” is not one shared by Christendom.

In addition to the Pope's many calls for Israel to stop defending herself against the Palestinian attacks, there have been other happenings that have shown the backing the Vatican gives to the Palestinians. It is worth remembering that the Vatican did not recognise the State of Israel until 1993. Yet it recognised the PLO in 1994 even though there is still no official Palestinian State!

An article published on the web by a Russian Orthodox worshipper, had this to say when Yasser Arafat was not permitted to go to Bethlehem for the Christmas celebrations (my emphasis):

“...This was the first year I did not see Arafat at the Orthodox Christmas service. He usually

attends the service with Michel Sabah, the Latin Patriarch, and thirteen days later the service with the Jerusalem Greek Patriarch. It is very significant that Arafat selects to attend these services because it indicates the co-operation and unity among Muslims and Christians in a Palestinian State. If we are to maintain a Christian presence in the Holy Land it helps when the government (i.e. the PA) validates our existence although we are falling below 2% of the three million Palestinian population.”

Michel Sabah is the first Palestinian Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. It is understandable that his leanings are towards the Palestinian cause. Yasser Arafat has his own website and reported on Feb. 3rd:

“Mr. President receives Patriarch Sabah
“Ramallah. H. E. President Arafat received the Jerusalem Latin Patriarch Michel Sabah and briefed him on the latest developments in the Palestinian territories in view of the mounting Israeli military pressures against our people.

“The meeting also tackled the situations in the Jerusalem City and the attempts of Judaizing its Islamic and Christian sites.”

The last paragraph has to be understood with the background that Moslems attempt to deny that there ever was a Jewish Temple in Jerusalem! Indeed they claim Jerusalem has always been an Arab city! The logical conclusion of which is that it must have been an Arab nation who put an Arabian Jesus to death!!

The Daily Telegraph carried a report on the 10th March of an earlier attack when 10 Israeli soldiers were ambushed and killed. It had all the hallmarks of an IRA killing. So much so that the *Daily Telegraph* reported that Mossad

had asked the British MI5 to investigate whether there were any IRA terrorists who had gone abroad in recent weeks. The IRA was known to have links with the PLO and other Middle Eastern groups. Many were trained in camps in the Middle East and North Africa.

Then an Italian paper on 12th April published an article entitled *European Anti-Semitism* by Oriana Fallaci. It was reproduced by the Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council of Australia, whose website puts out interesting collections of articles from around the world. Amongst the many things she wrote were these words:

“I find it shameful that the Catholic Church should permit a bishop, one with lodgings in the Vatican no less, a saintly man who was found in Jerusalem with an arsenal of arms and explosives hidden in the secret compartments of his sacred Mercedes, to participate in that procession and plant himself in front of a microphone to thank in the name of God the suicide bombers who massacre the Jews in pizzerias and supermarkets. To call them “martyrs who go to their deaths as to a party.”

On the 27th April the *Debka* site carried an article headed *What Non-Palestinian Hand Carried out Adora Attack?* This was an attack on a Jewish settlement west of Hebron. A witness testified that the attacker disguised in Israeli military fatigues, was light skinned and of non-Arab appearance.

Then the *Sunday Telegraph* 30th April gave an account of the amazement of a British ex-bomb disposal expert who was working for the Red Cross investigating the Israeli siege of Jenin, on finding that the devices he had found were identical in every detail to those he had encountered in Northern Ireland. The article was headed *IRA is teaching Palestinians how to blow up Israeli soldiers in West Bank.*

“He told *The Telegraph* that he had discovered more than 200 explosive devices while working in the camp... He said that he was convinced that the bombs were either supplied by the IRA or made under their supervision. He said:

“When I saw the bombs it was like a flashback to Northern Ireland.

“The pipe bombs I found in Jenin are exact replicas of those in Northern Ireland. The size of bomb, the way they put the nail in, the way of igniting it with a light-bulb filament, where they drilled the holes through, the use of a command wire and the means of initiating the bomb; these are all the same.

“They have all the hallmarks of originating from Ireland. When you put two and two together then it seems that they could well have been trained by the IRA.”

“Thirteen Israeli soldiers were killed in the street battle for Jenin, which was thought to be a centre of activity for Palestinian suicide bombers.

“Mr Collinson said that the booby-trap bombs used in Jenin and Northern Ireland were made from the same ingredients — nitrogen-based fertiliser, diesel and sugar.

“He also suggested that the tactics used by Palestinian militants in the battle for Jenin mirrored those of IRA attacks on British soldiers.”

Although the Vatican would deny any responsibility for the IRA, yet in their hey-day many priests acted to provide safe havens, to smuggle arms and generally assist the activities of the IRA. The late Avro Manhattan bore ample testimony in his books to Catholic involvement, books such as *Catholic Terror Today* and *Religious Terror in Ireland* (Now out of print). Indeed the earlier report of a bishop in Jerusalem smuggling arms shows that things have not changed. Many of the tactics used by the Palestinians mirror those used in the past by the IRA.

We now turn finally to look at the progress in the integration of Russia into Europe.

Russia and Europe drawing ever closer

This has been one of the exciting signs of our times. The Dragon and the Beast of Revelation working together with the False Prophet. (Rev.16:13). How dramatically the situation is changing. Russia is rapidly being



integrated into Europe. The month of May saw her being brought into a deeper partnership with NATO. Remember NATO was set up to act as a defence against the Soviet! NATO and Russian leaders gathered at an airforce base at Rome to sign an historic document. President Bush declared:

“Today marks an historic achievement for a great alliance and a great European nation. Two former foes are now joined as partners, overcoming 50 years of division and a decade of uncertainty. And this partnership takes us closer to an even larger goal: a Europe that is whole, free and at peace for the first time in history.”

The event was greatly hyped in the press, the reality is that Russia will not have much control over what NATO plans, it is however a significant step towards an integrated Europe.

While in Rome President Bush visited the Pope.

One of the interesting side-effects of Russia's desire to get closer to Western Europe has been a need to respect the majority religion of the EU. Putin has realised that the current

opposition to the Roman Church in Russia is holding back Europe's desire to make-up to Russia. The Stetson University in America monitors the Russian press for religious items and translates them into English. It makes for some interesting reading!

Under the heading *Russia gets mixed reviews in European parliament* it translated a report in a Russian paper of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe's meeting to review Russian progress at meeting European standards. Amongst the items was this one:

“The federal law on freedom of conscience was discussed as a separate question at the session. Several of its provisions were called undemocratic by the reporter, Deputy Kevin MacNamara (Great Britain). Besides, some regions have adopted their own legislation on religion which contradicts the constitution of the Russian federation. As a result there have been incidents of refusal of registration for nontraditional religious organizations, prohibition on the construction of Catholic churches in Siberia and on entry into Russia of Catholic priests, who effectively are denied the possibility of working with their flock.”

Mr MacNamara is Roman Catholic Member of Parliament. This report is dated 24th April. Two days earlier had been this blunt one. It was headed (Russian) *Government may be trying to embarrass patriarch.*

“On the surface, it appears that secular authorities are acting in compliance with the desire of the Russian Orthodox church to maintain its monopoly position. However, one should not forget that the expulsion of two priests threatens Moscow with a serious international outcry, which it would hardly take on without weighty reasons. It is quite possible that the federal authorities are engaging in a delicate intrigue with respect to the Moscow patriarchate. The issue is that Moscow is interested in a visit to Russia by the pope as soon as possible. Already Putin has said several times that the pontiff would have been invited long ago if it were not for the opposition of the leadership of RPTs (Russian Orthodox Church). He said that John Paul II does not want to go to Russia without the consent of the Moscow patriarchate. In developing such a noisy clash with the Vatican Moscow has put the leadership of RPTs in a very difficult position, since it is they who will turn out to be most guilty of a campaign against Catholics. In order to quiet the noise, the Moscow patriarchate will have to make a broad gesture of good will with regard to the Vatican. In other words — give its consent to the pope's visit.”

This is an interesting aspect that space precludes us from dealing with this time. God willing perhaps we can explore this in another issue. Meanwhile we remain watchful for the return of Israel's Messiah, to ultimately deliver them from the hands of their enemies and establish a rule of peace and righteousness throughout the earth.

EVOLUTION?? Hmmm...

The American Anna's hummingbird is an incredible little fellow who likes to connect with the nectar provided by fuchsias. In fact one might be excused for thinking that they were "made" for each other. The bird's long bill probes deeply into the fuchsia's narrow tube of petals, and as the tongue touches the bottom, pollen sticks to the bill and chin feathers and so is carried off to fertilize the next blossom. The blossom's "design" (excuse the expression!) usually excludes other nectar feeders such as bees, which are less efficient and would waste pollen on competing species. So bird and blossoms are a perfect match!



“Stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God.” Job 37:14.



Living on the nectar within these blossoms are tiny mites. But they need to move on to other blossoms, so they hitch a ride by racing up the bills of feeding hummingbirds, hiding away in their nostrils. Then they hop off at the next stop. This free travel is described by one expert as “intriguingly effective adaptations in an interdependent community”

Beautiful to look at and perfectly designed, the hummingbird is an amazing creature that feeds on blossoms where there is no perch or landing pad. Its wings, that can beat at up to seventy times per second (and from which the bird gets its “humming” name) enable it to fly up, down, dart backwards, forwards, or simply come to an abrupt stop and hover in mid-air. It does as much as the helicopter (right), but more efficiently and more skillfully. We are told that all this has “evolved;” to which we must say: Hummm...!! We might just as well believe that helicopters evolved!! The plain evidence is before us once again, that an all-wise Creator “made” them all.

