

in Jerusalem. "To plant" carries the idea of planting a tree, which can live for centuries. It was the Turkish 'tree' which was uprooted in 1917, having been planted there hundreds of years before.

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### The genealogies of Jesus

May I comment on the well-researched and very interesting article by Brother Ed Form of the above title ([Apr. 2005, p. 129](#))?

Matthew begins with the words: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David". Luke writes: "Jesus . . . being (as was supposed [*nomizō*]) the son of Joseph . . ." (3:23). Young's Concordance gives the meaning of the word *nomizō* as 'to reckon as law'. Some of the contexts

in which this word occurs seem not to warrant this precise definition, but would we be justified as reading Luke 3:23 as evidence that Joseph, when registering the birth of Jesus, named him as his own son? And if he did, it follows that Jesus, like Joseph, would be legally of the house and lineage of David. And if Joseph was the last in the line of David, then Jesus would lawfully be heir to the throne.

One thing is certain. If the Most High, Who rules in the kingdom of men, had not moved Caesar Augustus to make that decree when he did, Jesus would have been born in Nazareth and not, in fulfilment of the prophecy of Micah 5:2, in Bethlehem, the city of David. Nathanael asked, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (Jno. 1:46). It certainly came out of Bethlehem Ephratah.

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## Lessons from the life of Elijah

### 12. "Come near unto me" (1 Kgs. 18:29-35)

Stephen Whitehouse

*The prophets of Baal having failed to bring fire from heaven, it is now time for Elijah to call on God to do so. He prepares by taking actions designed to remind the people of God's desire that all twelve tribes of Israel should be united in worshipping Him.*

**F**OR SIX LONG HOURS on Carmel, without intermission, the prophets of Baal had sought their god. But their cries met with no response; no tongue of fire descended to lick up the flesh of the offering. All was quiet except for the sounds of anguish emanating from the self-injured prophets of Baal.

#### "When midday was past"

Elijah was tolerant, and patiently observed the foolish efforts of the prophets of Baal until "midday was past" (1 Kgs. 18:29). Quietly he had surveyed all before him with indignation and disdain. Yet, at the same time, how his heart must have been ready to break with compassion for his people!

The false prophets watched the sun rise to the apex of its climb and then saw it steadily decline on its parabolic path. Since Baal was viewed as

the sun god, once midday had past his powers began visibly to withdraw as the sun continued to dip in the western sky. All hopes of Baal's answer were declining with it. Yet they were so intent on calling down fire from heaven that they behaved against all natural reason and logic. They would not cease, for now "they prophesied [*naba'*]" (v. 29) aloud.

The word *naba'* can be understood as meaning 'to prophesy under the influence of a divine spirit' or 'as a false prophet'. They were not prophesying at all, merely babbling under the heavy influence of a false religious doctrine. The RSV captures their frantic behaviour quite beautifully: "they raved on". The picture is so vivid: as the sun gradually descended, their behaviour became increasingly hysterical.

This continued "until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice" (v. 29). The cutting, dancing and extensive bouts of moaning persisted till the appointed time when both the burnt and meal offerings were offered up by the priest (Num. 28:3-8; cf. Ex. 29:38) in the temple at Jerusalem. But why did Elijah wait till this moment? In symbol, he was attempting to unite the two kingdoms as one. As the high priest handled the burnt offering

in Jerusalem, so Elijah positioned the people's offering upon the altar.

**“He repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down”**

Elijah appealed to the children of Israel, “Come near unto me” (1 Kgs. 18:30). He urged the people to approach him as a united group. In symbol, he stood as their high priest and meditator, even “the propitiation for [their] sins” (1 Jno. 2:2; 4:10), and his first act was to repair the broken altar upon the mount: “he repaired [*rapha*] the altar of the LORD” (1 Kgs. 18:30).

Notice that he made no use of their altar, as it had been polluted with false religion. Moreover, the Hebrew *rapha* can be alternatively rendered ‘to heal’, ‘to make healthful’, both literally and figuratively. The prophet’s actions were thus designed to speak directly to the hearts of the Israelites. In effect, he was attempting to restore the old established worship, to heal them spiritually.

In the prophet’s actions we see Christ, for he welcomingly said: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Mt. 11:28). What is more, the Master is described as “The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in” (Isa. 58:12), the one “sent . . . to heal the brokenhearted . . . and [recover] sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Lk. 4:18,19; cf. Isa. 61:1,2).

Observe the sad fact: “the altar of the LORD . . . was broken down” (1 Kgs. 18:30). This altar had once stood as a testimony to the God of Israel, but now, due to the influence of Jezebel and her corrupt practices, a new and foreign religion had swept the land, coming to reign over the peoples’ hearts and minds. They had been driven not only to abandon all use of this ancient altar but also to destroy it (19:10,14).

**“Elijah took twelve stones”**

Before a mass of ever-watching eyes and attentive ears, Elijah carefully built an altar of twelve stones (18:31,32). The twelve stones were a practical declaration that the division of the nation into two kingdoms was at variance with the Divine calling. The prophet was declaring that the sacrifice was to be offered for the whole nation (cf. Ezra 6:17), for both Israel and Judah. This was the desire of the prophet, that they would have a common unity in mind and spirit, and a mutual hope.

The twelve stones were “according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob”, of whom was said, “Israel shall be thy name” (1 Kgs. 18:31). Special mention is made of God calling their father Jacob by the name Israel, meaning ‘a prince with God’. Was this done so as to bring shame upon the people, and to encourage the prophet to wrestle with God, to be relentless in his efforts (cf. Gen. 32:24-30)? If he persevered he too would be ‘a prince with God’, since the promise to Jacob was also a promise to all those who would overcome; as the prophet later said: “there He spake with us” (Hos. 12:4).

It was also of great significance that Elijah gathered together unhewn stones to make an altar to God. The Almighty had told the children of Israel that if they were to build an altar of stone it was to be an altar of unhewn stones (Ex. 20:25). Elijah, then, was appealing to “the Stone of Israel” (Gen. 49:24) to unite divided Israel, to bring them together “as lively stones” and build them “up a spiritual house” (1 Pet. 2:5). But though the prophet would persevere in this task, only Christ will truly establish this (Ezek. 37:20-22).

Furthermore, under the Law the high priest wore two onyx stones upon his shoulders, and upon them the names of the twelve tribes were inscribed (Ex. 39:6; cf. 28:9-12). Thus, in type, Elijah was taking on the role of the high priest, providing the means of mediation for the people.

**Altars and stones**

Recall how Moses had commanded the people, “it shall be on the day when ye shall pass over Jordan unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, that thou shalt set thee up great stones, and plaister them with plaister . . . thou shalt write upon them all the words of this law . . . [and] set up these stones . . . in Mount Ebal . . . And . . . Thou shalt build the altar of the LORD thy God of whole stones” (Deut. 27:2-6).

So, as Elijah positioned the stones upon Mount Carmel, or ‘the park’,<sup>1</sup> it would have brought to mind the beautiful scene of Mount Gerizim, the lush and green mount, the mount of blessing (27:12). However, Moses commanded that these great stones were actually to be placed on Mount Ebal, the mount of cursing (v. 13; cf. Josh. 8:30). Thus the Tishbite was making it plain to all on Carmel that this mount would bring either blessing or cursing, water or death. They themselves would determine God’s response.

1. See Part 10, [Apr. 2005, p. 107](#).

But under the Law what would determine whether Israel received the blessing or cursing? The answer is simple; Moses had said, “Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image, an abomination unto the LORD” (Deut. 27:15). Thus those that stood on the mount, unless they had a sudden change of heart, would surely be cursed.

When Joshua led the children of Israel into the Promised Land by the miraculous crossing of the River Jordan (Josh. 4:1-10), in order to preserve a memorial of this spectacular event “twelve men out of the people, out of every tribe a man” (v. 2) took from the midst of the Jordan “a stone upon [their] shoulder[s]” (v. 5) and carried it to Gilgal (v. 20). Besides this, “Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan” (v. 9). Two heaps of twelve were thus erected.

What did these two sets of twelve speak of? Having passed through the waters of the Jordan, the twelve tribes of Israel had now entered into a new relationship with God. They were now represented by the smooth, washed stones set up at Gilgal, having, in type, gone through the waters of baptism, with their past sins forgiven. The former man had been left for dead in the waters (*cf.* Rom. 6:3-7). It was this memory that Elijah attempted to stir up, a reminder of their unique relationship with the God of Israel and of the covering they had through His eternal grace, a reminder of God’s plan and purpose which centred on a united people.

#### “He built an altar in the name of the LORD”

So Elijah “built [*banah*] an altar in the name of the LORD [Yahweh]” (1 Kgs. 18:32). The Hebrew verb *banah* can be understood as ‘to rebuild’, ‘to establish’, or ‘to cause to continue’, and can, metaphorically, speak of ‘building a house’ or ‘establishing a family’.

The prophet therefore rebuilt the altar which once stood proudly on the mount. In this act Elijah was, in figure, attempting to build a spiritual house that, once built, would be a constant praise to God. The prophet, by carefully placing one stone upon another, was re-establishing the ancient way of the patriarchs and making it steadfast so that it would permanently stand. He adhered to the pattern already established by the forefathers of Israel (Gen. 12:8; 13:4; 33:20; 35:7) in faithfully building an altar unto his God in an act of dedication and worship.

Once Elijah had built the altar he made a “trench” so as to hold the necessary water, “as

great as would contain two measures of seed” (1 Kgs. 18:32). Significantly, this amount, according to scholars, is sufficient for a parcel of ground to be sown. This speaks of God sowing His seed into their hearts—particularly significant since beneath Carmel lay the Valley of Jezreel, signifying ‘God sows’.<sup>2</sup> The Father was carefully preparing their hearts in order that they could possess His Word.

#### “Fill four barrels with water”

The prophet carefully placed the wood and the offering upon the altar (v. 33). Observe how strictly he complied with the Divine pattern (Lev. 1:6,7). Elijah then authoritatively commanded, “Fill four barrels with water” (1 Kgs. 18:33). This was probably sea water from nearby. The prophet then continued, “Do it the second time”. The record then states, “they did it the second time”. Then, “he said, Do it the third time. And they did it the third time” (v. 34). Elijah saturated the sacrifice to preclude all suspicion of any possibility of fraud. Even the trench was filled (v. 35). He was determined that this Divine visitation would be utterly convincing, and so filled it with twelve barrels of water, denoting “the hope of Israel”, which bound him to his cause.

But note, the prophet requested three separate actions. The number three speaks principally of the resurrection (*cf.* Mt. 12:40). Recall also how Elijah had previously stretched himself three times upon the dead child at Zarephath and cried, “O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child’s soul come into him again” (1 Kgs. 17:21). The prophet now similarly desired that the soul of Israel would “come into [her] again”, that she would be spiritually revived. He longed for Israel to respond just as the widow had after she had witnessed the wondrous miracle of the resurrection: “Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth” (v. 24).

Commanding the people to “Fill four barrels” (18:33) is of equal spiritual import. The number four can be understood to denote the creative works of God. Was not the creation of the earth finished on the fourth day (Gen. 1:14-19), with the fifth and sixth days being for the furnishing of the earth with living creatures? Therefore, on this day on Carmel, all that they witnessed around them—the beauty of the mount, its rich vegetation, plentiful flora and fruitful foliage—was the

2. *Ibid.*

handiwork of God, and not Baal. And they were to recognise this solemn fact.

#### Four rows of stones

It is significant that the four barrels were thrice emptied. Does this not remind us of a set of four rows in three columns, the order of the stones in the high priest's breastplate, upon which were "the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names" (Ex. 28:21)? This priestly article was "foursquare" (v. 16) and would have vividly reminded the people of the camp of Israel and its arrangement (Num. 2).

The high priest wore the breastplate as he entered into the holy place, and was commanded that this was "for a memorial before the LORD continually" (Ex. 28:29). The breastplate hung down upon the high priest's heart, and so he

stood as a representative of the twelve tribes of Israel. Significantly, this ornament was also referred to as "the breastplate of judgment" (vv. 15,29,30) since it was also used as the means for conveying God's decisions on matters pertaining to their spiritual walk.

Hence during this day on Carmel the twelve tribes of Israel were much in view as the twelve barrels of water came into contact with the burnt offering. These twelve barrels were "for a memorial", to remember the mediatorial role of the high priest, his Divine counsel and atoning work for the children of Israel. They were also to identify this redeeming work with that of the genuine efforts of Elijah. But, if they were not prepared to commit themselves in total dedication to God, then He would wreak sore judgement upon them. The decision on this day of reckoning was theirs.

(To be continued)

## Two short reviews

John Nicholls

**T**WO NEW PAMPHLETS have been published recently by brethren on quite different subjects, and this review is a brief look at them both.

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### The role of sisters\*

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**T**HIS pamphlet sadly comes without our recommendation. Brother Davison considers the question of elders in the ecclesia and concludes that there is no indication in Scripture of the exclusion of women. This, however, is not the conclusion of Brother Michael Lewis in his book *Man and Woman* (pp. 86-89),<sup>1</sup> who says there are no passages which suggest that sisters can be elders.

Brother Davison disputes that 1 Timothy 2:8-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:34,35 mean that women should keep silent in the ecclesia, but rather says that it is permissible for women to pray, read the Scriptures in public when there are brethren also present and serve the emblems. He considers that we are bound by Victorian traditions in refusing to allow sisters to do these things. To the reviewer and to Brother Lewis (pp. 63-78), the fact that Paul's argument is based on the events in Eden shows that the Christadelphian practice of not allowing women to do these things is based on God's enduring principle for all ages, not the social whims of the Victorians.

Brother Davison's conclusion about women wearing a head-covering in meetings, namely that "pressure should not be applied on those sisters who, in all conscience, can worship without wearing a hat", is again contrary to fundamental teaching based on the events in Eden. There is nothing ephemeral about Paul's reasoning in 1 Corinthians 11:1-16. Again, Brother Lewis provides an excellent exposition in the chapter "The head covering" in *Man and Woman*.

Brother Davison says: "We, in our beloved Christadelphia, have a huge source of untapped talent, namely our sisters in Christ". However, it is simply not true that sisters' talents are untapped; their talents are used for the benefit of the Brotherhood as a whole in countless unseen and unheard acts of service. Brother Lewis gives a list of the kinds of things that are done (p. 91). By submitting to the commandments of Christ given through

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\* *The Role of Women in the Church*, Bill Davison, 26 Winster Avenue, Ravenshead, Nottingham, NG15 9DD. 12 pages. Cost £2. Proceeds to assist poor immigrant Russian-Jewish families in Israel.

1. Based on articles originally published in *The Testimony*. See inside front cover for details.