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# **The Remnant of Christ's Ecclesia**

in opposition to the Dogmas of  
Papal and Protestant Christendom

A WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

and a warning against the deception in the last days  
foretold by Christ

**"Take heed ye be not deceived"**

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## At the Table of the Lord

### “ THE JOY OF THE LORD IS YOUR STRENGTH ”

#### “ They Read . . . the Law of God Distinctly ”

Can we take our minds back to the time of Nehemiah and Ezra, when the children of God were engaged in the work of restoration—of the temple and of the walls of the city? It was a time of affliction and testing, for what strength would be needed, what faith, to continue steadfastly in the building, when faced with such obstacles in the way. They were, we know, not without help. In Nehemiah 8 : 1, we read that the people gathered together and requested that the law be read to them. The Book was brought by Ezra, and as he stood to read, all the people worshipped the Lord. And the record left for our instruction is :

“ *So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand.* ” (Nehemiah 8 : 8).

What help was given to those seeking it then, and, what help there is for us now. They read the word of God *distinctly*; it means to *declare*, to specify what is meant. This reading, in matter and presentation was clear, there was no question about what they were to understand and do. In Numbers 15 : 32–36, there is an example given, through the use of this same original word, which can help us. A man is found in violation of the Sabbath, he gathered sticks on that day. His offense was immediately realized, for the law was clear. He was brought before Moses, Aaron, and the whole congregation. Here, then, was a question of judgment. Verse 34 tells us :

“ *They put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him.* ”

In their understanding of the law, the requirement regarding his punishment was not distinct. There was a question. Reading further, we realize guidance must have been earnestly sought ; for verse 35 reads : “ And the Lord said unto Moses, The man shall surely be put to death : all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. ” How right to seek the guidance, for it had not previously been distinct . . . they had not been caused to understand. Had man’s reasoning ruled, would it have been just? We know through experience that the human hand of judgment can be too light or too heavy, with grave injury to the House of God. Does this bring a realization of how very important it is that the law of God be brought close to us, *distinctly*, so we know exactly what He requires . . . for we have to do with the building, the edifying, and we must be right. If, because we lack understanding, and are *not* sure, then must we not even as Moses and Aaron did, and *all the congregation*, seek the guidance of the Father and be alert to receive it?

So we find this reading of the law in Nehemiah's time was to *give the sense and cause the hearers to understand*. These words reveal in their original meanings, the thought of being able to distinguish and to be circumspect. Is this not the case with any whose hearts are seeking to understand . . . a fervent desire to know what He requires, to distinguish His way from all others, and then to move in a way which will honor Him? Personally and Ecclesially, there is a very grave warning and exhortation—we deal with Holy things, we must know and understand first, and must “look all around,” *before* we act. It is the “walking softly”, is it not, and a remembering that it is Another's work and so it can never be done in *our* way.

The record in Nehemiah continues, telling that when the people *heard* the law, they wept. Why was this? Because they realized then how wrong, how far from His Way, they had been. Their sorrow was the quick response always seen in faithful hearts. Is it ours, under such revealing circumstances? A sadness that God is offended and His Truth brought to reproach, with quick desire to make amends? A real humility brings forth this spirit, and a turning right away from the wrong.

### The Joy of the Lord

But what was Nehemiah's response to those who wept?

“ . . . *This day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength.*” (Nehemiah 8 : 10).

What did Nehemiah mean? How is it that the joy of Yahweh can be *our* strength? The father and child relationship in a human family can help us to grasp the love and the joy, which we are seeking. When a father has required certain obedience and response from his children, and it is seen that gradually the child turns from his own way and submits to the requirement—willingly and gladly—the father knows a real joy, does he not? And in his joy, reaches out in love and compassion to the child who is striving, to help and guide and encourage. Is it not this way with the Family of God. The very sadness which is shown at realization of wrong, is the first step in bringing pleasure to our Father. If, then, as children we obey, because of love, is there joy and delight in Heaven, as the Father watches.

That we, as mere, faltering humans, might bring joy to the Great God of Heaven, is almost more than we are able to grasp. But in His great kindness, He tells us this is possible.

In Moses' words, in Deuteronomy 10 : 14, 15, the children of Israel are reminded :

“ *Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens, is the Lord's thy God, the earth also . . . Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them . . .*”

Their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, delighted God. Was it because they loved Him, and out of this love stemmed their obedience. We are given equal opportunity to bring pleasure to our Father, for He reminds us— "... Such as are upright in their way are his delight." (Proverbs 11 : 20). "They that deal truly are his delights." (Prov. 12 : 22). "... The prayer of the upright is his delight." (Prov. 15 : 8).

Are we able to see the *end* of such delight—a lifting up and a strengthening in our way Zionwards, that ultimately we may experience the joy of being in His Presence for ever. Zephaniah 3 : 14–17, speaks of that time.

*"Sing, O daughter of Zion; . . . the Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save; he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing."*

If only we can grasp a little of this wonder—that we, His creatures, may cause Him to joy, and thus receive His strength. What joy *should* now be ours, and what renewed vigour to go on with the work of building. Could all this have been in the mind of Nehemiah, as he reminded Israel—"THE JOY OF THE LORD IS YOUR STRENGTH". Then can we reflect the minds of those whose joy it was to do His Will, and thus bring joy to Him ?

### **" Seek His Face Continually "**

Thoughts turn immediately to one who must have brought pleasure to God, for he was called a man "after God's own heart." This man, David, after being permitted to bring the ark again to Jerusalem, in the psalm of thanksgiving (I Chronicles 16), exhorts :

*" Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face continually "*  
(verse 11).

*" Glory and honour are in his presence; strength and gladness are in his place. "* (Verse 27).

It was in David's mind to seek the face of his Father in all things; that in the time to come, he might hope, to know the glory and honour which are in His presence.

Can we understand this mind and make it our own ? In seeking another's face, the desire is to find there an approval, guidance, and communion, is it not. This then, must be our constant seeking, brethren and sisters, and for this, we must get very close to Him. Just as a child quickly looks at his father's face to see what reaction his actions are bringing, and rejoices, then, to see love and care—or, is apprehensive in seeing disapproval, so ought we to try to look, in a figure, into the face of *our* Father, and strive to bring joy to His countenance, that ultimately, that Countenance will indeed shine upon us in eternal irrevocable fellowship.

## THE REMNANT

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Further help is given in Hebrews 12 : 1, 2—

*“ Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus . . . who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*

Can we rise up to this example given, being ready to endure (to stay under) whatever the trial may be—seeking first of all to bring joy to the Father, and not forgetting the great joy that He has set before us, if *now* we can respond with willing, humble hearts and minds, which are decisive and quick to distinguish right and wrong, and to move with a realization that our work is “ the King’s business.”

The Lord Jesus, to instruct His disciples, gave them the parable of the talents, in Matthew 25. We read there of the Lord who returned to receive an accounting of the use to which his talent had been put. What pleasure must that faithful servant have given him (Verse 21). “. . . Well done, thou good and faithful servant . . . enter thou into the joy of the Lord.”

It is the joy of *our* Lord to see willing and careful work, which cannot help but bring to Him and to His. It is also His joy to gather to Himself all those who have truly striven to bring delight to Him. But shall we know that joy, brethren and sisters? How, then, are we using the talents He has given to our trust? Have we brought Him gain—have we always remembered *whose* talents they are? As He, the Great God, unveils our hearts, does what is revealed give Him pleasure? As we continue in the work, are we truly striving *first* to please Him and to build His House? For here, we must remember, He has chosen to place His Name—the Yahweh Name.

Brethren and sisters, in whatsoever path we are led, let us be submissive and truly sure we are being led—and not ourselves leading. Let us determine to lay aside every personal care, every tendency of human planning and strategy, and try to live in the spirit of the Lord Jesus.

As we find recorded in Psalm 16 : 8-11—

*“ I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore, my heart is glad and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope: For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy: At thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”*

Brethren and sisters, can we reach above weakness and flesh, toward this hope, and find here the help to endure, after the example of the Lord Jesus. Can we in very truth remember that, “ THE JOY OF THE LORD IS (OUR) STRENGTH.” J. A. DeF.

## Remember Ye the Law of Moses My Servant

“Thou shalt not covet” (*Exod.* 20, v. 17)

“*Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour’s.*”

The tenth commandment ! The last spoken by God in the ears of all His people assembled at Sinai. A fitting climax in the warning it contained against the evil tendencies of the human heart to depart from God. For in this command the source of evil action is laid bare. Wise will be the brother or sister who grasps the help afforded ; for certainly the help is greatly needed by each one of us.

As the great voice of God ceased the words of this commandment would ring in the ears of the awestruck brethren and sisters. They saw the mount, the darkness, the fire. They heard the thunders and saw the lightnings. Washed and cleansed they had prepared themselves for this dreadful moment—a time never to be forgotten either by themselves or their children’s children. The whole circumstances were calculated to impress upon a variety of minds the holiness of God, and the impression was overruled that its effect in part might be lasting in all generations. The words spoken were few, a great example of the power of brevity. Easy to be remembered they at once afforded a tribute to the character of Israel’s God who required as his companions only those who put away such besetting evil from themselves. Further the commands provided a basis for all the other commands, the statutes, the precepts, and judgments by which Israel were to know the wonders of God Himself, and at the same time taste of His loving kindness. No nation before or since has had such care by which lives might be lived in perfect harmony, tranquility and peace. Where the flesh has reigned, as in all other nations, then evil must ensue ; in all kinds of inequality, oppressions, cruelty and strife. If the world could be taken back to Sinai, it would soon become much saner and more peaceful.

### To covet — To desire

Various words are used in the Old and New Testaments for the word *covet*. Each expresses desire of a strong kind—“to fix the mind on,” “to extend the arms for anything,” “one who wishes more.” The underlying thought throughout is the same—a strong compelling desire, almost to the degree of being uncontrollable. Satisfaction of such strong desire is naturally sought, often under the pretext of serving God. Eventually, however, under the care of the Spirit the base motive is revealed ; but often when much damage has been done ; damage which in some instances is irreparable.

The first lesson on this supremely important consideration graciously provided by the Spirit is that all forms of covetousness are *idolatry*. To uninstructed minds this might sound like an exaggeration. The Spirit declares, however :—

“ *Mortify (kill) therefore your members which are upon earth, fornication, uncleanness . . . and covetousness, which is idolatry.*”

“ *For which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience.*” (Col. 3, vv. 5/6).

Where the desire for something is strong the mind dwells upon it ; if very strong then the desire occupies the heart almost exclusively. God, who should reign there, is driven out, and the object of desire takes His place. Whatever this is, it is unquestionably an idol. Although unseen by fellow-labourers its presence will sooner or later be manifest. It could not be otherwise. Service in pursuit of the thing (or person) desired becomes an obsession. A course is followed by which the desire can be gratified at all costs. When in the grip of such a passion a brother or sister is doomed to ruin—possibly irretrievable ruin. And even the obtaining of the desire will only give a very short-lived pleasure. How could it be otherwise where the laws of an all-wise Creator are set aside ! He has said that such shall only find in their moment of gratification—“ *leanness of soul.*” A soul, a life, instead of expansive with good and happiness, constricted and stripped of all delight.

To make the extent of this command clear and show how much it covered in life, various items are listed which it is natural for a human heart to covet—some one thing and some another. In an all-embracing list seven possessions of one’s neighbour are mentioned as being likely to excite covetousness in the heart.

“ *Thy neighbour’s house.*” If only Ahab had controlled his impulses he would never have allowed his wife Jezebel to kill Naboth and seize his vineyard. Covetousness on the part of this evil pair resulted in lying deceit, oppression and murder. But how great was the retribution. Ahab through penitence was allowed to die in peace, but in the woeful knowledge that his house would finish and that his wife would be killed and consumed by dogs. This incident, divinely recorded, is demonstrative of the ends of all covetousness.

“ *Thy neighbour’s wife.*” David sinned in this serious matter, which brought in its train deceit and murder. Complacency is liable to refer to this incident as an excuse for what are “ *lesser evils.*” What an obscuring of the light such an attitude begets ! Is not the grievous sin of David recorded to help to avoid sin—indeed all sin. The result of David’s transgression is given so that God’s servants might hear and fear, and not use the incident as a cloke for their own

sins. The sword was not to depart from David's house. Absalom, Asahel and Jonathan (who David had received into his house) all fell by the sword. The events leading up to these tragedies as well as the culminations were a most grievous trial to David. At seventy years of age he was not only old, but he was worn out. Wisdom in this matter shows how that desire must not be allowed to get out "of hand," the need of appealing for help, and altering completely the course of life before the desires of the heart lead to guilty action. Such conduct is hearing and fearing, and the happiness which will attend it is beyond any known in the world.

**"Thy neighbour's manservant, maidservant, ox, ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour's"**

According to the disposition of the heart various things appeal. The danger occurs of regarding some as permissible because they do not seem so serious as others. The law, which is animated by the Spirit of Christ, shows that all covetousness is sin. If allowed to reign in the heart then evil will ensue. In the mildest form it will be jealousy, the arch-enemy of love. It can lead to stealing, lying and strife. The motive of covetousness destroys love and fosters hatred. It must be dealt with in its inception; otherwise love which is the fulfilling of the law will be quashed. Covetousness can even enter into ecclesial life: Diotrophes loved (eagerly desired) the pre-eminence. Many like this unfaithful brother have been guilty of this kind of covetousness. If it first be recognised that it is "God who hath set the members in the body, as it hath pleased him," then any ambition to dispossess a brother or sister of office will be seen as a deplorable act against both his "neighbour" and God Himself.

The antidote to the natural feeling to covet our neighbour's possessions is given by the Apostle Paul :

*"Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out"* (I Tim. 6, vv. 6/7).

The Apostle, knowing that where a life was lived in faith, then all things were of God, could say without affectation :

*"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."* (Phillip. 4, v. 11).

With each content in the family of God, how serene will be the atmosphere and how pure the love. Never will the wretched motive of jealousy show itself : never will there be any seeking of one's own, never will thoughts of evil be harboured against the brethren. Each and all will rejoice in the Truth, happy in the love of each other. Knowing that such love is of God, hearts will expand with a sincere love of Him who "giveth us richly all things to enjoy."

*(To be continued).*

## Bible Class Summary

**“ Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven : and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven ”**

(*Matt. 18, v. 18*)

To enter into the spirit of these words, is it not necessary first to enter into the spirit of the introduction given by the Lord Jesus in the 18th chapter of Matthew ?

The Lord Jesus in speaking to His disciples, in response to the question as to who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, emphasised the need for humbleness as a little child, humility being a quality of character which would be found acceptable in His sight.

He then goes on to show His disciples how precious in the sight of His Father are these “ little ones ” who by their lives demonstrate that they are striving to be as His little children. Our minds go back to Israel, who were the children of God, and His care for them. Is this not shown to us in Deuteronomy 32 in which is found the song of Moses, the song of redemption sung by Moses and Israel upon being brought out of Egypt under God’s guidance and care ? In verses 9 and 10 we read “ For the Lord’s portion is his people ; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land and in the waste howling wilderness ; he led him about, he kept him as the *apple of his eye*.” Is not here expressed the care of God for His little ones ? In confirmation we find that the word used in the Hebrew for “ apple ” is from a root meaning “ little man,” bringing out the thought of His “ little ones ” always before His eyes. The same thought is reflected in the words of David in his prayer in the 17th Psalm v. 8

*“ Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings.”*

Is not this same overruling care then shown to us by the Lord Jesus in His words in Matthew 18 ? In verse 6 we read

*“ Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones . . . it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea.”*

What care of the Creator for His “ little ones,” a protection and help lest they be offended. And then the instruction is given in verse 10—

*“ Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones: for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.”*

How easy it is for our nature to look down or despise one who appears small and weak, just as the nations have despised, and still do, Israel. But look at the position of the "little ones" their messengers are always in the presence of God—that they might give guidance and protection to the "little ones." What then is the position of one who despises one of these so precious in His sight?

### His Spirit to save those 'perishing'

What great care God shows for these little ones! And what sorrow if one were to go astray as illustrated in verses 11–14. The whole purpose of God is shown in verse 11: "For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost." God would not that *one* should be lost or perish as the word means, and so sent His Son for their salvation. This is shown by the Lord Jesus in the parable of the hundred sheep as a practical example. What searching and striving to save the lost one. Does this not illustrate God's desire for any of His little ones who are *perishing*? If any of the other ninety nine were in the same position would not the same care be shown for them?

The Lord Jesus then, having shown His disciples the care of His Father that not one of these little ones should perish, gives instruction as to how any one of these little ones in transgression or offence is to be saved or gained in verses 15–17. What care then is required in dealing with one in offence that always the spirit is *to save, to gain*, one of these 'little ones.' And so the instruction is to first "see him alone," then with witnesses, and then by the ecclesia that every possible effort be made to save one who is perishing, all of this work being done knowing what is the desire of the Father.

And then we find the words in verse 18—

*"Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."*

A recognition that if this spirit is dwelling with those dealing with a "little one" in offence then the spirit of those will be to gain and what they do will be recognised in heaven for we read "where two or three are gathered together *in my name* there am I in the midst of them."

How great then is the responsibility of those given the privilege of doing His work, that it be done in accordance with His Spirit, for if not done in accordance with God's care for His little ones, how dreadful the position. In such a circumstance could the loosing be on record in heaven? How could such a circumstance come about?

### The Spirit gone

The simple condition of enjoying the fellowship of the Father and His Son is that brethren should walk in the Light. If a brother transgresses then until he repents he is walking in darkness and has

not the companionship of the Spirit. In such a predicament that brother is perishing and because of this the Apostle John enjoins upon all the necessity for recognising that each will sin and therefore is in need of forgiveness. Until this is sought through the Lord Jesus by a confession of sins then there is a barrier to fellowship with the Father and His Son. On account of the weakness of our nature the heart must be searched daily for possible transgression which would remove the presence of the Spirit, confession be made and forgiveness sought that there might be a restoration.

Apart from the many stumbles through weakness, of which all are daily guilty and are in need of forgiveness there is the possibility of serious transgression against the Law of God. Again when this takes place the brother is obviously walking in darkness until that transgression be acknowledged and forgiveness sought in the proper way. Experience shows that where faith is small the confession of the transgression will not be readily made but until it is then that brother is in darkness ; indeed he is "perishing." For a while the brother may continue to attend the meetings, his transgression unknown to the brethren and sisters, but he is clearly in a position of darkness. Without the Spirit his work, whatever it may be in the Ecclesia, could not be with help which the Spirit alone can give.

At the appropriate time the transgression will be revealed to another so that the one who is perishing may receive the help from a servant of God with that Spirit which is given "to gain." In the mercy of God this spirit works, first with one servant and then with two or three and if necessary with the whole ecclesia in an endeavour to gain the one who is perishing. How great the love of God seems in this arrangement and how such a thought should condition the minds of those who are engaged in this work that theirs is not merely to condemn but in the first place to gain, to save.

The great promise of the Lord Jesus in connection with this vital work is that—

*"Where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them."*

The presence, however, of the Lord Jesus in an ecclesia to guide is not to be taken as a right but as a privilege, for it will be recognised that just as an individual may transgress and lose the fellowship of the spirit and the guidance which the spirit can give to him in his work ; so an ecclesia can, in like manner, fail and lose the guidance and help of the Spirit given in this promise of the Lord Jesus.

The possibility of this taking place may become the more clear if consideration be given to a brother in transgression and it be realised that he does lose the fellowship of the Spirit with all that

means. So if two brethren be in transgression then the result would be the same for both, and so on with three. God in His kindness shows the principles upon which He will bestow the mercy of His fellowship, either to an individual or to a collection of individuals are always the same. It follows therefore very clearly that if an ecclesia transgresses then their position can be no better than that of an individual and such an ecclesia must lose the fellowship of the Father and the Son until that transgression be acknowledged and put away.

In the case of an ecclesia losing through transgression the fellowship of the Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus will not be in the midst of them, to direct the work in which they are engaged and fulfil the promise which He made. Neither the binding of any nor the loosing of any could possibly receive the confirmation of the Spirit. It should be remembered, however, that during this time where it would appear that some who should be bound were not, the whole of the work is in the care of the Almighty, and at the appropriate time any failure to bind will be revealed so that if it be the purpose of the Almighty that such a one should be truly bound then he can be in accordance with His Spirit. In like manner if any loosing has taken place which has not received the Confirmation of the Spirit, then this will be revealed that the Ecclesia might put this right in accordance with the desires of the Father and His Son. Only a faithful ecclesia can expect the fellowship of the Father and His Son and the promise to be fulfilled in them that "Whatsoever shall be bound on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatsoever shall be loosed on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Therefore the anxiety of every ecclesia should be to walk faithfully, lest that which is so precious—the fellowship of the Almighty and His beloved Son—be lost.

To help frail human minds grasp what is the provision of the Father and His Son, the scriptures give many examples to help. One such is Israel in the time of Achan shown in Joshua 7. Achan was in defiance of a command of God which involved the whole camp of Israel as we read in Joshua 6 v. 18—

*"And ye in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing lest ye make yourselves accursed when ye take of the accursed thing and make the camp of Israel a curse and trouble it."*

Here was a responsibility, a charge for the whole assembly. We know Achan took of the accursed thing, and the result (Joshua 7, vv. 11, 12).

*"Israel hath sinned and they have transgressed my covenant: for they have taken of the accursed thing . . . neither will I be with you any more except ye destroy the accursed from among you."*

God had left the whole assembly because of their transgression and as a result Israel was defeated at Ai. Yet through His mercy He *worked with* Israel to reveal the wrong in Achan and his family that it might be made right and that He might return to them if they met the requirements faithfully. Achan and his family were destroyed by *all* Israel and so the Spirit returned.

Another example is found in Israel in the wilderness (which Acts 7 v. 38 tells us was "the ecclesia in the wilderness") in Exodus 33 where we find Israel again in transgression before God because they were stiffnecked, refusing to be submissive, to bow the head before their Creator. In verse 7 we read that Moses pitched a tabernacle (*the* tabernacle not yet having been given) *without the camp*, and called it the tabernacle of the congregation and "every one that sought the Lord went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation which was *without the camp*."

Here again God had left the camp of Israel and went outside the camp because of offence in His sight.

If other examples are needed, the mind goes to Saul where we find in I. Sam. 16 v. 14 "the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul." Yet the Spirit still *worked* on his behalf as he was given three more opportunities to repent or change, but refused.

Do not these considerations brethren and sisters lead our minds to the great mercy that God shows for His children, that His Spirit will dwell with each "little one," with each ecclesia so long as they remain faithful? If offence comes the Spirit will depart but in mercy will work in an effort to save or gain those who are perishing for He would not that any should perish.

Is there not also revealed in all this for us to see, a need for humility, for submissiveness to His will for we must come to realise that the presence of His Spirit to lead us individually or ecclesially is not something which is our right but a great privilege which is ours through His mercy alone. If we offend Him by transgression that privilege is taken away until there is recognition of obedience to His covenant into which we have entered. If only we can keep before us the greatness of that privilege, the wonder that the Almighty will look down and *grant* His Spirit to lead us closer to Him! Are we not reminded of this in the words of the Lord Jesus to His disciples in Luke 11 v. 13 where after He had shown them how to pray, He gave them a parable concluding

*"How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him."*

Brethren and sisters it is a gift, a supreme privilege which we can lose. Let us walk softly, praying to be shown where we are wrong that this great gift of God be not taken away!

J. A. DeF.

## “The Signs of His Coming and of the end of the world”

“Take heed that no man deceive you” (*Matthew 24 v. 4*)

It is significant that the address of the Lord Jesus in answer to the question put by His disciples “What shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world” is prefaced by these words. Deception of those who are believers must be a real danger otherwise this warning would not have been given. The Lord Jesus continues :

“*For many shall come in my name saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many.*” (*Matthew 24 v. 5*).

Previous consideration of these words shows that this does not refer to the possibility of the believers being deceived by the impersonation of Christ by some false messenger. This is most evident from the corresponding record in Luke :

“*Take heed that ye be not deceived for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and the time draweth near, Go ye not therefore after them.*” (*Luke 21 v. 8*).

If the possibility of some one coming along claiming to be the Messiah were the deception spoken of by Christ, then the words “and the time draweth near” would not be added. There are many sects who in effect say “I am Christ,” by claiming to speak His words and be His body, and proclaim His coming in the words, “The time draweth near.” Evidently many such bodies will be false for the Lord adds, “Go ye not therefore after them,” and warns—

“*For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets and shall show great signs and wonders insomuch that if it were possible they shall deceive the very elect.*” (*Luke 24 v. 24*).

The greatest deception comes from self-confidence, the belief of being right to the point of having no fear that there may be something wrong which should be put right. The fear of the Lord which is an essential characteristic of the true servant of God can be measured either by the fear of being wrong or becoming wrong. If this fear is lacking then deception, self deception is bound to ensue and the Truth be quickly lost. The true servant of God will do his best to cultivate this fear by absorbing the spirit of the Truth. Great help is afforded in the remarks of the Lord Jesus which follow the giving of so many signs that His brethren and sisters might know the times.

### The Ten Virgins

In this parable the Lord Jesus represents those in His house as virgins, that is those who are not defiled by the world. There follows however the alarming words—

*“ And five of them were wise and five of them were foolish.”*

*“ They that were foolish took their lamps but took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept.”* (Luke 25, vv. 2/5).

Up to this point in the parable there is no distinguishing the wise virgins from the foolish, unless of course the vessels which should have contained oil had been examined, which is not suggested in the parable. To bring out the suddenness of a call to meet the Lord Jesus both the wise and foolish virgins are represented as being in natural sleep, a state of natural unconsciousness when any call would not be expected and would be a shock.

*“ At midnight there was a cry made, Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.”* (Luke 25 v. 6).

Disturbed from sleep by this sudden call each of the ten virgins would not only be surprised but as they awoke would receive a shock. In this portion of the parable is not the frailty of human nature acknowledged by the loving kindness of the Father? When the Lord Jesus does come and all are called to Him, then however strong is faith the suddenness of it will give a shock. This thought has worried many, is felt to be a reproach for lack of faith, and yet it will be recognised if ever it were to be said the coming would not be a shock it would be presumptuous and an evidence of self-confidence which would indicate a wrong type of faith. The mercy that is shown here is great, a condescension to human frailty, a recognition of the limitations of the faith of every child of God.

What then can be done will be the cry of every devout heart that when the call does come approval might be found and the suddenness of the shock, which would seem to be evidence of a lack of faith, may not be displeasing to the Lord? The answer is found in the parable. The wise virgins were able to trim their lamps and with an adequate supply of oil ensure that they would have sufficient light, whilst the foolish in trying to do the same found that they could not, neither had they a supply of oil to replenish their lamps. The point is made in the parable that the opportunity to procure oil had gone. The request of the foolish virgins to the wise that they might have some of their oil shows clearly that the oil is a personal possession and those who have it at that time must have obtained it beforehand, that is, during probation.

The “oil” is seen in the Word of God to be that which ensured that the house of God should be lightened, for it was carefully taken and made pure for the candlestick in the tabernacle. The seven-branched candlestick which received this oil and gave light in the holy place was part of the furniture of the tabernacle which was *anointed*, part of that which represented Christ, *the anointed*. When

Christ came He was described as the Light of the World because He exhibited the Word of God in its power and purity. Each servant of God is called upon to be a "Light" and so can only be insofar as the Word of God is received into his heart and mind and the life in consequence becomes an expression of that Word.

What warnings and what comfort are found in these words of the Lord Jesus which follow the signs which He gave that His true brethren and sisters might not be deceived. They will feel doubtful of their faith as they examine their hearts as to whether they will be shocked at the announcement of the coming of the Lord and will realise from what Jesus said that this frailty is recognised by him as being part of their nature and they will not be blamed for it. What the Lord will look for will be "oil in their vessels," that is an adequate supply of the Word of God in their hearts and minds, sufficient to have provided a light in their life like unto His.

Gratitude for the merciful recognition of what is a human weakness and the instruction how approval may be found by making the Word of God a part of one's life will draw each appreciative heart nearer to the Father and His Son in service and in the seeking of that which pleases Him and will merit His approval when He comes. Now is the opportunity. Soon this will be ended. In the day of the call there will be no possibility of remedying that which may be lacking, namely the spirit word shining as a light in all the works of life.



### News from the Ecclesias

**Beeston (Notts.)**— Adult School Room, Acacia Walk, Beeston.  
Sundays: Breaking of Bread, 11.0 a.m. Sunday School, 2.0 p.m. Bible Class, 3.0 p.m. Thursdays: 7.45 p.m.

As we continue our studies of the Scriptures in our classes, we are grateful to our Father for the revealing of His Word anew, giving us guidance and comfort in these difficult days.

In His merciful kindness, God has wrought for us a great deliverance which as we look back over the year that has passed, stands out as a time to be "much observed." How great the need to show our gratitude as we continue our short journey through the wilderness to "the good land" which lies ahead.

To encourage us, we have had the labours of Brother Butterfield, for which we are grateful.

Our Sunday School Party has been arranged for March 10th, when all who can come will be welcome.

H.J.S.

## THE REMNANT

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**Criccieth.**—Pentrip, Black Rock, Portmadoc. Sundays : Breaking of Bread, 11.0 a.m. Revelation Study, 3.0 p.m.

We are encouraged as a result of two separate contacts with some in Portmadoc whose minds have been exercised as a result of our recent lecture there. One in particular seems interested.

Arrangements are in hand for a further lecture to be given in Portmadoc on March 27th.

—per J.R.M.

**Eden, New York.**—Grange Hall, Church Street. Sundays : Breaking of Bread, 11.15 a.m. Sunday School, 10.0 a.m. Revelation Study, 1.30 p.m. Bible Class : Mid-week alternately in Forestville and Hamburg.

Encouragement is felt in continued correspondence extending to Canada, to Florida, and to British Columbia ; thus, in the mercy of God, witnessing to those who have fallen away from Truth proceeds—great distances meaning nothing. He alone knows the outcome, and we must faithfully discharge that which is put upon us.

Contact has been made for the giving of a public lecture in or near Forestville in the near future.

The Sunday School Party on January 28th proved to be a happy and instructive occasion for all.

J.A.DeF.

**Manchester.**—Memorial Hall, Albert Square, Manchester.

Sundays : Breaking of Bread, 11.30 a.m. Lecture, 3.15 p.m.  
Thursdays : 7.15 p.m. at Onward Hall, Deansgate. Law of Moses Class : Second Saturday each month at 3.30 p.m.

We are glad to be able to report that the lectures have been better attended recently. Particular interest has been shown by one and discussions have taken place, and it is hoped that the work will continue.

It is feared that the special meeting for “Christadelphians” in Birmingham will have to be postponed a little, but as soon as arrangements are completed, brethren and sisters will be advised so that they can take part in helping to bring the proposed meeting to the notice of those who may be interested.

Our first Fraternal Gathering for the year is due to take place here on Monday, April 2nd, details to be announced later.

W.V.B.