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in opposition to the Dogmas of
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A WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

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

"Take heed ye be not deceived"

AT THE TABLE OF THE LORD

CHRISTENDOM - AND OTHERS - ASTRAY

THE GOSPEL

SIGNS OF HIS COMING AND OF THE END OF THE WORLD

NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS

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At the Table of the Lord

“IN YOUR PATIENCE POSSESS YE YOUR SOULS”

IN our portion this morning, we have had the privilege of listening to the words of the Lord Jesus. He helps us in our struggle to be like Him. He spoke in Luke 21, answering His disciples' question, verse 7 :

“ . . . Master, but when shall these things be ? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass ? ”

These disciples looked for His return . . . for the establishment of His Kingdom—for the time of which Jesus taught—the fulfilment of the Gospel, the good news concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. In answer to His disciples' question, Jesus spoke of signs that would come—troublesome times—persecution for those who believed in Him, difficulty, trial. At the same time, He exhorted them to hold fast to their hope, to take up their cross and follow Him. It would be a difficult time for His followers and Jesus knew this.

With compassion, He helped His brethren and ourselves as well. In Luke 21 : 17, He warned, “And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.” It is not easy to be hated of all men, even when it is for His name's sake. Yet, His disciples were hated as they witnessed that they did belong to Jesus ; and we, too, brethren and sisters, find ourselves hated or despised for His name as we are called upon to witness that we are separate, we are different. We cannot expect anything else for we either belong to Him, follow Him and by doing so are aliens to the world, separated by the enmity between ; or we belong to the world, consequently no longer hated because the separation has been broken down, the enmity is gone, and with it the hope of life is lost.

Truly, it is a trying position, yet one God requires of us to prove our faith. In Jesus' love for His brethren, He reminds (v. 18), “But there shall not an hair of your head perish.” We might ask ourselves, How can it be, not a hair of our head shall perish ? We look at those who have suffered for Jesus' name's sake, such as Stephen. Certainly, he perished. He did lose his life; but in God's eyes, he gained eternal life to be shared with all the faithful who will be numbered as members of *their* Head when Jesus returns. He was hated of men for Jesus' name's sake but loved of God for that same name's sake.

Stephen's example is a help to us as we listen to Jesus' words in Luke 21. It helps us as we see the sure signs of His return, as we long for it in the hope that deliverance may be granted. As we

look for it, reassured by the signs given by Jesus, we realise how close it is, how much we need His help found in His words we have read this morning. Jesus knew all that His brethren would have to endure as they waited for His coming and so speaks to comfort, to encourage those who in faithfulness are striving to be ready.

This striving is a continual struggle against the flesh. Jesus knew this and helps with these words (v. 19), "In your patience possess ye your souls." Perhaps one of the hardest things we have to learn is patience. The word involves enduring under. This enduring under includes waiting for some thing we long for, or are prepared for, to happen, being subject to whatever conditions may be required of us—not taking things into our own hands. All this involves the realisation that when our lives are in God's hands, we must endure under, submitting one to another and to Him, knowing that in the end that which is *His* purpose will surely be accomplished, and always for our good.

In our everyday lives when there is a lot to do and not too much time to do it, it is very difficult to be patient, to endure under what is required to be done first, instead of what we ourselves might like to do. We have some measure of control over these things, so that we can determine for ourselves what should come first, being the most important. How much harder it is to be patient under those things we cannot control. There are things we would like to take hold of and do our own way—get it done and so end the worry, the anxiety, the frustration of waiting for its accomplishment—but we can't always do it our own way. This is especially true with the things of God. In His wisdom, He accomplishes His will in His own good time. In His wisdom, He does not allow them to be done when we may think they should be done. This is when patience comes into play, or should. If we are patient, we are being subject to God's will, waiting on Him and, therefore, pleasing Him. If we are not patient, are we not saying to God; I know better than you; I'll do it now; or I think it should be done now. Surely, such impatience is hardly pleasing to God.

"HE THAT RULETH HIS SPIRIT . . ."

Perhaps with this in mind, we can see why Jesus speaks, "In your patience possess ye your souls." If we are patient, if we do wait for Him, if we can acknowledge that He knows best, we are in control of our living; we have brought it into subjection to the Spirit—we are possessing, owning, controlling our lives—all made possible through His strength.

This requirement of God reminds us of Proverbs 16 : 32, where it is recorded for our help, ". . . he that ruleth his spirit (soul, life)

(is better) than he that taketh a city." To take or capture a city is a great victory. But, the Spirit says that he who rules his spirit, his life, his flesh, is better than such a conqueror. To conquer, to rule, to possess our natural desires, is a victory—the great victory of the Spirit over the flesh. One of the ways to that victory is through patience, enduring under what the Spirit requires of each one of us, brethren and sisters. This was recognised by Jesus who surely possessed His soul, got the victory over His flesh, and so helps us today. "In your patience possess ye your souls."

"YE HAVE NEED OF PATIENCE . . . "

How much, then, we need patience if we are to get the victory. Paul was one who realised this and so writes to us, Hebrews 10 : 36-37—

"For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.
For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry."

How often we may question, When is He coming ? When will the promised deliverance come ? Paul must have often longed for that deliverance for he suffered much, was hated of men for Jesus' name's sake and endured stoning, imprisonment, stripes, many persecutions. He spoke from his own experiences, his own weakness, his own patience, his own victory, when he said, " Ye have need of patience . . . " How very true it is, brethren and sisters, we do, indeed, have need of patience if we hope to get the victory.

" . . . I WILL VISIT YOU . . . "

In our portion in Jeremiah, we have read the message of God to those in captivity in Babylon. Jeremiah 29 : 5-7—

"Build ye houses, and dwell in them ; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them ; take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters ; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters . . . And seek the peace of the city (Babylon) whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace."

Also, verse 10—

"For thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished . . . I will visit you . . . in causing you to return to this place (Jerusalem)."

Those who were captive in Babylon at this time—the princes, the artificers, the elders of Jerusalem—would be impatient to end the captivity in Babylon, to return to Jerusalem. They would not be

content to endure under the captivity brought about by God's displeasure with His people. The Word of God came to them in their captivity through Jeremiah, saying, in effect, be patient; endure under the captivity; I will bring it to an end, but not now; in seventy years, I will cause you to return. How similar to the words of Jesus, "In your patience possess ye your souls." It was not easy—indeed, most did not endure under, but a few faithful ones did, trusting in God's Word, waiting for *His* will to be accomplished. Our discerning of Jeremiah's mind, of his patience, of his message to Israel in captivity, helps us to perceive a little more fully Jesus' help given in His exhortation to endure under, the most difficult task we face.

"TAKE THE PROPHETS . . . FOR AN EXAMPLE . . ."

There are many helps given to us, for Jesus realises how difficult it is to be patient. He, too, was required to endure under much. One of the greatest of these helps is the example of our brethren of old who suffered much for the name of God. James 5:10-11 tells us—

"Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering, affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure . . ."

God counts them happy—righteous because they did endure under affliction and in so doing glorified His name. Job is mentioned by James as an outstanding example of enduring under—an example spoken of even by the world. ". . . Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." Job was greatly blessed at the end of his enduring—the tender mercy of the Lord which is in store for all, who in patience possess their souls.

Again, our brother James helps us, James 1:2-4—

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

How hard it is to let patience work her perfect work in us, brethren and sisters; but when it does work, it helps us in the struggle to possess our souls. In the striving to get this victory over our flesh, we have the hope of eternal life.

It is not easy, as each one of us can testify from experience; it is a battle every inch of the way. It was a struggle, too, for the Lord Jesus as He agonised to overcome. How much patience He

showed in achieving His victory. In possessing His soul, He became *the* Victor. From His own experiences, He seeks to help us in our struggle ; and He knows, as we are beginning to know, that in such patience is found the "peace that passeth all understanding." Our present lives, with all their struggles, fears, pain, and disappointments, can find this blessing—beyond our belief—if we are trying with all our hearts to put down what "we" want and submit in gratitude to what our Heavenly Father wants. Let us take heed to the help given this morning as we listen to His words, "In your patience possess ye your souls."

J. A. DeF.

Christendom — *and others* — Astray

The Spirit of the Law the Spirit of Christ

**“I BARE YOU ON EAGLES’ WINGS, AND BROUGHT YOU
UNTO MYSELF.”** (Exodus 19 : 4)

WHAT a vast store of wisdom is available when it is recognised that the Old Testament is as valuable as the New ; that both the Old Testament and the New are the expression of the Spirit of the Messiah, the Christ. It is true that the ordinances of the Law finished with the death of Christ ; but the teaching of the Law is preserved for the help and guidance of God’s people today. This, the Apostle Paul makes clear :

“But now the righteousness of God without (apart from) the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets.” (Romans 3 : 21).

This inexhaustible treasure is denied to those who relegate the Old Testament to a secondary position. Reason agrees that this should be so, for unless there is a devout and appreciative mind of what God has given and caused to be preserved, could it be expected that such a treasure should be made available to unwilling minds and hearts ?

Millions read His Word with unseeing eyes ; and hear His voice with unhearing ears. This dreadful malady is seen on a vast scale in Christendom, who use the words of Scripture in their “services” ; and take texts therefrom for their sermons, but never come any nearer to discovering the hidden treasure, than a man who stands on a vein of gold with a spade, which he will not trouble to use. Hence, Christendom, in spite of its claims, is denied the spirit of wisdom only possible through the presence of God. What a terrible loss this is !

“Because I have called, and ye refused ; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded.

When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind ; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.

Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer ; they will seek me early, but they shall not find me.”

(Proverbs 1 : 24 and 27-28).

Let us beware for so great a calamity can come upon those who, like Christendom, profess they have the Truth, but have lost His presence, so that a *form* takes the place of the *power* of godliness.

**THE NEW CREATION : THE REDEEMED.
THE WORK OF GOD FROM THE BEGINNING TO THE END.**

Christendom in spite of their many learned divines, their "Reverends," "Right Reverends," and "Very Reverends," are lamentably ignorant of the work of God.

Like the unfaithful in the Parable of the Vineyard, they have dispossessed the heir, and taken over the inheritance ; to run it as they please, for their own profit, and without any thought of what the lord of the vineyard requires.

The result is catastrophic. True, "livings" are procured ; but deaths everywhere abound. The "inheritance," the world, has become a bear-pit, with prelates taking no active step to stop the cruelty and suffering therein; and in many cases actually supporting in a veiled way the maiming and killing. Having taken over the "inheritance"—the earth—effrontery does not demur from assuming a right to the heavens. Claim is laid upon this sphere for their many "departed", as they are paid to commit the "remains" to the ever open and greedy grave.

This mockery, discerned by many, has come about, because of failure to perceive God's part in the work of salvation. What a lesson for the thoughtful ! Do away with the Truth, and philosophy will lead its dupes into a hideous and unbelievable plight. This was seen in the extreme in the Greeks who became mentally swaddled in their mythology. The greatest philosophers were Greeks ; many were the fathers of learning, but all their philosophical wisdom was manifestly "foolishness." Christendom today is the victim of similar foolishness ; wherein learned phrases that cannot easily be understood, high sounding titles for their dogmas in perhaps the Greek or Latin tongue, are calculated to impress that these must know the truth on all things, but a little searching reveals their utter ignorance and confusion.

The result of leaving God is like leaving the light ; to be victims of a gross darkness in which priests and people grope helplessly for the way they hope will lead to peace and life.

God has graciously shown that He will be the light of His people: "a light unto their feet, a lamp unto their path;" that the work from the beginning to the end with those who are to be saved might be carefully directed and overruled by Him.

This is fundamental. Any departure from such an understanding throws the whole scheme of redemption out of balance. All is made a matter of chance, so that eventually God becomes remote, left out of the great work of "calling" a people to His Son.

The *others* have stumbled over this same fundamental. Courting the style of Christendom many of their teachers disbelieve that the "call" is of God, claiming that it is by chance a man may discover the Truth. The dire result of such teaching, without it perhaps being realised, is that the work depends on human effort rather than divine. God has become distant. His presence is not felt, even if it is not denied. Instead of seeking guidance in efforts, importance is attached to campaigns, exhibitions, with attractive accompaniments by way of refreshments, entertainments by films and the rendering of the Messiah after the style of the Chapels, so that what was the Truth has become in a large measure commercialised. Truly the presence of God is not really recognised or declared. This dreadful departure is seen in the words of one of their writers, who went so far down the slope of apostasy to say, that the prophet Isaiah's exhortation to "buy wine and milk without money and without price" was the precursor of the present 'free gift' schemes to promote selling! (vide the "Endeavour").

Now let us see how simply and powerfully the Truth shines when we leave the "opinions" so prevalent in Christendom and amongst the *others*, and humbly seek the only opinion that matters—the will of the ever-living God, who has promised to reveal "all the truth" to His people. Sufficient has been written to show that men left to their own devices are bogged down by the mind of their own thinking, leaving them in a hopeless quagmire. May we turn to what God has said with minds and hearts of a "little child", without which Jesus says there will be no entrance into the Kingdom of God; and start by looking at the wonderful promise:

"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you."
(James 4 : 8).

This, we shall see, is the reality to be observed both in the time of natural Israel as well as present-day spiritual Israel.

GOD'S WORK WITH NATURAL ISRAEL—A TYPE

It was not by chance that Israel went down into Egypt; it was not by chance they found favour there and multiplied; neither was it by chance that Israel were brought out of Egypt with the "mighty hand and outstretched arm of the Almighty." Neither was their deliverance of their own doing or power, but simply because of the *call* of God; as says the Prophet—

"When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and *called* my son out of Egypt." (Hosea 11 : 1).

In the great work of delivering and preserving Israel, it was Yahweh who watched, intervened and *called*. Human arrangements

in this great work were entirely excluded. Opinions and the reasonings of men played no part at all in the salvation of God's people, and their eventual entry into the promised land. With absolute truth and touching compassion Israel were told :

“I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.”
(Exodus 19 : 4).

This, in essence, was the work of God to preserve and deliver a people for His name. Human reasoning, philosophy and opinions played no part in the development of the new creation in Israel. Indeed, as we have seen in Christendom, such are not only a hindrance, but an impenetrable barrier to an understanding of the work of God in redeeming a people for Himself.

It was God who *called* Israel ; who delivered Israel, who brought them unto Himself that they might know He was not far off, but nigh unto them, to give them “all the Truth.” This blessing exceeded the thinking and philosophy of any other nation as far as the heavens are higher than the earth. It was so great, so real, and so wonderful that contemporary nations could exclaim :

“Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for?” (Deuteronomy 4 : 6-7).

How pathetic the efforts of Christendom seem in what they say is the preaching of the Gospel, when obviously they have left out the essential ingredient—that it is God who *calls*, justifies and finally will glorify the accepted. (Romans 8 : 30). Their greatest efforts are seen as nothing more than a “beating of the air,” and their elaborate vestments and “services” as only “folly set in great dignity.”

GOD'S WORK WITH SPIRITUAL ISRAEL

Is it to be expected that this should be on any different lines, for it is the same God, with the same purpose who is working today as in Israel of old ? God is unchanging and unchangeable, and so the principles of His Truth never alter. The great work of Yahweh for the new creation with Israel of old supplies all the information that is needed for an understanding of His work now.

As already observed, Christendom do not understand this, because they deny the greater part of God's Word—the Old Testament.

While the *others* profess belief in all the Bible, error has eroded their faith like Christendom as many of their members have come

to look upon the Old Testament as inferior to the New. In the "Endeavour" (Autumn 1965) appeared this dreadful slight upon the Old Testament in an Article on "Inspiration" (W. Lambert)—

"Such a profusion of Scriptural testimony fully justifies the concept of progressive revelation, though the term is of course a modern invention. God revealed more in Christ than in Moses. Attempts have been made to circumvent the clear implications of this indisputable conclusion by alleging that the progress is one strictly of quantity, not of quality. In other words, while more knowledge was available in New Testament times, there was no fundamental difference in the quality of religion. So far as we have been able to ascertain, this idea is not based on any particular evidence of Scripture, but stems from the false premise already discussed, that an inspired book must be uniform. Some Christians have been seriously embarrassed by the Old Testament. The imprecatory Psalms, which pray for vengeance on the wives and children of enemies, Jephthah's rash vow, the presence of Rahab the harlot in the ancestry of the Messiah, Elisha's cursing of a group of children, are a few of the passages which has caused trouble. Every devout reader senses that the Spirit of Christ does not pervade the Old Testament to the extent that it does the New. One way of dealing with the situation is to cut out the offending passages as unworthy of Christ. The fault of this method is that those who share it set themselves up as arbiters pronouncing judgment on the Word of God. Another method essentially refuses to face the facts and by a most tortuous exegesis either asserts that the passages do not say what they do, or offers an attempted justification in the light of Christian principles. Basically it is the choice between Marcion or Origen. Either we reject, or we explain away.

The difficulty resolves when the concept of progressive revelation is accepted."

How terrible must this trifling with the Holy Word appear in the eyes of the Almighty, by a people who claim to believe that His Word is inspired in every part and yet at the same time question such inspiration in a way which amounts to a denial! Such must be viewed as both treacherous and hypocritical. For of God it is said :

"Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name."
(Psalm 138 : 2).

When it is recalled what happened to the despisers of the Law, how they were stoned to death and hung upon a tree to show God's condemnation of their blasphemy, then perhaps the seriousness of

the foregoing departure from the faith by the others may be realised.

Some may say they do not believe in such an undermining of the Word, but by belonging to the same Group and extending fellowship to those who do believe in this error, God shows they partake of the evil. It will be no use in the day of Judgment saying, "we did not allow this in our Meeting." Nowhere in the Scripture is fellowship shown to be limited to a particular place. The present generation of the others are following fast in the way of Cain, who said "Am I my brother's keeper?" The answer is that everyone in *the* Truth, the One Body, is responsible for every other member whether far or near. It will be no excuse at the Judgment Seat to say—"I allowed my brother to perish, because he did not belong to my Meeting." Jesus' command was all-embracing concerning the brother who was perishing :

"Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone, if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother."

(Matthew 18 : 15).

The one who was to be gained must have been perishing. Can it possibly be an acceptable reason before Jesus to say, that trouble was not taken to save the perishing because he belonged to another place ? Obviously not. Oh ! that the *others* might realise what is meant that the Body is one, and all are members one of another.

Let us come to realise that we cannot improve upon the ways of God, for His ways are perfect. We cannot know better than He what is to be done in all circumstances, so the devout mind will feel indebted to Him for all His Word, which will be looked upon in all its parts as having equal value ; and will be grateful for observing God's call and His work for the salvation of a people in the Ecclesia of Israel of old.

If caprice is to take the place of God's *call*, then God is made grossly unjust. Some may find Him, and others may not. From such shifting sands, the feet may come to stand upon the rock of Truth, and realise that the whole work of *calling* and perfecting is of God. By this means justice in the great work of salvation is seen to prevail. God will *call* any who have the capacity to respond wherever they may live, for He has said :

"For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him." (II. Chronicles 16 : 9).

He will not *call* those who have not the capacity to bear this great responsibility, for such a *call* would be only a call to condem-

nation. This God will never do. The Apostle Paul says, "all men have not faith," and for any of these to be called to the Truth would only mean their ultimate condemnation.

When God is acknowledged as the author of salvation, as the One who gives the increase, who works with those who are to be saved, then all problems and difficulties raised by speculative gentile opinions, disappear as the morning mists before the light of the rising sun.

How so many of the others can have allowed themselves to lose this simple and valuable truth is difficult to imagine. Especially, as they still speak of their assemblies as "Ecclesias"—meaning as all know, "*called out*". If they have come to deny the *call* of God, it would be more consistent and honest to cease to speak of their Meetings as "Ecclesias".

What confusion arises when the simple path of truth is left. As with Israel of old, so it can be said of those claiming to be present day Israel.

"The way of peace they know not ; and there is no judgment in their goings ; they have made them crooked paths : whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace.

Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us : we wait for light, but behold obscurity ; for brightness, but we walk in darkness.

We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes : we stumble at noonday as in the night."

(Isaiah 59 : 8-10).

Israel of old would doubtless be offended by this great indictment. The present-day counterpart, those claiming to be spiritual Israel—may likewise be offended. This, however, will not alter the truth of the divine condemnation, indeed the *others* are condemned out of their own mouth when they agree with the Prophet's declaration that "we must not judge," or in the Prophet's words "there is no judgment in their goings." The foolish will spurn such criticism. The wise will pause and ponder, realising perhaps for the first time how far the leaven of heresy has corrupted their Body, and determine to seek God afresh in the path of righteousness, "beside the still waters," wherein is the judgment of God and the purity of His Truth, unadulterated by the specious pleas of false teachers.

The humble and devout mind will realise the sublime and precious truth is as alive with godly power as it was three thousand years ago, when the Ecclesia of Israel were told :

"I bare you on eagles' wings and brought you unto myself."

The only change has been in those professing the Truth, but have come to deny it, saying in effect that they can come to God on their own wings !

How wonderful is the truth that God does not change, even though those professing to be His so frequently do so.

(. . . to be continued)

The Gospel

THE PROCLAIMING OF THE THINGS CONCERNING THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST

THE impact of what the Apostles and disciples had witnessed for three and a half years was indelibly impressed upon their minds. If the Centurion who saw the marvellous events surrounding the crucifixion could be moved to say "Truly this was the Son of God," how much more the disciples.

After the receiving of power from on high to help them testify, they went forth with zeal and vigour. In the face of much opposition they were not intimidated. How could they keep the good news to themselves ? Soon there were others added to their number totalling "about three thousand souls."

The slayers of Jesus were apprehensive. As the disciples continued in witnessing to the people, the ruler of the temple with the Sadducees came and laid hands upon them. But now there were about five thousand that believed the message concerning Jesus, the Son of God, and that He would return from heaven to establish a divine and universal kingdom of righteousness and peace.

Annas, the high priest, and Caiaphas and others of the priestly class began to question the disciples, having arraigned them before them according to the usual impressive way of a tribunal. Peter was not subdued by the pomp of those present ; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, he told them, were they witnessing and working miracles :

"This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there

salvation in any other : for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”
(Acts 4 : 11-12).

Perceiving that Peter and John were not men of learning, but nevertheless had the boldness which usually only belongs to men of worldly power, the rulers went privately to confer amongst themselves. Their main question as they counselled together was, “What shall we do to these men ? . . . that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.”

The fervent reply of the disciples later must have had an unpleasant ring to men accustomed to having their every wish observed :

“Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.” (Acts 4 : 19-20).

Fearing that the people who had been drawn to the disciples by the witnessing might become incensed if they did not release them, they let them go. How marvellous was all this. That in weakness the word of God went forth with power. This is how God works according to His supreme wisdom. He has the power to subdue all men before His message, but though all men eventually will be subdued before Him, He desires that response may be out of love for Him and a heartfelt realisation of the goodness of His message and provision of His Son.

The true test of responsiveness is seen in an acceptance of Him and of those that are His in “a day of small things” and in a time when they appear to be weak as compared with the great religions and sects and with the great men of the earth. It is not men, nor numbers that should be sought, but rather the power of His message which in every generation is witnessed through those who have very little power of themselves. The disciples realised that without God they could not continue ; the opposition was too great, hence their prayer :—

“ . . . Now, Lord, behold their threatenings ; and grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word.” (Acts 4 : 29).

But disciples need to be tested even after they have responded. Trials come to see if they will continue in love and in obedience engendered by true appreciation. The Apostles were apprehended again by an indignant high priest and his sect of Sadducees, and they were put into the common prison. But Jesus, before His ascension into heaven had said—

“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature ; He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be condemned.”

(Mark 16 : 15-16).

It is one thing contesting against the weak, but it is another thing trying to silence and kill the message borne by those who were and are weak. To the disciples, however, the question might have formed in the mind—

“Has God heard our prayer ?”

Here they were in prison apparently without hope of release. But God had most surely heard, and in His wonderful unostentatious way He sent His angel by night and took them out of their captivity. But they were not to run away and escape, for the message from heaven was :

“Go, stand up and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.” (Acts 5 : 20).

There, the next day the temple police found them, and brought them most carefully before the council, for they exercised caution lest they appeared to the common people to be fighting for an unjust cause.

The high priest now continued on the same theme as previously, saying :

“Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.” (Acts 5 : 28).

Rulers and opposers of the truth are usually grossly ignorant of the motives behind those who bear the message of the gospel. The leaders of the Jews saw it only as an endeavour to bring them into ill repute. They were blind to the true reason of the message, which would have included them in its scope if they could have humbled themselves. But God can help, and does help His people through the more thoughtful amongst the leaders of men, even though unbelievers. Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, a man of distinction, advised moderation :

“Refrain from these men, and let them alone : for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought : But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it ; lest, haply ye be found even to fight against God.” (Acts 5 : 38-39).

His counsel prevailed but not before the leaders had caused the Apostles to be beaten, and had again commanded them that

they must not speak in the name of Jesus. So they let them go ; but the Apostles continued their witnessing both in the temple and in the homes of the people preaching Jesus Christ. The steadfastness of their work has been a foundation upon which some in each generation since that time have been built up and brought under the scope of the saving grace of the Truth of Jesus Christ.

“ The Signs of His Coming and of the end of the World”

1970

**“THE LORD DOTH BUILD UP JERUSALEM : HE GATHERETH
TOGETHER THE OUTCASTS OF ISRAEL.”**

(Psalm 147 : 2).

AS the new year approaches the Middle East situation remains as a sore upon the international scene. Endeavours to improve tension in the world are broken upon this knotty problem. The Israeli-Arab conflict refuses to be healed. During the year that has passed the Secretary General of the United Nations Organisation spoke with foreboding of the future :

“I do not wish to seem overdramatic, but I can only conclude that the Members of the United Nations have perhaps ten years to subordinate their ancient quarrels and launch a global partnership to curb the arms race, to improve the human environment to defuse the population explosion and to supply the required momentum for World Development efforts.

If a global partnership is not forged within the next decade then I very much fear that the problems I have mentioned will have reached such staggering proportions that they will be beyond our capacity to control.”

What has been done to curb the arms race and subordinate ancient quarrels, such as the Arab-Israeli difficulty ?

In November the United States and Russia met in Helsinki, the Finnish capital, for Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT)—with a prospect of further full-scale talks possibly in Vienna in January

or February. But how can such talks succeed when the participants are the suppliers of an arms build-up in the Middle East? The more arms sent into that area, the more entrenched the opponents in the Arab-Israeli question become. But even if some adjustments to the new frontier could be agreed and settled between the Jews and Arabs there does not seem much hope of a reconciliation over Jerusalem. Israel is determined to hold on to their capital of old, and the Arabs seem to have a greater desire than ever to regain it. For two and a half years Jews have been rejoicing over their taking control of the old city of Jerusalem. At the time of the 1967 victory an Israeli General declared :

“The clock of history is advancing and we are all living it.”

To the Jews this was a momentous occurrence, a milestone in history as also to those who look for the “signs of His coming.” After nineteen hundred years the dream of many Jews had come to pass. Israel will never agree to let it go, hence the recent forthright statement of the Israeli Premier in a Tel Aviv pre-recorded interview, given out later over the American TV network. She said that some Arab territories would never be freed from Israeli occupation and added, “No Jordanian flag will ever fly over Jerusalem again.” Questioned about United States and Soviet talks aimed at finding a Middle East peace settlement she said, “The U.S. and Russia will never be able to reach a solution that Israel can accept.” There is more than Israeli obstinacy in such a statement for previously it had been reported that the American Central Intelligence Agency had learned that the Soviet Party leader had written to the Egyptian President pledging that the Soviet Union would not consider a Middle East solution unacceptable to the Arabs.

On the other hand hysterical Arab mentality is causing a consolidation of pro-Israel feeling in the United States. Egypt recently condemned the United States as “directly and fundamentally” responsible for the failure to achieve a peaceful settlement in the Middle East. The Egyptian National Assembly actually passed a motion which accused the U.S. of pushing the Middle East towards a war, “whose consequences to world peace and security nobody could foresee.”

So the new year begins with a problem for the nations which is as intractable as ever, with the powers of the North and South becoming more and more aligned in the positions foretold and decreed by the Word of God.

It is interesting to note also, that at a time when talks are taking place on limiting arms, the U.S. determinedly keeps to the forefront in nuclear weapons production and experimentation, and

Russia, on the other hand is reported to have more nuclear submarines at sea than the Germans had conventional U-Boats at the height of the battle of the Atlantic during the last war. It has been said that the Soviet Navy is now the second in the world, and Russia is building one more nuclear submarine every month ; and that the West's seaborne trade is as vulnerable to submarines now as in 1914-18 and 1939-45: and in a crisis the Russians could be in a position to cut naval arteries at will.

The statement of the U.N.O. secretary then is seen to be one that has proceeded from a thoughtful individual who refuses to blind himself to a situation which is becoming more and more evident especially to a man in his position who has many secret sources of information as well as the usual news reports. But his voice is carried away by the winds of hate, prejudice and political opportunism.

1970 then begins and plunges into a further period of time when dark clouds gather, and a chill wind of threat and subterfuge blows across the world scene.

But one of the things which stand out in assuring and comforting those who seek to know the will of the Creator in these troubled times is the fact that Jerusalem has returned to the Jews, and continues to be held by them after a long period of nineteen hundred years, even though there are many enemies at this time who would have it otherwise and desire to take it away from them. This is a sign, even though the nations would not accept it as such, that God is overruling and is fully aware of the troubles that beset mankind. For it is "the Lord (that) doth build up Jerusalem." It is "He (that) gathereth together (those who have been) the outcasts of Israel" (Psalm 147 : 2).

Events taking place at the present time are an earnest of a greater gathering yet to come, when Jerusalem will be pre-eminent as the "City of Peace".

D.L.

News from the Ecclesias

Newtownards, Co. Down, Northern Ireland.

Breaking of Bread, Sunday : 11-30 a.m. Sunday School
2-30 p.m. Bible Class, Wednesday.

As an outcome of the Lecture in Bangor we have had some correspondence and letters of apology for non-attendance. As we consider the results of our witness, we are reminded of the parable of the mustard seed "which is indeed the least of all seeds, but when it is grown it is the greatest among herbs and becometh a tree so that the birds in the air come and lodge in the branches thereof." May we continue faithfully and with patience until that prophecy is fulfilled on the earth.

We are grateful for the help given by Bro. Butterfield in this effort, and on Sunday morning; also for the Sunday School address.

J.P.

Eden, New York : Grange Hall, Church Street.

Sundays : Breaking of Bread 11-30 a.m., Sunday School
1-30 p.m., Bible Class : Midweek ; Forestville, Buffalo,
Hamburg and Orchard Park. Alternate week : Revelation
Study.

Thoughts and supplications are constant on behalf of those who are ill or under trial. Comfort is found in that God knows our every circumstance and will deliver in His great mercy.

It is in times of trial or distress that the closeness of the bond, known only in His Body, becomes more evident and is a cause for rejoicing in that love which is of God.

J.A.DeF.

Manchester : Memorial Hall, M.A.P.S., Building, Albert Square, Manchester.

Sundays : Breaking Bread, 11-30 a.m., Lecture 3-30 p.m.

Thursdays : Bible Class, 7-15 p.m., Onward Hall, Deansgate.

Joy is being experienced in helping minds which are toward the Truth.

In the land, where irrigation was practised, that is “watering by the foot”, not only the crops benefitted but the waters were enjoyed by the workers. Tired, hot feet were cooled and refreshed. A powerful figure to show the help received as well as given in guiding those really interested. Truly :

“He that watereth shall be watered also himself.”

Gratitude is felt for the visitation of God in still calling a people out of the Gentiles for His name.

W.V.B.