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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

LEAVE THERE THY GIFT

GRAVE WARNINGS FROM THE FAILURES OF
SOLOMON AND ZEDEKIAH

THE 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

“LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED”

WE HAVE BEEN listening to the words of Jesus as He spoke to His disciples. What a wonderful experience it must have been to hear Him, to see Him, to discern the power, the love that shined forth from His countenance. His presence must have been a great inspiration to those who followed Him. Yet, we, today, can hear His voice, can feel His presence—not here bodily; yet, He is here with us this morning, as we remember Him in faith. We recall His words:

“Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

Do we feel His presence, brethren and sisters? Do we hear His words? Are we strengthened as we feel Him close to us today, and every day in our struggles to face what God has placed upon us, to test our faith and our desire to serve Him?

We have heard Jesus say, John 14 : 1 :

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.”

How easily our hearts can become troubled, as we seem to be beset on every side by overwhelming problems. It is only natural, for our flesh is weak. “*Troubled*”, we find means “agitated”, or “stirred up,” as water is rolled. Our heart is like that—it faints at the trials that come upon us; it is agitated at tribulation. Yet, Jesus knows we can face it, and says to us, “Let not your heart be troubled.” Jesus knew from His own experiences what it is like to be greatly troubled for He said, John 12 : 23-28 :

“ . . . The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.”

The time of His death was fast approaching: Jesus knew He must die in obedience to His Father’s will, verse 24 :

“ . . . Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”

His struggle is expressed for us in verse 27 :

“Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name.”

Here is the spirit of Christ, so pleasing to God. His soul was troubled, as He agonized to overcome His flesh; yet, in all this, His spirit was, “Father, glorify thy name.”

Jesus knows our hearts—how easily troubled they can become—

knows, too, exactly how much is placed upon us. Yet, with it all there is help, sure and tangible help given.

“Ye believe in God, believe also in me.”

Believe—only believe. Yet, He knows, too, that this is not easy ; but can we recall how He helped the one who cried out with tears, “Lord . . . help thou mine unbelief” ?

“PEACE I LEAVE WITH YOU”

Jesus further helps us in John 14 : 27 :

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you : not as the world giveth, give I unto you, Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

“Peace,” we find, means “quietness,” “rest,” “at one”—the opposite of trouble. Jesus, God, the Spirit can bring peace—not the peace the world knows ; but an inner quiet, a rest, a tranquility that comes only because of trust. How uplifting it must have been to His disciples to hear His words, to look in His face, as He spoke, and to see there a peace, a comfort which came to Him from God. Can we receive His words this morning, “Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” ?

This is all very well, we can say ; yet, when trial comes, our heart can be and, indeed, does become troubled. Do we need, brethren and sisters, to trust more, and will He not provide those experiences which will help us do so ?

“HE . . . SPAKE COMFORTABLY TO THEM”

Perhaps an example can help us. We are reading of Hezekiah's time. His very name is significant, for it means “strengthened of God.” Our reading of him shows us his strength, given of God. He served his God, rebuilt the temple, established the Law as a force in Judah and Jerusalem and re-established the Passover. He believed in God, believed in the promised Messiah to come, else why would he be so quick to re-establish the Passover, which speaks of the work of the Messiah ? As a consequence, he was greatly helped ; and, moreover, was able to help his people when Sennacherib came up to conquer Judah and Jerusalem. This was the great power of Assyria, which only a few years before had swallowed up the kingdom of the ten tribes of Israel. Now this great power turned to Judah, to Jerusalem, to Hezekiah. No nation had been able to stand against this fearful power. How easily Hezekiah's heart could have been troubled and afraid. But, as we have read this morning, he got busy about the defences of Jerusalem, appointing captains over his army and stopping up the fountains and brooks outside Jerusalem to deny the Assyrians the water they needed. He was active in

helping and seeking help from God as he prepared to do battle with the enemies of God's people. As he did so, he recognized that the peoples' hearts could easily be troubled, and that they could be afraid. His mind is revealed to us in II Chronicles 32 : 6 :

“. . . he . . . gathered them (the people) together to him in the street of the gate of the city, and *spake comfortably* to them . . . ”

We find the word, “comfortably,” means in the Hebrew, “to the heart.” Hezekiah then spoke to the hearts of his people, seeking to strengthen, to prevent the agitation that so easily comes in time of danger. Though probably fearful, his own heart must not have been troubled; for he could speak to his people from his strength, saying, verses 7 and 8 :

“Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him : for there be more with us than with him : With him is an arm of flesh ; but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles.”

Here was trust in God ; tangible evidence of a heart not troubled. Does it help us to heed Jesus' words ? Do we, then, speak “comfortably” one to another, helping one another, speaking to each other's heart ? How much help the people of Jerusalem must have felt as Hezekiah stood before them evidencing faith ; not just in his words, but in his attitude, his face, his obvious activity and works as the Assyrian host came close to Jerusalem. How grateful Hezekiah would feel for the strengthening from God ! How grateful his people would be for that strength ? This was not the first time that Hezekiah spoke to their hearts, for we read in II Chron. 30 : 22 of the time when the Passover was kept after so long a time :

“. . . Hezekiah *spake comfortably* unto all the Levites that taught the good knowledge of the Lord : and they did . . . (offer) peace offerings and . . . (make) confession to the Lord God of their fathers.”

The Peace offerings—to bring peace ; and Jesus, the Passover Lamb, said, “My peace I give unto you.”

Did not the words and spirit of Hezekiah lead his people to finding this peace with their God ; and by this means, to the realization of peace in their own hearts ? How close Hezekiah's heart must have been to God, to His promised Messiah, not troubled, but believing.

Can we, then, find peace, an untroubled heart as the Spirit speaks “comfortably” to us through Jesus, through Hezekiah ? It is God's

desire that all His people might do so, by trusting in Him, in His Son, in the Peace Offering.

In our recent portion, in Hosea 2 : 14-16, we have listened to God's word through His prophet to Israel, further confirmation of His desire and promise :

“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and *speak comfortably* unto her. And I will give her her vineyards . . . and she shall sing there . . . And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me Ishi (my husband) . . .”

A unity with God ; a heart not troubled ; a heart at peace because of God's mercy in speaking comfortably to the heart of His people.

“THE PEOPLE RESTED THEMSELVES”

Going back, then, to Hezekiah's time, and the great help he gave his people, II Chron. 32 : 8 tells us :

“. . . And the people *rested themselves* upon the words of Hezekiah . . .”

They leaned upon and were sustained by Hezekiah's words. How much we can be sustained, brethren and sisters, if we listen to his words, if we hear, too, the words of Jesus. “Let not your heart be troubled.”

Isaiah's words also promise :

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is *stayed* (rests, is sustained) on thee ; because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever : for in the Lord JEHOVAH is everlasting strength.” (Isaiah 26 : 3 and 4).

Can we discern of what Jesus spoke ? “. . . my peace I give unto you.” It is possible only as we are “stayed” in God, rest in God, as Jerusalem rested upon Hezekiah's work. How much his words were needed for them ! How much we need them today as the world presses ever closer with its great evils, its dangers, its overwhelming forces !

“UPHOLD ME WITH THY FREE SPIRIT”

Our Brother David was one whose heart was touched by the Power of God, so much so that he became “a man after God's own heart.” When he failed—sinned grievously—his heart was troubled, and he turned to God seeking forgiveness. In Psalm 51 : 10-12, we find his spirit expressed for us :

“Create in me *a clean heart*, O God ; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence ; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation ; and *uphold* me with thy free spirit.”

David knew his only hope of peace was if God would uphold him, granting His Spirit's healing and grace because of David's contrite heart.

Can we, then, brethren and sisters, begin to perceive the love and mercy of God toward us as His people, in the provision of One who *can* speak—who *does* speak—comfortably to us in our distress ; even as Hezekiah spoke to those in Jerusalem ? Jesus' words, perhaps take on a new meaning, new hope :

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you : not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” (John 14 : 27).

Let us, also listen once again to the words of Hezekiah, the faithful king who saw and believed in the Messiah yet to come.

“Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him : for there be more with us than with him : With him is an arm of flesh ; but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles . . .” (II Chron. 32 : 7 and 8)

Do we believe this, brethren and sisters ? Let us show our Father that we do. Let us show each other, as well.

J. A. DeF.



Christendom — and others — Astray

The Spirit of the Law the Spirit of Christ
 “To the Law and to the Testimony.” (Isaiah 8 : 20).

“To the law and to testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”

IT IS AMAZING with the number of divine references to the importance of the Law that men should dare to treat it as of no importance. The greatest sect of Christendom are the worst offenders. There is no escaping the divine indictment against them.

“(They) shall speak great words against the most High . . . and think to change times and laws.” (Dan. 7 : 25).

Of the appointed “*times*” they are entirely ignorant, denying that God rules in the Kingdoms of men, and also that the Son of God is to return from heaven to possess all kingdoms. This view is not

surprising for the present benefits, and “livings” these afford, are too valuable in their eyes to even consider surrendering them to God’s Son. The appointed “time” is near, when they will be compelled to give up what they are most unwilling to, at the present time. Then in the divine devastation which will overwhelm them, there will be universal mourning at the loss which will be imposed upon them by Christ, who says :

“How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously (how true this is in every priest-house), so much torment and sorrow give her . . .

Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death and mourning, and famine ; and she shall be utterly burned with fire : for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.”

(Rev. 18 : 7-8).

In that day all that has been done to impress fellow creatures : ornate buildings, fine works of art, splendid music, rich vestments, and mystical ceremonies will be seen at their true value ; nothing more than “folly dressed up in great dignity”. Like apostate Israel in the time of Isaiah they :

“Put darkness for light, and light for darkness.”

(Isaiah 5 : 20).

The dreadful result is that in spite of the claims of their leaders---

“The earth is utterly broken down . . . The earth shall reel too and fro like a drunkard . . .

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth.” (Isaiah 25 : 19-21).

What a sad picture that the earth, which “God has given to the children of men” should come to such a state ; all because the light of God’s law has been ignored and despised. It is true today, as it was of the apostates of old---

“I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing.” (Hosea 8 : 12).

This grievous condition had its beginning. Not long after the apostles, men sought to exalt themselves by teaching for doctrine the commandments of men. It was fatal to the Truth. The warnings of Jesus to the seven ecclesias in Asia were not heeded. Little by little the precious Truth became the means of men exploiting their ill-conceived notions to give them authority over their fellows. At the time it perhaps did not seem they had departed from *the* Truth, from God, but it is wise to observe the final result in the earth, and

be warned lest we fail to observe the light of the Law, good doctrine that we may come to Christ, and remain in Him, who was and is

"THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD"

The source of all true knowledge is God ; of all guidance and instruction for "God is light." Natural light is an unsurpassable wonder. Men have sought in vain to fathom its mysteries. They hope that "laser" light might give them the key, but none "by searching can find out God."

We can leave the scientists to their own amusements, and content ourselves by knowing we can *see*, because there is light. This natural faculty tells us volumes. If we come to Him, who undoubtedly is "the light of the world", we are enabled to see the purpose of God, and deliver ourselves from the darkness which covers the earth. This was demonstrated simply but powerfully by Jesus.

"And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth."

This was no accidental occurrence, but "that the works of God should be manifest in him."

Jesus healed the blind man in a most significant way, and particularly to demonstrate that he was the "light of the world."

From the moisture of His mouth and the earth He made clay, which He used to anoint the eyes of the blind. Then He requested the blind man to go and wash in the pool of Siloam "Which is by interpretation, Sent". The blind man went and did what Jesus commanded.

"He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing."
(John 9 : 7).

Could there be more eloquent testimony to what is required to cure our native blindness ? Take the words that proceed from the mouth of Jesus (to be found in Spirit in all parts of the Word) and then go to the waters *sent* of God and wash. There is no other source than Jesus and His Father from whence we may have light, for God is light ; neither is there any other means of our being able to *see* than having our eyes washed with those waters *Sent* of God. These waters are only found in one place—in the Word of God, in the Law, in the Prophets, in the Psalms, and also in the New Testament. The beauty about these waters is they are not rough, they are not a raging torrent, nor are they muddy with any human contamination. Let us look at them, and enjoy them through the eyes of the prophet Isaiah.

"Forasmuch as this people refuseth *the waters of Shiloah that go softly*, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son"

What a contrast ! The waters of God are clear, limpid, smoothly flowing with all their divine meaning. The waters or words of men, as in the case of Rezin and Remaliah's son were the opposite. Like Hitler in his day, pouring forth a Niagara of words, impressive to fleshly ears, but where is Hitler now ? To what did his terrifying speeches bring him ? Death by suicide in his bunker in Berlin ; and to millions disillusionment, misery, and death. The contrast between the words of the great of the earth and the Most High could not be more striking.

May we, in all humility, appreciate the blessing God has provided in His Word, in His Law, for as Isaiah says it is to the Law and the Testimony only that we shall find *light*. Elsewhere all is darkness.

"HAVE NO FELLOWSHIP WITH THE UNFRUITFUL WORKS OF DARKNESS"

(Ephesians 5 : 11).

This is a simple command like all the Law of God. Those who philosophise to get round commands are the greatest snare. Who would not prefer to go along with friends of one's own choice, rather than refuse to do so because *fellowship* in the divine sense is impossible ? They may be kind, affectionate, and in many ways appealing to us, but when it comes to the fundamental duty to God, they would have us "not be so particular", and argue like the Serpent in Eden, that there is no wrong in what we decline to do. They refuse the Law and the Testimony, preferring darkness to light. The choice before us is simple : make friends with the world, which is bound to make us at enmity with God. To the inexperienced this may sound a great exaggeration. It is not so. Little by little the right will be made to appear uncharitable, hard and unnecessarily restrictive ; and unless the danger is seen and avoided then the call of the "soft waters" to the Truth will be drowned in the din of folly.

There has always been the temptation to look upon fellowship as a human arrangement, but this is not true. It is God's blessed provision that mortals may be His—providing they will reject all forms of darkness, and eschew any attempts to make darkness appear as light. The doctrine of Christ is light. The Apostle John says :

"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son."

(3 John : 9).

The work of those opposed to Truth, is to try and find a formula of words, which will enable men who have not the doctrine of Christ, acceptable to those who are particular about fully accepting and upholding the doctrine.

A classical example of this is the present attempt of the Central

sect of Christadelphia to find a basis of "Re-union" (a wrong word to use, for they were never united) with the Advocate group.

The Advocate group refuse to acknowledge the good doctrine that one enlightened, whether baptised or not, will be brought to the Judgement. They say this should not be made a "test of fellowship". Yet the "Statement of Faith" was amended to exclude this heresy. For years Central have met on the *Amended* Statement of Faith: the Advocate on the *Unamended* Statement.

Prolonged meetings have taken place without agreement being reached. These showed that in the Advocate group there were some six "views" on the principle concerning the raising of the enlightened rejector to judgement :

1. God cannot.
2. God will not.
3. I am certain that God intends to.
4. I do not know.
5. I think that God will.
6. God certainly will.

According to L. G. Sargent, the late Editor of the *Christadelphian* he wrote in September, 1968.

"For the benefit of our own readers, the answer on one point is simple : we could not accept for baptism an applicant who rejected Clause 24 of the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith" (This clause is the one stating the enlightened rejector, whether baptised or not will be raised to judgment.)

Hence, in the "simple" view of this late leader of Central, the members of the Advocate have not been baptised.

Yet to try and circumvent the good doctrine, and find words which will accommodate opposing views, the darkness as well as the light, it is proposed that two representatives of Central be asked to visit the "Re-union" committee in North America to help find a way out of what it calls "this perplexing area."

This is only trifling with clearly revealed doctrine. Numbers may be swelled, members will be pleased, the representatives congratulated. But God in heaven will view the work in a very different way ; in a way which shows that both parties have lost the Truth and the understanding of the doctrine of fellowship.

To those who have "ears to hear" our appeal is to go to the Law and the Testimony. The reason that the majority will not do so, causing the loss of the Truth in the past, is because there is no light in them. (to be continued).

“Leave there Thy gift”

“Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way ; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.”
(Matthew 5 : 23-24).

PERHAPS THE FIRST consideration should be the word “therefore”; for this shows a context to the above command. Jesus had previously been speaking of the veracity of the law (verse 18) not “one jot or tittle” was to pass from its fulfillment. And the breaking (verse 19) of the least of its commandments and teaching men to *do so* was condemned. Again unless (verse 20) there is a rising above the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees there will be no deliverance.

Jesus then in His inimitable way began to illustrate the spirit and the love of the truth as distinct from the coldness to keeping the letter of the law, of which the Pharisees were guilty. “Thou shalt not kill” was an ancient command (verse 21). Jesus added (verse 22) to the command, instruction and advice which elaborated the spirit of the command.

“But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment : and whosoever shall say to his brother Raca, shall be in danger of the council : but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.”

To be angry with one’s brother without cause is to allow a germination of an evil spirit of the flesh which can and has so often led to murder ! And to have murder in the heart even without the deed, Christ condemned. But Jesus also in the context condemned those who say of their brother RACA (margin—that is vain fellow) and fool.

Anger, hatred and contempt, then, if held in the heart was to be strongly deprecated. Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that thy brother has something against thee leave thy gift before the altar ; sacrificing it would be a mockery, go your way, first be reconciled to your brother, then offer your gift. The altar and the gift was important (but a right attitude to one’s brother was equally important : for without a right attitude the gift would be meaningless and unacceptable to God.

What did God want ? Not sacrifice really, which was only a means to an end. But rather a love by each of his brother, which

would prove a man loved his God. Could a man hate one who belonged to God if he loved God? Anger, hatred or contempt when allowed to triumph and be displayed to the injury of a brother was in the words of Christ against the spirit of the law and would be an impediment in the making of an acceptable offering to God until there was reconciliation.

“LEAVE THERE THY GIFT” . . . FIRST (i.e. the stage before offering) . . . “FIRST BE RECONCILED TO THY BROTHER”. A right attitude and brotherly love is what God wants—“first”!

“If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.” (1 John 4 : 20).

The above words emphasise the spirit of the Law’s requirements. The Pharisees were very meticulous in underlining the sixth commandment, “Thou shalt not kill”, illustrated in the following:

“Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death.”
(John 18 : 31).

It is obvious from the pressure put upon Pilate there was murder in the hearts of the Jews though they did not participate in the actual deed. But what good was their careful and meticulous, even fanatical observances, when there was murder in their hearts? What good was the efforts put into the great religious services at the temple when envy was completely captivating them? For example:

“For he (Pilate) knew that for envy they had delivered him.”
(Matthew 27 : 18).

These sacrificers and mechanical attenders at God’s altar were without the love of God, for they were without love for their fellows. This was seen particularly in their treatment of publicans and those whom they termed “sinners” on whom they rained hatred and contempt. There was no reconciliation with the recipients of their scorn for there was no desire in their self-righteousness to be reconciled. So the whole spirit of the law was submerged by a nation which finally brought upon itself the destruction foretold by Christ. But Jesus upheld the spirit of the Law, passing it on to His disciples and finally it is passed down to these times. If there is anger, hatred or contempt, and a brother is injured, “first be reconciled”—(orig. meaning—be changed throughout). There is no condoning of anger or impatience in Christ’s words; i.e. if there is no “cause” for such

action. The exception being a godly “cause”, and even there “meekness” is the prescription except in special circumstances. Failure puts one “in danger of the judgment”, particularly if someone is hurt and the matter is not rectified. To say personal matters are not against the Law of God overlooks that God’s law is given so that men are guided in every matter of life including personal matters large or small.

“Agree with thine adversary quickly” (verse 25) ANTIDIKOS—opponent in law”. (that is LAWFUL OPPONENT)—“whiles thou art in the way with him.”

By following the advice given recognition is shown that God and Christ are participating in the fellowship of the brethren who desire unity, achieved by reconciliation which brings healing with the eternal prospect this holds out to those who walk in love.

D.L.



Grave warnings from the failures of Solomon and Zedekiah

THE LIFE STORIES of the third king of the Jews and the last of that age are just about as different as one could imagine, except for one tragic common factor ; both Soloman and Zedekiah were plainly told that if only they would obey the Word of the Lord it would be well with them. For one, things were going very well indeed. There was peace, wealth and there was power. For the other there was a crisis of the first magnitude for the Jewish nation. The capital city was nearly all that was left, and its continued existence hung in the balance.

Both kings were tried in quite different ways, and one might safely say both were sorely tried, and both made decisions in favour of what was hoped to be an immediate advantage, but in both cases brought bitterness and anguish of soul at the imminent and prospective judgments of God against them. We remember how ch. 6 of 1 Kings opens with a brief description of the House of the Lord, built of stones not seen at that time ; being covered with boards of cedar wood. The inside of the House was covered with gold, and we know that when it was finished it was “Exceeding magnifical”, and

“The glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord.” However v. 12 we particularly wanted to note ; God says :

“Concerning this house which thou art in building, if thou wilt walk in my statutes, and execute my judgments, and keep all my commandments to walk in them ; then will I perform my word with thee, which I spake unto David thy father.”

What is the outstanding feature of these words in connection with the House ? Is it not that the presence of the House, with its magnificent appearance, did not ensure God’s dwelling with Israel ; but : “If thou wilt walk in my statutes, and execute my judgments, and keep all my commandments to walk in them . . .” So there was no taking refuge in the fact of having God’s dwelling place at hand. This was no substitute for righteousness, any more than having Abraham as a natural forefather, which Christ exposed as a vain boast. So there is a lesson for us, in that though we may be stones in the Spiritual Temple, and by reason of this position we may have God dwelling in our midst, this is no automatic access to His presence, protection or guidance. How willing and anxious was God to bless Solomon with lasting blessings to continue the throne established in David, but could it be right to perpetuate a declension from right to a wrong way ? All was not glorious in the Kingdom when Solomon died ; one of the fruits of his departure was a grievous burden for Israel, in toil and chastisement. The warning and the pleading to Solomon were given more than once, God knowing his temptations. Solomon’s greatest temptation seems to have been his insatiable desire to take any attractive woman, even alien, for a wife or concubine, which desire he did not appear to control ; possibly lying to himself that he could still have the benefits of God with him, and take the liberty of ignoring certain of God’s requirements which really cut across his strongest desires, indeed his way of life ! This is the choice we have to consider. It is not the ridiculous fancies that are in danger to us like a palatial home or a prestige motor car, which are out of reach for most people anyway. The worst dangers are things that have already grown into our lives, about which we may have been warned more than once, if we are attentive enough to recognise God’s warnings. We know that people who do not want to be warned about something will turn a blind eye to the warning.

Do we realise that things can grow into our lives that may even begin as being legitimate, like caring for a near relative for instance. This duty could cause departure from God if the relative’s demands were given priority over those of the Truth. A variation of this, of the greatest danger, is when either one in the Household, or one in

a household is allowed to dominate with a wrong influence. in a subtle and gradual manner, this could cause the loss of a family or even a whole ecclesia if they did not face the challenge and make the necessary changes. A blatant example is the domination of Solomon's household by his alien wives, bringing the downfall of Solomon. Roots of bitterness, or an angry spirit also, can grow from small beginnings to disastrous dimensions if unchecked. We know our own individual temptations and weaknesses if we will take in the Word of God with all its instruction ; the Spirit contained therein will show us the right and the wrong. We have noted some of Solomon's temptation in his prosperity, thinking he could have everything he wanted ; so may we look at the temptations which confronted Zedekiah, who came to the throne in times of terrible trouble for Israel. Trouble which was not his fault in the beginning, but by his actions he greatly advanced it, to his own hurt, and others'.

Zedekiah evidently had some regard for Jeremiah and the Words of God, which he spoke. But the King's fault was so common that we all have probably experienced the same tendency. He dreaded upholding the right against the evil counsel of the princes surrounding him, lest he should land himself in trouble with them. What a common situation in one degree or another—to value the praise of men more than the praise of God, and dread the scorn of men more than the rebuke of God.

In ch. 37, Zedekiah had taken Jeremiah from a dungeon and asked him if there was word from the Lord. He did not return Jeremiah to prison when the tidings were evil. Then in ch. 38 we see his weak answer to those who were infuriated against Jeremiah :

“Then Zedekiah the king said, Behold, he is in your hand :
for the king is not he that can do anything against you.”
(v. 5).

Later, however, God intervened through Ebedmelech, who persuaded Zedekiah to have Jerusalem rescued. A further consultation ensued between the king and the prophet, in which the great test was presented again to Zedekiah ; perhaps as a last entreaty from God :

“Then said Jeremiah to Zedekiah, thus saith the Lord, the God of hosts, the God of Israel ; If thou wilt assuredly go forth unto the king of Babylon's princes, then thy soul shall live, and this city shall not be burned with fire ; and thou shalt live, and thine house. But if thou wilt not go forth to the king of babylon's princes, then shall this city be given into the hand of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire, and thou shalt not escape out of their hand.

And Zedekiah the king said unto Jeremiah, I am afraid of the Jews that are fallen to the Chaldeans, lest they deliver me into their hand and they mock me.

But Jeremiah said, They shall not deliver thee. Obey, I beseech thee the voice of the Lord, which I speak unto thee : so shall it be well unto thee and thy soul shall live."

(vs. 17-20).

It might have been a very difficult choice in the king's position, to risk being scorned as a turn-coat. The issue was clear, and it was not too hard for Jeremiah, who was despised by many ; but the king was told it would be well with him if only he would :

"Obey I beseech thee, the voice of the Lord which I speak unto thee."

Can these words echo in our ears ? That is why we are given them. Who could say that nothing remains in which a decision and action of obedience to God has not already been taken ?

Zedekiah rejected God's entreaty, so all the evil that he was warned about came upon him and his people. His disobedience brought grievous suffering, including blindness and death in captivity. In spite of his apparent regard for Jeremiah, Zedekiah's obituary in the divine estimation was "Profane, wicked, prince of Israel."

We have read in Luke's record, the story of the future King of Israel, who did not pander to the fancies or comfort of His own flesh ; but in a far greater test than most of the "called" are ever likely to face, He "set his face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem", where He knew He would be brutally treated, scorned, forsaken and murdered. However, the agony, terrible as it was, did not last long, compared with the unspeakable joy to follow. Imagine how Jesus would feel at the delight of His friends in being made known to them : Mary, the apostles, the two disciples going to Emmaus. That was only the beginning of the reward, which we can share if only we also will give heed to the appeal : "Obey, I beseech thee, the voice of the Lord, which I speak unto the."

A.E.I.



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

IN THE TIME OF THE END TROUBLE AND DARKNESS

“And when they shall say unto you, seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto Wizards that peep, and that mutter : should not a people seek unto their God ? for the living to the dead ?

To the Law and to the Testimony : they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them . . . And they shall look unto the earth ; and behold trouble and darkness . . . ” (Isaiah 8 : 19-22).

WHOO CAN DENY that this is a time of trouble and darkness ? For when there should be prosperity, because nearly thirty years have elapsed since the dreadful upheaval of the Second World War, there are instead, shortages, unemployment and poverty. The world which might have recovered itself after such a length of opportunity is back to similar conditions that were the aftermath of the second world conflict. Why should this be so ? Does the ancient prophecy answer the question ?

It is because the world has sought after wrong things, so “they shall pass through it, (ie. this time) hardly bestead and hungry ; and it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their god . . . ” (verse 21).

Indication of the approach of such a condition of life is surely seen in the present world shortage of many essential things ; some nations being more affected than others. The greater the shortage, which inevitably means the dearer the commodity, the more the cursing of “their king” or leader as evident in the recent British political scene which has shown how divided the nation is. Of course there is no appreciation of God, the giver of all commodities, and as the situation gets worse the scripture foretells there will be no appealing to Him ; rather a blaspheming of “the God of heaven because of their pains” (Rev. 16 : 11).

Religion however still claims attention, but what kind of religion is it ? Isaiah foretells there will be *A SEEKING* to deceivers. It is one of the traits of human nature to desire anything rather than Truth. “Wizards” promise “the best of both worlds”, and this appeals, especially when the religion of such deceivers is dressed up in mysticism which has an emotional appeal.

It has been stated by an investigator for a provincial newspaper that a churchman he has met who has contact with youth Bodies has

claimed that in these days, "dabbling in the occult among young people goes much wider than the drug scene". "In talking to teachers, churchmen and youngsters, it is evident that eighty per cent of teenagers in and around London now have some experience in spiritualism . . ." " . . . Dabbling in the occult is the new thrill."

Endorsement of a belief in the reality of such vain things comes from dignitaries of the church. A Canon is on record as saying, "In my experience there are spirits—what the layman calls ghosts—that haunt certain houses." The procedure of this Church leader "for getting spirits to leave buildings has developed into a short service of Holy Communion with prayers for the release and repose of the disturbed spirit. After this a medium is entranced and contact made with the spirits haunting the place. When they are identified the medium can persuade them to leave." Another church adviser of high position is reported to have commented that "you have to demonstrate that power and love of God are greater than any adverse power."

And he never prays for an evil spirit to be destroyed—only that it will be returned to its **RIGHTFUL** place—the place, where ever that may be from which it has strayed."

It has evidently been forgotten that Saul the king of Israel died as follows :

"So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord, even against the word of the Lord, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it ; And enquired not of the Lord ; therefore He slew him . . ."

(1 Chron. 10 : 13-14).

"Should not a people seek unto their God ?" cries the scripture. ". . . if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them . . ."

Upon the world scene recently has come a new publication called "The Divine Times", which claims the support of eight million people. Evidence of what this publication stands for may be perceived in the following extracts :

"The fact is that *DEATH DOES NOT REALLY EXIST*. It is just something dreamed up by people who think they are alive. Harihar's experience (one thought to be dead following sickness who revived for a very short while) shows life does not end when the body becomes cold and lifeless and the force that animated it just leaves a worn-out shell . . . Death

then, despite all the turmoil, worry and confusion it causes is nothing but a state of mind. **DEATH IS IGNORANCE** that's all. It is just confusion that makes people think that physical death is anything more than a point of transition. . . . But just who can release us, who can actually make us experience the force that has been keeping us alive, who can make our dead bodies move? Guru . . . the . . . Perfect Master, can show us. The Knowledge that He has come to give the world is the key which unlocks the mystery of life and death. By meditating on this Knowledge, the realisation quickly comes that the body is just a shell containing something of infinite beauty. It is like walking from a grey, drab dream into beautiful sunlit day. But only when you have experienced this will you realise Guru . . . can set your dead body moving!"

Well if eight million people support such views that is proof itself that men will have anything rather than Truth. The people prefer to be lulled, hence the fulfillment again of the ancient word :

"Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that **IT MAY BE FOR THE TIME TO COME** . . . that this is a rebellious people . . . that will not hear the law of the Lord :

Which say to the seers, See not ; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits :

Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us."

(Isaiah 30 : 8-11).

The world however must pay the price for its rejection of the True God ; the God of Israel. The penalty is seen in the ever increasing trouble and division, nationally and internationally.

But though "many . . . shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken." (verse 15) The cry goes forth to the few who respond, "Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples." Stand with the true prophet is the exhortation, who says :

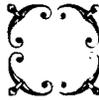
" . . . I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth His face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for Him." (Isaiah 8 : 17).

The looking for Him will not be in vain !

"For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people : but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come **TO THY LIGHT** . . ." (Isaiah 60 : 2-3).

What a need for the light of Truth there is. The world is as dark as it has ever been, or more so, and never has it been so threatened. What mercy that a few in these dire times CAN “wait upon the Lord” and “look for Him”, who will arise and shine to deliver some from a world that is grossly dark.

D.L.



News from the Ecclesias

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, Hamburg
and Orchard Park. Alternative week : Revelation Study.

Our hearts and minds join with our brethren and sisters as they are permitted the blessing of fraternal gathering. All here would that it were possible to be present, but will be there in spirit.

Events in the ecclesias and in our families show surely the hand of God working : to bless where there is love of Him, to chasten or cut off where the love is lacking or comes short. How grateful we feel for that hand and pray that we may always be subject to His will that we may hope for the eternal blessing when Jesus Christ returns to gather to Him all the members of His Body.

Our supplications and thoughts are with all those who are ill or in tribulation, recognizing that God knows our every circumstance and can deliver in His own time and wisdom.

J. A. DeF.

“*PENTRIP*”, Black Rock, Portmadoc.

Breaking of Bread : Sundays. 11-30 a.m.

Bible Class : Mid-week.

We look forward at the present time to the Fraternal Gathering in April—and to the first visitors in May. We shall appreciate these blessings more as we hear of the difficulties in the world—including transport. We remember all who are in distress at this time—and trust that as the summer approaches encouragement will be felt to hold fast.

per D.L.

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

Sundays : Breaking of Bread 11-30 a.m. Lectures on the first Sunday in the month. Wednesday : Bible Class 7-15 p.m. Milton Hall, Deansgate.

We are looking forward to the Fraternal Gathering to be held, if the Lord will, on Monday, 15th April, in our own Hall. The subjects for consideration are :

“Thy gentleness hath made me great.”

Our God the perfect Father ; the God of peace.

God’s mercy seen in His forgiveness.

Finally, be ye all of one mind . . . ”

These occasions are reminders of the Great Fraternal Gathering, the “Congregation” at which the Lord Jesus will be present, and His voice will be heard. Shall we be able to attain to so great an honour ? A question indeed, which only *the* Judge can decide, but we must ever keep in mind this is the day of opportunity for such a blessing.

W.V.B.