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A WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

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

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At the Table of the Lord

“... when shall these things be . . . ?”

THE TEACHING OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST can be a special help for us in these days of fear and perplexity in the earth. Jesus knew that such days would come, as they would be a time of testing for His people, who longed for His return. It is indeed a difficult time, but there is a great hope extended in what is to be accomplished when He comes.

How kind God is to give us signs and warnings ahead of time so that we can strive to be ready and can try to endure. Yet these are more than just warnings, for a sure hope is revealed as Jesus tells us:

“... look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.” (Luke 21:28)

Jesus' disciples had asked Him:

“... when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass? (verse 7)

A very natural question, and the similar one in Matthew reads:

“Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?” (Matt. 24:3)

Jesus' answer was:

“Take heed that ye be not deceived.” (Luke 21:8)

To be deceived we find means to be seduced, to go astray, to err, and to be out of the way. If we *are* deceived then we are being led out of the way of life. John helps in our determination to see clearly and truly.

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but *try the spirits whether they are of God*: Because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” (I John 4:1)

False prophets — what are they? We find the words used here mean pseudo and prophet. Pseudo comes from a root meaning to lie. False prophets then are those who teach or fore-tell lies. How well we remember that first lie out of the mouth of the serpent: “Ye shall not surely die.” False prophets, pseudo seers and teachers are of the serpent; they use the serpent's tactics, they speak lies. Therefore, it is clearly necessary that we do carefully try the spirits and in this earnest effort, Brethren and Sisters, we are helped to discern what is taught — Truth or a lie; the word of God or the word of man.

There must be special danger of being led out of the way, of being caused to wander in the last days, for Jesus carefully cautions, "Take heed that ye be not deceived." We may feel it can never happen to us, but it has happened to some; we have witnessed it. "Take heed", Jesus warns — beware, regard closely, perceive. Jesus, who was tempted as we are, and felt the danger strongly, is warning us. He tells us:

"For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." (Matt. 24:24)

It is not possible to deceive the elect *if* they will take heed to the warnings, the guidance, the help available to them from the Almighty. But from Jesus' words we can discern what grave peril may face us at any time. How needful that we listen. "Take heed."

"It shall turn to you for a testimony."

The signs of His coming grow more sure as we see wars, rumours of wars, hostages taken, terrorism, and with it all terrible perplexity, and human futility — seemingly there is no solution! We believe in His return, we long for it, yet we must be aware that severe trials and tribulation are sure to come to us all. These will become more intense as that day approaches.

"... they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony." (Luke 21:12, 13)

What does this mean — it will be a testimony? This word also means martyr. We know of many who by their steadfastness in witnessing to God's way became martyrs. These circumstances, we believe, may again take place in the earth. Such will be painful to bear as this pressure comes upon His people, we don't know how difficult until called upon to actually face such a trial, yet in it we will not be alone for Jesus said:

"Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: for *I will give* you a mouth and wisdom, which *all* your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist." (Luke 21:14, 15)

Settle it therefore in your hearts — is this the key to peace of mind in these difficult times? Settle means to bow or to kneel down, giving the thought of submitting. *Let your heart submit*, Jesus was saying. But this is not natural nor easy for us. How impractical and hard it seems to refrain from carefully thinking out a plan before hand!

We find Jesus' word meditate means to take care of ahead of time. So why does He so instruct us? If we "take care of" beforehand what the answer is to be, are we leaving room for the Spirit to work, to show us? Are we, by being so prepared, saying, "I can handle it", while God is ready in His infinite mercy and wisdom to help?

"I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist."

How difficult it is to wait, to believe, depending upon God's help, especially in dire and urgent circumstances. The natural mind wants to be ready to answer, to defend its own. But our only preparation must be that day to day feeding, trusting, abiding under His appointed way. This is what indeed will allow the greatest testimony to our Father.

Stephen was one who *was* able to settle it in his heart, and we read concerning him:

"Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. Then there arose certain — disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spoke." (Acts 6:8-10)

What he spoke was not his own wisdom and spirit, but God-given help in his time of need. Stephen died because of his testimony but died in hope of being with Jesus when He comes.

"As it was in the days of Noe . . ."

Our prayers are for Jesus' return, for the end of this evil rule of men over God's earth. As we see crime increasing so that people fear to go out of houses, as we see God's will and plan completely despised and men's ways substituted we are appalled and fearful. So far are they removed from reverence, that there is an active move to rewrite His word, removing all reference to Father, to Jesus as Son, and instead making these words conform to the feminist "non-discrimination" rules of today's depraved society. How evil it must appear to the Almighty's view, how He must desire to wipe it out as He did in Noah's day. But it is not yet time. He alone knows when it *is* time. There must be yet a need . . . in us, to teach, to strengthen, to test, yes — to correct. Others are being drawn out to Him. Some are being given the opportunity to repent if they will. Nevertheless it does seem the end must soon come. It is indeed a time to "look up, lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh." "Looking up" involves a deliberate action. The words mean "bending up or toward", implying the ability and desire to raise the head above today's conditions or needs and therefore to look ahead with hope

and resolve. The familiar example of Gideon's 300 who were chosen to carry out the defense of Israel comes to mind. Because they lapped while drinking, instead of bowing down to the water, they received the honour. Judges 7:6 tells us:

“The number of them that lapped, putting their hands to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water.”

Three hundred out of 22,000 were chosen to do God's work, three hundred who went forth to conquer the adversaries by the “sword of the Lord and of Gideon.” They kept their heads lifted up, bent back, aware of what was going on around them, circumspect and looking ahead. This is Jesus' exhortation to us in these last days, that we “look up”, keep our eyes fixed on things above, not on things on the earth. Jesus also, in commanding “lift up your heads”, is telling us some further help. It is obvious that we can't look up unless we do lift up our heads, thus not being stiff-necked, but yielding and flexible, able to see other than our own ways and viewpoints, indeed to see beyond this present life to the vision of the hope which He has given.

While it is necessary and right to take care of our daily needs we can be helped as we are able to look ahead to that redemption which His coming will provide, to the joy and peace of His kingdom with the flesh and its demands put away. Are we, Brethren and Sisters, trying hard to put away every possible distraction, using that wise restraint which is of the Spirit, thereby helping ourselves to be ready as possible for that day? We know we cannot ever be truly ready, but must we not be bending all our efforts in that direction?

“Lest that day come upon you unawares”

Being unaware, and thus unready is what Jesus warns us of in Luke 21:34:

“Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.”

Take heed — watch closely, perceive — can this happen to our hearts? Jesus is addressing His own people, so it must indeed be possible. But surely we are a sober people, not given to surfeiting, drunkenness. Why then does He warn us so. The word overcharge means to burden or weigh down. It must be possible for our hearts to become weighed down by what Jesus calls surfeiting and drunkenness as well as the cares of this world. When we examine the word for

surfeiting we find it conveys the thought of over indulgence, as also does “drunkenness”. Both words involve taking more than is wise *or* needful. Let us carefully examine our own activities then. Must not the same warning apply to us. For if we over indulge or grasp for too much of what this world and our natural minds value highly, shall we not be overburdened? And what is the result? A distracted and overfull life, which Jesus says, will cause “that day (to) come upon you unawares.”

“The cares of this life”

An example helps us to see the “cares of this life” and how they need to be watched carefully. When Jesus came to the house of Mary and Martha:

“ . . . Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? — and Jesus answered — Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.” (Luke 10:38-42)

Martha’s work was needful and helpful, as practical affairs often are, we know. Yet the scriptures say she was “cumbered” or distracted. Was there then an “overcharging”, a work more than was necessary causing a most important work to be neglected. She couldn’t or didn’t avail herself of the valuable opportunity to be taught at the feet of Jesus. A careful balance is needed and Jesus in love for Martha helped her to find it. Does He not here do the same thing for us? So let us listen, “Take heed — lest at any time your hearts be overcharged — so that day come upon you unawares”.

In this vein Jesus further warns us:

“ . . . as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.” (Luke 17:26-27)

There is, of course, no wrong in eating or marrying unless it be done to the neglect of God, or His work, or His people, through being over-attentive to the cares of this life.

The help of Jesus continues:

“Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot: they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded, but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.”

(verses 28, 29)

Do not these examples show how easily we can become “over-charged” with the cares of this life? Many activities are permissible, even beneficial, but let us be aware that our inclination is to get and to do more. Is it not vital then that we take heed, as Jesus pleads, “lest that day come upon you unawares.”

We do need, Brethren and Sisters, to look up, to lift up our heads, to be alert and circumspect as we long and wait for that day which in His mercy seems so soon to come. Watching, working, hoping, we pray that truly in His mercy “our redemption draweth nigh.”

J.A.DeF.



Selah

“Value it, considering the End”

Psalm 59

IF EVER THE HISTORY of this time were written it would be described as an age of plans — plans for peace, plans for defence, plans for social security, five-year plans, and the like. Modern production methods in factories have given man an exaggerated idea of the value of planning. In a works, plans can be made of plant needed, material required, workpeople necessary, with a real prospect of success. Man looks at these organisms of his creation and as the manufactured goods pour from the production line he boastfully declares, “See, this is a result of my planning.” But the farmer cannot plan with the same assurance. He is dependent upon the weather; upon freedom from pests and blight. Neither can man plan successfully his own future. Schemes can be well laid. Energy applied in carrying them out, but the future is never certain. The *end* is always in doubt. Man is loath to acknowledge this, although the force of circumstances will occasionally make him confess its truth, as when Burns declared after ploughing up a mouse’s nest:

“But mousie, thou art no thy lane (thyself alone),
 In proving foresight may be vain:
 The best laid schemes o’ mice an’ men
 Gang aft a-gley,
 An’ leave us nought but grief and pain,
 For promised joy.”

When the reality of the truth is felt that all the schemes of men, however well planned and executed, finally end in disappointment and death, then the kindness of God in promising an enduring and glorious *end* for His children becomes immeasurable. The devout and grateful mind reaching out for words to express itself can say with the Apostle Paul:

“Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.”
 (2 Cor. 9, v. 15)

Yes! “Unspeakable” in the sense that no words can adequately convey the wonders of His grace.

“A banner to them that fear thee . . . because of the Truth.

Selah” (verse 4)

“Thou hast given a banner (an ensign) to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the Truth. *Selah*.

“That thy beloved may be delivered; save with thy right hand and hear me.” (verses 4-5)

David wrote these words at a most momentous time in the history of the Truth. He had been successful against many enemies, and his thoughts turned to the dwelling of his God. He felt reproached that God’s house was only a tent, and he purposed in his heart to build a more suitable and a more permanent dwelling. This revelation of heart, developed through trial and suffering, through fear and distress met with instant approval, and the prophet Nathan was commissioned to go to David as the bearer of a wonderful promise:

“Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place *of their own, and move no more*; Neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as before time.

“Also the Lord telleth thee that he will make thee an house.

“I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels and I will establish his Kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his Kingdom for ever.” (2 Sam. 7, verses 10-13)

A banner indeed, a sign “to them that fear” which has never been forgotten by the children of God for nearly three thousand years. A sign, David says, to be displayed because of the Truth. Yea! It is the Truth; and then David adds the significant word — *Selah*, “value this, considering the end.” How much is to be valued in that certain and enduring end! A hint of what is implied is given in the next verse. . . .

“That thy beloved may be delivered; save with thy right hand and hear me.” (verse 5)

The power of the *Selah*-call in this Psalm can be the better understood, if a more careful look be taken at the “banner” or sign given to David. It will be noticed that not only does this foretell the establishment of David’s son upon the throne of the Lord for ever, but also specifically declares that Israel shall be given a place of their own, from which they shall never move, and in which they shall no more be afflicted by the children of wickedness. The Sign is two-fold. It concerns not only the coming of David’s son, but the establishment of Israel in the land. These are but two aspects of the same truth, inseparably bound together in the same sign or “banner”. David

realised that in the birth of Solomon and his ascension to the throne of the Lord, together with the settled and peaceful state to which Israel was brought, was not the end of the precious promises. When David exclaimed *Selah* — his mind was projected to *the end*, that end which he gratefully reviewed when he said:

“But thou hast spoken also of thy servant’s house for a great while to come” (2 Sam. 7 verse 19)

Now we are living three thousand years nearer to this *end* than David. It is testimony to the power of the truth that an ensign that has been held aloft by the servants of God during that long period should *at the end* begin to unfurl itself in the land; and that the essential preliminary to the realisation of the end should be taking place — Israel back in the land “to be moved no more.” Surely, we can be no less thrilled than David, who rejoiced at the beginning of the promise, for we by his *Selah*-call can value this, and consider the end which begins to manifest itself before our eyes.

“That thy beloved may be delivered” (verse 5)

This is the end which David foresaw by the Spirit, and in which he rejoiced. Not only for himself as the beloved — the meaning of David — but also for all those that are united to David and are the beloved of God. The salvation which David experienced from all his enemies and the peace which for a brief while as an old man he enjoyed were to him but a foretaste of the eternal salvation and everlasting peace which he knew would be given in *the end* to all the children of God. In the Psalm, David through the power of the Spirit takes the mind to the day of such great salvation. He points out, how after the defeat of the Northern power, represented in the Psalm by Aramnaharaim (Syria of the two rivers) and Aramzobah (Syria of Zobah) that:

“Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies” (verse 12)

The difficulty in such lofty considerations — considerations having such great issues — there is so much to value, that in spite of our Bro. David’s *Selah*-appeal, many things may be overlooked, and the gracious warning of the Spirit be missed — to be prepared as part of the house when the “Lord shall suddenly come to his temple.”

W.V.B.



The Lord Shall Establish Thee An Holy People

AS WE CONSIDER OUR POSITION in the sight of God, called out by God as His people, we must constantly reflect upon the ultimate hope set before us, a hope given by an all-merciful Father. There is indeed a great promise set before us, an everlasting end to be sought after, and it is in this struggle we find ourselves joined together in the overruling purpose of God. Here is the mercy of God revealed in that those whom He has called in His knowledge, are a people that *He* knows can finish the race set before them. Further, God knows it is a hard race, a struggle all the way and so He grants along the way blessings as He sees a moving along in hope towards the finish.

There are several references in the scriptures which speak to us of these blessings which can be granted unto those that embrace the hope of Israel. In Deuteronomy 28 verses 2-9 we are told as God spoke to the nation of Israel at a time prior to their entrance into the land:

“And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God.

Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field.

Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store.

Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out.

The Lord shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways.

The Lord shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

The Lord shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, and walk in his ways.”

Here are the blessings revealed, blessings to be given in every conceivable facet of life. These were God's words spoken by Moses to the children of Israel at a time just prior to their entrance into the land promised. It was an entrance which was blocked by obstacles

that were to be conquered. Promised as they sought to overcome however, was the blessing of life everlasting held out as an end.

These words speak the same to us as spiritual Israel, for all these blessings we can and do know also, as we strive longing for return to that land wherein stands the tree of life. In verse 9 of Deuteronomy chapter 28 we have the means to that end recorded which we must acknowledge and do in order to rise up to our calling as God's holy people. We read:

“The Lord shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as He hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God and walk in His ways.”

Two conditions, two directions we must struggle to do—

1. Keep the commandments of the Lord our God.
2. Walk in His ways.

Both of these conditions we recognize are given for the purpose of pointing the way to the Tree of Life.

We are given great help in our struggle to perform these commands of God by the example of the Lord Jesus who was able to keep and do all that God required of Him without failing. How did Jesus do it? How was He able to walk in God's way always? It is important for us to consider and know the answers to these questions in order for us to succeed in our struggle to overcome and find the way. Perhaps the answer is given by considering what Jesus' mind was in His time of walking the path of trial. The Psalms in this regard reveal to us His mind, although they are the words of David, we know also they are the spirit of Christ:

“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.” (Psalm 119 verses 105-106)

Here then was the spirit and mind of Christ affording that help which is needed to find the way of life; namely, that God's giving of His word, is the only way to keep us on that path.

Other references in the Psalms show us how Christ won the victory, how He was able to find the way and maintain His steps. For instance in Psalm 17 verses 4-5:

“Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.
Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.”

Also in the familiar 23rd Psalm verse 3:

“He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.”

Further in Psalm 25 verse 4 Christ's spirit was:

“Shew me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths.
Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God
of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.”

And a final sampling of His spirit can be seen in Psalm 119 verse 35:

“Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein
do I delight.”

In considering these words which reveal the spirit of Christ, are we not shown how He was able to walk in all God's ways? Jesus placed himself totally in subjection to God's leadership, for He realized that only by God's way, could the way to the Tree of Life again be opened unto Him.

Jesus in so perfectly following God's lead has walked to that Tree of life and partaken of its fruit, the first to do so. By His walk He has shown to us the way which we too may follow. Christ's struggles and victory then are more than just an example to us, they are our only means to surmount the obstacles placed in our path. Since Christ has become our help at the right hand of God, He is the only means through which we can come unto God, the only means through which we can hope to approach unto the fruit of the Tree of Life.

Christ then must be held up by us as the lamp unto our feet and the light unto our path. As such He has promised to show us the way, if we can only follow Him. He so clearly reveals this in John the 8th chapter the 12th verse saying:

“Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”

As we reflect then on our hope, how much we must keep always in mind the provision set forth by God through the struggle and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. For Jesus has reminded us in Matthew 7 verse 14:

“Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”

Only those called to make up God's holy nation, only those that follow in Christ's footsteps can hope to enter that strait gate that leads unto the Tree of Life everlasting.

How much then must our minds and our prayers in these last days think upon and cry out to God through Christ, asking to keep us in the way until the end comes, so that we can return to partake of the unblemished goodness of God's purpose from the beginning, which shall at this time be without end. To help us towards this end,

Jesus speaks to us in chapter 13 of John verses 34 and 35 saying:

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

To walk, to follow the footsteps of Jesus it is clearly revealed here that our walk must be in love, reflecting the love Christ has shown towards us, that love that God has shown towards us through His Son. John writing in his first Epistle chapter 2 verses 7-10 tells us:

“Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.

Again a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.

He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.

He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.”

To walk in love one for another is to walk in light, that light of which the spirit of the law sought to teach and instill in the hearts and minds of God’s holy nation of Israel. As there was a perception of this there came the blessings God had promised.

The old commandment, the new commandment, both are the same in the purpose of God, both directed attention to the purpose and work of Christ, in establishing God’s holy kingdom. Along that path which leads to the fulfilment of this purpose come the blessings upon those with whom God has chosen to work, bestowing such a great hope of being part of it with Christ, as Revelation 22 verse 14 explains:

“Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.”

What is required is perhaps summed up for us in the Proverbs where we are told “In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy path”. Our ways, our thoughts cannot be our own, but must be God’s ways as He directs our steps in love. A love we must reflect to one another, a love which says we want to follow Jesus. A love by which blessings can surely come as we struggle in hope of that greatest blessing of all — to be His holy people eternally.

M.C.S.

Envy

It was Solomon who said:

“Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?” (Prov. 27:4)

H E HAD GOOD REASON TO SAY THIS. There were two women, both with babes of approximately the same age. They lived together, which should have been to a mutual unstaining of themselves on the principle:

“... that two are better than one.”

But envy reared its head and what an ugly head it was! One of the babes died due to its mother’s carelessness. Having been careless, and suffered as a result, this particular mother wished to compensate herself, in a measure, at the expense of her fellow. She went about this matter with those vicious ingredients of “lying and treachery.” Thieving the other child by stealth while the other mother slept and was unaware, she laid forcible claim to that which did not belong to her.

So it is seen that the flesh can be a very nasty thing. The thought of her heart must have been:

“Why should I be left bereft, while the other takes delight in her son.”

Envy and selfishness is shown to go “hand in hand.” But how hard these traits can make the heart. Solomon obviously had a difficult task presented to him for adjudication:

“And the other woman said, Nay; but the living is my son, and the dead is thy son. And this said, No; but the dead is thy son and the living is my son. Thus they spake before the king.”
(I Kings 3:22)

Where envy is, there is no compassion; “wrath is cruel, anger is outrageous but who is able to stand before envy?”

“And the king said, Bring me a sword. And they brought a sword before the king.

And the king said, Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one and half to the other.

“Then spake the woman whose the living child was unto the king, for her bowels yearned upon her son, and she said, O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it. But the other said, Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it.” (I Kings 3:24-26)

The mind thinks of that awesome, glittering sword brought into the presence of the king, "Cut the child into two portions" said the envious woman, "cut the child off!" But the one who would have fallen before the envy of which she was the victim did not have envy. So she was prepared to be deprived (to the other's somewhat doubtful benefit) rather than such a cruel thing take place. She was the one who looked with fear and horror at that sharp and glittering sword. There was nothing cold and hard in her disposition at this stage of her probation, whatever failings she may have had. She yearned upon her son, she was hot with feelings of compassion.

Solomon in his wisdom delivered the one who would have fallen before envy, by this very test. The chapter concludes with the meaningful phrase, "that the wisdom of God was in him, to do judgment."

As the mind ponders this incident the dreadful rearing up of envy and selfishness is seen to have commenced with great cunning and deceit. It was only the wisdom of God that exposed it for what it was. The test of the matter concerned who was hard, and who was soft. The one who was hard, and cruel, and would have seen a life that should be spared, taken away, was the envious one. Is this record preserved from such early times merely to show how wise Solomon was? or is the situation which is described provided as a lesson in itself? Yes, who can stand before envy? But the wisdom of God can resist it, and show it up.

Further consideration from another part of scripture describes what envy can do:

"And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people; and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him:" (Luke 23:13-14)

Did these words of Pilate check the angry assertion of the people? No they did not! It is significantly recorded:

"And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them.

But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?

For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy. But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them." (Mark 15:8-11)

So three classes of victim are shown,

1. Jesus who fell before envy to suffer a cruel death, but was delivered by God out of all His suffering.
2. The chief priests who were the servants of the envy which fermented in their breasts.
3. The people who were deluded by those envious priests, to support them, in their evil and self deceptive machinations.

The scripture shows what human nature is and is given to help the combatting of the cruel inclinations of the flesh. If there are some who have not seen themselves by such precious help, is it because they have been reading in bulk rather than in depth? Acquiring knowledge, but losing understanding? That is not the way, surely, to combat the deadly foe of the flesh, which instead of softening will harden, while at the same time appearing to be acting for the benefit and good of the faith which it professes.

Such were the chief priests, and the amazing thing is that those professors of faith with them, could not see the envy so blatantly apparent to one who can be classed as an "outsider" — namely Pilate!

Yes, Solomon, by experience could say:

"Wrath is cruel and anger is outrageous, but who is able to stand before envy."

What a wonderful thing that the wisdom of God can resist even this, and by circumstances show up the stealthy inroads of this trait, which otherwise would not be perceived. Perhaps this consideration of the suffering of Christ conveys a particular warning.

The envious may get away with it for a while, or may even succeed, to the suffering and detriment of whoever that envy is directed against, but how can envy be hidden for ever? How can it continually succeed, in its covert way, when such a trait if successful can only make such a victim even worse and more hard. So it will eventually reveal itself as that hard woman did in the presence of Solomon. She had so obscured her mind that she fully believed that to divide the babe with a sharp and glittering sword, would not only appear to be justice, but would unquestionably have the support of the judges of the matter!

As such circumstances are pondered, what carefulness is shown to be needed when surrounded by a situation of weakening and falling away from the Truth with which the Body has been affected in these last days.

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

1981

“O Lord, revive (preserve alive) thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.” (Habakkuk 3:2)

“And I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy (indignity offered to God)” (Rev. 17:3)

WILL THIS NEW YEAR see anything better? Will there be a revival that will bring about true reverence for God in the place of vain profession? Nations claiming to be Christian stockpile the most dreadful weapons. Nations that say they trust in God, devote themselves in seeking out ever more devastating devices. Man's inventive genius is turned to destruction, yet the claim of “Christendom” goes forth! The profession of serving Him who said “Turn the other cheek” rests upon the lips of the multitude, but by their works they deny Him.

In 1848 there was one who saw it all, and penned his protest in the best way he could:-

“To the sons of Abraham, engrafted on their good olive, do I look as the only means of a world's conversion. Who will persuade the Archbishop of Canterbury to descend into the Thames, or the Pope of Rome and his cardinals into the Tiber, that they may imitate Him, who, in His humility, was buried in the waters of Jordan? Who, or what, can reconcile the jarring and discordant elements of the present Protestant associations? Will any one say the Gospel will do this? I answer, have they not heard? and again, who hath believed our report? The apostolic (there is no other) Gospel has been sounded in the length and breadth of the land, and though many, comparatively, have heard, what multitudes neither hear nor will hear? Who will convert the more than one hundred million of Romanists now bound, body and soul, to their miserable superstition? How can the gentle voice of peace be heard amid the clash of swords that is now preparing in Western Europe? There is a spirit aboard that will rouse

to fierce conflict the nations of the earth — but it is not the spirit of faith — no, but the spirit of infidelity. God says to the nations, since you will not hearken nor believe, make experiment of your unbelief. That experiment will be made, and the consequence will be, the present associations, political and religious, of the Old World, will be like chaff before the wind. The extremities, feet of Nebuchadnezzars metallic image, seen in a dream, will now be smitten; and, as Daniel says, become as the chaff of the summer threshing floors. This will terminate the dreams of Protestants about a world's conversion."

At the time of writing the Pope has been visiting Germany, appealing for more contact between Catholics and Protestants. At an open-air mass in the North German town of Osnabruck, he said that he was sure one day all Christians would be united. Later, at an American airfield outside the cathedral city of Mainz, he spoke up for human rights and religious freedom.

Rhine Army soldiers had participated in building the stands at Osnabruck, which is a British garrison town. A helicopter was provided to accommodate the cameras that were in operation as the mass was taking place, televising, live, the great scene of one hundred and forty thousand gathered people listening to the Pope, who emphasised, "Above all I want to encourage you to seek and deepen contact with your Protestant fellow-Christians. . . ." "The ecumenical movement of recent decades has shown you how closely the Protestant Christians are linked to you in their anxieties and joys, how much you have in common with them. . . ."

There was no mention of Martin Luther, or the warfare that resulted from the schism at the time of the reformation. But the Pope did say, "We thank God with all our heart that the different religious groups in your area no longer confront each other filled with misunderstanding or even divided in fear." He urged Roman Catholics to approach Protestants "in all humility", to display their own faith and quietly encourage their fellow-Christians to "re-affirm and deepen their beliefs and religious forms direct towards Christ."

Later the Pope met leaders of the West German Evangelical Church, representing the largest body of Protestants, numerically about half the West German population. The very fact that Evangelical representatives participated in such an arrangement reveals their acknowledgement of the changing religious order of things and their acquiescence to it.

It is a far cry from those days when Martin Luther posted on the door of the Castle Church at Wittenburg a series of propositions for

debate, known as the Ninety-Five Theses, concluding with the suggestion that the real treasury of the Church is the Gospel. Pope Leo X eventually received a copy of what Luther had written, and did not like it. He was the pope who was reported to have said, "The papacy is ours. Let us enjoy it," for he was a gambler and a hunter who loved the chase. Power began to ebb from him, when Luther said that the infallibility of popes and councils should be displaced by upholding the infallibility of the Scriptures. Luther contended that the papacy was not the creation of God but of man, and therefore it lacked the authority it claimed, which resided solely in the Scriptures. So began the shattering and fragmentation of the religious order, which became many Churches or names of religion.

Today, those many names remain, distinctive in that sense, but not in belief. For now they agree to differ while at the same time an ecumenism gathers in strength. Thus is fulfilled the words of the prophecy concerning "a scarlet coloured beast, full of names." But at the same time these "Christian" nations and peoples employ themselves in even greater endeavour, to produce the most horrific weapons without sparing expense of their peoples, who as a consequence have their standard of living depressed correspondingly. Will the new year see anything better? Surely not while this state of things exists.

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, Orchard Park.
Alternate Week: Revelation Study.

Encouragement in the work here continues as we seek His overruling care and guidance.

We are grateful for the care and healing granted to those in illness and in need, in response to the supplications of many.

The eyes of the world continue to turn to the Middle East, with the fear of a spreading conflict interfering with the flow of oil. As the nations begin to assume their appointed positions, the return of the Lord Jesus appears nearer. Surely it is a time to look up and lift up our heads.

J.A.DeF.

“PENTRIP”, Black Rock, Portmadoc.

Breaking of Bread: Sundays, 11.30 a.m.
Bible Class: Mid-Week.

We have been privileged to behold in the last few weeks the great power of the Almighty Creator in the high tides, the rough seas, and strong winds and heavy rain. We realise more and more what is being preserved for us through the Word by the faithful of old; and those at the present time, by their courage and example in carrying on with the work of the Truth.

per D.L.

MANCHESTER: Rycroft Hall Annexe, Audenshaw, Manchester.

Sundays: Breaking of Bread: 11.30 a.m.
Bible Class: 7.30 p.m. in the ante room to large hall,
Wednesday evening.

Life in the Truth not only requires a walking according to the Royal Law but separation from those who fail to do this, this duty often painful in the required leaving of friends has had to be faced in the decision of the Ecclesia to withdraw from Bro. A. E. Iago who refused to accept the admonition of the Ecclesia. Emphasising that sound doctrine allows whatever witnesses are necessary (even if they be more than two or three) in establishing truth when dealing with an offender.

W.V.B.