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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"

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At the Table of the Lord

“What is man . . . ?”

HOW HELPFUL it is at times to stop and review what has happened to us and what it may mean or may teach us. This is especially appropriate as we come to the end of 1980 and enter a new year. Is it not true that we can easily get lost in the day to day struggles and so lose the larger picture, the greater perspective? Let us then stop for a few moments, Brethren and Sisters, and consider this last year. Each one may think of different events — blessings, trials, successes, failures, joy, sorrow, doubt, hope, fear, perplexity. Many situations, perhaps different for each one of us. However we need to recognize that they all have been arranged under God's controlling hand and that therefore, they *must* be good, right, and needful for us, much as they may not always have seemed so. Yet as we reflect upon these past twelve months do we [not marvel at God's mercy and care for us as His children? We have been taught, chastened, blessed, rebuked, rescued, and guided. Should it not cause us to stop and ask as did David:

“What is man, that thou art mindful of him?” (Psalm 8:4)

In these words David was contemplating the hope set before him as seen in the title of this Psalm, “To the victor upon *Gittith*” (the wine press, that finishing process which results in the joy of harvest). He was looking forward to the final ingathering of all God's people to bring joy to Him, and to those harvested as His own. We share the thoughts he pursued during the quiet hours.

“When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained” (verse 3)

and then he asks, “What is man . . . ?” Have we not each of us been awed by the beauty of the night sky? the glory of the moon, the myriad of stars, each a sun in its own right and in multitude uncountable? This great creation should make us stand still and reflect upon the One who made it and who said, “Let them be for signs” (Gen. 1:14). Signs surely of His power, of the absolute sureness of that purpose to be accomplished in His Son. A new heaven, the Son of righteousness and His bride — including all those of whom Daniel speaks, sharing in:

“ . . . the brightness of the firmament — and as the stars forever.” (Dan 12:3).

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Can we see a little more clearly why David exclaimed as he stopped whatever he was doing to meditate, to consider his position, to marvel, "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" Mindful we find, is used in both the old and new testaments, as calling to remembrance. How wonderful that the Almighty has man in constant remembrance; not just man generally, which is remarkable enough, but particularly is He mindful of His children. Indeed Jesus tells us in Luke 10:20:

"... rejoice, because your names are written in heaven."
Also, Jesus as the good shepherd:

"... calleth his own sheep *by name* and leadeth them out."
(John 10:3)

The prophets sent to His people conveyed the same message as we read in Isaiah 43:1:

"But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee *by thy name*: thou art mine."

Can we value this enough? — for the Father to *know* each of us by name, to write these names in His remembrance — it does indeed cause us to cry out in wonder and fear, with David, "What is man that thou art mindful of him . . . ?"

If we halt in our daily distractions and carefully look back, we see more clearly, more gratefully how the Father has worked with us as a body but also by name, as individuals for whom He is concerned. This fills us with awe and does it not make us more determined to respond with greater humbleness, more acceptably, pleasingly, and more quickly when He calls us by name. His infinite patience and great mercy, that most undeserved condescension helps to emphasize to us that whatever our circumstances may be, God knows and works with us through them; therefore they are never accidental occurrences but evidences of His ever present Fatherly care.

When we think along these lines, our minds go to Eccl. chapter 9, verse 11:

"I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; *but time and chance happeneth to them all.*"

Looking back over this past year, meditating on the bigger picture we can better realize that to those who are striving to be subject to

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the great God of heaven, time and chance does not rule in their circumstances, as is the case with most of this world, but rather that God has quietly and with inconceivable wisdom directed our lives according to His desires. How thoughtful and careful we must try to be, Brethren and Sisters. We must seek to become more perceptive, more sensitive to that divine hand. Let us then, for help to be so, look a little more closely at these words of the one to whom the Almighty gave great wisdom, words which can help us grow in spiritual strength.

“The race is not to the swift”

Naturally we think that the fastest runner should win the race, but let us remember Paul’s words in Heb. 12:1:

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

His was a life of enduring under, bearing all things to get the victory. He did it not with speed, but with patience, never going ahead quickly in His own way, but seeking God’s help, and waiting for guidance. His bearing under reminds us of David’s words again, Psa. 38, a psalm to bring to remembrance:

“... *I am ready to halt* and my sorrow is continually before me.” (verse 17)

To halt means to limp. One who limps cannot go swiftly and surely and naturally speaking he is handicapped. Yet this halting is needful for our spiritual running in that race for life. We are reminded of Jacob’s experience after he had “cleaved” to the angel all night. We read in Gen. 32:31 that Jacob:

“... halted upon his thigh.”

This was a constant reminder to him of his weakness and need to go slowly, to be subject, to seek for strength in his travels, from God, who promises:

“In that day, saith the Lord, will I assemble *her that halteth*, and I will gather her that is driven out and her that I have afflicted; and I will make *her that halted* a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and the Lord shall reign over them in mount Zion — even for ever.” (Mic. 4:6, 7)

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Surely for those seeking to be subject to their Father, as they run in that race for eternal life, there must be a recognition that victory is to those who can go slowly, patiently, haltingly, and with fear, not plunging ahead in their *own* judgment and assurance.

“ . . . Nor the battle to the strong . . . ”

The word strong used here is not the usual, but one also meaning a giant, a champion, mighty and valiant. These are good attributes and helpful, but not necessarily required to win the battle. Our minds go to Israel in the wilderness when God instructed Moses to send the twelve chosen men to explore the promised land and bring the report back to the people. They found the land to be rich and beautiful but having some difficulties to be overcome. Numbers 13:33 gives us their report:

“There we saw the giants (same word as strong) — and we were *in our own eyes as grasshoppers*, and so we were in *their* sight.”

Only Joshua and Caleb believed that the battle was not to the strong (giants). They said:

“Let us go up at once, and possess it: for we are well able to overcome it.” (verse 30)

What a great role faith must play in all our struggles to get the victory, for of ourselves we are “as grasshoppers”. Can we, as did Joshua and Caleb, put away our doubts, firmly believing that God is over-ruling, and knowing that in regard to circumstances which appear as “giants”:

“ . . . their defense is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not.” (Numbers 14:9)

David, likewise faced a giant, Goliath, and conquered him. The result was:

“ . . . when the Philistines saw their champion was dead, they fled.” (I Sam. 17:51)

Their champion (giant, strong) was overcome by David who “was but a youth” but whose strength was expressed in these words:

“Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; . . .”
(verses 45, 46)

Because of a simple and genuine faith, God intervened on David's behalf, and for Israel. No doubt as time passed and he recalled this experience, David would feel anew, "What is man that thou art mindful of him?"

"Neither yet bread to the wise"

Do we not find that in this world it is often the wise who appear to prosper, to obtain the "good things in life"? Yet we must remember that God, overseeing the lives of His people, provides for their needs. An example is found in I Kings 17 where in a time of famine Elijah (not accounted as wise by Ahab the king and other enemies of God) was fed by the ravens at the brook Cherith, v. 6. Though he feared as we often do, Elijah waited and trusted that His Father would provide, if he obeyed. How foolish to the world such trust seems, for it is contrary to its "wisdom". Yet Paul said, by the *Spirit's* wisdom:

"It is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, — where is the wise? — hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? — we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, — unto the Greeks foolishness. But unto them that are called, — Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men."

(I Cor. 1:19-25)

Christ crucified, dying because of His flesh nature, saying to all the world that God was right in demanding His death as one of Adam's seed. This is foolishness to those who look upon the Christ as a god with a nature pure and unable to sin. We are privileged to remember His life of sacrifice, His victory over His flesh and especially so this morning, in the bread and wine, giving strength and renewed resolution to follow Him. Let us keep in mind, Brethren and Sisters, that this is His provision helping us to be wise in spirit.

"Nor riches to men of understanding"

Understanding — the ability to discern and therefore to deal wisely or prudently. To those who are able to do this in the practical and temporal ways, riches often accumulate. By this kind of understanding many are able to take advantage of circumstances for their gain. Indeed, to stay ahead of today's economic calamities and other uncertainties, vast amounts of time and strength are consumed in the pursuit of inflation-proof use of money.

Let us then contrast what we know of Moses.

"By faith Moses — refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; *choosing* rather to suffer affliction with the people

of God, — esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for *he had respect* unto the *recompense* of the reward.” (Heb. 11:24-26)

Because Moses understood *God's* purpose and saw its end as a great reward, greater by far than the obvious advantages of Egypt, he forsook what men of worldly understanding surely would have seized. Due to Moses' faith and submission, God worked with him, strengthening him, overruling his circumstances, taking away the “time and chance” which normally happens to “them all”. If we can only grow in that understanding and belief which Moses *knew*, we shall be enlivened in having that “respect unto the recompense of the reward.” We will learn to regard our *temporal* future as being in God's hands, and will strive to be balanced in this, filling our lives with what must be first and what *only* is lasting.

“Nor favour to men of skill”

Favour, we find comes from a word meaning mercy or grace. The ultimate mercy we know is from our Father as we hope for eternal life in His kingdom when Jesus returns to judge. At that time we will not be measured by our skill in our work, by our ability to earn a living, by our intellect, or by how well we got on in the world, but rather by how much we have truly sought to know God, His word, His will, His faithfulness, and to conform in love, whatever great effort it requires. We read in Prov. 3, verses 1-4:

“My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: — Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: so shalt thou find *favour* and good understanding in the sight of God and man.”

It is only as His laws, can become written on our hearts, *inside*, becoming a measure of our understanding and desire, that we can hope for His favour, in trials now and with great joy when the Lord Jesus returns to judge the hearts.

How helpful then, to us are these words we have just considered, this wisdom given by God, to enhance our realization of this past years events as applied to ourselves. It has all been laid out by the hand of our Father working, and surely causing us to exclaim with more perception, wonder *and* gratitude — Who are *we*! Whole heartedly we ask, with David, “What is man that thou art mindful of him?”

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Is it not possible that by taking time in this contemplation now we may grow stronger in the spirit and determination so pleasing to God, so well expressed by His Son in the hour of great trial, but also in spirit throughout His life. "Not my will but thine be done."

J.A.DeF.



SELAH

“Value it, considering the End”

Psalm 82

THIS PSALM might be described as a “fellowship-psalm”, for in it the privilege of becoming and remaining “fellows” of the Almighty is simply explained. From an ordinary point of view it would seem impossible that man, a creature made of dust, could ever be a “fellow” or companion of God. Yet such is the gracious honour extended by a compassionate Creator. Of necessity such a fellowship must be righteous and holy, and to enter this divine fellowship these qualities must be manifest. All fellowships of men require a certain attainment in the particular branch of learning or activity for which each stands. The fellowship of artists will only have those who have attained to a certain standard in art. The same applies to fellowships of men of science, of letters, of music and every kind of learning. If the most coveted letters, F.R.S., are seen behind a man’s name it is known he must have achieved some eminence in learning, otherwise he would never have been accepted as a Fellow of the Royal Society. Why ever should it be thought that God is less careful than men? No fellowship of men could ever compare with that of the Creator. Man’s fellowships are fleeting and their attainments superficial. True they may make men more clever, more knowledgeable, but they never give to man any counsel how he should live or tell him why he lives and why he dies. All the much vaunted and naturally impressive discoveries are only blandishments when considered against the stern facts of life. The proudest “fellows” quickly pass. Death soon makes them her fellows, or guests, and —

“*Her guests are in the depths of hell*” (Prov. 9, v. 18)

And what a fellowship this is! —

“*A land of darkness, as darkness itself: and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness.*”

(Job 10, v. 12).

The fellowship of God is entirely different, for it is founded upon association with the glorious and ever-living God, as shown in the commencement of the Psalm:

“*God standeth in the congregation of the mighty (elohim), he judgeth among the gods (elohim)*” (verse 1)

So glorious is this fellowship that its members are styled gods — elohim, among whom God is pleased to judge. At first it might be

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thought that these *elohim* are the immortal messengers, but the psalm makes clear who these are:

“I have said, Ye are gods (elohim), and all of you sons of the most High.” (v. 6 orig.)

And the Lord Jesus applies the name *Gods* — *elohim* in the same way.

“He called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken.” (John 10, v. 35)

How honoured is *the* congregation, *the* fellowship of God, that each member may bear the name of God, *elohim*. This name speaks of all the spirit powers which are from God, and shine through His Word. As this word is received and appreciated, these powers change a man from glory to glory into the image of Christ, the Son of God. Such a one becomes an evidence of God’s strength being made perfect in weakness, with the added promise that in due time this weakness of nature shall give place to immortal strength and glory. And so as the pure and powerful Word of God is received, mortal man has the honour of becoming a fellow of the congregation of God, part of the *elohim*, those made strong by His Word, and can look forward beyond present weakness to the time when strength can be renewed, so that he shall “mount up with wings as eagles, and shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint.”

The foundation of true fellowship is the presence of God. All others are merely “fellowships” in name. To speak of this “fellowship” or that is unscriptural. There cannot be a Suffolk Street fellowship, a Temperance Hall fellowship, Berean fellowship, etc., which are all divided and all in fellowship with God. Those who have departed from the Truth no longer understand the basis of fellowship which is through the presence of God. With the Almighty and His Son present in the Body there can be fellowship first with Him and then one with another. To divide from a body and yet say that those remaining are brethren and fellows of God is as absurd as it is inconsistent, for if they are “fellows” then God must be there, and division from such a body must mean separation from God. There is another danger just as serious but perhaps more subtle:

“How long will ye judge unjustly and accept the persons of the wicked? Selah” (verse 2)

It is difficult for the human mind to appreciate the holiness of the great God, and to obey from the heart the command:

“Be ye holy, for I am holy” (I Pet. 1, v. 16)

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A command cannot be obeyed with love and appreciation unless the reason for it being given is understood. God is holy. Sin in any form is transgression of His law; in other words it is a denial of Him. It needs the whole of the law of Moses to teach us what sin is really like in the eyes of God — “exceeding sinful,” and to let us see the reasonableness of the divine sentence:

“The wages of sin is death.” (Rom. 6, v. 23)

Mortal man is slow to grasp these essentials. He readily becomes confused in judging individuals as they appear to him. A kindness to him will atone for much neglect of and disobedience to God. An injury will arouse indignation and anger, often sufficient in vehemence to consign a good friend to divine disfavour and eternal punishment. Oh, how inconsistent man is: and all of us by nature! —

“It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.”

And so the mind anxious to please God (and the Almighty is not interested in any other) realises that sentimentality and feeling must be removed from judgement and reliance placed fully and entirely upon His Word. How kind the Almighty appears when it is found that His Word deals with every circumstance and aspect of life, and there need be no doubtful judgement in any matter.

What is to be done with “persons of the wicked” who manifest themselves from time to time in the congregation. The divine question at the head of this section is a challenge which must be met:

“How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked Selah” (verse 2)

So it is unjust in the eyes of God to accept the persons of the wicked, to receive them into the congregation, in other words to fellowship them. For to offer such fellowship in salutation or any other way is to declare they are fellows of God, and so make the Almighty a fellow of sinners! The consequence is so dreadful that one hardly dare write the words. They seem so irreverent. Yet that is the simple result of failing to appreciate God’s holiness, through mistaken kindness and fallacious charity in dealing tardily and wrongly with those who by words or deeds deny God. *Selah*, says David. Value that, considering the end. God is truly in the congregation, but He cannot be if the wicked be allowed to remain. Just as Joshua found when Achan took of the accursed thing. Then the sin of this man caused the whole of Israel to be defiled in the eyes of God, and God left Israel until this wicked person was put away. What is the end, which is to be valued? Is it not to refrain from being presumptuous

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because it can be said that God is in our midst. Beware lest the wicked be received, which is so often so much desired by the flesh. If this is done, God will depart from the Body, even though in the past the members have enjoyed the title of God's, — elohim. And in the end?

“Ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes” (verse 7)

Yes, it is possible to become so great in the congregation as to be like princes, “men of renown”. But how vivid the record which describes the end of those “two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown”;

“And there came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense” (Num. 16, v. 35)

The warning given by David of the end for all who would receive the wicked must have been very sobering as a visit was made to the temple, and the two hundred and fifty broad plates covering the altar brought to mind this signal judgment of God.

But not many heeded David's Selah-warning and the whole congregation eventually perished. How few there are to-day claiming particular association with David understanding his true judgment, his Selah-call, declaring the mercy of God that these things should be valued as of God, considering the end.

W.V.B.



Love Righteousness — Hate Iniquity

HOW GREAT IS THE HELP, comfort, and peace of mind which the Word of Truth can bring in our every-day living. God knows we need direction in overcoming the temptations of our flesh. Our resistance to be not of the world, yet found in the world is constantly being put to the test. This is why the Word of God must be constantly relied on in order to help in putting down our flesh.

The words in John 17 verse 15 reveal this help as Jesus prays in regard to his disciples' struggles, as well as for our struggles today:

“I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.”

“Thy word is truth”. This is the only means by which there can be sanctification or being made holy. The only means of being made at one with God is through that Word which we know was made flesh in the Lord Jesus. Jesus in speaking these words provides for our comfort and peace of mind as He said, “. . . keep them from the evil” in the world. In essence do not allow the world or the flesh to get the upper hand but rather sanctify through Thy word. How necessary is the Word of Truth. How comforting and reassuring to understand these words of Jesus, who is the Word, and through whom only we can be truly sanctified.

Hebrews 1 verse 13 speaks to us of the relationship of the Lord Jesus to the purpose of God:

“But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?”

To none other than the Lord Jesus was this said. Why? Verse 9 tells us:

“Thou has loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.”

This was the position of the Lord Jesus above all others in the sight of God: because of Jesus' perfect love of righteousness and perfect hatred of iniquity.

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God was obviously pleased with the Lord Jesus. As these words speak to us we know they are coming in righteousness, to show us not only to love righteousness, but how we should hate iniquity. We know from God's Word what it is that God is to accomplish, and how it is to be brought about; and how this understanding can help and keep us aware in our daily living. We often find ourselves in potential conflict with those about us. The world exercises itself as flesh. Yet it is exactly at these times of testing that our flesh is prone to fight against the flesh with flesh to satisfy itself. Yet we are told to hate iniquity and love righteousness.

Jesus, in regard to the enemies He faced reveals what is necessary to overcome the flesh in Matthew 5 verses 39-48:

“But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.

And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you:

That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

These words speak of the righteousness that Jesus had. They also speak of the hatred of iniquity and how we can overcome through loving one's enemies thus doing that which is not natural to the flesh.

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Resist not the man of evil, but rather allow the spirit to overcome that evil. “. . . Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

We can look upon the world today and see many areas full of corruption. We view the flesh exercising itself to the fullest degree. But God allows it to go on as God will allow “his sun to rise on the evil and on the good” until His purpose is accomplished. How well Jesus recognized of what it was that God was speaking, knowing in God’s purpose all would be accomplished. God will bring about His vengeance. It is at this time also that the perfectness will be manifested to those who have desired the Hope held out.

Turning to Romans 12:14 we read, “Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.” We see perhaps the application of the spirit of what Jesus was speaking, particularly in relation to our every-day dealings, and what our comfort must be in striving to show righteousness. Reading in verse 17 through to verse 21:

“Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”

How much this reflects the spirit of what we are to be like — the spirit that Jesus applied in all His living. We must love righteousness and hate iniquity to the point that there is no rising up in iniquity, even though at times it might seemingly be justified. It is important to get the balance in doing this. How can we? We are told “provide things honest in the sight of all men.” Honesty is the important quality to put forth in all circumstances of testing. Isn’t this what Jesus did perfectly? He knew the hearts of those whom He confronted yet He used each circumstance to reveal the love of righteousness opposed to the love of iniquity.

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Looking to Proverbs where these words were first spoken, chapter 25 verses 21-22 we read:

“If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee.”

“Heap coals of fire upon his head”. This speaks of how we are to function and to look upon the circumstances of every-day living in our relation with those in the world. If there is submission to God’s Truth there can be these “heaping coals of fire” by which is revealed the love of righteousness and desire to move in accordance with the purpose of God whenever the circumstances call for it. Jesus also helps in John 16:33 in this relation as He speaks to the disciples and to us for comfort and peace of mind:

“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”

How great a help these words are to get the balance in the circumstances of our every-day living. We must keep these words in mind as we are tried and put to the test; “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world”. How did Jesus do it? By the Word of God, because He loved righteousness and hated iniquity, and so was “annointed with the oil of gladness above (His) fellows.”

If we truly value God’s Word we can be helped to overcome. Let us then apply the spirit of the Lord Jesus in the circumstances and trials which we face, so that we can truly have peace of mind — help to overcome by truly loving righteousness and truly hating iniquity.

M.C.S.



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

“Thus saith the Lord God; because the enemy hath said against you, aha, even the ancient high places are our’s in possession. Therefore prophecy and say, thus saith the Lord God; because they have made you desolate, and swallowed you up on every side, that ye might be a possession unto the residue of the nations, and ye are taken up in the lips of talkers, and are an infamy of the people Therefore thus saith the Lord God; surely in the fire of my jealousy have I spoken against the residue of the nations, and against all Idumea, which have appointed my land unto their possession with the joy of all their heart, with despiteful minds, to cast it out for a prey.”

(Ezekiel 36:2-5)

THE FACT THAT THE ABOVE WORDS are recorded, and preserved even to these last days is sufficient indication of the divine will and intention towards the “problem” of Jerusalem. “Thus saith the Lord God; Surely in the fire of my jealousy have I spoken *against* the residue of the nations, and against all Idumea”

When Britain left its mandate in 1948 and Israel proclaimed itself to be a sovereign State, the Arab nations made their attack on a people left almost to their own resources. The Jordanian army had British Officers, and was well equipped with British armaments. Syria, Lebanon and Egypt who were not so well led, had the advantage of numbers. Nevertheless, they did not prevail, and Israel at the time of armistice following the 1948-9 War of Independence had more territory than had been proposed in November 1947 by the United Nations as being an appropriate demarkation. Significantly that proposal had been rejected by the Arabs as being too extensive. The frontier thereafter remained the same for the next eighteen years, with the exception of the Sinai Campaign of 1956 when Israel overran all the Sinai Peninsula in the October of that year, withdrawing her forces five months later. During those eighteen years Jerusalem was a divided city, the old sector being securely sealed from the modern suburbs by the Jordanian forces.

But the six day war of the 5th to 11th of June 1967 changed the situation radically. The territory west of the Jordan River which had been under the control of the King of Jordan was taken by Israel; as a consequence the Old City fell, Jerusalem became united, and the old barriers were broken away.

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A further attempt was made by the Arabs to bring about a reverse, in the Yom Kippur War of 1973. Great tank battles took place on a scale similar to the great battles of the Second World War. The United Nations then intervened, and Israel conceded to draw back into the Sinai. Subsequently the Suez Canal was opened again after years of deadlock with Egypt and Israeli forces opposing each other on the respective western and eastern shores of that waterway.

Since 1973 Egypt has come round to the view that it is more profitable to keep the Suez Canal open, than to have endless conflict with Israel over the barren wastes of Sinai. So Israel has become more established in those areas that are important to her, and particularly so in Jerusalem.

But the divine prophecy is absolutely accurate. Concerning those territories which did not belong to Jordan, but which were grabbed by Jordan after Britain relinquished the mandate; the cry is still raised by the enemy that “the ancient high places are ours. . . .”

The Arabs have a fanatical regard for the Dome of the Rock and the Aqsa mosque, for the Muslims believe that it was from the Rock that Muhammad ascended to heaven. Hence after Mecca and Medina Jerusalem is regarded by the Arabs as the third holy place of Islam.

The Arab emphasis tends to overshadow the basic significance of the rocky platform in its high position overlooking the Old City. This was the place of the temple which Solomon built, and later the place where the temple of Herod was raised up in the endeavour to reconstruct it. The place also where Jesus was undoubtedly taken in infancy, and which He visited in boyhood, and where He was seen up to the very last week before His death upon the cross.

Of course “Christendom” wants a say in Jerusalem as well as the Arabs, and does have it so in its way, even though Jerusalem is now wholly Jewish. All around the Dome of the Rock are the Armenian, Orthodox, Lutheran or Roman Churches. To list a few, these are the Church of St. Anne, the Church of the Flagellation, the Church of St. Mark, the Cathedral of St. James, the Latin Patriarchate, the Church of St. Peter in Gallicantu. Such buildings are looked upon as being very important to “Christendom”, even as the Moslem world regards the Dome of the Rock and its adjoining Aqsa Mosque in the same light.

But the divine prophecy has a message:-

“ . . . Thus saith the Lord God . . . to the mountains, and to the hills (of Israel), to the rivers, and to the valleys . . . because ye have borne the shame of the nations:

Therefore thus saith the Lord God; I have lifted up mine hand, surely the nations that are about you, they shall bear their shame." (Ezekiel 36:5-7)

At the time of writing, the one-time controller of the Old City, as leader of Jordan, has been speaking forcibly on the subject of Jerusalem. He has been virtually proclaiming the right to speak on behalf of the people of Palestine, overlooking the fact that Jordan never had a right in Palestine, and during the eighteen years of its occupation of the West Bank, had only obtained such a position by military force.

During the proceedings of a special Arab Conference, he said that Jerusalem had now been settled by ninety thousand Jews, brought there by Israel's government for the express purpose of changing the city. "I must tell you", he said, "of the bitter experiences befalling Jerusalem which today is witnessing a new Zionist offensive seeking to remove its Islamic nature and character. The ninety thousand Jews impose a raw reality in this sacred city . . . their archaeological excavations endanger the Aqsa Mosque itself."

He went on to say that he was appealing to the heads of the Islamic nations for the people of Jerusalem and Palestine. They expected the Moslem countries of the world to respond, as the Islamic heroes of old had responded. There would be no peace in the Middle East as long as Israel occupied Palestine and Jerusalem. At the end of his speech, he spoke of restoring the land of Palestine to the people of Palestine "under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, their sole legitimate representatives."

Though this last remark appeared to be an acknowledgement that Jordan has no entitlement to a control in Palestine, the fact that the role of spokesman for Palestine was assumed, seemed to indicate more than an interest in the affairs of Arabs living in Israel's territories. Especially as the P.L.O. leader had already spoken to the delegates to this Conference held in Taif. When it suited Jordan's king some years ago, he sent armour and troops with great violence against Palestinians living in his territories on the East Bank of the Jordan, and forced them to flee to the Lebanon.

Of course Israel is building itself up, which it is entitled to do, in the territories that came into its possession in the war of 1967. Officially and unofficially Jewish settlements are proliferating on the West Bank. The Gush Emunim have been very active in an unofficial way, having the support of Israel's Agricultural Minister. The

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official government finds the plans of this religious sect an embarrassment to their diplomacy of trying to effect reconciliation with the Arabs by lessening Jewish activities on the West Bank. The activities of the Gush Emunim were again highlighted when about three hundred belonging to this sect began a building programme on a rocky hill six miles north-west of Jerusalem, living on the site in tents meanwhile. Israel's Prime Minister offered them a site for an alternative settlement on another hill nearby. This they rejected by saying that unlike the position they were seeking to establish on state-owned land, the alternative would be on land claimed by Arab farmers.

There are hundreds of Gush Emunim supporters who are now claiming that a maximum number of Jewish settlements should be set up, and these have been going to the disputed site to help the settlement and prevent eviction. The government at the time of writing is apparently split on the issue. Israel's Deputy Prime Minister has appealed against the setting up of three new settlements on the West Bank of the Jordan (as approved by the Cabinet). But the parliamentary settlement committee has rejected his request. He maintains that three new proposed settlements are not necessary for Israel's defence and establishment in the face of a possible attack from Jordan and Syria, with Iraqi support.

Israel's Agricultural Minister thinks otherwise, and having been a successful general of Israel's armed forces is probably right in wanting such sites in the more densely populated Arab areas of Israel's territories.

Here then, is a situation, that is of significance as a sign in these last days. The continuing clash of intent between Arab and Jew fulfills the ancient prophecy "... the enemy hath said against you, Aha, even the ancient high places are our's in possession." This heralds the final, divine, solution, "... surely in the fire of my jealousy have I spoken against the residue of the nations..."

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 and Orchard Park. Alternate Week: Revelation Study.

Indeed it is a time of shaking, indicative of the last days before the coming of the Lord Jesus. May we be granted the mercy and strength to be permitted among those who cannot be shaken and so hope to remain.

Shortly a new president is to be inaugurated in the U.S. raising hopes that the many problems and perplexities facing this country and the world may be eased. While the change may bring some relief, we recognize that the only sure solution is the coming of the Lord Jesus to rule this earth in justice and righteousness in the Kingdom of God.

J.A.DeF.

“PENTRIP”, Black Rock, Portmadoc.

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

When this news is in print spring will be at the door. We know that with it will come warmth and growth and beauty, an earnest of those good things which are to come.

How wonderful is this evidence of the truth in which we hope.

per D.L.

MANCHESTER: Ryecroft 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.

It is a great blessing to have the truth and to know what is right so that we might walk in the way pleasing to Him. To have the light of His countenance shining upon us in this time of great darkness prophesied by Isaiah:-

“Darkness shall cover the earth and gross darkness the people.”

The nations are deprived of this and consequently there is “perplexity” — a word implying that there is no way out from present troubles either nationally or internationally, and apart from His coming the outlook would be gloomy indeed. Only by the return of Him who is “the light of the world” can there be any relief and peace.

W.V.B.