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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

“Thou—Hast led forth the people”

WHAT A WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE to have lived in the time of Moses, to have seen the hand of God working so visibly on behalf of His people. How uplifting to witness the effect of God’s great power against Pharaoh, bringing deliverance for Israel from the bondage which was indeed “with rigour”. We have read of these mighty works many times, and yet each time, with discernment, we may be more deeply touched. For there is more here than God’s vast strength that impresses us; we see too His great mercy, His long suffering toward Israel who at times murmured, doubted, and rebelled. Yet He did not forsake them even though on several occasions Moses earnestly entreated that He should not do away with His people for their perverseness lest His holy name be discredited in the eyes of the nations.

Shall we then, Brethren and Sisters, try to enter into the minds of Moses, of Aaron, and of our brethren in the wilderness as they journeyed under the shadow of the cloud and the light of the fire, which daily confirmed that God’s presence was with them. Those brethren of old who perceived His mercy in their deliverance would rejoice and strive to respond by seeking to please and honor Him through obedience. If we can today, in a measure sense the reality of their experiences we too can be fortified in spirit, in willingness, and resolve to curb the flesh from expressing itself through complaining, looking back, even to accusing God of forsaking in time of trial.

Immediately after the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea with the destruction of Pharaoh and his army, Moses and the children of Israel sang the song of praise that is preserved for us in Exodus 15, exposing their minds and spirits for our example.

“Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: — the Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation; He is my God and I will prepare him an habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt him.”
verse 2.

What an exhortation to us as we struggle, sometimes doubting, faltering! We find the word song is also used as psalm, as seen in the gracious words of David. Are we able to lift up our minds to be like

that of our brother David expressed in these “pruned songs”—carefully chosen words, never meaningless, all superfluity cut out, trimmed away to better give glory to God. Was this the intent of Moses and Israel after their wondrous experiences at the Red Sea? “The Lord is my strength and song — he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation.” Do these words strengthen *our* desire? Are we not inspired to prepare Him an habitation, a dwelling place where He might be pleased to abide? What *is* the dwelling place which our brethren desired to make ready and in which work we too are to be occupied? Paul helps as he speaks of this:

“Now therefore ye are — of *the household* of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for an *habitation of God* through the Spirit.” Eph. 2:19–22.

As our Father looks into our hearts, is He pleased to dwell there because it is circumcised, the flesh in the process of being cut off, and only then a suitable habitation for Him? This was the striving and desire of our faithful brethren in Israel as they perceived their miraculous deliverance from bondage and oppression. We have read of their rejoicing.

“Thou in thy mercy hast *led forth* the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation.” Ex. 15:13.

His people had seen the Almighty’s power, they had feared it and yet rejoiced in that He had used it on their behalf to lead them forth. These words, led forth, also mean to guide, to govern. God obviously *did* guide them and He does today for those who accept His governing and rejoice in His mercy. With this divine hand leading, our brethren *could not* go the wrong way, for the cloud or fire was always before them, demonstrating, “This is the way.” While today God’s pillar is not visible, He does by His counsel, by His wise intervention, continue to say, “This is the way” if we are keyed to hear.

“Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel”

David was ever careful to be aware of God’s leading forth and expressed his thanksgiving in his pruned songs or psalms. Psalm 73, a song of Asaph, the one who gathers, tells us of his conviction.

“ — I am continuously with thee: thou hast holden me by thy right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.” verses 23, 24.

He *will* gather those who heed this counsel and will reveal the glory of His kingdom. Here was David's sustaining expectation and it is the hope of all who are seeking God's right hand. We remember The words in the title of Psalm 5, "To the one who overcomes through being *led*, a pruned song of David." Only by willingness and a waiting to be led can there be a walking in God's way and a forsaking of our own ways — which we know are paths contrary to peace. David's words continue, revealing his awareness of the importance of the Lord God's counsel.

"But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple. *Lead* me, O Lord, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face." verses 7, 8.

It is only in His word that this straight way can be found, for our own inclinations are apt to be crooked, perverted by the flesh and not right or "fit" as the word straight means. Let us then with David's help, join Moses and our brethren in these carefully chosen, well thought out words of their song of deliverance. "Thou in thy mercy *hast* led forth thy people — thou *hast* guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation." In considering more carefully the implications of this divine guidance, we discover that the word is also used as feeding, carrying, leading gently. This leads our minds to the shepherd who, loving his sheep, leads them, guards them from harm, with his life if necessary, carries them when they are weak. He is concerned only for their welfare. And so, the Psalmist's words again help, as he reflected upon the work of *the* Shepherd:

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth (guideth) me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his names' sake." Psa. 23:1-3.

Do we not almost hear Moses and grateful Israel expressing these same thoughts as they too reflected upon God's mercy? We have, each one and collectively, experienced our Father's loving hand leading, protecting, feeding, and carrying us. Will we remember, can we strive to keep hold of this so that we can carry on in extreme trial and feel with trust. "I shall not want — for He is my shepherd."

"This is the bread which the Lord hath given"

Did Israel lack as they journeyed through that lonely and barren wilderness? When hunger came, God provided the gift of the manna, the bread from heaven, and said:

“This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat.”
Ex. 16:15.

Each day for six days it was there, and on the sixth day there was enough for the seventh, their day of rest. Even with such a marvellous provision, Israel murmured, for they became tired of it. Nevertheless, there it was, fresh and unfailing each morning, His provision, “the bread which the Lord hath given.” It speaks of more, of *the* bread from God, His Son, and also His word which sustains those struggling in their journey through this worldly wilderness. Yet how easily and naturally we too can fall into the way of murmuring, wanting something different, more titillating to our taste, more desirable to our fleshly senses, something less tedious, less difficult. So let us be alert to this innate tendency and remember with awe and gratitude, “this is the bread which the Lord hath given,” His Son, His Word.

In the wilderness, as God knew, our brethren had further needs — water — without which life would soon cease. He granted this in a most meaningful way.

“Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb: and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink.” Ex. 17:6.

All this bounty was given in spite of murmuring and distrust. Without doubt, God in mercy did lead forth His people, and more too. He revealed His purpose to be accomplished in His Messiah, the Saviour foreshadowed in the manna, the water, and also the rock smitten. As a constant reminder of that love, Israel was told:

“Fill an omer of it (manna) to be kept for your generations; that they may see the bread wherewith I have fed them in the wilderness — and Moses said to Aaron, Take a pot and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before the Lord, to be kept for your generations.” Ex. 16:32, 33.

Just where was this pot to be placed? In Hebrews, chapter 9, the apostle Paul speaks of the most holy place:

“ — which had — the ark of the covenant overlaid — with gold, wherein was the *golden pot that had manna* and Aaron’s rod that budded and the tables of the covenant, and over it the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy seat;” verses 4, 5.

Of what great import then was the manna in God's eyes, that He should command that it be placed in the ark as a memorial. Moses was told:

“ — that they may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness, — ”

All Israel yet to come would be made aware that the manna was there, safely kept, a reminder of God's unfailing care for their life.

Every possible need was known and filled for Yahweh's children. Food — water — health — guidance — protection. All this and yet we are shown still another aspect of His care. Israel was helped to fight their enemies. In the battle against mighty Amalek, Moses, at God's direction stood on the top of a hill with the rod of God in his hand. As long as he held up his hands, Israel prevailed over the enemy, but when he tired and his arms weakened and fell, then Amalek gained in the battle. (Exodus 17) Can we imagine Moses' anguish as he felt his arms trembling, about to fall? How he would struggle to push them up, but inevitably strength failed again, allowing Amalek to gain. What was to be done? God's provision came through Aaron and Hur who:

“ — took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.” Ex. 17:12.

How relieved and grateful Moses and Israel would be for the support and strength of the brethren. Moses would be helped also to discern, “I can't do it alone.” Our Father does give us those who can come along side to help and support in all the works and trials that we are asked to accept and do. Are we not often aware of our own weaknesses, our great need for a “staying up” and how merciful is our God to provide faithful and willing helpers, “to lift up the hands that hang down the feeble knees.” Heb. 12:12. Thinking of this blessing enables us to see how the whole house, by these means, may become more suitable for His habitation. The whole of Israel benefitted by this, learned even of their strong leader's needs, witnessed the willing and able help given, so a great foe was overcome in battle and glory was given to God.

On another occasion and as a further strengthening for His children, God appeared upon Mount Sinai, filling them with fear, as they

heard His voice, yet granting to them great blessing. He promised this people:

“Ye have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; — and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation—”
Ex. 19:4, 5.

As He brought them out of Egypt “on eagles’ wings” it was no ordinary coming forth, but a heart touching experience, a wondrous fatherly support, a taking to Himself in love, of a people for His name.

To God’s words, “if thou wilt obey —”, the answer of Israel was:

“All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.” verse 8.

A few did, — most failed and consequently perished without seeing their inheritance because of their unbelief, which became evident in their complaining and refusing to obey.

We are given the opportunity, Brethren and Sisters, to profit from the mistakes of the children of Israel. Are we not moved by the wonder that the mercy of God is extended again and again and that through every circumstance He will lead forth the people *He has redeemed* to bring them to His holy habitation? Can we discern why it is recorded concerning a time yet to come, that the faithful before the throne of God — those who during their probation joined in Moses’ song —

“ — sung as it were a new song before the throne — and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty four thousand *which were redeemed from the earth.*” Rev. 14:3.

This hope is ours, to be counted among His redeemed, but only if we can see and appreciate God’s loving care in the eagles’ wings of His Spirit, to bare us unto Himself. With that perception growing, we can resolve with sturdy hope in our hearts, “*All that the Lord hath spoken will we do.*”

J.A.DeF.

The Spirit of God dwelling within a person.

A NUMBER OF EVANGELICAL SECTS used to make great claims of possessing the Holy Spirit. The evidence (if it could be so-called) was the ability to speak in unknown tongues. This took the form of a jumble of sounds, which was supposed to be interpreted by a member present. In the performance there was much noise which was supposed to have a definite meaning. Of this there was no proof either directly or inferentially.

At the time those in the Truth rejected the claim, and were careful with those coming to the Truth that the prevalent and wide spread notion was not held in any way. Looking back it seems that the eagerness to reject the claim of possessing the Holy Spirit failed to discover the Truth in all its beauty and simplicity; of how the Holy Spirit was essential to a believer for reasons we will endeavour to explain. The Apostle Paul clearly states that believers in the Truth are the "temple of the Holy Spirit".

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *which is in you*, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (1 Cor. 6:19)

Words could not be clearer to show that believers must have the Spirit. Indeed, if they have not the Spirit the Apostle says "they are none of his".

In the past there has been the attempt to show there is a difference between the Spirit and the Holy Spirit. A little thought will show this is unreasonable. Would anyone say that the Spirit was (or is) at any time not holy? Of course not. It is remarkable that in the Old Testament there is only one reference to the "Holy Spirit". Meditation on this will be found to be helpful. The brethren in the time before Christ were absolutely familiar with the Holy Spirit, its great power and sublime teaching. They were aware that they owed their lives to the Holy Spirit. It was by this power that the waters of the Red Sea were divided, allowing Israel to escape from the bondage and cruel slavery of Egypt. No event could be more demonstrative of God's power in His Spirit. As the numerous host of Israel were hemmed in between the chariots of Egypt and the Red Sea the position seemed hopeless. The simple cry was heard in this extremity, "Stand still and see the salvation of God". This divine message has come down the centuries and every Jew we see today is a remarkable witness to its truth. For had there not been the divine intervention at the Red Sea, no Jew would have been saved; and there would not have been a Jew in the world today.

It has been supposed that possession of the Holy Spirit would enable miracles to be performed such as healing and raising of the dead. This is not so. It depends in what degree the Holy Spirit is possessed. We have already seen from the words of the Apostle Paul that believers do have the Holy Spirit but seldom in such measure as would enable them to do miracles. Let us face the issue by putting to ourselves this question —

“Do you have the Holy Spirit?”

If we say “no”, being anxious to avoid placing ourselves in the category of Apostles, we have the awkward conclusion that then we are “none of his”. Alternatively if we say “yes” without any explanation we would give an entirely wrong impression. This is why an explanation is necessary. Every believer must have the Spirit. The Apostle underlines this —

“For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” (Romans 8:15-16)

Let us pause and meditate on these mighty words. Not only by the Spirit dwelling within a believer are they declared to be children of the Eternal Spirit, but an experience which every believer must have, that “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” This is not easy to describe, but there is no doubt when it is felt. Care is needed lest we be caught up in the nonsensical notions of the so-called evangelists. To describe accurately such an experience is almost impossible. The task is like trying to tell a blind man what light is like.

At least it is clear from what the Apostle says that there is an accord (this may not be the best word to use) known by the believer between himself and *the Spirit* which makes him feel as well as know that the unity of the Spirit is a precious possession. This does not mean that such a one is free from the insidious temptations of the flesh, is free from sin. Indeed no! He is perhaps more aware of his own weakness and sinful tendencies than those who have not fully experienced the enveloping power of the Spirit. The example of the Apostle Paul will help. Although so fully devoted to serving Christ he confessed:

“For that which I do I allow not; for what I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that I do.” (Romans 7:15)

To make the matter quite clear that the Holy Spirit was possessed by the believers at the time of the Apostle Paul in a certain degree, and not always absolutely, let us look at the divine record:

“And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews. — — —

Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.

Wherefore, brethren, look ye out seven men of honest report, and full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus and Nicanor and Timon and Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch:

Whom they set before the Apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.”

This is seen as the means of imparting the Holy Spirit to a brother deemed worthy as in the case of Timothy to whom Paul wrote saying:

“Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, *which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.*”

Are we not shown that those who had the Holy Spirit were given a further measure by the Apostle laying his hands on them? A further measure for a particular work required by the Spirit.

In conclusion we see that all true believers have the Spirit — which must be holy — but only in a limited degree. This enables them to rejoice in the Spirit, and feel the power and beauty of its teaching, uniting them to all the worthies of old.

W.V.B.



Make haste to help me

OF CRITICAL IMPORTANCE IN LIVING the Truth is the constant struggle there is to control the power of the flesh. We know a birth and growth in God's Truth begins this warfare, and how difficult we find this battle to be. In the circumstances which confront us each day, we find ourselves in the same condemnation as Jesus spoke of, "... the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." The flesh *IS* weak — it desires to take the path of least resistance, and is strong to pull down the desires of the spirit — allowing self to govern rather than being governed by the spirit.

How well Paul has put this into words:

"For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin." (Romans 7:14)

This is the law of sin and death.

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.

Now then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

For I know that in me (that is in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:
But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." (verses 15-23)

Paul depicts here the frailty the flesh — its weakness which pulls down what the spirit would have us do.

In contemplation of this, Paul says:

“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

These words offer a perception of what it is and how it is this warfare can be carried out. “O wretched man . . .” Paul recognized he was flesh. “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Recognizing and questioning that deliverance would be sought after, that deliverance must be something looked for.

“I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God: but with the flesh the law of sin.” (verse 25)

How meaningful this is as Paul presents to us the understanding, and the place in which we find ourselves in the sight of God, also recognizing the place of the Lord Jesus, and the need to serve God first and foremost in attempting to keep in control of the things of the flesh.

This similar thought is brought out in Psalm 107, where David speaks of the frailty of the flesh and the mercy of God. We see David remembering what man is like, and that God in working with man has seen him be led away by flesh; but, if there is a recognition of it —

“O wretched man that I am” . . . then there can be mercy and forgiveness.

“Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses.”

Psalm 107:6

As there was falling away, as there was failure, and recognizing the evil of it, if there could be a crying to God, help could be sought and deliverance could be granted.

“Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.”

Psalm 107:8

Isn't this, too, what Paul was saying in Romans 7:24

“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death.”

Let us recognize the ultimate goodness of God and the need to praise Him for His goodness; recognizing that God works with His children, and as He works, He desires to see the spirit override the things of the flesh. He desires His people to be spiritually minded, and then, only can there be life and peace.

David also tells us in Psalm 38:

“Forsake me not, O Lord; O my God, be not far from me.
Make haste to help me, O Lord my salvation.” (verses 21–22)

Make haste. This is the recognition of what there must be before God’s help comes, the recognition by His children of their failure and their need to look to God as the only means of deliverance. This was David’s mind, as the title of Psalm 38 tells us. “A Psalm of David, to bring to remembrance”. To remember what God is, and what He does provide through the power of the spirit. What is required? Isn’t it the need for God’s closeness, and in recognizing the desire for that closeness, a crying out, an urgency revealed, and a trust in the salvation God holds out? In David’s writing in the Psalms this theme occurs time and time again.

“But be not thou far from me, O Lord: O my strength, haste thee to help me.” Psalm 22:19

“Be not far from me . . .” Is not this the closeness which God desires to see in His children? Wasn’t this the same understanding that David recognized in Psalm 107? When they cried, He was close. It was only the frailty of man to question how close He is. If there can be the crying out, we find how really close He is:

“For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.” Psalm 40:12

Similar to Paul — “O wretched man that I am”? and verse 13:

“Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me: O Lord, make haste to help me.” Psalm 40:13

He is pleased when He sees the mind of spirit overcoming the flesh. How is it made known? Wasn’t it as we read in verse 12:

“. . . my heart faileth me.”

This is what the flesh is like — David recognized how the flesh is evil, and he must come close to God, to seek His help and deliverance. Also Psalm 70:

“Make haste, O God, to deliver me: make haste to help me, O Lord. . . .

But I am poor and needy; make haste unto me, O God: thou art my help and my deliverer; O Lord, make no tarrying.” (verses 1 and 5)

Again, the poor and neediness is brought out — a contrite heart revealed. David remembering how in every circumstance God had

delivered. How much help could be provided as they turned to God. Perhaps one other Psalm summarizes the same understanding:

“Lord, I cry unto thee: make haste unto me: give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee.

Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.”

Psalm 141:1, 2

How well David recognized the need to cry to God, to reveal that prayer is as incense, a sweet odor ascending, desiring God to notice. That is the sweet smell God looks for as the spirit overcomes the flesh. That cry, as in Psalm 107, is important. Could we say then if there were no crying, there would be no deliverance? Crying is important, putting into words the recognition that only God can deliver and strengthen. It must be as the Lord Jesus who did cry three times if it were possible that the cup would be removed; but each time, not what Jesus willed but what God willed. We need to look to God for strengthening of the spirit, so that there can be a successful warfare against the flesh. Hope enters into all this for only as there is hope, can there be incentive to cry for help.

In II Cor. 12, Paul speaks with recognition — again fortifying his thoughts and the aspects that he recognized his flesh was constantly being governed by the law of sin:

“And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (verses 7-10)

All through his life, and our life, there is a warring between the flesh and the spirit. How much we need to recognize in all our circumstances this frailty when we are putting down the flesh — then we can be strong and can expect the help God provides.

Returning to Psalm 107:43 we read:

“Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord.”

Observe what things? The crying, the deliverance expected. It isn't that God can be mocked by repeated failures, but rather that He is close and understands the warfare. He looks for the crying, and when there is a crying, the warfare is alive.

“Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!”

How can we do this — remember God's goodness towards us. Remembering how He has worked with His children of old, and that the warfare is the wretchedness of the flesh being put down by the goodness of the spirit. Is it any wonder that David says:

“O Give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.” Psalm 107:1

M.C.S.



Hezekiah and the cleansing

“Then they went in to Hezekiah the king, and said, We have cleansed all the house of the Lord, and the altar of burnt offering, with all the vessels thereof, and the shewbread table, with all the vessels thereof.” (2 Chron. 29:18)

So was put right the wrong that Ahaz the father of Hezekiah had committed against the House of God, which is described in the following:

“And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors of the house of the Lord, and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem.” (2 Chron. 28:24)

Hezekiah brought in a time of dedication and building up. With better leadership there was more response. Hence the following words:

“Then Hezekiah answered and said, Now ye have consecrated yourselves unto the Lord, come near and bring sacrifices and thank offerings into the house of the Lord. And the congregation brought in sacrifices and thank offerings; and as many as were of a free heart burnt offerings.” (2 Chron. 29:31)

It was a great response, so much so, there were not enough priests to handle the work. As a result, an apparent deviation from accepted practice took place. The accepted practice is shown in the following:

“Therefore thou and thy sons with thee shall keep your priest’s office for everything of the altar, and within the veil; and ye shall serve: I have given your priest’s office unto you as a service of gift: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.”

“But the Levites shall do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they shall bear their iniquity: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they have no inheritance.”

(Numbers 18:7 & 23)

So it is evident that the law given to Moses instructed that the priests the sons of Aaron were appointed to all the work of the altar. But the Levites, of the tribe of Levi, were to serve in the lesser capacity of bearing the burdens of the tabernacle, as for example when the tent and its furniture was moved, as they went on their journeys. They would see to such things as bringing fuel for the altar fire, and the general upkeep and tidiness of the place where the tabernacle stood.

The priests office of course, was the greater office, in their attention to the altar and the sacrifices. But this time of Hezekiah's cleansing shows something of the spirit of the truth, which reveals that circumstances are allowed to be taken into consideration.

“But the priests were too few, so that they could not flay all the burnt offerings: wherefore their brethren the Levites did help them, till the work was ended, and until the other priests had sanctified themselves: for the Levites were more upright in heart to sanctify themselves than the priests. And also the burnt offerings were in abundance, with the fat of the peace offerings, and the drink offerings for every burnt offering. So the service of the house of the Lord was set in order.”

(2 Chron. 29:34-35)

Now if someone had risen up in the congregation at that time and had said to Hezekiah and those with him, “You are infringing the commandment, for the law has specifically stated that it is the priests who must do the work of the altar”, would that challenge have appeared to be right? Would it have looked as though such were courageously standing for a principle? And yet the spirit's message through this part of the word of God, shows it would not. “So” (by the means adopted at that time) “the service of the house of the Lord was set in order.” Does this not invite the mind to consider what the Spirit is showing? Which was more important, keeping to the letter in insisting that only the priests should and could, deal with the offerings (even though some of them were not even prepared for such work)? Or that Levites should be brought in so that order and an expeditious decency might prevail?

The Spirit surely invites in this part of the record, preserved for admonition and instruction, to consider that the spirit of an occasion can elevate above a rigid tenet keeping. In fact, if the Levites had not been brought in at the time of Hezekiah, the work would have been disastrously slow. The priests available, (and it is to be noted some were not available by neglect and omission) would have been overburdened; the spirit of the occasion would have been lost in their

weariness and fatigue, and therefore what was done with joy and enthusiasm by the people, in their abundant giving of sacrifice, would have been blighted by the inglorious spectacle of a jaded priesthood, working like automatons at their task.

But human nature is such, that it can insist upon such impractical things, in upholding its own pride in insisting upon the letter of the law, irrespective of the mockery such insistence would make of the spirit of an occasion.

What happened at the time of Hezekiah was a sudden thing. Surely this was another circumstance that lent justification for the deviation from the letter. It is recorded:

“And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people: for the thing was done suddenly.”

(2 Chron. 29:36)

It cannot be said that the people ought to have waited until the other priests had sanctified themselves, so that there was no infringing of the letter. Suppose some had said at that time, they ought to have waited, or they must wait. Would it have been in keeping with the Spirit, even though appearing to be right? There can be no doubt about the answer to this question for this verse 36 says, “God had prepared the people” in this sudden thing. If God had prepared them and so therefore was working with them, any mind that had suggested at that time that there must be delay, so that the command concerning the work of the priests be not infringed, who had spoken vehemently about it, and against it, would, as indicated from this record preserved to instruct, have been going against the Spirit.

What then is shown in the record concerning Hezekiah and the cleansing? Is it not the instruction of the Spirit, to guide as to how attitudes should be as circumstances arise.



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

“And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, neither shall the beast of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely and none shall make them afraid.” (Exekiel 34:28)

THE ABOVE WORDS yet relate to the future, but some remarkable things keep happening in Israel, which brings the focus of world attention on that land.

There was the occasion two months ago of the amazing air strike by the Israeli Air-force against the Iraqi nuclear plant which was nearing completion near Baghdad with French technical assistance. Nine aircraft carried out the attack which destroyed the plant which would have been capable of producing atomic bombs by the coming autumn. Iraq claimed that the nuclear plant was being built for peaceful purposes. Israel thought otherwise, for it had discovered that the plant was too small to produce electricity, even on a demonstration scale; and the French claim that it was sold as a “nuclear research” reactor, was most questionable, for the Iraqi Arabs virtually have no nuclear research scientists, and why would they want to dabble in nuclear fission anyway when they have such an abundant power source in the huge oilfields they control?

The world, of course, voiced its protests at Israel’s action, but it was also remarkable that about the same time the French Government was overthrown in election, and after many years, a radical type of leadership swept into power with a complete majority. The new French Government may not be as obsessed about the sheer monism of bargaining armaments and accessories for Iraqi oil.

Another aspect of change may also be a help to Israel concerning this threat from Iraq. To date Iraq has been ruled by a Sunni Moslem minority, but the majority of Iraqis are Shia Moslems, like those in Iran. Opposition groups in Iraq are increasing, because they are critical of the Iraq–Iranian war, which has meant that the Iraqi Shia, who form the vast bulk of the lower ranks of the Iraqi army, have to fight against their fellow Iranian Shia Moslems.

So events in the world transpire to dampen threats which arise against the survival of Israel. On Israel’s southern border with Egypt peace continues. The Egyptian President having chided Israel for its

“grave mistake” in bombing the Iraqi installation (something he was politically obliged to do, Egypt being an Arab nation) followed up his remonstrations by saying that the raid was not going to destroy the peace process, (that is the peace negotiations between Israel and Egypt). In due time therefore Egyptian, Israeli and American leaders met together near Cairo in the work towards finalising the arrangement for a multinational peace force for the Sinai, sponsored by the United States.

Egypt has become very much anti-Soviet Union. The Egyptian President has voiced a warning to Russia “not to fish in our sea. I do not want to see another Afghanistan in our region”. He has also voiced how he sees the Middle-east groupings. “On one side there is the strong alliance between Israel and Egypt backed by the United States and on the other there is Syria, Libya and the Palestine Liberation Organization backed by the Soviet Union.

Not even the question of Jerusalem, where there remains a strong difference of opinion between Israel and Egypt, is being allowed to spoil the accord that has emerged; and the Egyptian leader has even gone so far to say that if Israel is led into military confrontation with Syria, Egypt would not intervene.

So the course of events changes for Israel, and as a result Egypt has agreed to allow American troops into Sinai near Sharm el-Sheikh on the straits of Tiran. It appears that in the discussions that have taken place between Egypt, Israel and the United States, Israel has striven to involve the Americans as much as it possibly can in the Sinai peninsular, after Israel’s withdrawal is completed, which is due to be finished by the spring of 1982.

Meanwhile a vast new development is taking place in northern Jerusalem as part of an official policy of ringing the city about, with Jewish buildings.

In context with such improvements in Israel’s position the mind is caused to reflect upon the words of the prophet Ezekiel:—

“And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen — — —.”

This of course is not really fulfilled, but developments are seen to be taking place, ensuring the continuance and strengthening of the nation, prior to their final trial, when the nation will be saved by their returned Messiah.

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.

In the working with one seeking God's way of life, we are grateful for guidance given as afflictions and chastening reveal necessary changes in thinking.

Our minds and supplications are with those who are ill, incapacitated or isolated. Gratitude is felt for strengthening and help granted by our Father who is aware of our needs.

As events in the Middle East continue to be stirred up by Israel's aggressive attitude, we realize more clearly how near could be the return of the Lord Jesus to establish His rule of righteousness over all the earth.

J.A.DeF.

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.

We are glad to report that the interest experienced at our Sunday class still continues, and we feel blessed in having this work. Our desire is that we shall be helped and guided in this so the power of Godliness may be perceived by young minds helping them to do what God requires. This is not easy for those who are young but we do hope that by our efforts it may be perceived that there is no Salvation in any other way. Truly the way is narrow. God's promise is that it is the only means of obtaining life in Christ Jesus, which is Eternal.

W.V.B.