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A WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

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

"Take heed ye be not deceived"

"AT THE TABLE OF THE LORD"

"A COVENANT OF LOVE"

"MARRIAGE"

"NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS"

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At the Table of the Lord

“To this man will I look”

How helpful in the struggle to put our Father first are the words of Isaiah, a man whom God called to sustain His people in a time of trial and danger. The importance of this prophet's work, which is really God's work with His people, is revealed in the fulfillment of much what was spoken by Isaiah. The discovery of the Isaiah scrolls has proved to a skeptical world that the prophecy concerning the coming of Christ as Emanuel, God with us, was written before His birth. This is a provision to His people for help as they look to these promises of the Messiah to come. As we think about God's mercy and love seen in the sending of messengers like Isaiah, we can be helped to a greater appreciation of His care for His children in Isaiah's time and today as well. For do not his words sustain us as they did our brethren in Israel? Indeed, all through God's word we see a tender, steady care which is characteristic of a loving Father.

This fatherly care, extended to His children is clearly evident in His words:

“— the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?” Isaiah 66:1.

Truly the heaven **is** God's as well as the earth; they are His creation. He only, allows the earth to endure, overrules it, doing with it as **He** wills. So God may well ask, “Where is the house ye build — where is the place of my rest”, for whatever man gives unto God, only belongs to Him in the first place. Yet is not the Almighty pleased because His children seek to make Him a house, a place where He may rest or dwell among them?

When we think of a house for God, built by His children, David's desire to build one for the Almighty comes to mind. God's response to this determination is found in His promises to him that there there would be a house, a kingdom, a throne, a Son, enduring for ever. We know that God will not fail to keep these promises to establish David's house for eternity and we look in hope to the coming of the Son of David to accomplish that purpose. This hope was ever in our brother's heart as his words show in Psalm 132, a song of ascent, going up to the house of God. He wrote:

“We will go into his tabernacles: we will worship at his footstool.

Arise, O Lord, into thy rest; thou and the ark of thy strength." v 7, 8.

David's whole life and hope involved God's house, God's desire, God's Son. Consequently his prayer was constant that it might be accomplished. As a result of his complete trust that this **would** come about, God did greatly bless and help David to be a righteous king over Israel and more important, sustained him in the hope of Israel promised through his seed. In His mercy God will also be pleased and will bless all who seek Him in the spirit of David.

Isaiah's message confirms this as God spoke through him:
 "— to **this man will I look**, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." Isaiah 66:2.

How well these words describe David's mind and it **was** to him that God looked and blessed. This word look is used also as regard, have respect, consider. David was a man "after God's own heart", being poor, of a contrite spirit, and surely trembling at His word. Do these words of Isaiah set a pattern for us. Brethren and Sisters, as we hope and pray that our Father will indeed look to us, granting correction, guidance, and assurance as He considers us? Will He desire to make us a part of His house?

"The Lord Looketh on the Heart"

Allowing our thoughts to dwell upon God's loving regard for David, we remember how he was chosen to be king over Israel in place of Saul. Samuel was told to go to Bethlehem, to the house of Jesse, for God said, "— I have provided me a king among his sons." I Samuel 16:1. When Jesse's sons were assembled and Eliab was brought forth it was thought:

"Surely the Lord's anointed is before him." v 6.

Eliab, being Jesse's eldest son and goodly to look upon, would be the one that Samuel, naturally speaking, would judge suitable to be king. However God instructed Samuel:

"Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature: because I have refused him: the lord seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." v 7.

How easily we can be influenced by the outward appearance but God, who is able to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart can clearly see whether it is circumcised, the fleshy desires being cut off. This is evidence of one who is poor, is of a contrite spirit, and one that trembles at His word. This is what counts in God's

judgement, and this is what He saw in David, Jesse's youngest son. Samuel was told to anoint David as king over His people, for Saul had revealed a heart which failed to submit, to fear God, and so was to be removed from being king.

The record we are given of David's life, is evidence of his godly spirit. He did fail, grievously at times, but was quick to respond to correction, was not too proud to admit he was wrong, was instant in making amends. He did indeed fear and tremble at his Father's word. When the prophet revealed David's great failure to him, his response to God gives insight into his mind:

“ — thou desirest not sacrifice: else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.” Psalm 51:16.

Can we see why the Lord chose David and revealed to him His plan, the pattern for His house, His dwelling place with His people?

Brethren and Sisters, as we are helped to discern to whom God will look, we must bend every effort to please Him. How fully yet succinctly God speaks of what He looks for in those whom He would have in His house. He that is “poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.” Let us examine these qualities and strive to develop them more fully.

“Blessed are the Poor in Spirit — ”

The word poor comes from a root meaning depressed or pushed down, and it is used in the Bible as humble, afflicted, lowly, or needy, giving the thought of having been brought low by the working of God. We call to mind Jesus' own words:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:3.

Poor in spirit, humble — such are His people and being so are greatly blessed, being directed, helped, and cared for by a merciful Father. In today's world one who appears humble is little regarded by those who accomplish much and make a name for themselves. But **their** day is now. To such as are poor in spirit, the future holds a firm hope; now is trial and affliction but with assurance that God looks, cares, and loves.

“A Contrite Spirit”

When we consider the word contrite, it is found to imply a smiting or a maiming. Indeed it is used as lame, speaking of Jonathan's son Mephibosheth, who was “lame of his feet.” II Samuel 4:4.

In this connection the record concerning Jacob is recalled. He "halted upon his thigh." Genesis 12:31. This began after he clave to the angel of God all night, whereupon his name was changed to Israel. Those that are of a contrite heart as Jacob, are in a sense maimed in their walk because they are aware of their great weakness, being mortal, and do not put their trust in the flesh. In all their ways they proceed with diffidence, "haltingly", dependent upon God for strength and guidance. Of those who are struggling to be of this spirit God has promised through His prophet, Micah, chapter four:

"— I will 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 from henceforth, even for ever." Verses 6, 7.

Here is a promise, a hope for those to whom God looks because they are striving for a contrite spirit, broken by affliction and therefore putting no trust in their own ways. David, who knew this struggle so well, wrote:

"The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." Psalm 34:18.

We know affliction and long for deliverance, trusting that it **will** come if God discerns a contrite spirit as He looks into our hearts.

"That — Trembleth at my Word"

The Almighty looks for those who tremble when He speaks, those who feel awe and reverence and fear to displease Him. To tremble means be afraid, to quake. When we ponder this our minds go to Israel as they came to Mount Sinai — unto the presence of their God. How the mountain shook and how greatly the people feared as the voice of the Lord was heard! They did literally tremble at His word and pleaded, "— let not God speak with us lest we die." Moses' reply was:

"Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not." Ex. 20:19, 20.

During those dramatic moments, and probably for some time after, His people did fear, did tremble at His word. However as they journeyed, leaving Sinai, and encountering new experiences, many of those hearts ceased to tremble at His word; they forgot, exactly as we sometimes do, and sought their own desires.

How important it is then, Brethren and Sisters, if we hope to be among those to whom the Father looks, that we keep and cherish that trembling at His word, which enables us to be subject to it. How sobering yet hopeful is the knowledge that God does not look upon the outward appearance but looks so searchingly to see if our hearts are truly becoming circumcised, in the manner which Paul relates to us in Romans:

“ — he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.” Romans 2:29.

Through the help of Isaiah we have been shown a little more clearly how we can respond to the hand of God leading His children in His ways. Let us increase in gratitude and determination so that what our Father sees as He looks inside, will be only pleasing to Him, giving us the hope of redemption promised when Jesus returns to change the world as we know it, establishing His Kingdom. Again through the prophet Isaiah is revealed the great blessing of that hope in the Lord's unchangeable words:

“ — behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: — ”
Isaiah 65:17-19.

To bring joy to our Father! Can we hope for greater privilege than this? **J.A.D.**



A Covenant of Love.

How important and necessary it is for us to constantly perceive our position in the sight of God. To think upon and ponder often our membership as spiritual Jews of the nation of Israel, should make us realize the care God has for us in our special relationship with Him. It is a care which in every phase of our living is overruling our circumstances and experiences for the purpose that we may value more fully, as time goes on, the love of God towards us.

We might ask ourselves if we indeed value this care and the help of God through the spirit, which is given to direct our walk in the purpose of attaining unto an eternal inheritance. Clearly David was one who came to value this care, as his mind is expressed for us in the 28th Psalm the 7th verse saying:

“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him.”

For David there was no question as to what was within his heart, he knew his place in the overruling mercy of God, as one who of the nation of Israel, counted God as their leader and protector. He continues in verse 8:

“The Lord is **their** strength, and he is the saving strength of his anointed.

Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance: feed them also, and lift them up for ever.”

There was no doubt on David's part, and there can be no doubt in our minds that God does indeed save, bless, feed and will lift up **His** people, for as David, we too have experienced this overruling care of God. It is as David says in Psalm 34 verse 8:

“O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.

O fear the Lord, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him.”

We are reminded of this great care God shows to His people in the covenant he established with them when God said, “I will be their God, and they shall be my people”.

The words of Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, reveal that he also valued this covenant as recorded in Luke 1:68-72:

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people,

And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David;

As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began:

That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;

To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, **and to remember his holy covenant.**”

God clearly has had that covenant in mind from the very beginning. When we look up that word covenant we find it means, to set apart, or contract. But, how different from the contracts of today’s world. The contracts of today are to protect the vested interest of one or more parties, however the contract or covenant of God is one-sided to the point that David remarked, “Oh what is man that thou art mindful of him . . .” This is our covenant with God, that He should so graciously call us out to be His people and that He will be our God. God in this covenant relationship does look for something in return. In Isaiah we are shown what it is God looks for as verse 3 chapter 49 tells us:

“And said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, **in whom I will be glorified.**”

The covenant relationship is one in which God promises His care and protection to His people, and in return His desire is to be glorified, — the glory that is truly due His name.

Our struggle then is to glorify God, and how can we do this? We are helped through Zacharia’s words again in Luke 1:74:

“That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, **in holiness and righteousness** before him, all the days of our life.”

Here Zacharias makes known what it is that God looks for in us, that after our deliverance out of the hand of our enemies, the enemies we may have in the world, but more importantly our

greatest enemy, our flesh, that God looks for a service to him, without fear, in holiness and righteousness. Why are holiness and righteousness so important? We read how God separated the light from the darkness, and the importance of this is explained in I John 1:5:

“This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that **God is light**, and in him is no darkness at all.

If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness (or error), we lie and do not tell the truth:

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship, one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

As we reflect that light in our living, then righteousness can shine forth from our hearts. Only in light or righteousness can we glorify God, who is the source of all light and goodness, for “in him is no darkness at all.”

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel” were the words of Zacharias, and must be our words as well. How important our covenant relationship is, for it is not with all people, but **only** with those who understand and struggle to live within the terms of that covenant. Paul brings this thought to mind in Ephesians 2:12:

“That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.”

This was our state, before entering into that covenant relationship with God — no help and no hope.

As we look to the world today it is indeed godless for we see no matter what man intends, even those with good intentions, there are those who counteract. This is the flesh and its working, but to those of God’s household who are endeavouring to be spiritual Jews there is hope. Continuing in Ephesians 2:13 we read:

“But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ . . . And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off and to them that were nigh.”

This is spiritual Israel defined. As we recognize our place as grafted Israelites within God's covenant, how much we must be thankful for God's merciful provision. Also we think of our blessed position and the need to show that righteousness and holiness that God looks for in us, Paul instructs us in this regard in II Corinthians 7:1:

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God”.

Who is Paul speaking to here? To those spiritual Jews, separated by the covenant from the world. Paul tells us we must “perfect holiness in the fear of God”.

There is a crucial difference between those under the covenant and those without, just as there are two differing kinds of fear. One can be used in perfecting holiness, but the other is an adversary to holiness and righteousness — really a tool of the flesh. The fear that Paul speaks of here is a godly fear. With godly fear there is a recognition of God's might and power on our behalf in the covenant relationship and a godly fear lest we fail as we strive to be holy as God is holy. Paul in Hebrews 11:7 speaks of Noah, one who surely exhibited this godly fear:

“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, **moved with fear**, prepared an ark to the saving of his house: by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”

As we read over Hebrews chapter 11, which we commonly call the faith chapter, we see so many examples of those who were moved by that godly fear, and separated themselves from the world to show righteousness and holiness unto God.

Is it not true today that we likewise are required to show that same godly fear in order to perfect holiness and righteousness? We must realize that as we struggle to put down our flesh, this glorifies God as He can see that flesh being consumed. This sacrifice of our flesh can rise to God as a sweet smell, pleasing to Him. How great a hope then is set before us, and how great the blessings bestowed even in this life, to those who struggle to put down the flesh. We must, Brethren and Sisters, value more fully this covenant and move in godly fear to show that righteousness and holiness which gives glory to God.

M.C.S.

Marriage

And with a reference to the present contention on Divorce

The Word of God is the only source of information on the true purpose of marriage. Men know that it is for the procreation of children, but can see nothing more than this being a means of providing another generation to maintain the fast flowing tide of humans pouring into the grave; ever filling but never full.

God's revelation of the divine figure to be seen in marriage is resplendent with kindness exhibiting a glorious and eternal work, which will enfold all who are His in an unbreakable union with His Son.

Creation witnesses to this purpose, as it does in so many ways. Unseen by the world, these are a source of strength and joy to God's people. What is it which in every part of the inhabited world, attracts a man to a maid? Who sees in her the fulfilment of all his hopes and aspirations? While she by looking to him for protection and a "covering" makes his desire not only possessive but exclusive. This force of attraction is as powerful as any magnet, whose drawing force cannot be seen, but is certainly there as it pulls a piece of steel, a "Keeper" to itself. Such a power or force of mutual attraction is of God, and is beyond human understanding or explanation. Minds not bewitched by the present pornography will understand this as expressed by the Spirit.

"There are three things which are too wonderful for me yea,
four which I know not . . . The way of a man with a maid
(Proverbs 30:19)

This divine gift, and it is a gift, was ordained from the beginning, from the time of Eden:

"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and
shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."
(Genesis 2:24)

This union in the first place was for the bringing forth of children, who, feeling secure by parents being joined together in true and unselfish love, might be nourished in the characteristics which God desires. Let the emphasis not only be on love, but on unselfish love.

There is nothing a man would not do to please his future wife: or the maid her future husband. What a school for teaching unselfishness, which in a true union is carried into marriage, there to be the silent but most powerful teacher of the children. By

coming to know such love, such dedication, children are tutored in the rudiments of godliness, enabling them at the right age to look to the One who has so richly blessed them with fatherly love, so telling them without words that The Father is love.

Marriage a divine figure

Adam was given a wife by God taking a "rib" from his side, and creating woman:

"And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

"And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man." (Genesis 2:22-23).

This pointed to a people of God who would be given to His Son as a bride. They were to be taken out of mankind, and in a special sense from the side of the second Adam, so that they were part of Him, part of His Body.

When Jesus was crucified His side was pierced, and out of it came "blood and water". The blood was His life, the only life that was sinless in spite of every temptation to sin. This blood was no different in nature from any other blood. As it trickled down His side and fell to the ground it would congeal in the same manner as all blood. Because it was the life of God's Son who and never sinned, it gave fulfilment to all the offerings of the faithful from the beginning.

Adam would know with abject poignancy, that sin merited death: that nakedness must be covered. He would also know that the animal slain to provide a covering was not sufficient in itself to deliver from death. He would see, however, in the slain animal the lesson that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins", and that this blood foretold of the One through whom there was the opportunity of being accounted righteous, and so of having the hope of life.

In a figure, God's people become acceptable by being covered with this blood; this life which was sinless.

Under the old covenant, the Ecclesia assembled at Sinai, were inducted into a covenant with God by the blood of a slain animal being placed upon them at the same time as upon the Law and the altar. This blood, this life was seen to foretell of the life of the Redeemer which would be revealed in the Law, and seen at the altar so that through their confession of deserving death there

might be the hope of life through Him whom the altar represented.

After Christ, the ordinance of the new covenant was baptism for the deliverance of men and women from the world. It was not by accident that when Christ's side was pierced, out of it came "blood and water". Did space permit, references could be made to this association of blood and water, showing that both are used as representative of the life of Christ. This was seen in the wilderness when water was miraculously provided from the Rock. The Apostle Paul says that this Rock, "which followed them was Christ". Not, of course, that the Rock moved, but the waters which came from the Rock gushed out becoming a stream or river giving life to Israel in their wanderings in the desert.

In baptism, the water in a figure is a grave. In this the one to be baptised is buried "into the death of Christ", a confession of the justice in burying the "old man", and acknowledging that the death of Christ showed God was right in condemning to death all including His Son. If the one immersed were to remain in the water a literal death would quickly ensue. Coming out of the water a "new creature" is born. Now the water assumes the figure of the life, the blood of Christ, covering the one making an acceptable confession, and granting him a new life in Christ.

More could be written to show the continuity of the divine figure in the "water and blood", by which a people will eventually be saved: a nation will be born in a day; a bride will have been prepared and adorned for her husband.

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33).

Divine teaching on Divorce

It seems a dreadful chilling plunge from the lofty heights where the pure and clean air of God's wisdom can fill the being, to have to come down to the dank and fetid swamps of "divorce". The task, although distasteful, seems necessary in order to help perplexed minds deliver themselves from the toils of vain and wordy arguments.

There has just come to hand a booklet entitled: "**Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage**", published by the Advocate Group, and which has been issued in the "hope that the brotherhood will be strengthened by the counsel offered".

Who constitute the "brotherhood" is not stated. It would appear that any Group professing the name, however much in error, are regarded as part of the "brotherhood", which is a contradiction

of the view put forth that those guilty of adultery should be withdrawn from. When those in error, be they few or many, are expelled according to the commands of Christ, can they still be part of those who have righteously cut them off? The answer is obvious.

The booklet, while not reaching all the conclusions required by the Truth, may have a purging influence. So far, so good; but is this enough to deliver a people from the darkness of apostasy?

Let us now look at the teaching of Christ in which some claim to have found a permissiveness to gratify their desires. Wisdom requires that we look at the teaching of Christ as a whole, remembering that one part is complementary to another. In the approach to any investigation it is best first to remove obstacles to a clear understanding; one of which is:

“The Exceptive Clause”

“But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.” (Matthew 5:32)

Superficially read, this seems to indicate that “fornication” which here appears to be synonymous with adultery, allows for “putting away”. Hence, Gentile commentators and those who have lost the Truth have understood this to be the “exceptive clause” to the forbidding of “putting away”.

Careful consideration will show this is not the case, and that the simple meaning of Christ’s words is:

“Whosoever shall put away his wife, causes his wife to commit adultery unless, as is obvious, she is already guilty of this as indicated by the words saving (or except) for the cause of fornication”.

In other words the cause could not be the “putting away” if the wife were already guilty.

This is the clear teaching of Jesus which allows for no “exceptive clause”. Any ambiguity which may be felt with regard to the foregoing is clearly resolved by the record in Mark, Chapter 10:

“What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.

Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.

“And if a women shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.”

(verse 9, 11, 12).

Here, without qualification, “putting away” and remarrying is completely forbidden.

The fullest account of Jesus’ teaching is given in Matthew, chapter 19:

“Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female.

And said , For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh.

Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.”
(verse 4, 5, 6).

So that the disciples of Christ (and this includes all who are disciplined by Christ) will bow to the divine teaching and heartily endorse by word and action the words of Jesus.

Continuing the account of the discourse:

“They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?

“He sayeth unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

“And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.” (verse 7, 8, 9).

The disciples realised immediately the effect of this teaching when they said:

“If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry.” (verse 10).

Could the words of Jesus be more powerful to show that remarriage by one who desires to enter the Kingdom of God is forbidden? He said:

“All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given.

“For there are some eunuchs, were so born from their mother’s womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake He that is able to receive it, let him receive it. (verses 11:12)

Only those desiring to please the flesh by seeking divorce so that they can remarry will try and explain away such a simple teaching: a teaching which will always be upheld in the One Body because the heart-desire is to enter the Kingdom of heaven. With the prop of the "exceptive clause" out of the way, nothing is left for the teaching of any license regarding divorce, Full and unqualified endorsement of divine teaching remains unimpaired and undiluted, that:

"What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."

Divorce in the Law

Why was this permitted as stated by Jesus? He says

"Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so" (verse 8).

It is obvious that certain things were allowed or "suffered" by God in a nation who were in the process of being brought by Christ. For example more than one wife was not only permitted but in the case of David were given to him by God:

"And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things." (2 Samuel 12:8)

Yet, when Christ came polygamy was forbidden. He required that in the Ecclesia the type of one man, one wife should be honoured.

The law allowed divorce as stated in Deuteronomy, chapter 24, verse 1.

"When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house."

It can only be assumed what was the "uncleanness" or "matter of nakedness". Could it be that the man had been deceived into thinking he was being given a virgin, and then this was found not to be the case? Perhaps a widow, or perhaps a willing or unwilling victim of assault, without the fact being disclosed to the prospective husband. This shows that marriage was not recognised when the woman had so deceived. Divorce in this case was in the nature

of a failure to ratify the marriage due to deceit, or “hardness of heart”. The “putting away” was not to be capricious, but was to be certified by a “bill of divorcement”. Jesus makes it clear that even this was not to be permitted as a ground for “putting away”, although it does indicate what is required of a prospective spouse.

Position at Baptism

Does God join every marriage in the world?

God said in the beginning:

“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”
Genesis 2:24)

From this it has been argued that this Law has applied to all man-kind in every age, with the result that a remarried divorcee applying for baptism must be told he is living in adultery, and must leave his present wife. Nothing is said as to what should happen to any children. Oh! The confusion, inextricable confusion which results when the straight path is left. Aliens are without God in the world. In what sense can He be expected to join their marriages?

Would God join the sons of God to the daughters of men in the days of Noah, and then destroy them by a flood for doing this?

Did God join the marriages of Israel to Moab at Baal-Peor, and then slay twenty four thousand by a plague because of these illicit unions?

What about the marriages Israel made with strange wives when they returned from captivity? Did God “join” these, and then cause His prophet to break the marriages? Listen to the divine record:

“Now therefore make confession unto the Lord God of your fathers, and do his pleasure: and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives.

“Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice, As thou hast said, so must we do. Let now our rulers of all the congregation stand, and let all them which have taken strange wives in our cities come at appointed times, and with them the elders of every city, and the judges thereof, until the fierce wrath of our God for this matter be turned from us.

“And they gave their hands that they would put away their strange wives; and being guilty, they offered a ram of the flock for their trespass.” (Ezra 10: 11, 12, 14, 19)

How impossible the suggestion that God "joined" these marriages and then visited His wrath upon those who were guilty.

Does God still join the marriages of believers to unbelievers and then condemn them for this sin? God is not the author of such contradiction, such confusion.

Clearly, the divine record shows the impossibility of God joining all marriages.

Reference has been made in the booklet previously mentioned that because certain aliens were familiar with the Law of God that this is evidence that the Law is universal. Principles of the Truth have always infiltrated into the world, and although perverted, have given society a basis for existence. Wholesale neglect of what God purposed for the benefit of His creation from the very beginning has resulted in nations becoming depraved and corrupt and in due time they have been destroyed from the earth like the Amorites, whose "cup of iniquity was full" The judgement of God on nations is on an entirely different basis from God's judgement of those who are responsible to Him. The former are judged collectively without any reference to an individual appearance at the judgement seat: the latter are to be judged personally when Christ returns.

Looking at the marriages of mankind in the world there are many which God would never have joined as will at once appear when the facts are considered.

In the time of the Ptolemies it was the frequent custom for a brother to marry a sister. Would God at one and the same time condemn and yet join incestuous marriages? Obviously not.

In the countries today polyandry persists as it has done from time in memorial wherein a woman marries two or three men at the same time. It would be interesting to know what those who claim that God joins all marriages would make of this.

Then again a marriage in the world has been spoken of as a contract which cannot be cancelled like obligations of indebtedness or service in an employer. So, it is argued, that a divorcee coming to the Truth must revert to his original contract, that is, to his first marriage. But what of the many marriages in the world, particularly amongst Aborigines and in India, where the parents arrange the marriage, and their children are not included in the contract?

The truth is that God does not join all marriages, but only those where there is a knowledge and belief of His Law.

The position at baptism is that God gives sanction to the existing marriage. Previous ones have been contracted without God and broken in ignorance of God's law, and so the parties are in no

way accountable. The words of the Spirit given by the Apostle Paul are:

“Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.” (1 Corinthians 7:24)

Conclusion

We have read of those whose words are like brandishing of an axe, but this does not lead them anywhere. While in the forest of human difficulties created by the endless discussions on divorce, they may make a clearing by chopping down a few trees but only to find that there are still more trees than ever. That is what has befallen the apostasy. By the supposed removing of a difficulty without a basic understanding of the Truth, more and more difficulties have appeared.

As an example, some say that one coming to the Truth “loosed from a wife” must return to her even if married to another. We will not speculate on the practical difficulties which could arise, difficulties of a very serious nature concerning the children of either one or both marriages. The Truth is always practical, and never places a believer in an unreasonable or impossible situation. So the advice of the Spirit in this case is:

“Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.

“But if thou marry, thou hast not sinned.”

(1 Corinthians 7:27, 28)

Here there is no injunction that the one previously married must break off his present union and return to the former wife.

Also it is as well to remember that under the Law (Deuteronomy 24, verse 4), a husband who divorced his wife was forbidden subsequently to take her again; which is absolutely contrary to the professed beliefs of some who say, that one coming to the Truth must return to his first spouse or remain as unmarried.

SUMMARISING

Marriage is a divine institution intended to show the union of all God's people to His Son, at a time when naturally there will be neither marrying nor giving in marriage.

The world is without God, and neither understands the divine sanctity of marriage nor what it is intended to illustrate as a type.

God only joins those marriages wherein the parties are believers and sanctifies the marriages of those who come to the Truth even if one of the spouses is an unbeliever.

Divorces or "putting away", is forbidden in all circumstances. There is no such thing as an "exceptive clause".

At baptism God recognises the present marriage. Any previous broken marriage is one contracted in ignorance and without God.

It is hoped that those struggling with difficulties on the divorce question, which has so plagued the others who once had the Truth, will be helped by the foregoing to see the simplicity of the Truth, and will come to rejoice in the beautiful light which it sheds. The Truth was never intended to make us into lawyers; on the contrary we are to become and remain as "little children" if entrance into the Kingdom of God is to be gained. These solemn words of Jesus are pregnant with the issues of life and death. Do not let us try to be wise above what is written.

May the determination be to leave the murky atmosphere of speculation, profitless discussion, debate, strife and dissension, and rise to the sublime heights of the precious Truth, there to breathe its pure air with those who are joined together in the same mind and the same judgement.



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.

Encouragement in the work is given by the continued desire of one seeking God's way of life. How uplifting to see changes in thinking and living as the wonder of God's word reveals His requirements and promises.

Our Sunday School enrollment was increased by the attendance of Brother and Sister Steiger's younger son, Nathan. How refreshing to see innocent young minds respond to God's word.

Continued inquiry from Christadelphians enables the witnessing to go on. We rejoice at the opportunity and pray that there may be some whose minds and hearts can be touched.

J.A.DeF.

“PENTRIP” Black Rock, Portmadoc.

Breaking of Bread: Sundays, 11.30 a.m.

Bible Class: Midweek.

In the recent months we have been visited here by four families with whom we used to meet. They spoke of the happy times spent in those days here. Time was short in each case but we hope we have been of some help to them, and grateful for improvement in our health that we may continue in this way as permitted.

We have experienced unusual heavy gales and seas recently, but no damage done here and so we are reminded continually of this great over ruling care which we have mercifully received.

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.

When Elijah fled and came to Horeb he felt weak and alone. The truth he knew was in his mouth, but the Apostasy was great and powerful. Yet in his need, he was shown that there is no greater power than the Truth even though it speaks with “a still small voice”, for in the voice of truth, there is the Lord God of hosts.

Is this not an encouragement for these days of “small things”?