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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 SHALT REJOICE..”

We have been listening to Moses as he, under God's direction, rehearsed the law for the children of Israel, preparing them for the land of promise. It was forty years that they had been journeying and now they were at last on the threshold of their inheritance. Moses knew that he himself could not go in because of his failure to sanctify God at the rock, but he did all he could to prepare his brethren for their long anticipated entrance into their land of promise. He reminded them of their great blessing, of their position as God's children, cared for and led by the Almighty. This blessing was not always valued; indeed at times there was murmuring and rebellion against their Father but nevertheless, He was still leading them — a truly great blessing.

The children of Israel knew that the land would be a fruitful land, “flowing with milk and honey”, having been already cultivated with vineyards, olive groves, and all delightful fruits. The natural desire would be to eagerly partake of all this bounty, this great goodness granted, and so satisfy their hunger, the craving of those forty years of wandering in a barren wilderness. But Moses' command at this time was:

“ — when thou art come unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance — that thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit which thou shalt bring of thy land that the Lord thy God giveth thee, and shall put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his name there.” Deut. 26:1-3

The word of God was specific, bring the first fruits unto me — deny **your** longing, put away self and honor me by first coming to my altar with your fruits. This would be a true sacrifice on the part of our brethren, a refusal of their strong and understandable yearnings. To what end did God require this act of obedience? Was it not to bring to recognition that all their blessing came of His mercy and love. How easily they could forget and how easily **we** too can forget, as favor is granted, as difficulties are removed, as promises are fulfilled, we may lose sight of Who has brought it all about. It is a reminder that to God alone must be given thanksgiving, praise, and obedience, in acknowledgement of the great longsuffering and mercy toward His children.

“— I PROFESS THIS DAY —”

Let us consider the further circumstances recorded. As the first fruits were brought the bearer was to tell the priest before the altar:

“—I profess this day unto the Lord thy God, that I am come unto the country which the Lord sware unto our fathers for to give us.” Deut. 26:3

Here was realization that God had fulfilled what He had promised in spite of the murmuring and rebellion. Would this not help the thoughtful in Israel to discern more fully how truly merciful was their Creator, and how great a love He bestowed upon them in keeping His word given to their fathers? This would stir up in their minds, along with the natural rejoicing at the riches of the land, a keener perception of the Father's beneficence.

As a further reminder, when the first fruits were set down before the altar, Moses instructed that the offerer in Israel declare:

“A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous:—”
Verse 5

A Syrian, a Gentile, ready to perish, with no hope of redemption. First this could apply to Abraham, called out of Ur of the Chaldees, given the hope of Israel through the promises God made to him. It also applied to Jacob who, dwelling as a sojourner in the land, knew sore famine and was delivered in Egypt through one whom his brethren had rejected, Joseph. Here was God's hand at work to rescue a people who were near to starving. How fitting then that these descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, now a great nation were to affirm that it was indeed the hand of the Almighty that had wrought their deliverance, that brought them out of sore bondage and now had granted the promised land. How easily, Brethren and Sisters, we can lose from our minds what is so important. Do we not need to come before the Lord and acknowledge that we too are Gentiles and have been ready to perish, astray from the hope of Israel, and that our Father has reached out and delivered? As we strive in this way, let us think on what we considered here in the directions of God to His people. Then, discerning and accepting this help, can we with our faithful brethren in Israel of old enter into their willing and grateful spirit?

“Now, behold, I have brought the first fruits of the land, which thou, O Lord, hast given me.” Deut. 26:10

As we try to picture such an occasion, how impressed we are. There would be literally thousands of baskets full of first fruits set before the Lord, as each household obeyed these commands. Every family which came and added a basket to those already there would clearly discern that they were abundantly blessed, even above all people, and would desire to worship the Lord in denying themselves, by bringing these fruits to Him. Would it not further impress upon each mind their Father's great love and the sureness of His word, as they offered filled up and overflowing baskets from their land. It would help them further, as Moses' command to them had been:

“ — And thou shalt set it before the Lord thy God, and worship before the Lord thy God:” Verse 10

To worship, we find means to bow down, to humbly beseech, to do reverence. As each would bring his offering there would be abundant gratitude felt for the blessing granted, but as he added it to the great multitude of baskets already there before the Lord, would he not begin to realize more fully the magnitude of God's purpose, seen in a great multitude of people, led, chastened, delivered, and granted inheritance? Would not this perception help each brother to more humbly and acceptably worship the Lord his God?

We, Brethren and Sisters, are few as we come to reverence God, but we too can be granted an increased perception of His boundless mercy and love, in experiencing enhancement of the fellowship in being joined in the one desire to bow before the One who who has called us when we were ready to perish.

“ — THOU SHALT REJOICE — ”

How can we faithfully worship before the Lord our God? Moses' words in Deuteronomy 26:11 tell us a further important aspect:

“Thou — shalt **rejoice** in every good thing which the Lord thy God hath given unto thee. — ”

What good reasons our brethren had to rejoice before their God, not just at this particular occasion to bring the first fruits, but as their spiritual needs were provided for as well. In Deuteronomy 12:6, 7 Moses instructed them:

“Thither (to the place which the Lord shall choose) ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes — and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks and

there ye shall eat before the Lord your God, and **ye shall rejoice** in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein the Lord thy God hath blessed thee."

A vow, a sacrifice, a freewill offering, would not be acceptable, could not be pleasing worship if it were brought without a heart that rejoiced in the privilege and at the mercy provided. Does this not help us as we yearn and strive in pleasing God? Joy is the sure fruit of willing obedience and so our first fruits, our vows, our living, if faithful, will manifest that rejoicing spirit. Gladness comes with perception and service which is not half-hearted, not grudging, not with sorrow or regret, but as a true worship, thankful rejoicing before the Lord for all His benefits extended to us.

Can we strive to more fully and more pleasingly come to this mind? Perhaps Jeremiah's experience can show us. In chapter 15 we see that this prophet was suffering great tribulation because of his faithfulness.

"O Lord, thou knowest: remember me, and visit me, and revenge me of my persecutors; take me not away in thy longsuffering: know that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke." Verse 15

The help and strength which Jeremiah found in the midst of his deep distress is revealed in verse 16:

"Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and **thy word** was unto me the **joy and rejoicing of mine heart**: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts."

Here was true worship of God in the midst of trial, as His word brought gladness to the heart of the prophet. Jeremiah rejoiced before the Lord in spite of personal affliction and danger. Can we find help in this, to take God's word, His promise that He will call us by His name, and keep it always before us as a joy even when trials, sorrow, and hardship press heavily? Our brother continued:

"Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable — ?"
Verse 18

This gives us an idea of what he was enduring. We too are called upon to suffer, in a measure, pain and sorrow, to prove whether even in sore circumstances we will think on His word to find that spirit to rejoice before the Lord and thus to worship Him in sincerity and truth. The word here used by Jeremiah, "**Why is my wound incurable**" is also found in II Chronicles 2:10 where Solomon promised to deliver to Hiram, for his help with the materials for the temple, payment of:

“ — twenty thousand measures of **beaten** wheat — ”

The wheat to be useful must be beaten, threshed to remove the chaff, which is useless and unfruitful. When Jeremiah cried out he was asking, “Why is my wound, my beating, my threshing, going on for so long, apparently without cure.” He had to accept that it was God’s hand working with him to separate and discard the unfruitful flesh from that which is right, good, responsive to God. Are we not called upon to endure a measure of the same tribulation and threshing? This word tribulation, as we know, is derived from *tribulum*, a heavy weight used in the threshing process to beat out the grain. As Jeremiah did, we may feel this beating, wounding, is unending, nearly unbearable, but if our mind can be like that of Jeremiah’s allowing His word to evoke the joy and rejoicing of our heart, we can be helped not only to bear the tribulation, but in time regard it as a gladsome evidence that God, our Father, is in His caring love, working with us.

The Apostle Paul helps us in this difficult task at which the flesh rebels:

“ — we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience, and experience hope and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.” Rom. 5:3-5

To glory is to rejoice. How difficult, how unnatural it is to rejoice in such circumstances but this is what God looks for and finds pleasure in. “Thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God hath given unto thee — ” We may not think of tribulation as a “good thing” yet without the threshing, the first fruits brought would not be beautiful and good but would include chaff — the useless part which would not be acceptable.

Let us consider then these words of God spoken through Moses, as we determine to worship the Lord, rejoicing before Him now in a time of threshing; let us look to the promised deliverance. In this direction our minds can be greatly encouraged and inspired as we thoughtfully ponder the words of the prophet Isaiah as he describes for us some of the great wonders and sure promises of the hope of his people, Israel:

“ — in this mountain (Zion, the throne of God’s kingdom on earth) shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things — he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in

victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces: and the rebuke of his people shall be take away from off all the earth: — And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.” Isa. 25:6-9

Surely these words speak in promise of the time when all the true first fruits of the Lord’s planting shall be gathered to join their Saviour who has already offered Himself, to worship forever in righteousness before the Lord. It is our great hope, toward which all our lives must turn, that we may then be allowed thereto eternally “—rejoice in every good thing which the Lord (our) God hath given.”

J.A.DeF.



“Come Ye After Me”

Contained in the Gospel of Mark is a look at the ministry of the Lord Jesus, a ministry summed up perhaps by Mark 1:15

“— The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.”

In essence, this was the work of the Lord Jesus, to fulfill and do those things, which would establish the way to the Kingdom of God.

From that first ministry of the Lord Jesus, we see how the simplicity of His teaching and His ability to move and to be guided by the Spirit was shown forth to those who were perceptive, and who allowed it to enter their hearts and moved them to follow after Jesus.

“Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.” Verses 16-17

And their response:

“And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him.” Verse 18.

A simple command “Come ye after me” was enough for them to lay down and forsake their nets and follow the Lord Jesus. Likewise in verse 19, James and John were mending their nets:

“And when he had gone a little farther thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were in the ship mending their nets.

And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.”

Also in Mark 2:14:

“And as he passed by, he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.

The responses to Jesus' command to “Follow me” were met with obedience. Can we relate to their response as we likewise come to know God's Truth? Was not their desire to follow and to be led to serve Jesus as He commanded? These disciples when they were called, began a work of learning the Truth and what they were to do in following Jesus. Their closeness centered around

Him. They learned as He taught. We are constantly tested to see if we can comply with the simple truth set forth in the Scriptures.

The example in Matthew 14 where Jesus walked on the water is perhaps a case in point:

“And in fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.

And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.

But straightway Jesus spoke unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.” (verses 25-27).

Again simple words from the Lord Jesus, to relay to the disciples their need to not fear, but trust. “Be of good cheer —” Take courage — “it is I”. Their trust in Jesus was being put to the test. All had come out at the command and followed Jesus. Yet, their growth of belief in Jesus and in those things which Jesus was to fulfill was needed. Peter’s words continuing in verses 28-31 help us to recognize the frailty of the flesh — our flesh!

“And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.

And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.”

And what was Jesus’ response?

“And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?”

As we go through our probation striving to value our place in the sight of the Lord Jesus, are we not often in this same position — of having our faith tested and failing to show it fully?

Don’t we often ask ourselves, “wherefore didst thou doubt?” Why? Because of the flesh, because we do fail to always value the things which God has held out. We fail to trust and see what God has given to us. We are no different than the disciples and we are given many examples to help us grow in faith, like them. Peter perhaps helps us when he cried — “Lord save me” An obvious recognition and perhaps a reversal of the doubt he had just experienced, and the quick response of the Lord Jesus as he stretched forth his hand in aid, “O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” This is a lesson for us. Do we cry out, “Lord save me” believing that He can help our unbelief? Isn’t this why Jesus said, “Be of good cheer”? At the center of all our living, in our striving

to obey God's words, we must believe — show courage, that we are not afraid and recognize the place of the Lord Jesus.

Those words, "Be of good cheer", were often used by Jesus to instill faith as in Matthew 9:2

"And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee."

Because of the faith and trust shown, it was obvious that those who brought that man must have believed in the Lord Jesus. He said in verse 6 of that 9th chapter of Matthew, "Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house." The courage was there, and so the belief was there. Isn't this what we are to recognize in seeking to follow the Lord Jesus and to show the courage necessary, that we must ask the Lord Jesus to reach out and save us? Jesus said to be of good cheer. Our response must be one equivalent to the command.

In John chapter 16, we see these words used again in consideration of Jesus' overall purpose:

"His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: By this we believe that thou camest forth from God."

Verses 29-30

These words were spoken during the last year of Jesus' ministry. So we see the disciples' confidence was continuing to be put to the test. They said now that they had a greater belief and courage, and Jesus answered:

"—Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.

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.**"

Jesus' desire was to have His disciples recognize that it is easy to say "I believe", but is there sufficient courage and trust in Him as our mediator with God? He told them they would have tribulation, but to continue to be of good cheer. He had overcome, but their tests would continue. Although we acknowledge our belief, that belief will always be put to the test. Why? To see if there will be a crying out to Jesus to be saved; and a valuing that Jesus did overcome the world, and likewise in a measure so can we.

In Acts 23 in regard to Paul, again these same words are used regarding the going forth to Rome:

“And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, **Be of good cheer**, Paul: for as thou has testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.”

Jesus' words to Paul were rehearsed in order to help him understand what it was that was required. Words to bring to Paul's mind that the work of witnessing must go forth with courage. Natural fear would be there; yet to overcome. Jesus' words given to Paul helped him go forth and do what was required in order to show that he was following after the Lord Jesus. How often we must recognize that our faith needs to be bolstered and we need the coming alongside of those around us, in order to help us see the trust that is required. “It is I” This is what Jesus said. Can we think upon these words in our everyday living when we are tested to see if we still acknowledge the place of the Lord Jesus among his brethren?

David helps us further to consider this courage we are to have in Psalm 31:24 and shows the spirit which God looks for in us:

“Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord.”

This again is the simplicity of what Jesus endeavored to instill in those whom He called to follow — “be of good courage”, “be of good cheer” for God will reach out to save and strengthen the heart, through the Lord Jesus, to those who hope in the Lord. If we have this hope and show forth courage, we are then revealing to our Father that we have a recognition of Jesus' work and the Kingdom of God which is near at hand. Can we like the disciples, continue to be helped and bolstered in our faith, for it is an ongoing endeavour in which God has allowed us to be joined. What is required? To repent and believe the gospel. We can only do that as we strive to have Jesus' place constantly before us, recognizing that only through Him and His ability to mediate for us can we be helped to follow Him. Can we then follow Him in these last days, showing our faith, that we indeed value and want the safety that Jesus provides; and can value the provision of God and His mercy in showing us His Word and the means of following that Truth?

M.C.S.

From the Readings of the Day

The enemy is strong, very strong. But God can help His people to overcome the enemy, whether in self or in other people who go against the welfare of the Truth. The enemy of course is the flesh.

We have read of this enemy this morning:-

“Therefore the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, the king of Eglon, gathered themselves together, and went up, they and all their hosts, and encamped before Gibeon, and made war against it.”

(Joshua 10:5)

Five kings with their armies, (the flesh) gathered together to oppose, pull down, destroy and spoil the welfare of the people of God. But Joshua had courage, as we have read:

“So Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he, and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valour.

And the Lord said unto Joshua, Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee.” (verse 7-8).

Why did God tell Joshua, who was a courageous man, “Fear them not”?

Because the Truth from an ordinary point of view always appears to be in a weak position, and those in the Truth can hesitate themselves, because of their weak appearance. But God is always there to encourage those who endeavour to have courage.

As Israel smote the enemy, Canaanitish people, wholly given over to the flesh and its works, and therefore invariably in opposition to God and His people. God Himself brought His punishment to bear down upon them.

“And it came to pass, as they fled from before Israel, and were in the going down to Beth-horon, that the Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died: they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword.”
(verse 11).

When Joshua saw how God was working for His Truth, he marvelled. There was nothing which God could not do for the people of God. So we have read Joshua’s powerful appeal to God; an appeal full of faith and belief in what God could do to save His people:

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“Then spake Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon.

“And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies.

Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day.

And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the Lord fought for Israel.” (verses 12-14).

As the canaanites fled, pursued by the vehicles of God's Truth, Joshua and his valiant men, the enemy were counting upon time to deliver them from the retribution from heaven. ‘The evening will come’ said they, ‘and we will vanish away into the darkness, and so escape.’ But the evening did not come! Why was the sun still high in the heavens? Why after running so far was it still daylight! ? Ordinarily after covering such a distance the darkness would be upon us, would be their thought. Why then does the sun still burn down upon us! ?

So the enemy, the flesh, was broken. This confederacy could have succeeded in a campaign of a different kind, but against God there is no success.

Finally the Canaanite leaders hid themselves away in the artificial darkness of a cave, but to no avail. There is nothing hidden that cannot be made known by God. Hence the words we have read:-

“But these five kings fled, and hid themselves in a cave at Makkedah.

And it was told Joshua, saying, The five kings are found hid in a cave at Makkedah.

And Joshua said, Roll great stones upon the mouth of the cave, and set men by it for to keep them.” (verses 16-18).

Those who try to hide from God in an artificial darkness, so to speak, are trapped in their own attempts to escape. What the kings thought would be their protection, was their prison, their trap, as huge stones were rolled against the mouth of the cave, the retribution upon them was sure.

Yes, there is no escape from God. Whatever men do, whatever the flesh tries to do, God will catch up and work out His purpose and His judgment. So we have those words to consider:

“And it came to pass, they brought out those kings unto Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said unto the captains of the men of war which went with him, Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings. And they came near, and put their feet upon the necks of them.

And Joshua said unto them, Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the Lord do to all your enemies against whom ye fight.” (verses 24-25).

These words take the mind forward to what is declared in the last book of the Bible.

“Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwelt upon the earth.”
(Rev. 3:9-10).

What an assurance and a hope to be told that those in the Truth will be kept, when all others are brought low.

Moving on to our second reading we see God's promise for the future, when the enemy, that is the flesh, is brought low.

“This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth: and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?” (Isaiah 14:26-27).

Who can disannul what God has purposed? Who can turn back what God has designed to bring about? God's message comes with an emphasis to impress upon the minds of those who feel the enemy (the flesh) is strong and that they are weak, that the flesh will never be allowed to triumph.

“The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand.” (verse 24).

This fourteenth chapter of Isaiah concludes with the stirring words of a question to which is supplied the answer.

“What shall one then answer the messengers of the nation ? That the Lord hath found Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust in it.” (verse 32).

Yes, the poor, those who walk softly, who realise their need, who at times may feel hesitant because the Truth seems weak, and the flesh seems strong. These are to consider that it was God who founded Zion. It is there undoubtedly upon the surface of the earth as a very special place, where great happenings will take place in the future. This indeed is something to trust upon, and to take courage about.

Moving on now, briefly to our third reading for today, we see how Paul encouraged his brethren:

“Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.

And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.

“For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.”

(Philippians 1:27-29).

When Paul wrote these words he was a prisoner in Rome. The enemy therefore seemed to be strong and the Truth weak. Stand fast in one spirit, says the apostle, and with one mind strive together for the faith. Do not be terrified by the adversary. The fact that they are adverse is the very token of their perdition. The fact that they are adversary to you, is the token that you have the Truth, which is the salvation of God.

It is of course not only given to you to have belief in salvation through Christ, but also along with the comfort of belief, is the suffering for His sake. The flesh hates the Truth, so you will suffer.

But when we think of the perdition which is coming upon the opponent, just as surely as that retribution in the days of Joshua, whose side shall we be on? Surely the Lord's side, however weak, and poor, and needy, we may seem to be at present.

We therefore can look to Zion. We can look Zionwards, and know, just as Joshua knew, that ultimately the land will be in possession of the people when the adversary, the flesh, falls and is broken.

Fear Not

It is recorded in Deuteronomy 11:26-29:-

“Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day:

And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known.

And it shall come to pass, when the Lord thy God hath brought thee in unto the land whither thou goest to possess it, that thou shalt put the blessing upon mount Gerizim, and the curse upon mount Ebal.”

Why this divine instruction regarding blessings and cursings if not to teach for all time that the right was to be upheld and that the wrong must be condemned. Many are there who have failed to do this throughout the ages — and why?

What has been the greatest deterrent which has caused failure to uphold the right or to condemn the wrong, especially the latter, if not FEAR, and what is the reason for this fear? We all know what fear is, for it is something which all have experienced at some time or other, but perhaps we could not do better than to let the scripture define it for us.

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.”

This is a fact that has always been recognised by the Great Creator, as we can see from the number of times He has said to His people —“Fear not” and further it is recorded in Psalm 103:14:-

“For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust”,

again in recognition of the tendency of our hearts to flutter and quake when the requirements of the Truth are demanded.

Perhaps we do not always realise that it is just as important to condemn the wrong as it is to uphold that which is right and so the oft repeated instruction that we are not to fear.

On searching through the scripture we find a remarkable number of times where God has encouraged His people with these two words “Fear not” some of which are as follows:-

“Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” (Luke 12:32).

“Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: Behold your God will come with a vengeance, “even God with a recompence; he will come and save you.” (Isaiah 35:3-4).

“Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father.

Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows”. (Matt. 10:26, 28-29 and 31).

“For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve.

Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.” (Acts 27:23-24).

“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

(Rev. 2:10).

And why have we to fear not? 2 Chronicles 15:1-2 gives the answer:-

“And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded:

And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The Lord is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you."

And yet time goes by year after year and from a human point of view time seems to lose itself, but we must remember that God needs not to hurry and we must realise that when occasion arises He can deal a lightening blow as when he overthrew the Egyptians in the Red Sea and when He engulfed the rebellious company of those associated with Korah in the wilderness.

But in the general proportion of God's plans we see that deliberation and gradualness are characteristic. Faith is honouring to God, and faith requires time for the exercise during which we are instructed to Fear not. God has made great and precious promises to the fathers, trying them by not specifying time, and causing them on occasion to wait long, and so as in the case of Abraham we read in Hebrews 6:15:-

"And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise."

Let us then not weary under a similar test, i.e. a patient continuance in well doing:-

"To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:
But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,"
(Romans 2:7-8).

This incorporates upholding the right and condemning the wrong **without fear**, which will no doubt test our faith with nothing to rely on but our confidence in the pledged word of God and that by this process we shall be prepared for a place among the faithful sons of God with whom we shall be enabled to say the words of Isaiah 25:9:-

"And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."
And all because we have been mindful of the instruction given to Moses in Deuteronomy 11 concerning the blessings and the curses, teaching us that we must always be ready to uphold the right and likewise to condemn the wrong, without fear or favour.

J.S.

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

“In the latter days thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people ————.

Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm ———— thou shalt think an evil thought:

And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates.” (Ezekiel 38:8-11).

Undoubtedly this time is upon us. The land of Palestine is brought back from the sword, and Israel has emerged by a gathering (of the Jews) out of many people. Since 1948 the Jews have suffered in their land. The marauders have been at work continually. There have also been the wars with the Arab nations, on the borders of Israel. Now there is peace (rest) on the borders of the Negeb. No longer is there a fear of an Egyptian attack. The Golan area in the north presents no menace, as it formerly did, for the Arabs who at one time shot down from the heights upon the villages of Israel are no longer there, they have been driven away.

Even the implacable enemy Syria, is subdued; the sophisticated Russian supplied missiles are no longer effectual because of the method Israel has discovered which jams the anti-aircraft radio controlled missiles in mid flight.

This past summer saw the Israeli Lebanon operation; an unprecedented operation. As the Palestinians in Western Beirut began to capitulate, trapped by Israel's forces, the marauding element was broken. The Israeli Prime Minister was caused to speak some very significant words in the light of knowledge he has from all information at his disposal:-

“There is reason to expect that we are facing an historic period of peace.”

With the destruction of Syria's most sophisticated planes and tanks, there was now no other country around Israel capable of attacking Israel.

“For our part we will not initiate any attack against any Arab country. We have proved that we do not want wars.” With the end of the fighting in Lebanon, Israel looked forward to many years of establishing peaceful relations with the Arab world.

Israel's Defence Minister also spoke up at the same time saying, "The terrorists are actually being expelled. That is the truth. This is an extraordinary achievement in Israel's military history". "With its dispersal to eight countries, from Algeria to South Yemen, from Iraq to Sudan, the PLO has finally lost its power."

What an amazing event this is for it does not seem so long ago when the PLO leader was allowed to speak at the United Nations in New York.

Alas, for Israel, the peace they are looking forward to now after thirty-four years, is the sign of that final dreadful experience, as shown so clearly by the prophet Ezekiel, speaking about these last days.

Yes, the "Roshian" power will "come like a storm — — — to the land of unwallled villages." To Israel, who now thinks its villages will no longer need defending. How desperately they will have to fight against the "Roshian" power.

The words of the prophecy of Zechariah come forcibly upon us in the context of such an event now about to take place:-

"And the city (Jerusalem) shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city — — —. Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight — — —.

And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives — — — and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee." (Zech. 14:2-5).



News from the Ecclesias

EDEN, NEW YORK: Grange Hall, Church Street.

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11.30 a.m. Sunday School 1.30 p.m.

Bible Class: Midweek: Forestville, Orchard Park and Buffalo
Alternate Week: Revelation Study.

Supplications are made for those in illness and trial that healing and help may be granted by the God of all comfort.

The Sunday School Picnic was held on August 14th with lovely summer weather adding to the enjoyment and benefit.

We are encouraged by the interest of one who through unusual circumstances has been caused to seriously and sincerely seek His way. May we give the help according to His guidance.

J.A.DeF.

MANCHESTER, Ryecroft Hall Annexe, Audenshaw, Manchester.

Break of Bread: Sundays 11.30 a.m.

Bible Class: 7.30 p.m. in the ante room to large hall,
Wednesday evening.

These are very difficult times for the world, "Distress of Nations with perplexity". **(No way out) for the world**, when "Mens' hearts are failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth" (Luke 21 verse 25-26).

In the body there may be difficulty. But there is always guidance to show a way out. How grateful we should be for such an inestimable blessing.

"PENTRIP" Black Rock, Portmadoc.

Breaking of Bread: Sundays 11.30 a.m.

Bible Class: Midweek.

We are very grateful for the opportunity we had for attending the Manchester Fraternal Gathering to have the uplifting and strengthening of the help so manifestly given.

How grateful we need this help in these days of testing and what a comfort to meet face to face those companions of our pilgrimage.

(per D.L.)