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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

“... YE SHALL REJOICE IN ALL THAT YE PUT YOUR HAND UNTO”

HOW eloquent were Moses' words as he stood near Jordan when Israel was preparing to enter the land promised to their fathers. These words were the words of God given to Israel to encourage, to remind, to stir up for the work before them. Deuteronomy, a repeating of the law, gave special emphasis to the different circumstances which Israel would meet in the land—different responsibilities but the same law, the same word of God, the same love of God for His people. We have an example in the words of Moses:

“Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land ... :

That thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all statutes and commandments, ... that thy days may be prolonged ... that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the Lord God of thy Fathers hath promised thee, ...” Deuteronomy 6:1-3.

We remember the promises to their fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—involving a land, a people, and a seed which would possess the gates of his enemies. A partial fulfillment was about to take place in Israel's going into the land and possessing it. The Jordan—the river that flowed from Adam to the Dead Sea, would be stopped by the ark of God. Twelve stones as a memorial were to be taken out of it. All this spoke of God's purpose and promise. Jericho was a strong, walled city, seemingly invincible. At God's command the city was to be compassed about for seven days by the ark. On the seventh day this Gentile city would be compassed about *seven* times, the trumpets blown by the priests, the people were to shout, and the seemingly impregnable walls were to fall before the ark, a type of God's Messiah. All this for Israel was yet to come, and these words of Moses were to remind that their God would be with them “that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily.” Moses continued in a more explicit way:

“... These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:” Deuteronomy 6:6.

And they were to:

“... teach them diligently unto thy children ... talk of them ... bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and ... as frontlets between thine eyes ... write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.” Verses 7-9.

The Almighty had power to put these words into their hearts, but He wanted His people to willingly take them to themselves, feed upon them, drink of them so that the divine help be at their hands, before their eyes for use in all their circumstances. They would be to Israel as they were to be centuries later to Jesus when He was tempted in the wilderness, and overcame His flesh's desires by: "It is written." The scribes and Pharisees claimed to live by God's word, indeed bound phylacteries upon their hands and frontlets between their eyes, but only as a form as they refused to heed the spirit of the law—for it was not inscribed on their hearts.

Moses also warned Israel:

"... When the Lord ... shall have brought thee into the land ... Then beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt: ..."

Deuteronomy 6:10-12.

God knows our nature and warns against it, for when things go well it is our inclination to relax, to forget the deliverance from affliction and bondage—as all needs are provided for by the Father. How easily, Brethren and Sisters, we can forget who is the Giver of all good and all mercy. Our Creator promised His people:

"... If ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, ... the Lord ... shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he sware unto thy fathers: And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee ... Thou shalt be blessed above all people ..."

Deuteronomy 7:12-14.

What wondrous and undeserved kindness these promises revealed. How difficult it must have been for Moses to speak of these, knowing he would not experience them, for he had failed to sanctify God at the rock. Yet his mind, his heart, his hope was fastened upon the greater fulfillment to come.

Brethren and Sisters, let us stop and consider these divine words spoken through Moses. We believe the time of Jesus' return to establish His kingdom is near, a time when this promised peace and righteousness beyond our greatest expectation will be accomplished. We hope to have a part in that promised blessing, but can do so only if we cherish His word, lay it up in our hearts, allow it to grow there, and so cut off the flesh as evidenced by our words, our actions, our obedience to Him in the spirit, not in the letter.

Further, Moses continued as they paused there on the east of Jordan. They must utterly destroy the idols, the groves, the altars, and the pillars which they would find in the land, lest they be tempted to serve them rather than their God. And in addition, Moses told them:

“... Unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose ... to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come: ... thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings ... sacrifices ... tithes ... heave offerings ... firstlings.”
Deuteronomy 12:5-6.

There was only one place to which the sacrifices were to be brought—one habitation of God, as in the wilderness where was the tabernacle with the cloud and fire. This was to be chosen, not by Moses, not by Joshua, not by the high priest, but by their Father. Ultimately this place of His dwelling was to be, and yet will be again, in Jerusalem, the city of peace. How wise God was to so instruct concerning the one place to approach unto Him. Concerning this house it is recorded:

“... *there* ... ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto: ...”
Deuteronomy 12:7.

If His word was truly in their heart, if the sole desire of their heart was to lovingly serve their Creator, would there not be a rejoicing as they came to His dwelling place—a foretaste of the house to be established forever?

Rejoicing is a tangible emotion, a good feeling, an evidence of gratitude and love, an acknowledgment that such great blessing *is* possible through the loving kindness of God. We remember Jeremiah's spirit:

“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.”
Jeremiah 15:16.

God's word does bring rejoicing to those who love Him. But it brings enmity between them and those who have no regard for Him. The word of God points out and commands against the evils of the flesh, helping one to deny it, and thus to build up the man of spirit. Only as that flesh is restrained and put down will there be a joy of heart. As there is a bringing the flesh under control, that struggle is made easier and joy ensues. The word of God is the weapon which enables us conquer these hateful attributes. Paul confirms this for us:

“... The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul (flesh) and spirit, ... and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Hebrews 4:12.

This is God’s design, His plan. We must allow that word to work on our hearts, Brethren and Sisters, removing from it all contrary and adversarial tendencies—a life-time work, but we have the help of an all-powerful Father and His Son. Jesus did this perfectly all through His life, and said with joy as He died:

“... It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the Spirit.” John 19:30.

This was a cry of victory—not a sorrowing at death—a true joy in accomplishment. This was Jesus’ life-time work as He said:

“I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” John 17:4.

He had won, enduring great suffering, and Paul reminds us of this:

“... who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Hebrews 12:2.

Can we imagine the rejoicing in heaven as Jesus cried out: “It is finished”? Let us try to find a measure of that joy as we are called upon to follow His example, remembering our Father’s desire: “Ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto.”

Moses spoke of a time of rejoicing concerning the feasts in Israel. Of the feast of wave loaves—foreshadowing the bringing to God of the first fruits, an earnest of those who would be His for eternity, He wrote:

“... Thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God ...” Deuteronomy 16:11.

As a faithful Israelite perceived and valued this, how real would be his rejoicing. Also in the feast of tabernacles in the seventh month when Israel dwelt in booths, God’s instruction was:

“... Thou shalt rejoice in thy feast ... because the Lord ... shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands, therefore thou shalt surely rejoice.”

Verses 14 and 15.

Again a promise, a hope, God’s purpose revealed. We are privileged to know the hope of being a part in this blessing if God’s word is imprinted upon our heart.

THE REMNANT

In this connection, we think of Abraham who on many occasions rejoiced before the Lord. Jesus spoke of his faith:

“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.” John 8:56.

How did Abraham see the day of Jesus? Through absolute belief in the promises made to him:

“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” Hebrews 11:13.

Abraham embraced these promises, took them to his heart. This enabled him to offer up Isaac, and to assure him from his heart:

“... My son, God will provide himself a lamb ...”
Genesis 22:8.

Can we imagine Abraham’s great joy and wonder as he heard the voice of the angel, saw the ram in the thicket, and was able to offer it upon the altar instead of Isaac, the seed of promise?

As we contemplate these things, as we meditate upon the marvels of God’s word, what great reason we have indeed to rejoice before the Lord. Events may at times weigh us down, life may seem hard, depressing, with no relief in sight. Yet when we look at the bigger picture, the sure promise of deliverance out of great tribulation, we do have good cause to rejoice. Zechariah helps us to anticipate this:

“Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord.”
Zechariah 2:10.

These words were spoken in the time of Zerubbabel and Jeshua, who were leaders in the work of rebuilding the temple — the habitation of God. This work was hindered and stopped by adversaries. Judah, a captive people, were discouraged, engaged in building their own houses, rather than the house of God. How little they would feel like singing and rejoicing. Yet God was with them, their hands and their resolve were strengthened by His words through the prophets who encouraged Judah to resume the work, to finish the building of His house. As the temple was finished:

“... the children of Israel ... kept the dedication of this house of God *with joy.*” Ezra 6:16.
They rejoiced before the Lord because He had strengthened their hands in the work and it was now accomplished.

THE REMNANT

How essential, Brethren and Sisters, that we give serious thought to His words: "Ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto." All our doings, all our living is to be motivated by the word of God, by the desire to serve Him and to serve His house. David in one of his songs of ascent, visualizing the going up to Zion, rejoicing in the hope and privilege wrote:

"The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof *we are glad*. ... They that sow in tears shall reap *in joy*."

As we perceive what great things God has done on our behalf, as we strive to bring before Him our willing offerings, let us renew our vow to:

"Rejoice before the Lord in all that (we) put (our) hands unto."

J.A.DeF.



Thou Hast Done Wonderful Things

AS we read the book of Isaiah, we have a glimpse of the mind and spirit of that prophet as he reconfirmed to Israel their relationship with God—a help to us also as we strive to move subject to His overruling care in our living.

In Isaiah 25:1 we read the prophet's words as he reminds the rebellious house of Israel of God's mercy and care:

“O LORD, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth.”

Isaiah goes on in verses 4—6 of this chapter to tell of some of the wonderful blessings that God had given and would provide again if they but turned unto Him:

“For thou has been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.

Thou shalt bring down the noise of strangers, as the heat in a dry place; even the heat with the shadow of a cloud: the branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low.

And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full or marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.”

God has done many wonderful things for us as well, and thinking of them can help us to struggle on.

David spoke in Psalm 103:2 with a similar understanding:

“Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:”

David enumerates several of these blessings as he goes on in verses 3—6 to say:

“Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;

Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies;

Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.”

The key here is to “forget not” all the wonderful things God has done. Why did David stress this aspect? Was it not because he realized that it is easy to forget when other distractions get in the way? This happened to Israel who forgot the blessings granted and were now in the sad state of rebellion.

In Joshua's time, as always, God's promise to His people was faithful and righteous as it is recorded in Joshua 21:43-45:

"And the LORD gave unto Israel all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein.

And the LORD gave them rest round about, according to all that he sware unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand.

There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass."

All of the wonderful things that God had promised had come to pass, yet after coming from Egypt through forty years of wandering, only two men remained to hear these words—Joshua and Caleb—two who had not forgotten. Israel had been warned by Moses in Deuteronomy 6:12 of this very danger:

"Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage."

We know from the scriptures that they had forgotten, and had murmured while in the wilderness, not remembering the relief granted from the slavery of Egypt.

Here then Israel was, years later with God's condemnation spoken by Isaiah in Isaiah 1:2:

"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me."

This has been the history of God's people—the tendency of the flesh to turn away from God, forget His kindness and rebel against His ways. Yet, the mercies of God are sure, even in the midst of rebellion, if one can turn back, and this was the work of Isaiah to bring Israel to repentance.

The knowledge of these benefits from God can be a help to make us realize the wonderful things granted by a loving Father—blessings that can help us hold fast when other distractions try to tempt us away from His paths. David helps us to value our position as he questions in Psalm 116:12:

"What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?"

This is a logical question if one is striving to be a child of God. What can be rendered in return for all His benefits? David tells us in verse 13-14:

"I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD.

I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people."

How important it is to value this "cup of salvation", the provision granted through God's word made flesh in a savior, the Lord Jesus, and perceiving this to call upon His name. This is what Isaiah was conveying when he said:

"... I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name;"

(Isaiah 25:1).

Isaiah's name translates as, salvation of God, and he was given the work to instill this need for salvation into the minds of a wayward Israel. David knew the value of the end of God's salvation when he praised God in Psalm 116:16-19:

"O LORD truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds.

I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD.

I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people, In the courts of the LORD's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD."

David's words of praise went beyond the time at hand, looking forward to God's purpose to be accomplished with His people, and his desire was to move in God's ways, not his own.

If one forgets God's ways, His benefits, how easy it is to fall away, just as it was for Israel in Isaiah's time. Let us be reminded again of what is necessary on our part in order to keep alive the hope of God's salvation through Isaiah's words in chapter 25:9:

"And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is 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." (Isaiah 25:9).

These words spoken by Isaiah to Israel must apply to ourselves today. We must remind ourselves to wait, to praise His name for all His benefits during all our time of probation, even though trials may come to prove our resolve. In James 1:1-4 we are reminded:

"James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.

My brethren, count it all joys when ye fall into divers temptation; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

Patience is the bearing under trial as we strive to return to God what He requires of us for all His blessings granted. He will provide all that is necessary for us now, but only as He sees a spirit of waiting in patience, valuing our place in His sight. Let us not forget then all His blessings and strive to have the spirit of Isaiah who said:

“O LORD, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou has done wonderful things, thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth.”

(Isaiah 25:1).

M.C.S.

Amos

“Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet’s son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit:

And the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.”

(Amos 7:14-15).

Amos recognised his obscure start in life. He had been nothing more than a herdman or shepherd. He had gathered sycamore fruit, going amongst the wild woods to gain sustenance. He had been amongst the herdmen of Tekoa:-

“The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.”

(Amos 1:1).

God took him from this obscurity and brought him before kings and rulers. Tekoa, where he had tended the flocks, was in the wilderness. It lay to the south-east of Jerusalem, on the way to the Dead Sea.

From this lonely, unimportant place, Amos was called to testify against the misdeeds of Israel. He had obviously to be brave, especially as there would be even less respect for his message because of his lowly origins. Human nature is such, that to a polished individual there is some semblance of recognition, even though there be no real acceptance of his views. But to the lowly individual there is only scorn and a turning away.

The message of Amos touched the very foundation of the evil:-

“Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink. The Lord God hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fishhooks.”

(ch. 4:1-2).

This message, of course, would be intensely disliked. So Amaziah the priest of Bethel (Bethel—God’s House) reproved Amos:-

“Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there: But prophesy not again any more at Bethel: for it is the king’s chapel, and it is the king’s court.” (ch. 7:12-13).

Amos’s answer was to say he realised he had nothing naturally, to recommend himself. What he was doing was the work to which God had called and exalted him. “The Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.” God did not choose Amos because of any great ability. He chose him for what was in his heart. It is the way of God, He can help the mouth to speak, and directs the way to take.

Let us therefore not respond over fewness of numbers or weakness, by worldly standards. Though not (metaphorically) prophet’s sons; but rather of low place, what matters is being taken for His great work. Let us therefore not forget that it is a great work, for there is no other work greater, though the world fails to recognise it. Some no doubt would tell us to cease, saying in effect, do not bring yourselves here, we want nothing to do with you. But we see this is nothing new, for that is what Amaziah the priest of Bethel said to Amos.

But rejection of the message of the Truth even though by a lowly conveyor if it, does bring a final judgment, as in the case of Amos.

“Now therefore hear thou the word of the Lord: Thou sayest, Prophesy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac.

Therefore thus saith the Lord; Thy wife shall be an harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou shalt die in a polluted land: and Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land.”

(ch. 7:16-17).

Rejectors of this present time therefore, who once belonged to The House do bear responsibility for the hardness and their spurning of God’s message, however, in whatever lowly form it is conveyed.

As Amos looked for a sign from God, who had called him to what he realised was a great and honourable task, something special was shown:-

“Thus hath the Lord God shewed unto me: and behold a basket of summer fruit:

And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said the Lord unto me, The end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more.” (ch. 8:1-2).

What is so remarkable about a basket of summer fruit? Why, nothing! Likewise what has been remarkable about some of the things which have been shown in these last years? From a fleshly viewpoint, nothing whatever!! But from a sublime aspect great evidences have come, of God's work of ensuring the continuance of his message.

As Amos beheld the basket of summer fruit, what then did it indicate? Surely that the fruit was ripe? It was time for the fruit to be consumed, or devoured. Hence the message, "The end is come upon my people of Israel." It was the time for them to be consumed or devoured. Not that Israel believed it, for they continued in their apostasy:-

"Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit?

The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works." (verses 5 & 7).

Then came to Amos another sign:-

"I saw the Lord standing upon the altar: and he said, Smite the lintel of the door, that the posts may shake: and cut them in the head, all of them; and I will slay the last of them with the sword: he that fleeth of them shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered." (ch. 9:1).

Here was God standing to wreak His judgment at the very centre of the Apostasy. Smite the lintel; that which upholds 'the entering into The House.' This will shake those (the posts) who support it! "Cut them in the head, *all* of them." The obscure prophet had indeed a great message for those who thought they were worthy of prominence. Of course they did not listen, but that did not nullify the importance of his work.

But there was also a message of hope to any who had ears to hear.

"For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth." (verse 9).

To be sifted is to be shaken. As the shaking proceeds the chaff flies away and disappears, but the grain remains. Looking at the sifting pan we see far more of the light stuff than the solid substantial grain underneath. That is how it is, in the case of those who find favour with God; for in the sifting or shaking, "not the least grain" shall fall. Not even the least, for God is merciful. But He will not treat with that which is light and shift, for it cannot take His truth seriously enough therefore cannot

remain, but removes away. So to use the other metaphor, the lintel is smitten, and the posts that uphold i.e. hold it up, are shaken, and they are cut (i.e. marked) in the head, all of them. All of them! It is the sign and evidence of God's disapproval. To be cut in the head, is to be cut off in the most vulnerable feature of the body. Not merely the hand or the leg, severe as that may be, but in the very directing force. The sign is amongst the leading section, as division takes place, of the cutting off of all; for where are hands or legs without the head? So if the leading element is apostate, so are all.

As we consider Amos, then, let us not despond in low estate. In the work of God it does not matter. What is important is the Lord taking us for His work in a time of great apostasy, knowing that ultimately there will be a vindication of His work, even though in the meantime it be despised in such words as:-

“... prophesy not ... and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac.”

A Bible Class

“BE SURETY FOR THY SERVANT FOR GOOD”

(Psalm 119:122)

THIS 119th psalm is special in that a letter from the Hebrew alphabet is used to head each group of eight verses. The Hebrew letter that heads this particular section where our verse under consideration is found, is “Ain” which means, to love long.

In looking at verse 122 we find that the word surety means to intertwine, mix, braid, pledge and mortgage. A mortgage is a pledge given that payment will be returned to the lender, similar to a covenant relationship, showing trust between two parties.

David, who wrote this psalm, recognized the frailty of the flesh and knew he needed help and strength from God to endure. In time of trial he trusted in God's help and promise that He would be a surety to give strength. We think of some of David's encounters with Saul, surely one of his greatest oppressors. David was often tempted to take vengeance with his own hand against Saul, but instead waited on God, trusting in His mercy. In verse 126 David could almost be speaking of Saul who had no respect for God's law as he appealed to God saying:

“It is time for thee, LORD, to work: for they have made void thy law.

Solomon, David's son, brings out a negative aspect of surety as a warning in Proverbs 11:15:

“He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it: and he that hateth suretiship is sure.”

With the meaning of surety being to intermingle or mix, we can see why Solomon was pointing out that it was not wise to provide surety for a stranger — one who is not joined in thought and spirit — who doesn't yield to God's purpose.

David valued the covenant given by God and by looking to God as a surety illustrates this. He knew God's promises and mercies were sure. God is unchanging, His word is constant and for those who put their trust in Him He will be a surety to them for good. Perhaps this may not be their own view of what is good, but rather what God knows is best for them.

M.C.S.

What seest thou?

“Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord.

Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree. Then said the Lord unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten my word to perform it.”

(Jeremiah 1:8 & 11-12).

I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord. This promise is consistent with that given to Joshua in chapter 1 verse 5, and repeated by the Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews ch. 13 verse 5. “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” These two promises which are the word of God cannot fail and as we contemplate this wonderful condescension of the Great Creator of the heavens and the earth our hearts should be warmed and uplifted knowing that these promises given to Joshua and Jeremiah, and to all God's faithful children are given to us also providing we can remain faithful to our calling.

The promise was reiterated in Jeremiah 15:19-21, but we must remember that Jeremiah was a man. It is natural for us to assume that all the prophets and all they that were their companions were men to whom inspiration and the exercise of authority secured for them the enjoyment of their divine position, and placed them beyond the weariness and painful endurance with which we find ourselves in this day and generation. But a close consideration of the record of Jeremiah will quickly dispense all idea of this kind and should enable us to see why the Apostle James advises to take the “prophets for an example of suffering affliction” for they were fellow sufferers with us.

Jeremiah was a man pretty much alone in Jerusalem. The prince, the elders and the priest, corresponding to the clergy and the upper classes of our day were all very much against him, and

under their leadership, the common people held Jeremiah in contempt. His own testimony is — “I was a derision to all my people and their song all the day” (Lamentations 3:14). His own feelings in contact with them day by day, and his estimate of them are manifest from Jeremiah 9:2:3:-

“Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of way-faring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men.

And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the Lord.”

Between the derision manifested by the people toward him and Jeremiah’s sense of their worthiness it is easy to understand why he should say, “for peace he had great bitterness” so much so that he felt inclined to shut his mouth and said, “I will speak no more in his name” because “the word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me and a derision daily” and even went so far as to curse the day he was born saying “Cursed be the day wherein I was born and let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed. ... Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labour and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?” (ch. 20:14-18).

This helps us to realise that Jeremiah was a man like we are and helps us to realise what James testifies of all the prophets in general as true—that they were men “subject to like passions as we are.”

And so those words of Jeremiah 1 verse 8 stand out with authority when God encouraged the prophet so powerfully in his time of need — “I am with thee to deliver thee.”

Then, as shown in verses 11 and 12 of chapter 1:-

“... what seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree.

Then said the Lord unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten my word to perform it.”

Why an almond tree? Surely this takes us back to the time of Moses and Aaron in Numbers 17:2-5 & 8:-

“Speak unto the children of Israel, and take of every one of them a rod according to the house of their fathers, of all their princes ... twelve rods: write thou every man’s name upon his rod.

And thou shalt write Aaron’s name upon the rod of Levi: for one rod shall be for the head of the house of their fathers.

And thou shalt lay them up in the tabernacle of the congregation before the testimony, where I will meet with you.

And it shall come to pass, that the man's rod, whom I shall choose, shall blossom: and I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children of Israel, whereby they murmur against you.

And it came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle ... and behold the rod of Aaron ... was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds."

So we can see that the almond signifies the chosen of God. "Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten my word to perform it." It is interesting to note that this word hasten is the same word as almond. Jeremiah had well seen in that he had seen and was shown unmistakably like Aaron and Moses, that he had been chosen—a chosen vessel to glorify God in the work he was called upon to do, and the encouragement was given; God was with him to deliver him.

We are reminded of the words of the Lord Jesus in John 15:16:-

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you."

So to all His chosen ones the message is the same—"Be not afraid of their faces, for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord." God's word is steadfast and sure and the beauty of it is that God is faithful. God never gives a promise and fails to fulfil it. And so what greater encouragement could we have as we see the day of deliverance drawing nigh, that these words addressed to Jeremiah and all those of like precious faith:-

"And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee." (Jeremiah 1:18).

What is Truth? (Part 15)

(John 18:38)

Abraham

Quite early in the pages of divine history the name Abram appears. An inkling is given of a family which was struggling in the midst of apostasy and idolatry, beset by doubts over what was taking place around them.

It is recorded:

“Now these are the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran began Lot. And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees.

And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram’s wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor’s wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah and the father of Iscah.

But Sarai was barren; she had no child. And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son’s son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram’s wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there.”

This family obviously were not content with their life in Ur of the Chaldees, whose sophistication and luxury has been revealed by archaeology during this last century. They had served the idolatry of the place, for the divine message says, “... Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood (River Euphrates) in old time, even Terah the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods.” (Joshua 24:2).

In journeying north from Ur they left that idolatry behind and finding a suitable place for their flocks, it seems they called the name of their new habitation after their deceased relative Haran, to keep his name in remembrance, though his burial had been in their late abode of Ur of the Chaldees. Terah had originally determined to take the crescent path north and then a circle for the west, and so down into the land of Canaan, but he obviously became settled in his new abode near to the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. The break therefore from idolatry, for him, was incomplete and he died in the place of his new abode aged two-hundred and five years, nearly sixty years after Abram had journeyed on to the land of Canaan.

However it is recorded of Abram:-

“The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come unto the land which I shall shew thee. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land (Canaan).”

(Acts 7:2-4).

Abram’s father as referred to, would appear to be his grandfather, also called Nahor, who as the genealogy shows, died when Abram was approaching his fiftieth year. It was after this one’s decease, when Abram was seventy-five, and had “... substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran ...” (Genesis 12:5) that Abram continued the second stage of his journey to Canaan.

Such details reveal a very human situation, of how Abram, over a period of time, waited for the guidance of his affairs from the true and living God in whom he believed and trusted. Furthermore the choice of his sister Sarai for his wife reveals his rejection (along with his brother Nahor) of the idolatrous women of the Chaldean city of Ur, for one of his own family who undoubtedly justified his confidence in her, by courageously following him in his response to the call of God.



The Signs of His Coming and of the End of the World

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.”
(2 Timothy 3:1).

The media has never been so influential as it is today. But in propagating the government's views in respective countries of east and west, or in the third world, so influencing the masses to incline to certain political values with which the ruling powers wish to impress them there is another aspect to world broadcasts which is highly detrimental to the well being of the peoples.

It is almost as though there is a modern day fulfillment of what was spoken against in ancient times by the righteous message:-

“Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near.” (Amos 6:3).

Certainly the violence of these times in one respect, is brought very near to almost all people, as horrific scenes which are now all too common, are caused to appear upon the television screens in the homes of the people. The young, of course, see these things and it does appear some of them are hardened, calloused, by the frequency of the evil things displayed.

It is of course true, that because of man's nature, there has always been violence. But never has it been brought so near, and so continually close, as in these times. The present generation has, for years now, been storing up trouble for the future by this modern media decline, but does nothing to temper or alleviate its worst aspects by bringing about a change for the better. So those concerned in these things “... put far away the evil day ...”.

But thinking people are noting what is happening. At a conference in Manchester educationalists have deplored the influence on children by some newspapers, television and video tapes. What the children have seen is conveyed in essays which the children write at school. They recall murder and mutilation of bodies, and weird sights of imagination. Children were being fed upon “a damaging and unsuitable diet of such things ...” such “... material is poisoning young minds and it is wondered who should see the school psychologist, the child or its parents.” It was also commented, “How do you teach a child who can hardly keep his or her eyes open because of watching the television until the early hours.”

The scriptures declare that a time is coming which will remove such things:-

“... the Lord, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more.” (Zephaniah 3:15).

Meanwhile the situation, warned of so long ago, remains evident in the growing generation:-

“... For men shall be ... blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ... incontinent, fierce ...”.
(2 Timothy 3:2-3).

News from the Ecclesias

EDEN, NEW YORK, Grange Hall, Church Street.

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11.30 a.m.

Sunday School 1.45 p.m.

Bible Class: Midweek: Forestville and Hamburg.

Alternate Week: Revelation Study.

The continued opportunity to witness through several inquiries from Christadelphians is felt to be a blessing, and gratitude is felt for strength and for help in this work from our brethren.

The Fraternal Gathering planned for Saturday, September 6th is much in mind — a token of the companionship and unity which is promised if we are faithful to our God.

May we continue to feel His guiding hand in our lives both individually and ecclesially, especially as the time for our probation to end seems very close.

A witness is planned shortly for concerned Christadelphians.
J.A.DeF.

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MANCHESTER, Ryecroft Hall, Audenshaw.

Sunday: Breaking of Bread 11 a.m.

Thursday: Bible Class 7.30 p.m.

It is a cause for profound gratitude as we consider the help which is received both far, as well as near, in answer to our seekings relating to the inevitable difficulties which are experienced from time to time.

The long and faithfully adhering probation of our Sister Minnie Thorman has come to an end at the age of 95 on Friday, September 26th. The burial in the grave of her sister Carrie was on Tuesday, September 30th.