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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

THAT IT MAY GO WELL WITH THEE

THESSE last few days we have been listening to the words of Moses in Deuteronomy as he spoke of Israel's entering the land promised to their fathers. The word *Deuteronomy* means "a copy of the law". His words here in Deuteronomy were a repeating of the law given to Israel on Mt. Sinai forty years earlier. We know that God provided the law for His people so that "sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful" (Romans 7:13). In addition, it was a schoolmaster to lead Israel unto Christ, their Messiah (Galations 3:24). Moses repeated this law knowing he was about to die and was anxious to impart to his brethren the wonder of God's mercy in the law. In addition, Moses knew that Israel's circumstances were about to change; no longer would they wander in the wilderness, dwelling in tents, but would dwell in the land. The law of God would remain, but some details would require modification to fit the different circumstances. Today the law has been fulfilled in the work of Jesus. A new covenant is in effect, but much help toward keeping this new covenant can be found in the law. We remember that the thousands in Israel had only this law. The faithful saw in it God's mercy, His love, to culminate in the coming of Christ. Let us then listen to Moses as he repeated the law for his younger brethren — and for ourselves.

First Moses reviewed their forty years' journey when God's hand was with them, notwithstanding the hardness of their hearts, their murmuring and refusal to hear. We are told the time for the journey from Sinai to Kadesh-Barnea was eleven days in normal circumstances (Deuteronomy 1:2). But because of their rebellion against God's word, it became forty years. Is it not true that our own thinking, fears and sense of independence can make our journey harder and longer than it need be? It may become much laden with anguish and tribulation; indeed our lacks can even cause the hope for the end of that journey to be lost.

To help Israel, Moses reminded how forty years before, God had spoken at Sinai:

"... Ask now of the days that are past ... whether there hath been any such thing ... Did ever people hear the voice of God ... and live? Or hath God assayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of another nation ...?"

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Unto thee it was shewed ... Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord he is God ... there in none else." Deuteronomy 4:32-35 & 39.

Consider it—this word is also used as restore, turn. Was Moses' message then, turn it over in your heart, restore your faith and trust that Yahweh is mightiness. He has done all this for you! To what end?

"Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments, ... that it may go well with thee, ... and that thou mayest prolong thy days ..." Verse 40.

Israel should have perceived and pondered this, for it did not go well with them as they murmured and complained. It did not go well with Moses and Aaron as they failed to sanctify Yahweh at the rock. We too must realize that it will not go well with us if we fail to heed His word. Let us then put ourselves into our Father's hands, trusting in and subject to His word. Then we will find it does go well with us. It may not be the way we naturally want to go, but in the direction *He* knows is right and for our ultimate good.

Moses realized this after his many experiences under the Almighty's care and love, and now was anxious to impart this strengthening to his brethren. He reminded Israel how at Sinai they feared to hear God's voice and asked that Moses speak to them instead. And God said through His servant:

"O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!" Deuteronomy 5:29.

Can we discern why Moses was so diligent to repeat the law, to exhort his brethren as they were about to enter the land? Can we see why it can be a great strengthener to us also in our struggle to find the promised inheritance?

Moses continued:

"Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years ... to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart ..." —

Deuteronomy 8:2.

To be led of God, what a great privilege — one which no other nation knew; and today, that a few, a remnant may also be so blessed! In Israel's day that leading was very evident as the cloud and the pillar of fire went before them, showing the way. Today we do not have such tangible evidence of His leading, but as prayer is answered, as circumstances develop, not by mere time and chance, that hand IS there to *lead* in the way He would have

us go. The word *lead* comes from a root to *walk*. God in a sense walked with Israel, as a diligent loving father would do with his children.

The Almighty in His "walking with" also works to humble His people, to gentle unto submission— which is a willingness to be led, not going in one's own strength, weakness, or fear. Are we able to submit in this way? Can we put away our own wishes, plans, or doubts sufficiently to allow His guidance to rule our way? Cannot God provide for all our needs, just as He did for Israel's in the wilderness?

For forty years He granted manna, bread from heaven. Every morning (except for the sabbath) without fail there it was. By it and by the water from the rock, Israel lived. However, human nature soon exhibited itself, as without other food they tired of God's provision, saying:

"... our soul loatheth this light bread." Numbers 21:5. They overlooked the fact that without it in their wilderness journey, they would soon perish. Therefore things did *not* go well with Israel as God showed His displeasure at their lack of perception and appreciation. Yet may not we, Brethren and Sisters, fail in the same way? Day in, day out we are granted the food of life — His word — to sustain spiritually. It is there for the taking as was the manna. We may grow lax at times, or we may grow accustomed to a daily habit; even at times we may wish our circumstances were different, more varied and catering to our flesh, more pleasing to our own desires. Then we need to take a hard look at ourselves and realize that the Almighty knows our needs and provides what is exactly best, and often prevents us from doing something which is wrong or harmful. As He does so, He watches, proves us, tests us, discerning what is in our hearts. We may feel we are "all right" — that our hearts do not need proving—after all, 20, 30, 40 years or more in the Truth should have proved something; why do we need testing? But — let us look back in our lives as we have seen esteemed and beloved brethren, faithful in the Truth for many years, fail at some new, God-given test, and so fall away. Does it not make us fear lest in such a time we, too, may fail? Even the Lord Jesus was tested, proved often. We recall His proving immediately after receiving the Holy Spirit. He could have felt that with the power of the Spirit He was all right, couldn't fail. Yet we know His first trial was—would He use that power to ease the hunger which was so acute after forty days without food? This would indeed also manifest that He *was* the Son of God. But His answer to Himself — at these thoughts — was "No", saying:

“... It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

Matthew 4:4.

Obviously these earlier words of Moses (Deuteronomy 8:3) were in His heart, and thus He was able to conquer the temptation. He was led and humbled by God, and in His testing honored His Father. As a result it went well with Him, for:

“... angels came and ministered unto him.”

Matthew 4:11.

The words of Moses which we have been reading were directed to Israel; they may seem far from us, perhaps not applying to our living today. But were they far from Jesus in His time of proving, as He lived in the fear of failing? Paul helps us to be closer to God's word, helps us to be strengthened as he writes concerning Christ and the law:

“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”

Romans 10:4.

And then the apostle continues:

“... the righteousness ... of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)”

Verses 6—7.

There is no need to question or doubt, for in the word He is near. It is simple if we are willing to be led as Paul further tells us:

“But, what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in they heart: ...”

Verse 8.

What a help for us as we begin to realize how close to us God, His Son, His purpose can be if His word is truly in our mouths and in our hearts. This was Moses' exhortation as He said to his Israel:

“But the word is very nigh ... that thou mayest do it. See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil.”

Deuteronomy 30:14-15.

The word of God has not changed since Moses spoke these words. Let us, Brethren and Sisters, strive to make it as nigh to us as it was to Moses, to Jesus, that in God's mercy it may indeed “go well with” us.

J.A.DeF.

Lay Thine Hand Upon Thy Mouth

AS WE read Proverbs chapter 30 we find that the words of Solomon can help us to more fully value how we are to serve God. When we begin reading in this chapter we are perhaps puzzled by the first verse which says:

“The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, even the prophecy:
...”

When we look up these two unfamiliar names for Solomon we find that Agur means gathered and Jakeh means harvest. Perhaps as Solomon wrote this proverb his mind was upon that gathering and final harvest which comes to all men, for he says in verse 7:

“Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die:”

These thoughts can help us to be mindful of the final harvest and the gathering of the worthy and unworthy to judgment.

Much of Proverbs speaks of the wisdom and foolishness of man. Solomon ponders his own situation; in verse 2 he admits:

“Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man.”

The fact is, that man being brutish, can so easily deny God. As verses 4 and 5 continue we are helped, as the tone for the remaining chapter is established:

“Who hath ascended up into heaven or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son’s name, if thou canst tell?”

Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.”

Here the majesty and power of God is established as compared with the insignificance of man. How important it is for man to be mindful of the need to turn to the word of God, for within that word is help, but only as confidence and trust is put in Him.

Solomon tells us in verse 8 to: “Remove far from me vanity and lies:”, but when we look at his failure toward the end of his life, we see how difficult it was to be far from them. We know from Solomon’s admission in Ecclesiastes 4:13 of his downfall:

“Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished.”

When one will no longer receive admonition it is usually because the vanity and lies of the flesh have created a false sense of pride, and man, like some of Israel of old, is too stiffnecked to bow his head in shame and be rebuked. We remember the subtlety of the serpent in the garden and how Eve was enticed by his lie. This misstep caused the downfall of both Adam and Eve and the sentence of death to be passed upon all the children of men. Solomon knew that God could help those who stumbled, and would be to them as a shield and protector, but only as they trusted in Him.

When we go to verse 32 we are given additional help as it says:

“If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought evil, lay thine hand upon thy mouth.”

How often we have seen a little child quickly put a hand to his mouth when he realizes he has said something improper, or has mispoken. The spiritual aspect here is to stop the advance of evil words or thoughts ... to restrain the flesh. We see the same mind in Job as he says in Job 40:4:

“Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.”

Job perceived he was vile, or as my margin says, “of no account” before God. How mindful we too must be of the subtlety of the flesh, for Solomon even with his great wisdom fell prey to it at the end of his life.

The 3rd verse of our chapter in Proverbs says:

“I have neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy.”

This is a surprising statement from one to whom God gave great wisdom, but perhaps we see why this was so when we read Ecclesiastes 2:10-11:

“And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour.

Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.”

We can agree with Solomon regarding these words, “all is vanity”, but what a sobering thought to know that Solomon with all his wisdom did not adhere to this thinking toward the end of his life. This should help us to recognize the great struggle required to apply the spirit in our living and restrain the flesh,

lest we of a much lesser wisdom than Solomon fail in the same way. We know that if we put our trust in God He is close at hand to help. Peter tells us in I Peter 5:6-10 what our spirits should be as we approach unto the Father for His support:

“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.”

Here is the means of help revealed: be humble, sober and vigilant and recognize we must be subject to the mighty hand of God. If when we have done foolishly we can put our hand upon our mouth, we know God will provide His care as a shield and protection to establish and settle those who trust in Him.

M.C.S.

Responsibility

The excellence of God's law to direct is shown as follows:-

"If one be found slain in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee to possess it, lying in the field, and it be not known who hath slain him;

Then thy elders and thy judges shall come forth, and they shall measure unto the cities which are round about him that is slain:

And it shall be, that the city which is next unto the slain man, even the elders of that city shall take an heifer, which hath not been wrought with, and which hath not drawn in the yoke;

And the elders of that city shall bring down the heifer unto a rough valley, which is neither eared nor sown, and shall strike off the heifer's neck there in the valley."

(Deut. 21:1-4).

It is easy for human nature to say about some great calamity "We did not know about it; it is nothing to do with us." God's law says that those near to a situation *are* responsible, or are at least responsible to demonstrate they are not at fault in a particular calamity. Those nearest to an evil situation under the law were not permitted to say, "Oh yes, we are near to this sin, but what of others, are they not near also?" yet if the others were measurably further away from sad and evil events, then the nearer ones were more responsible to enquire into the evil and repudiate it.

So Deuteronomy gives a picture of Leading Brethren measuring out who were the most responsible, in the matter of duty, when evil arose. To repeat, Deuteronomy 21:2-3:-

"Then thy elders and thy judges shall come forth, and they shall measure unto the cities which are round about him that is slain:

And it shall be, that the city which is next unto the slain man, even the elders of that city shall take an heifer, which hath not been wrought with, and which hath not drawn in the yoke."

So where there was a cluster of cities (or villages), we can see that great care was required to be taken, to make sure who had a particular responsibility in the matter. The demarkation might be a close one, but the wise rule of the spirit made no exception; it might be only a little and weak village that was nearest. What of that larger, more powerful city on the other side, hardly much further away? No, the weaker was nearest, and must take the necessary steps to deal with the matter.

Are these things not written, even for our admonition and

learning, in these last days? Is it not possible to spiritually fail to follow this counsel? It will not do to hold brethren at a distance to be responsible for a disaster which has occurred near to hand, neither is it sufficient to say, "We did not know," or to say "they were in a better position than us to act on the matter". The responsibility is on those who are the nearest and closest to the calamity. Perhaps nothing can positively be done about the matter but nevertheless something *has* to be done.

In Israel there had to be no holding back.

"And all the elders of that city, that are next unto the slain man, shall wash their hands over the heifer that is beheaded in the valley.

And they shall answer and say, Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it.

Be merciful, O Lord, unto thy people Israel, whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto thy people of Israel's charge. And the blood shall be forgiven them." (verses 6-8).

What was the beheaded heifer representing? Surely the sacrifice. How else could there be a cleansing and forgiveness? Let us note, that when they had made the sacrifice and washed their hands, it was *then* that the blood of the slain, the blood of the hidden iniquity, revealed in a measure by the finding of the body, was forgiven them. In other words they were collectively in need of forgiveness, even though it was something that had happened to them in ignorance, because it had happened *near* to them, and so they were contaminated by it unless they showed some collective responsibility, and expressed their need for God's mercy through the sacrifice.

But suppose they had not washed their hands? That could not be, they must wash their hands of the evil, and say they were not responsible for it, nor had their eyes seen it.

We see here then another important feature of the Spirit's instruction. At times it is important to protest innocence. If not, a situation is left unresolved. When the responsible in Israel expressed through the washing of their hands that they were not in the transgression, the situation, which was a difficult one by reason of ignorance, was at least cleared up as far as it could be cleared up.

Let us note the concluding remark of this instruction from the law of God:-

"So shalt thou put away the guilt of innocent blood from among you, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the Lord." (verse 9).

This instruction is to help and guide us into doing that which is right in His sight.

The Day Of Atonement (Dr. Thomas 1861)

“BEHOLD, NOW IS THE TIME OF ACCEPTANCE; NOW IS THE DAY OF SALVATION.”

THE day of atonement, its numerous sacrifices, and the various rites enjoined, all deserve our most careful attention; not only from the supreme importance attached to them under the Mosaic Law, but from their frequent mention in the New Testament, and from their typical bearing on the events of our own time, or those which will shortly come to pass.

By the Jews, it is called emphatically THE DAY. It is the day of condemning, avenging, and coverings of Sin, — *yom hak-kiphpurim* — a Day of Coverings: on it the sins of the whole Jewish nation were covered over; on it the High Priest performed all the functions of ordinary priests; and on this day only, he entered the Holy of Holies, or the most holy chamber, or division, of the temple beyond the Veil. This day was considered as a Sabbath, or rest, a festival, and the strictest of fasts; and it concentrated in itself the solemnities proper to each of these, and it had a longer period of preparation preceding it than any other holy day required.

The High Priest performed all those services appointed for the Tabernacle — the daily, the sabbatical, and the festival services as well as those peculiar to this day, and he finished by reading to the people.

Tisri was the first month of the Civil Year, and the seventh of the Ecclesiastical Year, and the 10th of *Tisri* was the Day of Covering, termed in the English Version, “the Day of Atonement.” From the first to the seventh are called *days of conversion*; because in them they turned to Yahweh in preparation for the 10th. The 8th and 9th were styled *terrible days*. On these they clothed themselves with sackcloth, and began to afflict their souls. At sunset on the 9th *Tisri*, the fast began. No food was allowed, except in cases of extreme necessity, and even then the quantity was limited to what a date shell could hold. Seven days before the fast, the High Priest took up his abode in the temple, purifying himself, and practising those various sacrifices, and other offices which he would have to perform on the 10th. On the 9th he fed sparingly, concluding before sunset; during the night he was attended by the younger priests, who read to him, and prevented his sleeping, lest his dreams should be unholy. Others watched for the approach of day, and at the first streak of dawn, they roused the High Priest to the arduous duties of the day.

There were fifteen victims which he must slay, divide, wash, and offer in sacrifice as far as possible with his own hands. *He must wash his whole body five times; wash his hands and feet ten times; and change his garments six times during the day; and the fast must be as strictly observed by him as by the rest of the people.* He went into the Holy of Holies four times during the day:

1. With the Incense;
2. With the Blood of the Bullock;
3. With the Blood of the Goat;
4. At the conclusion of the sacrifices to bring out the Incense.

When the Day of Coverings dawned, the High Priest *put off* his ordinary garments, immersed his whole body, and five times washed his hands and feet; he then *put on the holy golden garments*, and addressed himself to the service of the day.

He first slew the daily sacrifice, a lamb, burnt its members, offered the morning incense, trimmed the lamps, and went through the ordinary morning service. He then offered the bullock, and seven lambs, appointed for extraordinary significant days, and again washed his hands and feet. He then put off the golden garments, bathed himself, and put on the linen garments appropriate to the day — (Lev. 16:4); and now began the service peculiar to it.

He first went to his own bullock, (verse 6) which was between the temple and the altar, and putting both hands upon his head, confessed his sins. Leaving the bullock in the hands of a keeper, he went to cast lots for the two goats in the north-east quarter of the Court below the altar. The lots were inscribed, the one "*For Yahweh*" the other "*For Scapegoat*". After drawing them, he tied a scarlet fillet on the horns of the Scapegoat, when it was taken to the east gate of the temple, which looked towards the Mount of Olives, whence it was to be sent into the wilderness in due time, the victim-goat remaining where it was.

He returned to his bullock, and confessing again over him his own sins, and those of the sons of Aaron, and of the holy people, he slew the bullock, and gave the blood to a priest, who stirred it up to prevent coagulation.

He now took the censer, filled it with burning coals from the Brazen Altar; then took a *handful* of incense from a vessel which was brought to him, and threw it into another dish. He took the censer of coals in his right hand, the dish of incense in his left, and entering the *first* time into the Holy of Holies

through the Veil, placed the burning censer in front of the Ark of the Covenant, poured the incense into his hand, scattered it on the coals, waited till the place was filled with smoke, and then came out backwards, his face being towards the Ark.

On reaching the Court of the Priests, he took the blood of the bullock, which had been kept stirred, and sprinkled it upon the Mercy Seat, eastward; and before it seven times. Coming out again from the Most Holy, he left the remaining blood *in the Holy Place*. He now went out, and slew the victim goat, and going with his blood into the Holy of Holies *a third time*, sprinkled it the blood of the bullock *before the Veil*, then the blood of the goat also. He then *mingled both bloods* in one vessel, and sprinkled the Golden Altar, and vessels of the sanctuary; and going out, poured the remaining blood *under the Brazen Altar*.

These things transacted, he next sent away the Scapegoat, having laid his hands on his head, and confessed the sins of the people. While the Scapegoat was being conveyed away, the High Priest went on with the service of the day. He divided the bullock and goat he had slain, and whose blood he had taken within the Veil: he burnt their fat and inwards upon the Brazen Altar, but sent their cacasses to be burnt *without the camp* or city. By this time the Scapegoat had reached the wilderness, which event, they say, was known by the whitening of the scarlet fillet on the doorpost.

The High Priest then read certain sections of the Law, recited eight prayers, washed his hands and his feet, *put off the linen garment*, bathed, *put on his golden garments*, and washed his hands and feet. He then offered a Ram for himself, and another for people, and seven lambs as extra oblations for this day. At length he offered the daily evening sacrifice, washed his hands and feet, *put off the golden garments*, bathed, put on the linen garments, washed his hands and his feet, and going *a fourth time* into the Holy of Holies, brought out the censer and the dish, which he had left there at the beginning of the service of the day. Washing his hands and feet, he put off the linen garments, bathed, put on the golden garments, washed his hands and feet, offered the evening incense and trimmed the lamps. Then finally washing his hands and feet, he put off the golden garments, resumed his ordinary dress, and went home, followed by the people, and congratulated by his friends.

In solving the enigma of this Mosaic Day of Coverings, it should be remembered, that Christ's person, Christ's office, Christ's sacrifice, and one time of offering it, the Eternal Spirit

in Flesh, or *Christ alone* could fill — to show forth any *one* of these, several types combined; and as each type requires its own time, there must be for each one of Christ's offices several times in the types. The Christ, in his single person, embodies the paschal lamb and its blood of sprinkling; the victims of the Day of Coverings and their blood of sprinkling; the bodies burnt without the camp; and the High Priest who entered the Holy of Holies. All the types centre in the Eternal Spirit Incarnate—the Christ; and therefore in applying them to *Him*, we are under the necessity of giving our whole attention to the meaning of the emblem, not to its circumstances. We must stop, in our application of the types of Christ, at that point where they foreshow his person or offices, and not apply to THE GREAT ANTITYPE the various times, places, and circumstances which are only meant to give necessary locality to the several types. But when the finished work of the Christ comes to be applied to the faithful, or to successive generations; or when we endeavour to trace out the course of his future manifestations, the time and order observed in the type become important features in our inquiry, and an attention to this distinction removes some difficulty in the case.

The Day of Coverings was a day of sacrifice in a preeminent degree — a day of death, of burning, and of blood — “A day of blood and fire, and cloud of smoke.” It was a day also of confession of sin, tribulation, and pardon; so that it became “a time of acceptance, and a day of salvation.” This was the character of the Mosaic Pattern; of a single day in every year of the Times of the Ages; and it foreshadowed a day of like character — a “Now”, which, Paul says, is the time of acceptance and the day of salvation. (2 Cor. 6:2).

This Antitypical Day of Coverings has already continued for many centuries. Its preparation began with the entrance of the Eternal Spirit into its personal Temple (John 2:21) when he descended on Jesus in the form of a dove; the slaying of the bullock and the goat; the burning of their carcasses without the camp; and the carrying of the burning censer into the Holy of Holies — has been fulfilled in the death and resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, who, like the Scapegoat is absent from the camp of Israel. The *handful* of incense, the prayers of the little flock, still smokes before the Ark. The censer remains there; yea, and must remain there till the day is terminated, and its service complete. While it is smoking before the Ark, blood flows and the fire burns. Sin has been condemned in the flesh; and the household or sanctuary of the Eternal Spirit reconciled; but all its members have not yet been brought in. When these are

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complete, "the hour of Judgment", the last hour of the day of atonement will have come. The law will then be proclaimed from Zion by the High Priest in his golden garments. The Jubilee trumpet will sound, and Israel shall return. In this terrible crisis, Babylon falls, the harvest is reaped, the vintage gathered, the winepress trodden, and the times of the Gentiles fulfilled. Their kingdoms become the kingdoms of Yahweh; Israel is pardoned; the nations blessed in Abraham and his Seed; the Day of Atonement consummated; and the Feast of Tabernacles, the feast of the 15th of Tisri, inaugurated to the joy of all the earth.

What is Truth? (John 18:38) Part 24

JACOB AND THE BIRTHRIGHT

ISAAC was no longer a young man when his sons Jacob and Esau were born, for it is recorded "Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them."

As they began to grow up they showed quite different traits:
"... Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field, and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling tents."

(Genesis 25:27).

These few words reveal much information. Abraham had dwelt in tents in his long and faithful sojourn of the call of God. Isaac had followed his father Abraham in this. But Esau, the firstborn of Isaac, was restless, a man of the field, attracted by the excitement of the chase. Not a meditative course of life for him, not a gentle caring of the flock. He indifferently left that responsibility to his younger brother. No wonder Rebekah favoured her younger son Jacob.

But Isaac was hoping for great things from his firstborn which was the natural thing of the time to do. He was however to be ultimately disappointed. In the meantime Esau coaxed his father to favour his way of life, as it is recorded "... Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison ..."

Jacob meanwhile was pondering the call which had led to his family's way of life from the time of his grandfather, but through whom would the fulfilment of God's promises come? Through the firstborn or through himself?

One day as Jacob was preparing sustenance in a cooking pot his hunting brother returned in a famished condition from an unsuccessful sporting escapade. He of course had done nothing to contribute to the family's general economy which had provided the meal for them all. However he immediately asked to be given the prepared food. It was at this point that Jacob perceived an opportunity; would Esau relinquish, in exchange for the prepared meal, the privilege of being firstborn? So came to pass that which is indelibly written for all time:-

"... Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."
(Hebrews 12:16-17).

Esau was devoid of faith, obviously shown by his expressing the thought "... what profit shall this birthright do to me?" So

he made the solemn oath that Jacob should be the named one in connection with the principles and traditions of his fathers, thus showing a great disregard for those very things, which were taken away from him as a result.

A Bible Class

“LABOUR NOT TO BE RICH: ...”

Solomon tells us that the purpose of a proverb is to enable one to:

“... know wisdom and ... To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; ... A wise man will increase learning; ...” Proverbs 1:2-5.

Proverbs are short, often one verse or less, but give much to help. This is true of the proverb under consideration:

“Labour not to be rich: ...”

This message of the spirit does not condemn riches per se. The word *labour* comes from a root meaning to gasp or be exhausted, and is used as to faint, to be weary — which implies spending strength (and thus time) beyond what is right or expedient. The wisdom of the spirit word explains:

“The labour of the foolish *wearieth* every one of them, ...” Ecclesiastes 10:15.

We can see from this that over-exertion and over-attention for the sake of temporal gain is foolish; it brings weariness and is the work of one who is lacking in God’s wisdom, and more intent on his own wisdom.

Thus we are not to labor for *riches*. This word comes from a root meaning accumulation, a piling up. Is God’s instruction for us then: “Do not weary or exhaust yourself to pile up possessions?” The balance of the verse as well as the next one tells us:

“... Cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle ...”

Verses 4-5.

The wisdom of the fleshly man is to accumulate, to over-provide for his needs. The wisdom of God goes on to describe the impermanence of worldly riches: they can quickly and unexpectedly evaporate, leaving those who have labored empty-handed and also without the true riches.

It is helpful to look at an example or two of those who put their hearts into laboring to be rich. Jesus taught His disciples by the parable of the rich man whose ground brought forth abundantly, so much so that he was unable to store it. He said:

“... This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; ... And I will say ..., Soul, thou hast much goods; ... take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.”

Luke 12:18-19.

The Almighty said to this one who felt such satisfaction:

“... Thou fool, this night thy soul (life) shall be required of thee: then whose shall these things be ...? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

Verses 20-21.

The only riches which are enduring or of any consequence are those “toward God”. Is it not for these that our life’s essential labor must be increasing, diligent, and first?

Further help is found in Jesus’ experience with a rich young man who:

“... came ... running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?”

Mark 10:17.

Jesus answered:

“Thou knowest the commandments, ...”

Verse 19.

And the young man responded:

“... Master, all these have I observed from my youth.”

Verse 20.

This man was anxious to find salvation — he kept the commandments. What more was needed? Verse 21 reveals this for us:

“... Jesus *beholding* him *loved* him, and said ..., One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.”

Jesus *beheld* him; we find the word means to observe or to clearly

discern. Jesus knew what was in the young man's heart, and perceiving a lack there, He "*loved him*" by revealing that lack. What *was* lacking? It was that his heart valued his riches more than the hope of eternal life — for, it appears, he was not able to take up the cross and follow Jesus, as he "went away grieved: for he had great possessions".

Must we not conclude from these considerations that —

"... no servant can serve two masters: ... Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Luke 16:13.

Master is a word used as God or Lord, and means one supreme, controlling, having dominion. It is then a question of who or what has dominion or control over our minds, our hearts, our time and works? Is it *the* Master or is it that which pleases the natural man in its challenge and satisfaction? That for which one labors with great zeal and diligence is that which is closest to one's desires. Jesus recognized this and warned:

"Lay not up (accumulate) for yourselves treasures upon earth, ... But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, ... For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Matthew 6:19-21.

Then Jesus went on to repeat that one cannot serve God and mammon. What is first in the heart is revealed by what or whom one serves. Jesus expressed this for us:

"If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon (temporal means), who will commit to your trust the true riches? Luke 16:11.

If because of a desire to accumulate riches there has been a failure to use these temporal things in a way that is faithful, for the work of the Truth, for the brethren and sisters, there will not be granted by a Father who beholds all, the "treasure in heaven" which is the greatest blessing that can be known to man.

J.A.DeF.

Signs of His coming and of the End of the World

"... EVIL men ... shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."
(2 Timothy 3:13).

There is a conspiracy at work by those in power to allay the fears of their populations over the nuclear threat. Propaganda snippets are constantly being put forth that radiation escapes from Nuclear Complexes are so slight as to be of no consequence because they have been measured to have been below a prescribed level, which demarkates where the danger commences. The pertinent question should be, is any man-made radiation safe?

The warning of Chernobyl is undiminished. At the time of writing it is revealed that the effects of the Russian disaster are still being felt. In Wales three-hundred and forty-five farms with more than a quarter of a million sheep are still under restriction because the animals show contamination when geiger counters are used to check them. It is the same in Scotland, and particularly significant that many farms previously not under restriction have now been brought under health regulation. England's Cumbria is also still affected with one-hundred and fifty farms under regulation.

The Welsh Office has explained that: "What appears to have happened is radio-active caesium has lingered in the root mat and surrounding soil and has been brought out by the new growth of grass this year ... No one knows what will happen next year, but we think it likely that, once again, fresh radio-activity will be introduced to the food chain from the new growth of grass."

A Scottish member of Parliament has been quite forthright in saying: "I do not think people have fully realised the implications of the Chernobyl disaster, and the British Government is certainly not anxious for them to be realised." He went on to say: "One farmer I know who volunteered to have a check was astonished to find the extent of radiation there was in his body." The politician said, concerning the continuation of radiation levels: "This underlines how much we believe the Government underestimated the seriousness of this problem and even deliberately played it down. It is quite unprecedented for this kind of thing to be done." ... "There is great concern about the cumulative effects on people of this radiation. If it has affected sheep then it has affected all other animals and food as well."

Now, further contamination has been found in Yorkshire, the levels of radio activity being three times greater than the official safety standard. An ecologist of repute stated that he suspected that: "... the Ministry of Agriculture, which has been conducting the monitoring of sheep in Cumbria, is not monitoring

in the Pennines (Yorkshire) because last year, immediately after Chernobyl, the Pennines appeared not to have been affected."

Honey from bees feeding on heather on the Lancashire side of the Pennines near Preston has been shown to have radio-activity above the prescribed radiation level. Caesium 134 and 137 which are man-made radio-isotopes that cannot occur in nature are being found in and around the city of Leeds, even in deposits on the roofs of houses. Children, it has been said, have the greatest risk, whose developing bodies are particularly susceptible to the effects of radiation, and it is by no means certain they are not victims of radiation entering the food chain other than by lamb and mutton.

To play down therefore the modern radiation threat to life, and to insist upon maintaining nuclear schemes which can affect health and well-being so greatly is another form of deception of these last days and fulfils the prophecy of nineteen hundred years ago: "...men ... shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."

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.

Thoughts and supplications are with those in illness and trial. May our Father grant His healing and comfort as it is His will.

Interest continues in response to advertising with plans for further witness in October, God willing.

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.

When guidance is received and valuable counsel obtained for the work of The House, what a blessing is such help. It is assurance, affording much comfort, that though problems be great at times they can be resolved where there is a true desire to find the Father's will.