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A WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

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

"Take heed that ye be not deceived"

"AT THE TABLE OF THE LORD"

"A PSALM OF ASAPH"

"THE SPIRITS IN PRISON"

"A BIBLE CLASS"

"AN IMPORTANT QUERY ANSWERED BY DR. J. THOMAS 1851"

"THE SABBATH DAY AND THE LORD'S DAY"

"TREES FOR MEAT, WHOSE LEAF SHALL NOT FADE"

"THE SIGNS OF HIS COMING AND OF THE END OF THE WORLD"

"NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS"

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AT THE TABLE OF THE LORD
"AFTER THIS MANNER PRAY YE"

This morning we have heard Jesus' words to His disciples as "he opened his mouth and taught them". In love for those whom he had so recently called, He taught them concerning His Father, His Father's purpose, and His own part in that purpose. He spoke of His coming to fulfill the law, and especially He opened to them the spirit of the law so that they might perceive the mercy and loving kindness of Yahweh. He helped them to feel that gratitude with which all the faithful desire to serve the Almighty, that He might be pleased and they might be blessed. He showed them too the way of practical things; the giving of alms, the means of communicating with God in prayer to seek His help, to thank Him, and to glorify Him. This was never to be done before men, for self-glory, but in secret, as in a closet, that the surroundings might be quiet, with no distraction and no suggestion of mere form, never forgetting that "the Father, who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly" (Matthew 6:6). Hearing His children, He gives heed, responding as He knows best.

The Lord Jesus offers help to us, lest we forget:

"... use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking."
Matthew 6:7.

As we pray, we know God discerns our minds and hearts, and knows what is our first desire. Many words, repeated phrases, a formula in prayer do not impress our Father, but rather reveal a lack on our part. Because prayer is a frequent part of each day, it is possible to fall into a pattern and so come short of being acceptable. Jesus spoke of those who used much speaking:

"Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.
Matthew 6:8.

How merciful and gracious is our God, who in His supreme perception knows our lacks which we ourselves may fail to perceive. We remember the rich young man who asked Jesus:

“. . . Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?”
Matthew 19:16.

Jesus' response was: "keep the commandments" and the young man quickly said he had already done that, and so "what lack I yet?" Jesus, knowing his heart, loving him said: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor..." (verse 21). It appears that the young man could not bring himself to do this, and thus revealed what he valued most. He had sought help, was shown his need, but failed to receive it. Perhaps his original question revealed a need in his spirit: "what good thing shall I do?" for there is never just one specific need, but it is the spirit which must wholeheartedly yield to give of the whole life to God, subjecting one's own thoughts, desires, projects, and priorities to Him. Are we not particularly blessed, Brethren and sisters, having been called to be His children, brethren and sisters of His son, through whom, if faithful, we may become the temple of God (I Corinthians 3:16)? for us there is access to God through Jesus' mediatorship as we strive to yield ourselves members of His body. He intervenes with mercy and understanding for He knows our struggles and temptations. He pleads for us as we fail. In our prayers is there a seeking to be shown our lacks? Are we ready, willing to make hard changes, put our desires, our thoughts and works second, doing so in a manner which is pleasing, not grudging, not last on our list; but sure that all done for Him is a privilege as well as a responsibility?

To guide us, for our perception and diligence often fails, Jesus enlightens our mind to what is acceptable prayer. But don't we already know how to pray? Could our supplications and the spirit behind them become more pleasing? Jesus spoke, "After this manner therefore pray ye" and then He gave them the words which are commonly known as "The Lord's Prayer". This is recited by millions, an example of "vain repetitions". However, it must be perceived as a "manner" of prayer which provides a pattern for us,

one to be fitted to whatever the circumstances. Jesus did not mean it to be done by rote. It is a guide for pouring out our hearts to a Father who already knows His children's thoughts, but yet desires their communicating with Him. He stands ready to reveal, to correct, to strengthen, to help; in short, to do the many things a loving father will do for his children. Recognizing this, Jesus helps us to a suitable "manner" of Prayer.

"Our Father which art in heaven"—Must we not acknowledge and be ever aware of His position as the Almighty God, dwelling on high, ever present, overseeing all His creation?

"Hallowed be they name"—This means we desire to love and venerate His holiness and glory. As flesh, we cannot approach unto Him, yet He has provided One to bring our prayers into His Presence, Jesus Christ, who is teaching us in simple ways how to pray. He is worthy to do this, for His words are true:

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

His life was dedicated to that work from a child. When He remained behind in the temple at Jerusalem as a twelve year old, Mary and Joseph found Him "sitting in the midst of the doctors (teachers), both hearing them and asking them questions". When his worried parents found Him, Mary asked: "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us?"—and His reply was, "wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke chapter 2:48,49). Mary may have felt His duty was to them, but Jesus had a clear priority even at that early time; His first thought was of His Father as He sought to learn more so that He might truly "hallow" His name. Is this not a help for us, revealing how we must desire to sanctify Him, doing His given work, going about His business, putting it first always? Jesus said in this regard:

"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."

John 9:4.

Is not this diligence of Jesus a way of hallowing God's name, assuring that His work is done while there is yet time?

“Thy kingdom come”—Can we keep our minds and hopes centred on that promised kingdom, pray for it, long for it, work for it? If the kingdom is “good news”, in a time of probation, difficulties and tribulations, do we not long for the deliverance it will bring, and then perceive the Father’s mercy in its promise?

“Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven”—Jesus’ mind in the midst of His agonizing was, “not my will, but thine be done”. He gave his life to the doing of it. As He suffered in the garden to bring his flesh into subjection to that will, “he prayed more earnestly”, more fervently and without ceasing, recognizing His great need for help to conquer. Strengthened, He went on and did what was required. This is for our example, Brethren and Sisters, in our personal battle to do what the Father desires. But further, we long for His will to be honored on this earth which is now utterly defiled by mankind.

“Give us this day our daily bread”—A practical need for strength to live, to be sustained; a need He ever fills, yet not always appreciated by ourselves. Is there not also a spiritual need for daily sustenance? Jesus countered the temptation to turn stones into bread as he hungered in the wilderness, by God’s word:

“... Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Matthew 4:4.

That word is alive and available. We have read it this morning. We have symbolically partaken of the substance of it as this Table. Let us then pray for this continual nourishing and growth, made possible by this provision of the bread of life. Let us not neglect this daily feeding, for we know how other things can press in to cause its loss.

“Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors”—Failure and sin are ours each day. We offend and seek His forgiveness. But first, Jesus reminds, there must be a forgiveness, mercy to those who have offended us. Our fleshly inclinations back away at times, but how essential is the putting away of hurt feelings, forgiving trespass against self. Jesus clearly reminds, “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy” (Matthew 5:7). Realizing our own need for the Father’s forgiveness, let us then be fervent in our sup-

plication for help to be merciful, lest failing in this, we let a spirit of bitterness build and we become unworthy of His forgiveness.

“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil”—The world is our place for now an evil place. Surrounded by it we find it is so easy to be caught up in its enticements. Our desire must be for deliverance, a drawing out or rescuing from it. Jesus’ prayer for His disciples was:

“I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.”

John 17:5.

Temptation faces us often, as we observe and sometimes feel the lusts of the world. So the constant plea must be for help to resist the evil, not forgetting Jesus’ words concerning His brethren:

“They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”

John 17:16.

Is this true concerning ourselves, Brethren and Sisters? Are we tolerating it, or are we alert, aware of and hating the evil, seeking deliverance from its subtle power?

“For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever”—The glory is God’s alone, yet He in mercy extends the hope of a part of that power and glory in His kingdom, participating in His work there.

God teaches us to pray “after this manner”, desiring that we may feel and express gratitude and awe that He should allow mere mortal man to know such privilege. Let us then beseech His help, strive to hallow His name, giving thanks for His unlimited mercy. Paul helps us in this determination:

“Be careful for nothing (not anxious over fearful); but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:6-7.

J.A.DeF.

A PSALM OF ASAPH

Our readings in the Palms once again focus our attention on the songs of Asaph, whose name means, to gather or collect. There are twelve such psalms which bring to remembrance the ultimate gathering to take place. To gather can be for any end—a gathering to salvation, or a gathering for another designated purpose, as the coming judgment:

“He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself. Selah.” Psalm 50:4-6.

This judgement we know will take place when the Lord Jesus returns to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. This judgment must occupy our thoughts daily, since that accounting will be based upon the knowledge of the word of God and what has been done with that knowledge during probation. Even under the law, and during David’s time, the required sacrifices spoke to the faithful of God’s desire for the sacrifice of their living, as the following verses in this 50th Psalm illustrate:

“I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me.
Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?
Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High.
And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.” verses 8, 13-15.

What sacrifice is God looking for? He looks for people that value His word, who looking within themselves to judge their own actions according to the standard He has established. This is not a routine obedience monitored by rule, or else the sacrifices under the law would have been sufficient for eternal life. They were an outward sign that the giver had judged his own heart, found it lacking, and was now bringing what was required to find atonement for the breach caused by failure. This psalm of Asaph helps us to reach a better understanding of what God really requires of those who will

be responsible to that judgment gathering.

David's words also help us to comprehend the essence of the covenant relationship between God and His people. To offer thanksgiving one must be perceptive of what a great gift God has given to man—His word, the knowledge of how to attain unto His promised Kindom. To pay one's vow is to walk in accordance with that word, valuing what the blessing of His daily care can mean in our living, and realizing that to call upon Him in the day of trouble is part of exhibiting a trust in His care. Our whole life is a "day of trouble", for without His help our fleshly impulses would conquer completely and we would be hopeless of any better life after this one. However, each time we call upon Him in our distress, we glorify God by relying on His help, rather than going on in our own strength. He accepts this in the spirit of a true sacrifice of our own ambitions and desires.

"Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." verse 5.

This Gathering is the time looked for by all who struggle to serve Him. Their hope is that through His mercy they may become one of His saints—those who have glorified His name by offering their living to Him. This is far beyond the animal sacrifice under the law, but it is rather the continued personal sacrifice made each time the man of flesh is denied and overcome.

How great an influence these psalms of Asaph must have been to the brethren of old, as they attempted to bring their living before God as an offering to His glory. We see this at the time of King Hezekiah. During his reign we read of such a gathering in worship, as the long neglected house of God, was cleansed by the priests and Levites and the people assembled to offer praise and sacrifice to Yahweh:

"And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded: and all this continued until the burnt offering was finished.

And when they had made an end of offering, the king and all that were present with him bowed themselves and worshipped.

Moreover Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the LORD with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer. And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped.

II Chronicles 29:28-30.

Here was true praise to God by all, glorifying Him in both word and deed. This response complied with David's record of the Almighty's mind:

"Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God."
Psalm 50:23.

To order one's conversation aright is to set or put one's life on course in the right direction, moving toward God, as the spiritual mind focuses its single hearted attention upon serving Him.

Under these circumstances the salvation of God can be seen and appreciated by those who love Him and seek to be His gathered ones. Psalm 91 reveals the Father's mind:

"Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high because he hath known my name.

He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him.

With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation."

vv 14—16.

By our acknowledging the name of God through calling upon Him, our Father is glorified and in response, He delivers and further verifies that He holds forth the only means of salvation.

Let us then be reminded of how important is our calling and the sacrifice required. Let us respond in a way which offers that fitting praise to His glory. In rightly ordering our conversation, we show our love and our trust in His mercy, to the end we may be part of that great gathering unto salvation.

M.C.S.

"The Spirits in Prison" (R. Roberts 1867)

"This is a mere synonym for the men how in hades, or the death state, of which you may be satisfied by carefully reading the context. "By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient when once the long-suffering of God waited IN THE DAYS OF NOAH, while the ark was a preparing"—(1 Peter 3:19-20) Now who were disobedient in the days of Noah? The men who were contemporary with him. Hence "spirits" and "men" are in this case equivalent. What was the condition of those men at the time of Peter's writing? They were dead and in their graves, and gone to nothing. Hence "prison" is interchangeable with grave, of which we have illustration in Isaiah 24:2; Zechariah 9:11-12. The grave is certainly a prison of the most effective description; there is no escape from it, and dead men wasted to nothing in it, may, with a retrospective glance at their having once lived, be well described as "spirits". When were these disobedient men preached to by the spirit? The answer is, "in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing." The spirit preached through Noah, who is styled "a preacher of righteousness."—(2 Peter 2:5) This was "the spirit of Christ which was in the prophets," (1 Peter 1:2) and in Noah amongst the rest. The anointing spirit of which Jesus of Nazareth was the complete embodiment, (being God manifest in the flesh), was common to all the servants, messengers and prophets of ancient times. Hence, the spirit which quickened Jesus in his resurrection, and developed a saving name through him, was the same power, influence, or agency that operated through Noah in proclaiming a salvation which Peter says was a figure of that to be achieved through Christ.—(2 Peter 6:21) If it be asked why Peter should suddenly diverge from Christ to Noah, the context would suggest that he did so to show the parallel between the two dispensations thus: There was preaching in Noah's time, and preaching in the apostle's time; disobedience in both; salvation in both; by water in both.

If you contend that Peter means that Christ in a disembodied state, went to hell during the three days he was in the grave, and preached the gospel to the immortal souls of those who were drowned at the flood, you involve yourself in strange difficulties. Christ did not go himself, observe; he went by the spirit, and

preached, etc. Why by the spirit? Did he inspire some devil in hell to preach the gospel? and why was the preaching confined to the souls drowned at the deluge, when, according to the theory in question, hell had received countless millions of souls since the flood, all as wicked, and all as much in need of the supposed privilege? But in truth, these difficulties are perfectly gratuitous. There is no hell, no disembodied state, no immortal souls. These are myths of paganism. The truth of the matter we have endeavoured to set forth."

A BIBLE CLASS

"...yielding pacieth great offences"

In considering these words of Solomon, we are to remember they are the perfect wisdom endowed by God. This entire chapter contrasts the difference between wisdom and foolishness, really a comparison between the ways of a man of spirit and the man of flesh.

This particular verse allows us to grasp a part of that wisdom given to Solomon, though tempered with the knowledge that he failed later in his life—which says that knowing God's wisdom is one thing, but the application of it is quite another. Our verse under consideration is as follows:

"If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place; for yielding pacieth great offences.

Ecclesiastes 10:4.

Looking at the words for yielding and pacieth in the Concordance, we might paraphrase this verse as, "healing (yielding) causes sin to rest". With this in mind, we are helped to apply the wisdom of this verse.

It seems on the surface understandable that to resist the power of a ruler is unwise, when yielding may calm a tempestuous situation. Yielding is a curative process by which one can be healed in the sight of God, or as it says here—the king. In the 8th chapter of Ecclesiastes is an application of that wisdom in a similar sense:

"I counsel thee to keep the king's commandment, and that in regard of the oath of God.

Be not hasty to go out of his sight: stand not in an evil thing;

for he doeth whatsoever pleaseth him.

Where the word of a king is, there is power: and who may say unto him, What doest thou?

Whoso keepeth the commandment shall feel no evil thing: and a wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment."

Eccl. 8:2-5.

These verses give the perspective of one before God or a worldly ruler. The thought of "be not hasty" is similar to the thought in our verse of, "leave not they place". God's wrath is always justified and correct but a king's wrath may not always be so, because he is flesh, nevertheless, yielding whether the wrath is justified or not tends to cool an angry confrontation. How does not leaving cause a cure? An example may be found in I Samuel chapter 25 where Abigail came to an angry David, falling at his feet and saying:

"...Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be: and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid.

Let not my lord, I pray thee regard this man of Belial, even Nabal: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him: . . . Now therefore, my lord, as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the LORD hath withholden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies, as they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal."

verses 24-26.

There was a twofold yielding here, for she yielded in submission to David the king, but recognized the wrong he might do to Nabal in avenging himself, courageously urged him to yield to God. We know she was greatly esteemed because of her wise advice, for after Nabal's death she was taken by David to be his wife.

Another example of David's yielding to wise advice is seen in II Samuel chapter 12 in his involvement with Bathsheba. Nathan the prophet came, relating the story of the rich man who selfishly took

the poor man's lamb, saying "thou art the man". David's response to this accusation is recorded in verse 13:

"And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD . . ."

By acknowledging his sin and submitting or yielding to the prophet's rebuke and thus to God, David in a sense was cured of his great offence as Nathan's reply indicates:

"The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die."
II Sam. 12:13.

How does this lesson apply to us today? God is our ruler—our king, and we must recognize His supreme power in our living as always being just and upright. We must keep His words in our heart and mind, always yielding to Him, even when we may feel there is justification in what has been done. He looks for our spirits to overrule the natural tendencies of our flesh in all ways, making them yield and submit to the purpose of God. When there is failure there must also be for true yielding, confession and repentance, for this is the only way healing can be achieved, and that at-one-ment with God when offense has occurred. If this mind is not there, we are warned what can be expected:

"The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: whoso provoketh him to anger sinneth against his own soul."
Proverbs 20:2.

If one provokes a lion he will attack and who suffers? Usually only the provoker. Contrary to this is the act of yielding, submitting oneself in the sight of God in order to receive His favor as Solomon further reminds:

"The wrath of a king is as messengers of death: but a wise man will pacify it.

In the light of the king's countenance is life; and his favour is as a cloud of the latter rain."
Proverbs 16:14-15.

"The king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion; but his favour is as dew upon the grass."
Proverbs 19:12.

The wrath of a king is something to be greatly feared, yet these

verses in Proverbs speak of his favour as something of great value—as the latter rain or as the dew. The dew settles gently without our knowledge and is seen only in the morning as a welcome refreshment to the earth. This favor may be made only to those who are gentled by the recognition of their own failures, realizing in doing so, they have provoked the wrath of God upon themselves, and thus seek atonement through repentance.

How different is this way of life from the thinking of the world. A world that promotes all to stand up for its individual rights, speaking up loudly and clearly for whatever it wants, regardless of others who may be in the way. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life is the basis of man's foolishness therefore, let us struggle to apply the wisdom of the Spirit in yielding our living in the fear of God and to His mercy.

M.C.S.

AN IMPORTANT QUERY ANSWERED

BY DR. J. THOMAS 1851

"What must a man know and believe before he is a fit subject for immersion?" E. M. S.—Illinois.

Answer

"The Gospel of the Kingdom," that is, "the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ." See Mark 16:15—16; and Acts 8:12; also Matthew 24:14. When a man knows, or understands, and believes this gospel with "an honest and good heart" he is fit to be united to the Holy Ones, that he may receive repentance, remission of sins, and a right to eternal life through the name of Jesus. See Luke 24:47; John 20:31; Acts 5:31; 11:18; Revelation 22:14.

THE SABBATH DAY AND THE LORD'S DAY

Letter to Dr. Thomas. September 2 1858

Brother Thomas:- There are several in this neighbourhood patiently waiting to see your answer to Bro. Dunn's letter respecting the Law and the Sabbath, thinking you may throw some light upon our benighted minds- - -

George R. Hall.

Extract from letter (as referred to in the above) to Dr. Thomas.
January 12, 1858

Dear Sir— --- I do not agree with you that the first day of the week is to be observed as the Lord's Day, and because I do not find it sustained by the Apostles, either by precept or example. Neither do I find anything to sustain the idea that the seventh day sabbath is a Jewish institution. Certainly it was not Jewish in its origin, God having sanctified it at the Creation. Gen. 2:23; And Jesus forbids such an idea, when he says, "The sabbath was made for man," Mark 2:27. And it also appears from Isaiah 66, that the sabbath is to be kept in the Messiah's age. Now, while I keep the Sabbath with the other nine precepts, which are certainly binding, I do not seek justification through them, but through faith in obedience to the word ---

T. H. Dunn

Dr. Thomas' explanation January 1859

On the seventh day, which was neither longer nor shorter than the days which preceded it, "God ended his work which he had made;" and because of this notable event, "he blessed and sanctified it." A day is blessed, because of what is or will be imparted to those who are commanded to observe it. The sanctification of the day implies the setting of it apart that it might be kept in some way different from other days. The manner of its original observance may be inferred from the law concerning it when it was enjoined upon the Israelites. To them it was said, "remember the sabbath day to keep it holy." If it be asked, how was it to be kept holy? the answer is, "in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor any one or thing belonging to thee;" and the reason for this total abstinence from work is referred to the Lord's own example in that "he rested the seventh day." The nature of its observance in the ages and generations, and the recompense thereof, is well expressed in the words of Isaiah; "if thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath from doing thy pleasure on my holy day: and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shall

honor him not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

(Isaiah 58: 13-14).

In this passage the conditions are stated upon which faithful Israelites might inherit the blessing typified by the rest of the seventh day. They were joyfully to devote themselves to the way of the Lord. They were not simply to abstain from work, yawning and grumbling over the tediousness of the day, and wishing it were gone, that they might return to their ordinary course of life; but they were to esteem it as a delightful, holy, and honorable day. Their pleasure was to consist in doing what the Lord required, and in talking of "the exceeding great and precious promises" he had made. To do this was "not speaking their own words," but the Lord's words. Such an observance as this, however, of the sabbath day, implies a faithful mind and a gracious disposition as the result of knowing the truth. Neither antedeluvian nor postdeluvian could "call the sabbath a delight," who was either ignorant or faithless of the import of the promise "thou shalt delight thyself in the Lord, and ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed with the heritage of Jacob." A man who simply looked at the seventh day as a sabbath in which he was interdicted from pleasures, and conversation agreeable to him, and from the money-making pursuits in which he delighted, would regard the day more as a weekly punishment, than as joyous and honorable. Though he might mechanically abstain from work he did not keep it so as to be entitled to the blessing which belonged to the observance of the day to the Lord. It was irksome to him, because being faithless he perceived no reward in keeping it; and "without faith it is impossible to please God."

(to be continued)

TREES FOR MEAT, WHOSE LEAF SHALL NOT FADE

Ezekiel 47:12

The subject which we are privileged to consider at this time takes us to the coming age when the kingdom of God will fill the earth. It is from the vision shown to the prophet Ezekiel—the glory of God’s temple which will stand in His chosen place. The words of the man sent from God to Ezekiel are:

“... Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thine heart upon all that I shall shew thee; for to the intent that I might shew them unto thee art thou brought hither: declare all that thou seest to the house Israel.”

Ezekiel 40:4.

The vision revealed the divine purpose to establish ultimately a house of prayer for all people. Through the prophet’s words we are given an uplifting view of the time when Jesus Christ will reign over the earth, with all peoples subject to Him. These, now all Israelites in heart, will worship in this house, offering sacrifices, keeping the feasts, fulfilling the words of the Almighty:

“Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD... will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.”

Isaiah 56:6-7.

Can we imagine the impact of this vision upon Ezekiel? He was captive in Babylon; Jerusalem and Solomon’s temple were in ruins—a seemingly hopeless situation. Yet here was this vision to sustain the prophet’s hopes and those of any faithful Israelite. Is it not a shining hope today for those who look and long for Jesus’ coming?

Our subject concerns a particular aspect of this temple and God’s plan. Ezekiel was shown a river rising from the altar’s south side, flowing out to the right of the prince’s gate eastward. Its depth increased as it flowed, as did its width until it became a river that could not be passed over (Ezekiel 47:1-5). The purpose of this river

was revealed to Ezekiel:

“... These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed.”

Ezekiel 47:8.

The waters east of Jerusalem, the site of the temple, constitute the Dead Sea. This body is 1300 feet below sea level, and has no outlet for the six million tons of water which flow into it every day. By evaporation over the years, its water contains four to five times as much salt as do the oceans; consequently, no life can exist in it. It is well named the “Dead” Sea. In Ezekiel’s vision, the great river from under the altar, when it reached the Dead Sea, caused its waters to be “healed”, and we are told that “every thing shall live whither the river cometh.” (Verse 9). Are we not shown that from the altar (Christ), living waters will provide spiritual health and healing to all mortals in the kingdom age?

What then of these trees which grow by the river of life?

“... Upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: . . . the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine.”

Ezekiel 47:12.

Here in the sublime provision of the Almighty is fruit for life and nourishment, and medicine for healing the mortal frailties. These trees are sustained by “waters (that) issued out of the sanctuary” (Verse 12). In this connection we think of Jesus’ words:

“... the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

John 4:14.

The mortal subjects will be supremely blessed, partaking of this divine provision which can lead them to spiritual health and hope.

David speaks of one delighting in the law of God who:

“... shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”

Psalms 1:3.

Jeremiah gives us further help using this same figure:

“Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river . . . her leaf shall be green; . . . neither shall cease from yielding fruit.”
Jeremiah 17:7-8.

From this help are we not able to see that these trees typify a glorious people who live and reign with Christ as saints? Their work is to lead and guide those blessed as subjects in His Kingdom. Christ’s saints are ever there—providing, nourishing, healing, caring, upholding—even as in their time of probation they knew that wondrous strength in the water of life issuing forth from God’s Messiah altar for mortal men.

Ezekiel was mercifully made stronger in faith, encouraged by this vision of God’s purpose. Can we too experience that uplift, and look beyond our present trials to that radiant hope so graciously extended to those who perceive and unite themselves to that same purpose?

J. A. DeF

SIGNS OF HIS COMING AND OF THE END OF THE WORLD

“The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect.”

(Psalm 32:10).

Not long ago governments were proclaiming the benefits of nuclear power. Some leaders deceived themselves into believing that fission produced electricity was wonderfully economical. That was before Chernobyl. It is a different story now, the British Government for example reversing its plans for nuclear power because of the great costs involved in dealing with nuclear waste.

The Soviet disaster alerted governments to the potential grave danger if an atomic power station gets out of control. Russia is still paying a great price for what happened at Chernobyl four

years ago. British scientists with special equipment along with experts from other countries have been trying to assess whether another three million people need to be evacuated from the Chernobyl region. There are fears that a million children could be suffering severe health problems as a consequence of the radiation dispersion estimated to be fifty times greater than was produced by the Hiroshima bomb. It is a great problem for the Soviet Union that three million people live in contaminated areas where they have undoubtedly imbibed radio active material. A Russian spokesman for the Ukraine region has now said, "We are still only realising the true extent of the tragedy --- Now we can see it for ourselves. All the children in the contaminated areas have swollen thyroids --- they do not --- run and play like children, they sit around in groups like old men."

In the Chernobyl area of the Ukraine five million hectares of farmland and one and a half million hectares of forest are contaminated. Ninety thousand people were evacuated but there are still one thousand six hundred towns and villages occupied in the area, with a population of one and a half million. The authorities are trying to resettle another fifteen thousand, but there are another one hundred and fifty thousand with seriously affected thyroid glands left behind. Then—north of the Ukraine in Byelorussia, a fifth of its farmland and over two million of its population are also contaminated. The comments of a Russian politician reveal a grim situation, "The consequences of the Chernobyl disaster have turned out to be much larger and on a more serious scale than was perceived by many, including prominent scientists and experts."

Yet, even now, some leaders and politicians still advocate retention of nuclear power stations, presumably so that material for nuclear weapons can still be readily available. What folly it all is.

But from the ancient record comes counsel and hope, "The Lord --- maketh the devices of the people of none effect." The Chernobyl disaster has undoubtedly caused restraint on world leaders; their plans are now changing, so there is a curbing of nuclear weaponry. The hand of God is undoubtedly at work to protect His good earth from the mad excesses of its peoples. This indeed is a sign, for His wonderful creation will be preserved for the Kindom which is promised.

NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS

HAMBURG, NEWYORK, Corner Southwestern Blvd. & Pleasant Ave.

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 presence of Brother and Sister W. G. Butterfield of the Manchester ecclesia brings joy in the companionship and for the stronger bonds which such visits surely build.

Gratitude is felt for the Father's help and healing for those in the ecclesias who are ill or infirm.

The invitations mailed to Christadelphians, inviting those interested to write for the booklet dealing with the history of the Truth have brought a steady response, giving encouragement in this continuing witness.

J . A . DeF .

MANCHESTER, Ryecroft Hall, Audenshaw.

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11 a.m.
Thursdays: Bible Class 7.15 p.m.

The return of Brother and Sister W. G. Butterfield from New York bringing with them all the love and care of the Brethren and Sisters in America has furthered the binding of the fellowship which is of the Truth. We have rejoiced at their reports of the welfare of the Brethren and Sisters and of the work going on in the United States for the furtherance of the Truth.