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The Remnant of Christ's Ecclesia

in opposition to the Dogmas of
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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
"LIFT UP YOUR HEADS"

How impressive is the divine record. Recently consideration has been given to three occasions of God's special working with his people: in the time of Solomon, in Jeremiah's time, and later on with the Apostles. These three periods together encompass about one-thousand years – a considerable portion of the history of God's people since the creation. Today, Brethren and sisters, almost two thousand years after Christ, we see sure signs of His soon return to fulfill God's ordained purpose with this earth. No one knows specifically the time, for only the Almighty Himself knows. Surely, however, soon Jesus will return to gather the responsible to His judgment and to reward His faithful. Ultimately this will bring about a new earth, a changed world – one ruled in perfect justice and righteousness – hardly imaginable to mankind in this present troubled state.

In this country, recent elections have brought sharply to serious minds the need for great change, and yet the alternatives are not within human grasp: Three candidates, none having the people's trust, all having dubious qualifications. Is this not in general the state of man's rule? We may observe with certain dismay, yet in trust, for "the most High ruleth in the Kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." (Daniel 4 : 17)

What does all this mean to us, a very small remnant looking for the Messiah's promised return? Does it not reinforce our faith, build up our hope, yet quicken our fear lest we be found lacking at His judgment seat? Is our determination the greater to do His will, submitting to whatever circumstances He may ordain? surely we must be more ready to take heed and hope in Jesus' words:

"And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."
Luke 21:28.

To "look up" gives the thought of not being bowed down but lifting the head in renewed determination, contemplating those things not of the earth but from above.

Paul shows what this means to us:

"If ye then be risen with Christ (baptized), seek those things which are above, ...

Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." Colossians 3:1-4

Our great hope rests with God in heaven. Those whose love is in Him and His Son will have their eyes lifted up, their heads raised in expectation. To help us look to Israel's hope, Brethren and sisters, there is strong support and incentive in our readings which provide guidance, encouragement and warning for these last days.

The time of Solomon was the height of Israel's glory and power. Because of David's righteousness he was promised a kingdom, a throne, a son, a house – the hope of Israel to be accomplished ultimately in his greater son, Jesus. Solomon, David's immediate son newly made king, was given wisdom far above ordinary men as he lifted up his hands in prayer to God:

"...I am a but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in.

Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: ..."

I Kings 3:7, 9.

This blessing he received, and because his request pleased God great riches and honor were added. As a result, he and Israel prospered. Solomon built the temple according to the divine plan given to David. As he dedicated it, he raised up his head to God in prayer:

"...let these my words, wherewith I have made supplication before the LORD, be nigh unto the LORD our God day and night, that he maintain the cause of his servant, and the cause of his people Israel at all times, as the matter shall require: That all the people of the earth may know that the LORD is God, and that there is none else."

I Kings 8: 59-60

Solomon and his people were exceedingly blessed as the Almighty responded to his supplication. Thus Solomon grew in fame and in riches while Israel grew in stature among the nations. As time passed, however, a sadness is revealed:

"But king Solomon loved many strange women ...; Of the nations concerning which the LORD said... Ye shall not go in unto them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love.

And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart."

I Kings 11: 1-3

Solomon was joined in love to these who themselves had no love for Israel's God. Perhaps his mind would often be taken up in this direction, although likely he would scarcely know their names, being so many. He set up high places for Ashtoreth, Chemosh, Milcom and for Molech, pagan deities and abominations to the Almighty, to please these wives. And so:

"...it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.

And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD ..."

I Kings 11: 4,6.

While the king may have been old, less vigorous, he would still have available the wisdom and understanding to discern between good and evil, divinely given to him many years earlier.

What happened to cause such a falling away from his early faith and zeal for God? Could it be that he no longer looked up, no more lifted up his head unto God, becoming absorbed with earthly things, concubines, wives, fame, riches – all of which are so enticing to the flesh? He was able and desired to experience every human attraction, convinced that he was strong enough to resist these temptations:

"... whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; ..."

Ecclesiastes 2: 10.

Yet he further explained his foolish behaviour:

"I applied mine heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things, and to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness:

And I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her."

Ecclesiastes 7: 25-26

The king could discern good and evil, yet failed because he did not persist in his first determination – to keep his heart and mind fastened upon God. He did not look up, lift up his head, but rather allowed himself to be drawn to that which is of the world – "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." To the natural man these are a great pull, most desirable, yet how empty in the larger hope extended by the Almighty to His faithful children. What a warning for us, Brethren and Sisters, as we now live close to the revealing of God's purpose when Israel's hope will be fulfilled

in this earth! Let us put aside worldly ambitions and distractions which can so easily ensnare, raising our aims, setting our affection on "things which are above."

Now let us turn to Jeremiah almost four hundred years after Solomon. The ten tribes had been dispersed into captivity. Judah and Jerusalem were destroyed, the temple burned, and the people captive in Babylon. Why was this disaster? They had lost their fear of God, did not give heed to his prophets, and disobeyed His commands in spite of His many warnings. Was it because of failure to look up, keeping their minds fastened on the Almighty, rather than putting their trust in something other than God? Even Nebuzaradan, captain in Nebuchadrezzar's army, realized why such disaster came upon them, saying to Jeremiah:

"...The LORD thy God hath pronounced this evil upon this place.

Now the LORD hath brought it, and done according as he hath said; because ye (Judah) have sinned against the LORD, and have not obeyed his voice, therefore this thing is come upon you." Jeremiah 40: 2-3

Jeremiah, the Almighty's faithful prophet, was given a choice by Nebuzaradan, to remain in Jerusalem or go to Babylon. He chose to remain with the few left in that city. As these in Jerusalem in fear sought to flee to Egypt and escape Babylon's army, Jeremiah conveyed to them God's word:

"If ye will still abide in this land, then will I build you, and not pull you down, and I will plant you, and not pluck you up: ...

Be not afraid of the king of Babylon ... saith the LORD. for I am with you to save you, and to deliver you from his hand." Jeremiah 42: 10-11

They did not listen, being determined to seek refuge in Egypt. God's reply was:

"Now therefore know certainly that ye shall die by the sword, by the famine and by the pestilence, in the place whither ye desire to go and to sojourn." Jeremiah 42: 22

They satisfied their own thinking, having put aside the words of the God of heaven. They went to Egypt they did indeed perish there at the hand of King Nebuchadrezzar. Thus the nation of Israel ceased to exist; the times of the Gentiles began, and continue still, until Jesus returns to fulfill God's purpose.

Another six hundred years passed, and we move on to the time of the Apostles. Israel is still a captive nation, now under Rome's stern rule. Jesus, the promised Messiah, had come, born of

Mary by the power of God's spirit. During His life time He taught the gospel, the hope of Israel, the still faithful promise of a kingdom in which His people would reign with Him over all the earth. Most of Israel, led by the high priest, the scribes and Pharisees, whose influence was threatened by His teaching, denied that Jesus was the promised Son. They demanded His crucifixion, saying to Pilate :- "We have no king but Caesar" and "His blood be on us, and on our children." It was and it still is! These men were of Israel, the seed of Abraham, aware of God's promises. Yet they demanded His Son's death. Even after Jesus' resurrection and ascension, and having been visible for forty days, they still refused to acknowledge that He was indeed the promised Messiah. They continued by persecuting His apostles as they witnessed of Him. One of these, Peter, spoke out against their unbelief after he, through the power of the Holy Spirit, had caused the lame man to walk :

"...Ye men of Israel, why ye marvel at this?

...the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate,...

And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses ...

Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord..."

Acts 3: 12, 13, 15, 19.

Stern words for them, yet they might have asked, What are these "times of refreshing?" "Refreshing" speaks of breath, that which gives life and lifts the mind to the time when life will be restored eternally for those accounted worthy. This is the hope of Israel. Our readings have revealed how amongst the history of God's people, few have clung to that hope. Some, though greatly helped by the Almighty, turned away, looking rather to obtaining their own pleasures.

These are the last days, Brethren and Sisters. We look, we long, yet fear for His coming, ever praying for the accomplishment of that hope. As events in the world today are so pointed, let us rise above our own activities, needs, interests and fears, yielding our lives and cares to Him, giving heed to His word, His work, His people – our hope, heeding his words:

"... look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."

Luke 21: 28.

J.A. DeF.

"THAT YE MAY PROSPER"

Through our portion in Deuteronomy we have shared in Moses' encouraging words to the children of Israel, prior to their longed for entrance into the promised land:

"And Moses with the elders of Israel commanded the people, saying, Keep all the commandments which I command you this day.

And it shall be on the day when ye will pass over Jordan unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, that thou shalt set thee up great stones, and plaister them with plaister:

And thou shalt write upon them all the words of this law, when thou art passed over, that thou mayest go in unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, a land that floweth with milk and honey; as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee." Deuteronomy 27:1

These words were rehearsed in their ears to reemphasize His covenant with the people:

"These are the words of the covenant, which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which he made with them in Horeb." Deuteronomy 29:1

The covenant was reaffirmed to make them mindful of His greatness and power shown on their behalf in the past, and which would continue close at hand if they upheld His precepts and continued to serve Him obediently. It was surely a land that flowed with milk and honey – that flowed freely with plenty and blessing, but there would be as well the daily trials they had come to expect, as the Almighty tried their hearts to prove if they would, even in adversity, believe and cleave unto Him.

"Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do."

Deuteronomy 29: 9

How simple a command – keep His word and prosper, or as that word prosper means, "the ability to deal wisely". There are many throughout the Scriptures who did prosper because they allowed God's Word to govern their living, endeavoring to walk in His ways. Joseph who suffered under the bitterness of his brothers' jealousy, was sold and carried away far from his father's home to bondage in Egypt. Because of his enduring faith in God, he was preserved and prospered, and eventually through God's interven-

tion, was raised up to the position of second only to Pharaoh. He not only prospered in wealth and position but became a saviour, a type of Christ, to his brethren and their families, because of his faithfulness under great adversity:

“And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand.”

Genesis 39: 2-3

Years later in faithful King Jehoshaphat’s day, a great multitude from Moab and Ammon came to attack Jerusalem. With fear and trembling, the king called together all of Judah to ask help of the LORD – to invoke the power of His covenant with them, saying:

“If, when evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for thy name is in this house,) and cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help.”

II Chronicles 20: 9

This was the substance of the covenant Israel had made with the Almighty, for God had promised if they walked in His ways, His strength and might would be used on their behalf when they but called on His name. In answer to their cry, the Spirit came upon Jahaziel, “a Levite of the sons of Asaph” who prophesied in their midst:

“... Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not your’s but God’s.

To morrow go ye down against them: behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz; and ye shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jeruel.

Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you.”

II Chronicles 20: 15-17

Here was assurance given of His abiding care and protection, for those who trusted in Him and called upon His name. Believing in the earlier words recorded by Moses which we read in Deuteronomy, Jehoshaphat worshipped God in thanksgiving and praise,

encouraging the people as had Moses saying:

“... Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem;
Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established;
believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.”

II Chronicles 20: 20

“So shall ye prosper” – much like the words of Moses to the children of Israel as they entered that land which Jehoshaphat now ruled. We know that Judah did prosper against the armies of Moab and Ammon, as the Scriptures confirm:

“And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten.

For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another.

And when Judah came toward the watch tower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth and none escaped.”

II Chronicles 20: 22-24

Going back to our chapter in Deuteronomy, Moses goes on to encourage the people, promising that the “secret things” – or the knowledge of His wisdom, which belongs to God alone, will He in love and mercy reveal to those who endeavor to please Him:

“The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.”

Deuteronomy 29: 29

Through this knowledge of the hope extended, coupled with obedience to His precepts, one can be helped to prosper. Both Joseph and King Jehoshaphat believed in the nearness of that help and cried out for God’s care, just as Moses taught many years earlier to those entering the land :

“For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off.

It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who should go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it ?

Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we

may hear it, and do it ?

But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it."

Deuteronomy 30: 11- 14

God's help and care is close at hand, through His Word becoming an integral part of our living – kept within our hearts and minds to help us govern each facet of our being. Only the froward thinking of the flesh would say it is too far off or too difficult-unattainable. This Moses pointed out to the children of Israel, for the fears and unbelief of their fathers had prevented them from entering earlier, causing them to wander forty years in the wilderness. Here were their children ready now to go into their inheritance, therefore, Moses set forth the conditions of God's covenant once more:

"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:"

Deuteronomy 30: 19

Let us be both warned and encouraged by Moses' words, that we may keep God's word close to our hearts, endeavoring to walk after His precepts that we may hope for entrance into that inheritance promised all those that love Him – to a sure and eternal prospering.

M.C.S.

THE LOTTERY

A recent letter from Australia to the Birmingham Ecclesial Magazine made the following comment about "The National Lottery": -

"I have been astonished and dismayed at the signs that our principles in this area of daily living have been crumbling away in recent years. Perhaps it is not surprising, in view of the enthusiasm with which the world has embraced gambling in this generation, that governments now energetically promote and tax gambling in all its forms, seeing it as a major source of income. In this atmosphere, perhaps we should not wonder too much that brethren and sisters are attracted towards some form of participation. It can be said, 'There is no mention of lotteries in the Bible.' True, but there is plenty of mention of the principles that lie behind the motivation to participate in them ---. We are expected to help others as a result of our labours with our hands, not spend our hard earned money in the almost vain hope that it will provide the means of doing so. A brother said to me once that he only expected to win if it was God's will, but he didn't respond when I said, "Well, you will only have to buy one ticket then, won't you."! As we see the effects of the lottery wins we also see the truth of the Proverb: "Better a little with the fear of the LORD, than great wealth with turmoil". (15v16)

A brief outline of the history of lottery

The lottery was used by Augustus, Nero and other Roman emperors for revenue and to finance building projects. Lotteries were held in Europe from the 15th century onwards. In England the first lottery on record was announced in 1569 with Queen Elizabeth as patroness. In America there were lotteries as early as the 17th century and the reason given was to provide for schools, churches and public works. It was a case of "let us do evil that good may come." For undoubtedly lotteries penalize the poor, who in ill-advised hope or desperation buy most of the tickets. It is not easy to safeguard a lottery against chicanery. England prohibited private unlicensed lotteries in 1698 and the United States outlawed private lotteries by 1850. Despite their illegality, however, lotteries in various guises flourished on both sides of the Atlantic. The popular forms were 'bingo' and the 'numbers game' which ap-

pealed to members of the lowest income group, and its greatest popularity was among the Negroes who in some cases were found to be spending their money every day of the week in false hopes of a win.

In England in the Finance Act of 1926 a Betting Tax was brought in. This tax had been considerably resisted by an opposition on religious, moral and social grounds. It was feared that betting, being taxed, would mean that the State was recognising it as being lawful. To meet this apprehension, the government then introduced a section into the act making a provision that betting would not be rendered lawful by the act in any manner of place in which it was unlawful at the commencement of the act. Or to authorize the writing, printing or publication, or sending of any notice, circular or advertisement which was at that time unlawful. Illegal betting, as in the case of street betting, remained illegal.

This act was withdrawn by the Finance Act of 1929. But new duties were then imposed on bookmakers. This change came about because of the admitted difficulties of administration and the very large numbers of evasions.

But now, in this later time, what a great loosening of restriction and of the endeavours of that earlier time when there were rules to stem the growth of betting. It is a sign of these last days, of the continuing decline of morality, and of the failure of those in power to take a righteous course for the safe guarding of the lowly in society.

Religious change

The Methodist Church as an example completely opposed any form of gambling until 1992. But then at the annual Methodist conference it was decided to allow raffles, tombolas and lucky dips into their chapels. Obviously to encourage their people to part with money in the hope of easy gain, and for the church itself to gain at the same time.

There was considerable resistance at the conference to this change of direction. One of the delegates, a prison chaplain, warned of the results of gambling. He said, "I have seen the devastation at first hand in prison and I have seen the distress it causes to their families." Another delegate declared, "For years we have been admired for funding our churches without recourse to gambling in any form. We should not open the door one fraction." The objectors

however lost the day, and so betting entered in.

The following is an extract of a report of what one gambler confessed: -

"Every time, I would tell my wife never again. And every time I meant it. I really loved my wife - - - .

They came to me one Sunday in prison. The chaplain took me down to his office, and told me my wife had killed herself. She couldn't cope with my lifestyle. They never showed me the note she left, and I've never visited her grave. It's the only way I can live with myself."

The writer has been personally acquainted with a similar tragedy. Of one who got into great debt through his gambling, and then in desperation endeavoured to gamble his way out of his extreme distress. He made one failed attempt at suicide, but he still could not extricate himself from his obsession after this painful lesson. His next attempt succeeded!

It is obvious that gambling is an evil which leads to suffering and distress. For a National Lottery to emerge after years of curbing endeavours by governments is truly a sign of the times. How, then can a sincere claimant of Christian principles support such a thing by participating in it? How specious is the argument, as hinted in the letter quoted at the beginning of the article, "there is no mention of lotteries in the Bible" and "to help others it (a win on the lottery) will provide the means of doing so."

A BIBLE CLASS

"HE THAT IS FIRST IN HIS OWN CAUSE SEEMETH JUST"

Proverbs 18:17

As we look at this verse, the key phrase appears to be, "in his own cause." The thought of cause comes from its root meaning a contest, implying a struggle for victory or supremacy. All those responding to God's calling are engaged in a contest to overcome their flesh's propensities, submitting to God's word. One who is "first in his own cause" is contending for his own purpose or desire, seeking to put himself in a most favorable position. In so doing, the mind and heart may become preoccupied with "self", pushing a personal cause, usually to the detriment of others. Such a mind is found in Absalom's working to undermine his father David, the Lord's anointed king, for his own purpose. When any of Israel came to seek David's judgment, Absalom sought their support for himself, saying:

"... Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice !" II Samuel 15: 4.

He thus implied that David's judgement was faulty as he said:

"... thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee" (verse 3). It is clear that Absalom's "cause" was to displace David. The evil, self-serving scheme "seemed just" unto him, and he persuaded many in Israel that it was indeed just. As a result, "Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel" (Verse 6) and temporarily did displace David, causing havoc and harm to Israel as he sought to pull down the king and exalt himself.

Many who are not subject to God's law, which restrains such fleshly ambition, may feel they are righteous or may appear to others to be so. Jesus spoke a parable concerning those who:

"... trusted in themselves that they were righteous (just), and despised others." Luke 18: 9.

The parable contrasted the mind of two men (a Pharisee and a publican) who went into the temple to pray. The Pharisee prayed:

"... God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess."

Luke 18: 11-12

Here was a mind that judged itself to be just or righteous, and was clearly being "first in his own cause" by showing to God all the good things he had done. In contrast, Jesus spoke of the publican who:

"... standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be

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merciful to me a sinner."

Luke 18: 13.

Here was a humble man, feeling keenly his own unworthiness, and seeking God's mercy that he might be forgiven lest he perish. Concerning these two, Jesus tells us that the humble collector of taxes:

"... went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Luke 18: 14.

The lowly publican, not seeking his own, but recognizing he was, as all men are by nature, a sinner, confessed and sought God's mercy, knowing that without it there would be no hope of salvation.

Going back to our subject verse – "He that is first in his own cause seemeth just..." – it is clear that one seeking to be first, ahead and better than all others, lacks in humility and despises others, contrary to the word of God. In this connection, we remember Jesus' answer to the question: "Master, which is the great commandment in the law" (Matthew 22: 36) ? His reply was:

"...Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

This is the first and great commandment.

And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Matthew 22: 37-40.

One who is "first in his own cause" is motivated by love for self, not for God or for his neighbour. He may feel to be righteous or just, but it is not pride in one's own talents and accomplishments which blinds the eyes to how hateful and unjust it is before the One who knows our every thought ? Being taken up with one's own causes, thoughts or ambitions can become a consuming occupation, shutting out the Spirit's help, leading us away from God who looks for humility and submission.

The rest of our verse opens up the Almighty's help and provision to save one from this danger:

"... but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him."

Proverbs 18: 17.

How can one search or penetrate the mind or heart of him who is deceived into believing he is just ? By bringing to bear the light of God's word which can shine into his heart and reveal the darkness

or wrong thinking which may be hidden there. How great is God's mercy that there are neighbors who in love seek to gain any who are in danger of losing the hope of salvation. This is true brotherly love, requiring selflessness and courage to act.

David, a man after God's own heart, acknowledged:

"O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me.

For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether." Psalm 139: 1, 4.

At a time when David had failed to justify God by humble obedience, the Almighty in mercy sent a neighbor (Nathan, the prophet – II Samuel 12: 1, 7) to reveal his great sin, and so provided opportunity for perception and repentance, a change of thinking, without which he would be lost. Learning from this experience, he was able to cry out:

"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:

And see if there be any wicked in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Psalm 139: 23- 24.

How easily our natural plans and ambitions can influence, making a wrong act seem acceptable. Our father knows this! How merciful He is, looking into our hearts, and upon finding fleshy thinking, reveals it so it can be cast out, turning us away from our own "causes". Thereby we may glorify God, determining that no more will we persist in our own cause, putting first the greatest cause - that which honors and upholds His will.

J.A.DeF.

"AWAKE, WHY SLEEPEST THOU, O LORD? "

Psalm 44: 23

In the beginning of this Psalm, David relates how the strong arm of the Lord on behalf of His people, had fought their battles and made possible the possession of their land.

"We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old. How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; how thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out.

For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them." Psalm 44: 1-3

Cognizant of Israel's rebellious history against God's word, David was aware that He would grant deliverance to the contrite, yet would withdraw His help from the wilful and disobedient:

"... thou has saved us from our enemies, and hast put them to shame that hated us.

In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name forever. Selah.

But thou hast cast off, and put us to shame; and goest not forth with our armies.

Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy: and they which hate us spoil for themselves.

Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat; and hast scattered us among the heathen." Psalm 44: 7-11

By examining both sides of this issue, David warned about the danger of losing God's support. With this background in mind, let us examine our verse under consideration:

"Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? arise, cast us not off forever." Psalm 44: 23

David knew that, being omnipotent, God does not sleep. However, he also knew that discerning unfaithfulness, God would turn His back and withdraw help. In Psalm 78 he illustrates such a situation, recounting Israel's rebellion:

"For they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images.

When God heard this, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel:

So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men;

And delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand. He gave his people over also unto the sword; and was wroth with his inheritance."

Psalm 78: 58-62

Because of their defiance and idolatry, God turned away from His people, bringing judgment upon them by the sword of their enemies. When they cried because of this affliction, He refused to hear as One that sleeps.

David in his personal trials often cried out to God for deliverance. Pouring out his complaint before the Almighty, he uses the figure of awakening in this prayer for help:

"Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me: neither let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause.

For they speak not peace: but they devise deceitful matters against them that are quiet in the land.

Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me, and said,
Aha, aha, our eye hath seen it.

This thou hath seen, O LORD: keep not silence: O LORD be
not far from me.

Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, even unto my
cause, my God and my Lord." Psalm 35: 19-23

David's prayer, in fear that God had forsaken him, reminds us
of the Lord Jesus' final words as he suffered upon the cross:

"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice,
saying, Eli, Eli lama sabachthani ? that is to say, My God,
My God, why hast thou forsaken me ?"

Matthew 27: 46

He was in dire straits, in the midst of great pain, agonizing to the
very end to remain subject and obedient. He knew God had not
forsaken Him, but in anguish, His flesh cried out for the trial to end,
repeating David's words:

"My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me ? why art
thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my
roaring?" Psalm 22: 1

God does not sleep, but He may remove His help and
support because of unfaithfulness or He may momentarily with-
draw in order to test and search out the hearts of His people, as He
did to the Lord Jesus upon the cross. When this happens, will we
remain steadfast, believing that He is not asleep but ever watchful,
aware of His people's circumstances? David was mindful of this
process for he said:

"I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast
pleasure in uprightness." I Chronicles 29: 17

It is interesting to note in our verse under consideration, that
the word for "Lord" is not the usual translation of "Yahweh",
printed all in capital letters (LORD), but rather the lowercase
version (Lord), which is translated as Adoni and often used to speak
of Christ. When David said, "Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord?",
was he looking in hope to the end, speaking of the awakening and
return of His greater Son promised, the One who would fulfill the
sure mercies given by God in the resurrection and judgment of His
people in the Kingdom age?

How helpful it is to contemplate the Spirit's words from
David, giving help and encouragement as we too, looking in hope
to the soon return of his greater Son, the Lord Jesus, struggle to walk
after His example. We must as David, expect testing and adversity,
knowing with certainty He does not sleep, but will deliver His
people when He sees a faithful endeavor to please and honor Him.

M.C.S.

SIGNS OF HIS COMING AND OF THE END OF THE WORLD

"This know --- in the last days --- men shall be --- truce breakers --- incontinent, fierce --- traitors ---."

(2 Timothy 3: 1-4)

A correspondent writing recently from Canada made the following remarks:-

"The situation here --- is such that there have been, over the past year or two, some ten thousand Auto thefts. Times have changed to the point that everything we own must be either locked up, or nailed down, and it becomes risky to take a walk unaccompanied."

From New Zealand we have received the comment:-

"I note that unemployment is on the increase in the U.K. as it is here and in Australia and the U.S.A. This means more crime and violence and general unrest. The New Zealand economy is at a low ebb."

These are thought provoking remarks, especially when one considers that New Zealand is a beautiful country with a rich potential.

From South Africa comes the sombre news of spiralling crime and a call for the return of the death penalty. The A.N.C. is to review its opposition to capital punishment. South Africa could be a very rich country, and have a prosperous contented people; instead, every day there are murders, rapes and robberies. In 1995 a new Constitutional court outlawed executions, but now South Africa's President has declared that crime is "out of control". The chairman of the car manufacturer BMW South Africa has given an ultimatum unless the crime level is reduced a manufacturing investment programme will be cancelled. The South African government has expressed its intention to eradicate poverty as a basis for a long term strategy to solve the crime problem. The President has expressed, " - - we want to better the lives of all our people. But we cannot regard this as an event to be achieved overnight - - ."

It is a tacit admission of no immediate solution to an awful situation. Furthermore, poverty is not a sole cause of such evil circumstances. The racketeers who indulge in crime have large amounts of money at their disposal.

These things speak of a breakdown of morality as the peoples of the world turn away from even a form of godliness. Their self indulgence and disregard can only bring bitter and evil results. But what is so pointed by such news and information, is the world wide prevalence of the deterioration of behaviour. From Britain to

America, to Africa and Australasia.

Abraham Lincoln in 1863 wrote the following: -

“It is the duty of nations, as well as of men, to confess their sins and transgressions, in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance leads to mercy and pardon, and to recognise the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord.”

What government today would confess its sins and the sins of its peoples? But it is clear that at the time of Jonah the prophet, had Nineveh not confessed and repented, it would not have been spared. And this is the measure of God’s judgment for the present generation.

How sad a recent letter from a 17 year-old young lady from Armagh, Nothern Ireland: -

“You’ve probably all seen the chaos on the streets of Nothern Ireland since the beginning of July. It might seem shocking: the scenes of violence burning houses, shops and cars, yet to the youth of this small embittered country, it is normal; a fact of life. Only we thought it had changed in September 1994, with both the Unionist Ulster Volunteer Force and the I.R.A. calling ceasefires - - - ; it symbolised new freedom - - - a more ‘normal’ life. The next year was the best of my life - - - . I often got very angry when friends would argue in support of the IRA, or the UVF, as I felt that no one should be condoning organisations that used violence to try and enforce their ideals. - - - surely there has to be a way to sort it out? No, there isn’t. Not until the politicians, military leaders and a few mediators on all sides actually sit down at a table to talk can some sort of compromise be made. - - - The latest developments threaten to plunge this country into war again. With that the hopes of thousands of peace-loving people will disappear. When the recent upsurge in violence began I was reading ‘The Journals of Sylvia Plath.’ In part of it, she talks about war, saying things like, “I’m scared and frozen - - - I want to acutely become aware of all I’ve taken for granted!” It described how I and my friends felt. We have taken peace for granted. Even if we do eventually get permanent peace, I think it will come too late for me. The sight of smouldering lorries and barricades together with horrific riots in my own town, was the last straw - - - . I am determined to leave Northern Ireland and live abroad. I

don't want to live in a country whose politicians cannot sit down together to talk. They cannot --- even for the greater good of Northern Ireland and its people."

Unfortunately, for this young person, whose aspiration is to seek for peace elsewhere, there is no peace. There may be alleviation in another country, but these are the times of "truce breaking, incontinence of behaviour and ferocity" as foretold in God's holy Word. As things get worse, it is obvious to the faithful that the only real solution, is a heavenly one.

NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS

HAMBURG, NEW YORK, Corner Southwestern Blvd. and Pleasant Ave.

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11.30 a.m.
 Sunday Afternoon Class 1.45 p.m.
Midweek: Bible Class: Forestville, Hamburg and
 Fredonia
 Every Third Week: Revelation Study

The summer picnic held in August was an enjoyable occasion. Bright warm weather permitted swimming and other activities followed by a meal and readings before breaking up. We are grateful for the opportunity to be together, and for the good weather and the beauties of His creation, which gave all such pleasure.

Our prayers are with those of His house in need of healing, comfort and encouragement in our journey.

J.A.DeF.

MANCHESTER, Ryecroft Hall, Audenshaw.

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11.00 a.m.
Thursdays: Bible Class 7.15 p.m.

Considerable economic changes that are taking place in Local Government as a result of new policies emanating from the Rulers in London, have affected the Committee which runs our Sunday Hall.

However, we can gratefully state that though Hall Administrators are having a struggle over meeting financially the new circumstances, they have been most considerate towards our means and needs.