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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

"Take heed that ye be not deceived"

"AT THE TABLE OF THE LORD"

"DAVID — THE SERVANT OF THE LORD"

"A BISHOP THEN MUST BE BLAMELESS"

"A BIBLE CLASS"

"RAMATH - LEHI"

"NEW TESTAMENT POPYRUS"

"SIGNS OF HIS COMING"

"NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS"

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AT THE TABLE OF THE LORD.
'MY WITNESS'

At this time, we have once again finished our yearly reading plan. All of us have read the scriptures according to this plan for many years, as well as having relied on and been helped by God's word in classes, exhortations, and in times of personal need. These words have become our food, sustaining spiritually, helping to a stronger growth and maturity, giving wisdom and above all, helping us to grow in reverence being filled with awe, wonder and joy that God has revealed Himself so needfully and so mercifully. Here then is a good opportunity to take account of ourselves. Has a greater faith developed, greater hope and above all, greater love for God and His people? this is what God had in mind as He inspired and preserved His word, to lift up and strengthen His children.

Accepting this, let us look to that holy word, particularly as we come to the end of the yearly plan. Our portions for today are from Job, Malachi and the Revelation. What hope there is revealed in these words as we work and wait, longing and yet fearing for the accomplishment of God's wonderfully revealed purpose in Jesus Christ.

First let us listen to Job, whose name means hated, persecuted, or implies enmity. For a year Job suffered grievously - his riches were gone, his family was wiped out, he was much afflicted with sore boils, and also harassed by his "friends." He may have questioned why he was so tormented in view of God's own judgment to the adversary:

"... Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" Job 1:8.

Was "Satan" - or the adversary and accuser - perhaps jealous of Job's position? Certainly he ("Satan") may have felt condemned by contrast. But there was much more, for Job was being tried by the almighty. Would he retain his integrity; would he curse God as he faced such scorn and affliction? Job's reaction, for all who read his spirit with perception, brings the realization that if there is sincere integrity, patience and trust in God, victory over all adverse circumstances is possible, making us feel that with His help, possibly we can overcome. We are now reading in Job of God's revelation of Himself to our brother, showing His greatness and power, causing Job to feel his own insignificance - how weak, how fallible, having no hope apart from the Almighty's mercy. This morning we have

THE REMNANT

read of Job's succinct and humble response:

"Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth." Job 40:4.

"I am vile!" Do we ever feel like this? The flesh would never accept such a thought. We are indeed vile, the flesh is contemptible, despised, as the word means; and, for this reason no mortal man may approach to God's presence. Job came to recognize his basic nature as God revealed the magnitude and awesomeness of His power, and the inability of any to do such. He spoke to Job:

"Hast thou an arm like God?..."

Then will I also confess unto thee that thine own right hand can save thee." Job 40:9,14.

Job thus saw God more fully, not literally with his eyes, but as the Almighty revealed concerning Himself - His fearful power as well as His grace. Can we see why Job declared:

"I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.

Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Job 42:5-6.

Having greater perception of God's power and mercy, Job more clearly understood his own weak and failing nature. As we read the same divine words which moved Job to this conclusion, what is our reaction, Brethren and Sisters? He heard them but once and understood; we are privileged to read them at least once a year, and probably more so. Is our reaction likewise to abhor (loathe or reject) self, and determine to repent, changing our thinking from being focused on self to a greater preception of what we really are in God's eyes? Job struggled for a year under great tribulation, sustained by God's word. Thus he was enabled to put behind his fleshly thinking. As a result of this great change:

"...the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning ..." Job 42:12.

Is there not help here for us, Brethren and Sisters, if we give more earnest heed to His word, absorbing it, and allowing that word - not self - to govern our living?

Our next reading is in Malachi (my messenger) sent by the Almighty over a thousand years after Job. His work was with Judah, now restored to Jerusalem after the 70 years of Babylonian captivity, possibly during the time of Nehemiah's return to Babylon after having helped his Brethren in Jerusalem. During Nehemiah's absence (12 years), Judah fell back into evil practices, offending God

who had so mercifully provided for and sustained them. Malachi, the last Old Testament prophet, rebuked the priests and the people for their turning from God, warning them:

“... I have no pleasure in you: ... neither will I accept an offering at your hand.

Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? ... “

Malachi 1:10,13.

Why was their offering to God such a weariness to them? Why did they bring the torn, the lame and the sick instead of the best and the unblemished? Was it because their love and fear of God had been lost and they were merely “going through the motions” of offering? Malachi further warned the priests who presented these offerings:

“... ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts.”

Malachi 2:8.

How very far God’s people had turned from him! Yet in mercy he sent Malachi, his messenger, to warn and bring them back to the true and sincere worship. Malachi also did speak of other “messengers” whom God would send to stir up His people:

“Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in:

... he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them ... that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.”

Malachi 2:1,3.

This speaks of John the Baptist who was to be a messenger of the Lord Jesus’ coming, preparing the way before Him. Malachi also spoke God’s promise concerning another messenger who later would come and who is yet to appear:

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.

And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”

Malachi 4: 5-6.

Looking now to a time we hope is soon to come - Elijah, resurrected when Christ returns, along with all those responsible to God’s word, will have a work with those Jews alive at that time. He will

plead with them in the wilderness, urging them to return to God, promising to those who heed, the hope of becoming mortal subjects in God's restored kingdom of Israel. This kingdom will be ruled over by Jesus Christ; the faithful of all ages who have been resurrected and judged acceptable will be immortal saints ruling with Him. Thus we come to recognise and honor the words of these messengers. Malachi, John and Elijah were faithful men, each sent of God to warn and to direct in the one way which makes the hope of the gospel involving the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ a reality. We are privileged to listen to their messages concerning "the great and dreadful day of the LORD." To those who feel the message is a weariness and a trouble, it will be a day of destruction and judgment. But there will have been some quietly living in obedience and hope, of whom Malachi speaks:

"... they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.

And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." Malachi 3:16-17.

Those who truly fear the LORD and give care and thoughtfulness to Him have the hope of eternal life in His kingdom. Thinking upon the LORD instills humble esteem and a fear of that name. To such the promise is:

"... unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall." Malachi 4:2.

As we may experience physical disability we are moved to pray for healing, trusting in the Almighty to make us whole if it is His will. If we ask "nothing doubting," submitting to His will, relief can be granted, and what gratitude it brings! Do we turn to Him in the same spirit of urgency and importunity when there may be spiritual disability or weakness, seeking His loving care and wisdom? Let us keep our thinking fastened upon the promise of eternal healing from all the frailties of our flesh, as we wait in hope for "the Sun of righteousness."

Moving on now to our last reading in the Revelation:

"... which God gave unto Him (Jesus), to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John."

Revelation 1:1.

Again a "messenger" brought God's word to John, and through John to us. Today we have listened as he:

"... saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; ...

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven. prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."
Revelation 21:1-2.

Here is a bride made ready for her husband, the figure of those who have feared the LORD in their living, to be united to Jesus as a bride. How do such make themselves ready? Is it not by giving heed to His word, determined that it governs their living? Our mind goes to the parable of the ten virgins, of whom five were wise and five foolish. What distinguished the wise from the foolish? Jesus' words make it very clear:

"They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps."

Matthew 25:3-4.

When the bridegroom came for His bride:

"... they that were ready (prepared), went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut."
Matthew 25:10.

The wise were ready, prepared, and adorned as a bride who loves and longs for the bridegroom. How were they so? Would it be that they had feared the LORD and had given heed to His messengers? By so doing, they were able to bring their lives into subjection to their Father, conquering the strong lusts of their flesh. To such is given this promise:

"... I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be His God, and he shall be my son."
Revelation 21:6-7.

Shall we be among those who, having hungered and thirsted after righteousness, will know the blessing of the Almighty when Jesus Christ returns to gather the members of his bride?

It is in wisdom and mercy that He has sent messengers such as we have listened to this morning. Let us heed the words of Paul, another of those faithful messengers:

"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."
Hebrews 2:1.

J.A.DeF.

DAVID - THE SERVANT OF THE LORD

We have recently read Psalm 36, a pruned song which expresses David's gratitude for God's loving kindness and care as he says:

"How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings."
Psalm 36:7.

This loving kindness that David had experienced is known to all those who, in covenant relationship with the Almighty, value the promise of life extended through the sacrifice of the Victor - the one who has made this hope possible. In this realization, David entitled this Psalm: "To the chief musician (Victor), a Psalm of David the servant of the LORD."

Given the knowledge to attain to the end of God's purpose, David was honored to be known as His servant - a worker in His service, applying this word in his daily living.

David reflected in this Psalm upon the natural wickedness of man and, fearful lest he fall in the same manner pleaded:

"Let not the foot of pride come against me, and let not the hand of the wicked remove me.

There are the workers of iniquity fallen: they are cast down, and shall not be able to rise."

Psalm 36:11-12.

Without the constancy of God's mercy and care there would be no means of overcoming, therefore David appeals for this loving protection:

"O continue thy loving kindness unto them that know thee; and thy righteousness to the upright in heart."

Psalm 36:10.

Those who know God and value their place as His children, struggle to be His servants, workers in a covenant relationship He has established with those that endeavor to live according to His word.

Another Psalm with a similar title, again describing David as a servant of the LORD, is Psalm 18 entitled:

"To the chief musician (Victor), A Psalm of David, the servant of the LORD, who who spake unto the LORD the words of this song in the day that the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul: And he said,

I will love thee, O LORD, my strength."

Psalm 18: title & verse 1.

Because he was a faithful "servant of the LORD", David was delivered from his enemies, and in response to the love and care extended from the Almighty, responded: "I will love thee, O LORD, my strength." David could have taken circumstances into his own hands against his enemies, but he knew this was not God's way but the flesh's lust for retaliation and vengeance, therefore he struggled against it. He could have rationalized that Saul was a wicked man, and as Israel's king was leading God's people astray, yet in a right spirit he said, "I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the LORD'S anointed (I Samuel 24:10).

A good servant does the bidding of his master, he knows what is expected of him and carries out the master's instructions in a way that will please. This same dutiful and willing spirit can be seen in David's counsel to his son Solomon:

"And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.

Take heed now; for the LORD hath chosen thee to build an house for the sanctuary: be strong, and do it."

I Chronicles 28:9.

God, the perfect master, gives knowledge and instruction to His servants of what He desires, and then tests looking for diligence in completing the task in a way that is pleasing to Him. The Lord Jesus taught of this same aspect in the parable of the Sower - he who sowed the good seed or word upon different types of ground or individuals. There is no guarantee that one who receives the word will attain unto the end promised - it is predicated upon the individual effort of those upon whom it falls, just as the Lord Jesus interpreted the parable for His Disciples:

Seed That Fell By The Way Side

"When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side." Matthew 13:19.

Here is illustrated the importance of understanding, for without it there is no foundation or motivation to walk in His ways - hearing is not enough.

Seed That Fell On Stony Places

“But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.” Matthew 13:20-21.

Those classified as stony ground took in the word with joy at it’s hope and promise, but when tribulations came to prove their heart, their root or grounding in the Truth proved too shallow and they abandoned it as too difficult.

Seed That Fell Among Thorns

“He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.” Matthew 13:22.

Those identified as thorny ground heard the word but any efforts to bring forth fruit were choked, for the truth was not the first priority in their living, therefore the cares of daily life and worldly pursuits and concerns took preeminence, displacing the word and their service to God.

Seed That Fell Into Good Ground

“But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.” Matthew 13:23.

Those who Jesus called “the good ground” received the word with understanding of what was required. They made it the most important facet of their living, and in an effort to grow spiritually, labored to develop qualities pleasing to the Father. Through their faithful efforts they became identified as good servants in the Master’s eyes.

The prophet Jeremiah also wrote praising the value of spiritual understanding when he warned:

“... Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches:

But let him that glorieth glory in this that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in

THE REMNANT

these things I delight, saith the LORD.”

Jeremiah 9:23-24.

What a help it is to realize that the glory of worldly wisdom, might and riches are only temporal - fleeting benefits that mean nothing in the life long labor of a true servant of Christ who seeks to please the Master and attain unto the promise of life eternal. With these thoughts in mind, let us endeavor to labor in the Father's service, that we may hope to be known, as was David, as servants of the LORD.

M.C.S.

**"A BISHOP THEN MUST BE BLAMELESS, THE HUSBAND
OF ONE WIFE"**

(1 Timothy 3:2)

The great religions emphasise the importance of the office of Bishop. The Apostle Peter has been described as the first Bishop of Rome. He was so named in the Liberian Catalogue, compiled in Rome A.D.354. This assertion was based on an earlier tradition ascribed to a letter written by Clement of Rome dating from the third century. This letter quoted Peter saying to the Roman congregation:-

"I ordain this Clement to be your Bishop: and to him alone I entrust my chair of preaching and instruction. I bestow on him the power of binding and loosing which the LORD bestowed on me, so that whatever he shall decree on earth shall be decreed in the Heavens."

It has however been admitted that the above letter is spurious and wrongly attributed to Clement. Nevertheless over the centuries the popular Churches have emphasised the great importance of the office.

An Anglican Church hymn reads:-

"Bishop of the souls of men,
When the foemans step is nigh,
When the wolf lays wait by night
For the lambs continually,
Watch, O LORD, about us keep,
Guard us, Sheperd of the sheep."

Such words magnify the term Bishop of the Church. His office, according to the rites and ceremonies of the Church includes the "laying on of hands of those come to years of discretion," after which such become eligible for "Communion." At the time of writing, this ceremony by the Bishop of London has just been enacted for the elder grandson of the Queen of the British Realm, who has been "Confirmed" into the Church of England, at St. George's Chapel in Windsor Castle. But there is a shadow now on all this religious profession. The Bishop of Birmingham has made known his intention of marrying a woman who already has an husband. There are some in the Anglican Church who are greatly upset by this report. We quote two of their comments (one from a Vicar), as follows:-

"... your report (March 4th) of the Bishop of Birmingham's controversial intention to marry a divorcee, the lady's first husband is referred to as a "retired G.P." Retired or not

from medicine, he is also an Anglican priest living in the Diocese of Birmingham, who has not remarried.

Quite apart from the desirability or otherwise, of the Bishop's action from the point of view of ecclesiastical discipline ... a further question should perhaps be considered - how does this action affect the relationship of the Bishop with one of his priests who is the first husband of his intended wife?"

A letter from the Vicar reads:-

"... a spokesman "for the Church of England" tells us that there is nothing in canon law to prevent the proposed remarriage between the Lord Bishop of Birmingham and a lady whose first marriage has had it's legal form dissolved at civil law but whose husband is still living.

But that is to read canon law as though it were like secular coercive regulation.

The point is surely that the Lord Bishop at his consecration, declared that he would "strive to fashion his own life and that of his household according to the way of Christ." The Church of England still accepts the Western Catholic understanding that the marriage bond can be dissolved only upon death of one of the parties (not when people claim that the marriage has "died") and this is reflected in her canon law. To sidestep canon law by "marrying" in a register office is not quite what the flock would hope for from one of Christ's undersheperds, but increasingly in these troublous days, precisely what we come to expect."

What a deterioration this situation reveals especially as it is now implied by a Church spokesman that the Church does not really forbid the Bishop, for what he intends is not denounced in canon law. Scriptural law thus is not mentioned! Yet the scripture is very clear that "A Bishop . . . must be . . . the husband of one wife." It may be argued that in this case it is the woman who will have two husbands, and not the Bishop. This in no way nullifies the principle that such a situation, one way or another, is not to be allowed in the Church.

What is being shown in this for these last times? Is it not that there is a great deterioration even in the "form of godliness."

Is there not a lesson in such circumstances for all, who in a particular sense, claim to have the Truth? Many of whom are being troubled by matters of divorce in their Meetings.

A BIBLE CLASS

"Give To Him That Asketh"

(Matthew 5:42)

Our verse under consideration is part of what has become known as the "Sermon on the Mount." In speaking to His disciples and the multitude, Jesus Christ endeavored to convey the spirit of the law, putting aside the hardness of the letter as taught by the Scribes and Pharisees. This was a new revelation - a great change, for Israel had become so steeped in the rigidity and exactness of the letter of the law, they had overlooked the spirit of love within. The principal behind the law was to teach, pointing out the dangers of walking outside of God's precepts. Knowing the frail nature of man, God in His mercy gave the law as a series of signposts to warn of the danger of straying from the path that could lead them to Christ and life eternal. This too was the focus of the Lord Jesus' ministry: to bring to light the spirit of divine love which had been overlooked and neglected. Paul in writing to the Corinthians endeavored to do the same saying:

"... but our sufficiency is of God:

Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." II Corinthians 3:5-6.

These disciples, when taught by Christ, became able teachers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the spirit. Our consideration is just a small part of that teaching:

"Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away." Matthew 5:42

Many times during this "Sermon on the Mount," the Lord Jesus began with, "Ye have heard that it hath been said." In other words, they have heard the law, but He went on to say, "But I say unto you," or in addition, pointed out the spirit contained within a familiar precept mentioned. He was providing additional spiritual instruction just as is explained in Paul's letter to Timothy:

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all goods works." II Timothy 3:16-17

The Lord Jesus taught not to pay back evil but to submit, explaining it may be part of the reproach that one of God's followers is required to endure. He taught not to be exacting as the law may

seem to imply in, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:", but rather yield in love as Paul also taught:

"Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

Romans 12:17-18, 21

This is contrary to what the flesh would do. However, through such restraint a man of spirit who endeavors to live in peace and love with all men is revealed. This yielding behaviour may make a favorable impression upon a oppressor, who acting with malice or evil intent, receives kindness instead of violence in return. More importantly, it displays to God a submissive spirit, struggling against natural inclinations in obedience to His word.

In the Proverbs, written by Solomon, under the law, is seen this same spirit of love, evident all along to those perceptive of the Spirit's direction:

"If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee."

Proverbs 25:21-22

Another example of this same spirit of love is seen under the law as recorded in Leviticus:

"Thou shall not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD."

Leviticus 19:18

Here in the law the spirit of love was displayed, for all who in submission would perceive it. The flesh is self - oriented, therefore God in His mercy, revealed the spirit of the law that man might walk therein, growing in love and thus pleasing Him.

It is in this same spirit of love Christ taught to give freely to whoever asks and to not turn away any seeking to borrow. Not just to those to whom we are joined in fellowship as brethren and sisters, but to any who may be in need. There are of course exceptions to giving, when help is solicited to support a cause that is evil in the Spirit's eyes and contrary to His word. But by using care and discretion, when appropriate, we should freely give of our material as well as spiritual wealth, when we see a need, in the spirit of Jesus' teaching, "freely ye have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8).

M.C.S.

RAMATH - LEHI

In one of the main ecclesial magazines recently an article on the life of Samson made the following comments:

"The ass was a symbol of Israel, whose people had stubbornly sought their own pleasure (see Jeremiah 2: 23-24).

The ass already slain, was to be used as an instrument to bring judgment on the Philistines. Even though Israel were to be judged, they would still be used as an instrument of God's judgment on their enemies (Jeremiah 51:19-20).

God used the weakest part of the ass to demonstrate that through weakness strength can be revealed (Hebrews 11:34; 2 Corinthians 12:9.). The hollow in the jaw bone was a source of nourishment; indicative of the sustenance available to those who are prepared to be abased. (Judges 15:16)."

These comments relate to that episode in the life of Samson as recorded in the following scripture:-

"And when he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him: and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him ...

And he found a new jawbone of an ass, and put forth his hand, and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith.

And Samson said, With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men. And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking, that he cast away the jawbone out of his hand, and called that place Ramath- Lehi.

And he was sore arthirst, and called on the LORD, and said, thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant: and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?

But God clave an hollow place that was in the jaw, and there came water thereout: and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived: wherefore he called the name thereof Enhakkore, which is in Lehi unto this day."

(Judges 15:14-19)

The suggestion that the refreshing water came out of the jawbone does appear to be the meaning as perceived by the translators. It certainly has to be accepted that God could so provide, if this was in His purpose. But there is a difficulty in

accepting such an explanation. Before Samson was born his mother was specifically commanded:-

“Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing:

For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.” (Judges 13:4-5).

Now the ass, under the law of Moses, is an unclean animal not suitable for sacrifice. The law made this very clear:-

“And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck” (Exodus 13:13).

Therefore the question arises, would the miraculous provision for Samson the Nazarite be given from something which the law of God had forbidden him?

What then is the explanation? Is this found in the hebrew names mentioned? Samson called the place of victory Ramath-Lehi-Ramath: a height - Lehi: the cheek (bone) or jaw (bone). So the scene of the conflict was named “the height of the jawbone.” When the miracle then took place of a “hollow” being opened “in the jaw;” that is in the place Lehi; a miraculous spring came forth upon those heights for the exhausted Samson to refresh himself. The thankful Samson called that spring Enhakkore, a “fountain of calling;” and says the scribe of this account, it is there “in Lehi unto this day” (Judges 15:19).

This consideration prompts a thought of the need of caution in scriptural subjects, not to over spiritualise.

NEW TESTAMENT PAPYRUS.

The oldest known fragment of any part of the New Testament was reputed to be housed in the John Ryland's Library in Manchester. The wording on this antiquity is from John's gospel record chapter 18:31-33, 37-38. The language is Greek, said to be of the commercial and domestic Greek of the multi-national Near East of the Apostolic time. This fragment was discovered in Egypt and has been dated to the first half of the second century A.D. The verses relate the answer of Jesus to Pilate, that He came into the world to testify to the truth. It is a proof of what Paul said in his testimony, that the things concerning Jesus "were not done in a corner." The papyrus was a form of writing paper about five inches wide by ten inches deep, each sheet joined at the bottom to the top of the next, so making a roll of whatever length was required, and the hand writing upon these pages would usually be small and in double columns. The lines would be without punctuation, but a dot or small space would indicate a paragraph. A short note might be inserted at the top or at the bottom of a sheet. The title of a book, or the destination of the epistle would be added at the back of the finished roll, but there were no chapters or verses in the manuscript.

Now just over two years ago (December 24, 1994) the British National Newspaper, The Times, reported that a papyrus had been discovered in an Oxford library older than that housed in the library in Manchester. The donor of the fragment which had had been given to Magdalen College, Oxford was the Revd. C. B. Huleatt (1863-1908) who bequeathed it to the college in 1901, having been formerly an undergraduate there. It had been unearthed in upper Egypt and came into Huleatt's possession when acting as a missionary in Egypt. Its significance however, had not been fully realised until a German expert, married to an English wife, made a visit to Magdalen College in 1994. His comments motivated the President of Magdalen to give the relic more attention. The Times report was soon picked up by the newspapers world-wide, but there was a so called scholarly criticism of the new dating of this earliest alleged portion of the New Testament writings. Also some details concerning the finder of the papyrus had been lost when Huleatt, his wife Cornelia and their four children were all lost in the earthquake which destroyed the Sicilian port of Messina on 28 December 1908: his private papers being destroyed in the disaster, except for a bundle of personal letters retrieved from the rubble.

The German expert however, who was Director of the Institute

for Basic Epistemological Research in Paderborn maintained that the Oxford papyrus was of astonishing early origin, dating from mid-first century A.D. His findings were based upon analysis of the Greek writing with comparisons with the calligraphy on other manuscript fragments that had survived from that early time. The importance of the professor's assertion was that he was not speaking theoretically, but rather showing his position by physical evidence. Furthermore in the fragment, which is from the twenty sixth chapter of Matthew's gospel record, and the remains of a book of about 150 pages long, is something from the lifetime of the apostle himself. A senior Fellow of Magdalen has underlined this startling fact by saying, "It means that the people in the story must have been around when this was being written. It means they WERE THERE!"

There has been speculation in the past whether the New Testament was written by contemporaries, or near-contemporaries of Jesus. But now the identification by the German scholar of the artefact, even though only of a fragment, points to proof of the direct involvement of Christ's friends with these books of the Bible.

The fragments are called the Magdalen Papyrus, on both sides of these remnants in Greek scripts are phrases describing the anointing of Jesus with the precious ointment in the house of Simon the leper at Bethany, and of His betrayal to the chief priests by Judas Iscariot.

It is, to a degree astonishing that these three scraps of paper have attracted little attention for nearly a century, being stored in Magdalen's Old Library at Oxford, and even now they have not had the publicity which is really warranted. Of course there may be reasons for this connected more with previous religious publications by some professors of Religious studies, than with a fact of truth.

This new find has upset some of the views propounded previously by so called scriptural exegetists.

SIGNS OF HIS COMING

“ ___ they ___ did not choose the fear of the Lord: They would none of my counsel ____ . Therefore shall they ___ be filled with their own devices ____ .”

(Proverbs 1:29-31)

At the same time that man's technical abilities and inventiveness has increased, a momentous decline has taken place of respect for the veracity of the word of God.

The last few years has seen great advances in computer development. The earlier models were bulky, but as time has gone by, micro-circuits have enabled computer mass development to take place. In turn, though providing employment for some in this new industry, many have become unemployed as machines have taken the place of clerical labour. In the long run it is questionable whether there is economy in the broad term as a result of such scientific development. It is true that reduction of clerical labour has brought salary savings, but the machines that take the place of people have to be paid for, and they are costly and have to be maintained. Furthermore those who become redundant have to be provided for from the national economy, so any saving made for individual companies by a reduction of the work force, is transferred as a further burden onto tax payers.

But now as the end of the millenium approaches, the computer experts have suddenly been hit by the thought of what the date figure of 2000 might do the programmes of the mass of computers in existence throughout the world. The reason is that most computers use a two-digit shorthand for the year, for example 1997 is 97. Therefore it has been expressed that when midnight is passed on December 31st, 1999 a large number of machines will move from 99 to become 00. This will cause computer shutdown, as 00 will mean nothing to the computer, though some machines are likely to assume the change to mean the date 1900. All sorts of computer automations regulating a very great variety of controls will fail as a result. For example programmes that print dates on cheques or invoices. A renowned computer expert recently said, "There will be a headache, but how much pain it will cause remains to be seen." A survey which was made to find out whether there was an awareness about this problem, found that only fifteen percent of senior managers were aware of this aspect. It has been said that it is possible to deal with the problem, but at great cost throughout the world. But one

THE REMNANT

snag is the doubt whether there are enough experts to fix the computers. The measure of the difficulty is seen in the estimates of IBM which says major corporations use as many as thirty thousand computer programmes. Each programme has approximately ten date entries, and it has been said that each of these will take considerably more than a few minutes to rectify. When it is considered there are now billions of lines of computer codes throughout the world, the coming difficulty comes into perspective.

So man in his cleverness finds great problems arising as a result of his devices. He has overreached himself in making science his god, and relegating, as a result, the testimony of the holy word of God to a diminishing role in human affairs.

Surely as the end of this present millennium approaches, such a setback for man's inventiveness at so significant a time, is itself a sign that science cannot provide man with real and lasting welfare. Only the millennium of God can do this as foretold in the divine record.

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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

Our minds and supplications are with our Manchester brethren in the work given to them. We are grateful for the privilege of counselling together for, "in the multitude of counsellors they (purposes) are established". (Proverbs 15:22).

Looking ahead, the annual summer outing has been scheduled, God willing for Saturday, August 16th.

J.A. DeF.

MANCHESTER, Ryecroft Hall, Audenshaw.

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

We rejoice at the recovery of those who have undergone surgery. We also have the comfort of reassurance for those who have had health worries, by medical investigation that has given a clear report.

As the work continues with a degree of response, it is a cause of encouragement.