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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"



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AT THE TABLE OF THE LORD

“BE STRONG AND OF A GOOD COURAGE”

This past week we have completed our reading of the first five books of the Bible. These (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy)—sometimes called the Pentateuch—are ascribed to Moses under the hand of God. Their record covers a period from the Creation to Israel’s entering the land which was much earlier promised to Abraham, a span of over 2,500 years. Contained in this record were God’s promises of a land to be their inheritance as Abraham’s seed, if they would heed His word and keep His commandments. More importantly they provided the hope of an eternal inheritance in God’s kingdom promised to the faithful. This will be accomplished when Jesus returns to bring about God’s promised redemption. Four of these five books concern Moses, chosen by God to lead his people out of the hard bondage of Egypt, to their promised inheritance in the land of Canaan. We have often read these records, perhaps at times without realising they were all written by Moses.

According to the dictionary, the title of the first book Genesis—means “the way something comes to be.” It tells of the creation of this universe by the Almighty:

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”

Genesis 1:1.

Also we are cognisant of John’s words:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

John 1:1.

God spoke and it was—the creation of this heaven and earth—“. . . the work of an Almighty hand”—notwithstanding all man’s theories and fantasies about the evolution of the species.

Moses, of course, did not live during the 2,300 years covered in Genesis, but God must have revealed it to him, that it might be recorded, allowing us to know what He had in mind from the beginning. God’s first work was:

“And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided (separated) the light from the darkness.”

Genesis 1:3-4.

Ever since, this separation has remained, physically as day and night, and spiritually as there are children of light (truth) and children of darkness (error)—separated by his decree.

It is not known when in Moses' lifetime Genesis was revealed to him, but we do know that this man was a "friend" of God to whom He spoke "face to face" (See Exodus ch. 33:11). How often it is recorded through Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy: "And the LORD said unto Moses . . ."—directing him to instruct and inform his people as he led them in His way. Recently we have read of Moses' death:

" . . . Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated."

Deuteronomy 34:7.

What a lot this reveals: "his eye was not dim"—enabling him to clearly see the land before he died, for he was not allowed by the Almighty to enter therein:

" . . . the LORD said unto him, This is the land which I swear unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither."

Deuteronomy 34:4.

Moses was allowed to see "unto the utmost sea" probably the Mediterranean Sea. He saw with clear eyes more than the actual land of Canaan as he through faith visualised God's revealed purpose, His kingdom, the inheritance promised to the seed of Abraham, the hope of spiritual Israel. We are also told: "his natural force was not abated." At 120 years of age he had all his faculties, thus sustained by the Almighty for the work given. As Moses was about to die, his work done, he would think back over those 120 years, remembering God's hand upon him, God's voice directing him and Israel, God's blessings as well as His chastenings.

The first 40 years of Moses' life were spent in Pharaoh's palace as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Here he would be surrounded by riches, power, privilege. He did not suffer the affliction that his people knew, those same afflictions that caused his mother to hide him lest he die. He was taken as an adopted son (under God's hand) by Pharaoh's daughter, and so became a member of that royal household. He enjoyed every practical advantage in those 40 years. Yet, he also had a far more wondrous advantage! His own mother had been appointed through God's intervention to be his nurse in Pharaoh's house. She, being a faithful woman, would teach him about Israel's God, His truth, His separation of light from darkness, placing an enmity between the seed of the woman (children of light) and the seed of the serpent (children of darkness). She would also instruct him concerning the promises to Abraham, the Truth re-

vealed to His people from the time of Adam, all that was needed to open his heart to God's love and to His word. After 40 years of learning and maturing, struggling between the material advantages in Pharaoh's family and his desire to serve the God of Israel, Moses made a decision:

"And it came to pass . . . when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens . . ."

Exodus 2:11.

He knew he had a brother and sister, Aaron and Miriam, but he also had other brethren, his people Israel. He chose and "went out" to them, and shared their burdens. He did more than just "look on their burdens"—he chose sides, revealing his loyalty, his love, his concern for the children of light among God's people. Decisively he turned his back upon the pleasures of Egypt as:

". . . he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren.

. . . he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand."

Exodus 2:11-12.

By this act of affiliation with his brethren, Moses committed himself as we are shown by Paul:

"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season:

Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward."

Hebrews 11:24-26.

He chose a life of affliction rather than enjoy "the pleasures of sin for a season," for such pleasures gratify the flesh for a "season" or as the word means, temporal, of short duration, of no spiritual benefit. His faithful decision resulted in being forced to flee to Midian, fearing for his life as Pharaoh became aware of his killing the Egyptian. Thus ended his first 40 years.

Moses was another 40 years in Midian, probably knowing a measure of peace and security. There he married, and a son was born whom he named Gershom (refugee).

". . . for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land."

Exodus 2:22.

He felt to be not of "them" but a sojourner and a pilgrim in an alien land, separated from his brethren, not knowing how they fared.

When 40 years in Midian had expired, Moses was keeping:
“... the flock of Jethro, his father in law ... and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and come to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.”

Exodus 3:1.

Mount Horeb is Mount Sinai. There Moses saw a burning bush, aflame, yet never consumed. God spoke out of that ever-burning bush, saying:

“Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.”

Exodus 3:10.

Moses, overwhelmed at the enormity of this requirement, asked: “Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel?” (Exodus 3:11). To which the Almighty responded:

“... Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.”

Exodus 3:12.

Moses was encouraged by the Almighty and given signs which would testify to his people that God was truly with him to save them in their strong crying out for that deliverance. The Almighty again spoke to His servant:

“... Go, return into Egypt: for all the men are dead which sought thy life.

And Moses took his wife and his sons, and ... returned to the land of Egypt: and Moses took the rod of God in his hand.”

Exodus 4:19-20.

So, at the age of 80, began another 40 years of Moses' life. After a long struggle with Pharaoh who refused to let them go, and as that rod of God brought grievous plagues upon Egypt, Moses finally led his newly “released” people out of their slavery in Egypt. For the next 40 years, he continued to lead his people, as they went out, miraculously passing through the Red Sea on dry ground. Shortly they came to Mount Sinai, as God had promised much earlier. Exodus 3:12). There Moses was given the law and the pattern for the tabernacle—God's dwelling place with His people. For 40 long years of wandering because of the unbelief of Israel at Kadesh-barnea earlier in their journey, Moses bore many trials at their hands. The people murmured against God, as well as against Moses and Aaron; indeed, they wanted to stone Moses and his brother. He

endured their rebellion, trusting in God. Yet at the “rock” both he and Aaron failed to sanctify God when, provoked by their stiff-necked and demanding people, they said in anger:

“Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?”

Numbers 20:10.

As a result of failing to sanctify God, Moses and Aaron were not allowed to enter the land promised so long ago to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and their seed. Moses accepted God’s judgment and encouraged Joshua whom God appointed in his place, saying:

“... Be strong and of a good courage: for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I sware unto them: and I will be with thee.”

Deuteronomy 31:23.

Did not Moses learn this in his 120 years of service to God: “Be strong and of a good courage?”

Is there not great help for us, Brethren and Sisters, in Moses’ life-long faith and reliance upon God? We are given these five books to show us God’s hand with His people for 2,500 years. About 1,400 years after Israel entered the land, Jesus Christ was born, beginning the partial fulfilment of God’s promises. In a short time we believe he will return to gather those who have striven in their lifetime to hear and obey God. Moses will be there, Aaron will be there, Joshua and Caleb will be there, all through the mercy and grace of God. The question is: Can we hope to be there? Only if our living is pleasing to our Father; only if by our submission we glorify Him, not ourselves; only if we are strong and of good courage, “esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.” If by so doing, having respect unto the recompense of the reward, we may hope for the perfect gift of God—eternal life—promised from the beginning. It takes much strength to seize and hold on to that hope. It takes courage as well, being alert, fortified, steadfastly minded to do His will, and determined to glorify Him by subjection to His word as did Moses, our brother.

J. A. Def.

WISDOM, KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

We are helped by the words of Solomon the “Preacher,” as he recorded the Spirit’s instruction as a help and guide for any desiring to know the ways of Truth. From the Proverbs we learn of the building process of God’s house:

“Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established.”

Proverbs 24:3.

When speaking of wisdom, knowledge and understanding, we often group these three together as the same, but the Spirit through Solomon, differentiates between them.

Wisdom means “to be wise” and the only source of true wisdom is God, for through His divine power and wisdom was all we know created. Man thinks he has wisdom, but before man, was the creation, of which he is only a small part. How insignificant is man’s knowledge in comparison to the Almighty’s great wisdom and power. It is important to take note that His house can only be built through His divine plan and wisdom not through that of man, as David wrote in the Psalm, “A Song of Degrees for Solomon”:

“Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it:”

Psalm 127:1.

To ignore or deviate from His divine plan and arrangement for mankind is to build in vain. Only as God allows man to know His wisdom and to partake in that covenant relationship He has offered, can there be a continuance of true understanding in the hope of eternal life.

From Solomon we are told by spiritual understanding is that house “established,” which means to be erect or standing. It is one thing to have a plan or idea and recognise the various components that it will entail, but to have the intelligence and wisdom to put it together is another sphere of knowledge—this is understanding. God’s plan for man shows how those parts are to be assembled in order to be erect and established. The plan itself does nothing if not acted upon. We are called to be the Almighty’s spiritual house—His dwelling place. God’s wisdom provides a plan for man, while through understanding are we enabled to know our part in this divine project. When these two components, wisdom and understanding are in place, then Solomon says:

“. . . by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches.”

Proverbs 24:4.

The house built for His honour and glory is designed to have chambers or rooms within, filled with “precious and pleasant riches”—those spiritual blessings granted of a loving Father when He sees an endeavouring towards righteousness.

This word “knowledge” as used in this reference means “cunning” but in a positive sense, giving the thought of understanding what to do and with ability to do it. Solomon goes on to speak further of knowledge:

“A wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength.”

Proverbs 24:5.

Solomon extends the thought that applied knowledge can enable one to go from strength to strength, predicated upon an understanding of God’s plan. We can more fully comprehend why David said, “they labour in vain” if their building is not according to God’s plan.

From Solomon again we learn of the inter-relationship between these three components:

“. . . incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding;

Yea, if thou criest after knowledge and liftest up thy voice for understanding;

If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasure;

Then shall thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.

For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.”

Proverbs 2:2-6.

God has granted His wisdom through His word, that through its application in one’s living an understanding and knowledge of Him and His commandments may be nurtured. To those who seek Him, and His way, wisdom is uncovered—made easy to be understood, while the unbelieving scorner will hunt in vain:

“A scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not: but knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth.

Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge.

The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way: but the folly of fools is deceit.”

Proverbs 14:6-8.

To search and find the knowledge of His truth and be allowed to perceive what is required to walk in the ways of understanding, is a marvellous gift, freely granted in love to any, who with an open heart to His word, endeavour to walk in obedience by denying self. Solomon's charge to any of such a mind was:

"Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth.

Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee.

Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.

She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee."

Proverbs 4:5-7, 9.

This is our hope and the "ornament of grace: a crown of glory" is the emblem of victory we labour to achieve—the gift of eternal life through His mercy. None that run that race deserve the crown of victory, for being flesh, too often we stumble and succumb to our erring nature. Only through His mercy and grace and the provision of repentance made possible through our mediator the Lord Jesus, is there hope of being part of His house. How marvellous is the blessing held out to man through the wisdom, knowledge and understanding of God.

M.C.S.

FALSE CHRISTS

“... If any man shall say unto you, Lo here is Christ, or there, believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs . . .”

Matthew 24: 23-24.

How truly these words of warning came to pass. It is perhaps not generally realised how much so.

In Jewish circles in the fifth century a message purported to have come from Elijah the Prophet stated that “the world will endure no less than 85 jubilees (which is 4,250 years) and in the last jubilee the son of David will come.” The Jews calculated this to be between 440 and 490 A.D. At that time there arose in the Greek island of Crete a man calling himself Moses. As the Messiah, the new Moses, he said he would “lead dry-footed the Children of Israel to the Promised Land of Israel.” There were many Jews in Crete at that time and he managed to persuade almost all of the Jewish population of what he claimed to be. The day came for the exodus to take place and this Moses led the multitude carrying their possessions upon their backs to a promontary, at the cliff this Messiah raised his arms and ordered the sea to part, calling upon those following to exercise faith. They plunged in after him, and a considerable number of people drowned, though some were saved by local fishermen. Those who survived wanted to bring this Moses to account, but he had disappeared, never to be heard of again. After this disaster Jewish scholars looked at their “Elijah message” again, and re-interpreted it to mean “Before the 85th jubilee you need not expect him (the Messiah) at all. After the 85th jubilee you may expect him.”

The faithful at that time would undoubtedly recall the warning words of Jesus when this event was made known to them.

The Twelfth Century

A certain David Alroy appeared about the year 1147 A.D., which was the time of the Second Crusade. He was born in Kurdistan, and had studied at the Baghdad Academy. He was reckoned an expert in Jewish and Arabic traditions, and so he appeared to many of the Jews living around the Euphrates and in Persia. Many of these people were experiencing a degree of oppression from the ruling Sultan of Persia. Alroy declared he was the Messiah and sent letters to the Jewish communities throughout the Middle East telling them to fast and pray, to prepare for a return to Jerusalem. To further his cause he engineered various signs to impress. So were gathered around him Jews, particularly those who were in the mountains of Chافتan who lived as nomads; these were prepared to wage war to

capture Jerusalem. Opposition from the authorities, however, prevailed, and Alroy, it is said, came to a violent end. Even then, some Jews persisted as his followers.

The Thirteenth Century

Abraham Ben Samuel Abulafi, born in Saragossa, Spain in 1240 A.D., attempted a journey to Palestine at the age of eighteen. He, however, was prevented from getting any further than Acre because of the Crusades still taking place. He then turned his attention to the Lost Tribes of Israel, hoping to locate them. Of course in this he failed, later devoting himself to studies of Jewish literature and himself writing about his own findings he developed a kabbalah system based on the four-letter holy name of God involving various combinations, permutations and numeric values. He then claimed that this was the means of revelation and wrote, "When I reached to the names and untied the seal bands, the Lord of all revealed Himself to me and made known to me His secret, and informed me concerning the end of the exile and the beginning of the Redemption." Lecturing on his methods he gained a Jewish following in Spain, but there was also opposition to his strange ideas and so he left for Italy, and arriving in Sicily in 1284 he claimed that God had come to him appointing him to be the Messiah. The day before Rosh Hashanah he set out for Rome, where, he said, he was going to convert the Pope (Nicholas III). The monks there quickly ensured that he was cast into prison. The Pope however died suddenly which enabled this strange man to be released. Jewish contemporaries in the main rejected him, even though he wrote twenty-eight books and a commentary on the Law of Moses. Amazingly some "Christians" accepted his claims, and he declared "whilst the Christians believe in my words, the Jews eschew them, and absolutely refuse to know anything of the calculations of God's name." Ultimately the Jews in Sicily forced him out, and he went to live on the island of Comino, off Malta. There he wrote a book in which he proclaimed "The time of salvation and the day of Redemption is come, and no man . . . pays any regard to this fact."

The Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries

The fifteenth century brought about the expulsion of Jews from Spain and Portugal (1492-1498). A consequence was the uprise of the Marrano Community, which numbered about three million Jews, citizens of these countries, who were forced to convert to "Christianity," but still served in secret a form of Judaism. These were hoping that Messiah would come to deliver them, and restore

them to the land of their fathers. One David Reuveni was born at this time (1490) One morning in 1524 he appeared in Rome upon a white horse, to visit the Pope, declaring that he was the ambassador of his brother, King Joseph, ruler of the ancient tribe of Reuben. The Pope (Clement VII) allowed Reuveni, who had twelve Jewish leaders and two hundred "Christians" with him, to enter the Papal palace. Reuveni asked the Pope for aid to enable him to raise an army with which to attack Palestine and drive out the Turks. For a year the Pope kept Reuveni as his guest, no doubt pondering what he should do about the request.

Reuveni began to tell his Jewish followers that he was descended from the House of David, and of his intention of taking them back to their Promised Land. The Marranos of Spain and Portugal were astonished at this hoped for deliverance, but his fame also spread to Jews in England, France and Holland.

Subsequently the Pope gave Reuveni a letter of safe conduct to see the King of Portugal to make a request for help. On his arrival the Marranos proclaimed him to be the Messiah, and the Portuguese king decreed that their persecution should cease. John III of Portugal, this king, promised military aid for an expedition to Palestine. The Marrano enthusiasm at this, however, was so great that the Portuguese authorities became alarmed at Marrano conversion back to Judaism. As a result Reuveni's endeavour came to nothing, and Pope Clement having now died, Reuveni lost his protector and also died in prison. The Marranos of Spain and Portugal were greatly disappointed by the outcome.

After Reuveni's death, one Isaac Luria was born in Jerusalem, but later went to live in Egypt. After a period of study he claimed that Elijah the prophet had visited him, he then returned to Palestine, where he taught that "good souls in heaven could be brought down to inhabit the bodies of men," presumably to indicate how human affairs could be affected. Though he never proclaimed himself as the Messiah, his followers believed him so to be, because of the things he taught. However, his growing influence ended abruptly when he was caught in an epidemic and died at the age of thirty-eight.

The sudden death of Luria meant that his disciples had to look for another leader, and they found one in Hayyim Vital (born 1542). He was the son of a scribe who had moved from Italy to Palestine. He became obsessed with his messiahship, and declared that it was Israel's lack of repentance that delayed the advent of the Messiah. However his self-declaration as the Messiah had no lasting effect on his contemporaries.

The Seventeenth Century

In 1648 pogroms commenced in Eastern Europe The Jews greatly suffered. Some managed to flee to Turkey. Shabbatai Zevi, born 1626, the son of a Smyrna merchant, rose up endeavouring to be a Jewish leader, but a majority of them refused him and he was expelled from his hometown in 1651. He therefore began to travel, first through Greece, and later he settled in Constantinople. One of his deceptive doctrines was to teach that holy deeds could be effected even though sin was involved in bringing them to pass. Eventually he found his way to Jerusalem, and then went on to Gaza to join himself to Nathan of Gaza. This new friend pronounced Zevi to be the Messiah. Puffed up by this declaration Zevi rode to Jerusalem on a white horse and after riding round the city seven times was acclaimed by most of the people. News of this happening spread throughout the Middle East and onwards to the Jews of Germany, Holland and England. He had a plan to capture Turkey without a battle, and to gather up the Ten Lost Tribes. Many who heard about him were filled with messianic fervour, and a degree of mass hysteria. When he set out to capture Turkey he was arrested, but the Turks spared him, especially as his disciples paid them huge bribes. But eventually the Sultan grew tired of Zevi's escapades, and being brought before the royal authority was given the choice of holding to his beliefs and be condemned to death, or of becoming a Moslem. He chose to wear the turban and thereby greatly shocked all those who had looked up to him. By the time of his death, on Yom Kippur in 1676, most Jews had forgotten about him.

The Eighteenth Century

One Jacob Frank (1726-1791) rose up to claim he was the divine reincarnation of the soul of Shabbatai Zevi! Not all Jews had forgotten Zevi, for secret cells of his followers existed still in Europe. Contacting these, Frank got their support. He proclaimed his messiahship and taught his supporters to do their utmost to acquire wealth even if it meant the use of fraud. He also, eventually, fell foul of the authorities, but like Zevi before him, he gained his freedom by agreeing to convert to Islam. This did not prevent him making visits to Eastern Europe to contact the Zevi cells which still existed in Poland, Galicia the Ukraine and Hungary. When these spurious Jews, called the Frankists, began to experience persecution they placed themselves under the protection of the Bishop of Poland by exaggerating their common belief with Christianity, actually saying they accepted the Trinity! Frank went on to appoint twelve

“apostles.” But he overstepped himself by allowing his followers to say they regarded Jacob Frank as God. He was thereupon arrested by the authorities and was kept in exile in a fortress for thirteen years. On his release from custody he was supported in luxury by gifts from adherents from around the world. Then in 1791 he was overcome by a stroke and did not survive. But Frank’s followers still continued with their spurious faith, some of whom actually belonged to the nobility. His book “Words of the Master” was still being published in the nineteenth century, and it is thought that communities of Frankists may still exist to this day.

What a terrible history of deception and wickedness this is. Many, many people were deceived by these false claimants. How truly meaningful were the words of Jesus:—

“Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them.”

Luke 21:8.

(Note.) These false Messiahs, over the period mentioned, appear to have mainly arisen from Jewish circles. But then, the dominant Roman Church was not as likely to have Messiah claimants, because the papal authority was regarded as acting for Christ in the affairs of the world.

STAYED ON HIM

Our recent portion in Isaiah chapter 50 gives a unique glimpse into the life of the Lord Jesus—a prophetic account of His work and spirit recorded by Isaiah many hundred of years prior to His birth.

Isaiah was sent to a rebellious people, whom the Spirit in love rebuked, saying:

“... Where is the bill of your mother’s divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you?”

Isaiah 50:1.

It was not God who had cut Himself off from them, but rather they through their rebellion and fleshly thinking:

“Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.”

Isaiah 50:1.

Their own iniquity and serving of self had separated them from serving God. Still in love and mercy, the Spirit continues to reason with them saying:

“Wherefore when I came, was there no man? when I called, was there none to answer? Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh, because there is no water, and dieth for thirst.”

Isaiah 50:2.

How could any doubt or question the power of the Almighty—to think He is unable to help, for history chronicled through the Scriptures has evidenced just the reverse.

Continuing in that 50th chapter, the spirit of the promised Redeemer speaks to Judah and Jerusalem, as well as to us today, of His obedience and faithfulness:

“The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.

The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.”

Isaiah 50:4.

God’s “word in season” or timely help, comes to those of a willing heart, ready to hear and receive it. Solomon also spoke of the comfort of this word in season:

“A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it.”

Proverbs 15:23.

Judah had grown weary of listening to God's word, therefore was the prophet sent to awaken them to their responsibilities and the spiritual rewards in store for the repentant and obedient. Solomon also gives help in this direction:

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver. As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprovcr upon an obedient ear."

Proverbs 25:11-12.

God is the "wise reprovcr" and His word can save, but only when it is received by those with a listening ear, ready and willing to receive correction. This mercy comes with the power to deliver from difficult circumstances as the Lord said, "have I no power to deliver?", but only as He sees a willing heart and humble spirit.

Isaiah was sent to a rebellious people, however there was no need for the Almighty to reprove His Son, for though of the same nature as we, He gladly received His Father's instruction and with perfect obedience did not rebel. Even in the midst of His final agony, he prayed to do God's will:

"... O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."

Matthew 26:39.

He displayed a perfect spirit of submission, that no matter what the circumstances, he would yield in obedience. Knowing the Scriptures as completely as He did, he may have reflected upon Isaiah's words as He steeled Himself to face the final days of His sacrifice:

"Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God."

Isaiah 50:10.

Isaiah's task was to awaken the rebellious house of Judah and turn them from their own thinking to a renewed trust upon the Lord—to look to Him for support and direction, to "stay" their trust upon Him. In several other places throughout Isaiah's writing this same thought is expressed:

"In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.

Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."

Isaiah 26:1-3.

A lack of trust in God caused those in Judah to rebel, their flesh deluded them to trust in their own strength. To turn to God for help and strength is to realise that in man there is no help. To those who do so there is hope promised by His prophet:

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth."

Isaiah 10:20.

David was one who endeavoured to become part of that "remnant" as we read of his trust in God to deliver:

"... The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence.

He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them that hated me: for they were too strong for me.

They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay."

II Samuel 22: 2-3, 18-19.

David's understanding grew from a lifetime of experience—through tests and trials which taught that no matter which enemy plotted against him, whether it be Saul, the surrounding nations, or his own flesh nature, he would place his trust in God to deliver—he would be stayed on Him.

In this same spirit, the Lord Jesus speaks to us from this 50th chapter of Isaiah, illustrating His resolve and trust in God. It shows us a mind fixed, sure, and unmoveable on fulfilling the task which lay before Him:

"For the Lord GOD will help me, therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know I shall not be ashamed."

Isaiah 50:7.

Our test of trust is whether we will as did David, keep our mind stayed on Him, keep our eyes fixed on His purpose and endeavour to walk in obedience therein. If this is our goal, let us take encouragement and help from these words of Isaiah, and example from the life of the Lord Jesus of which they speak.

M.C.S.

SIGNS OF HIS COMING

“HAVING A FORM OF GODLINESS”

In 2 Timothy 3 verse 5 a form of godliness in the “last days” is referred to, in context with the charge that men would be “blasphemers” and “unholy”, of “corrupt minds”. That they would “wax worse and worse”, “deceiving and being deceived.”

A recent survey in Britain reveals that almost ninety per cent of the population no longer go to church. So even the “form of godliness” is diminishing, as compared with a century ago.

The aspect of blasphemy is most markedly seen in a statement from a member of a musical pop group, that he and his fellow musicians “are more important than God.” He said, “I would hope we mean more to people than putting money in a church basket . . .”

But it is not only blasphemously inclined young “covetous, boasting, proud” despisers who are undermining even the form of religion. The religious leaders themselves are undermining their own position. They have the scriptural warning concerning Sodom and Gomorrah, concerning which the Apostle Paul emphatically declares were turned “into ashes condemned with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly.” (2 Peter 2:6) The Apostle Paul also referring to the same evil, declared “men with men working that which is unseemly and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.” (Romans 1:27.)

Yet recently the Church of England tried to minimise the consideration of such wicked tendencies, feeling that the synod is becoming obsessed with single-issue matters. A debate nevertheless was arranged on the 1991 bishops’ report entitled “Issues in Human Sexuality.” This amazingly pardoned unnatural behaviour in a committed relationship in the laity, but forbade it in the clergy. Some Church leaders feel the report of 1991 should not be the final word on the subject. Many bishops however are against any amendment to it. However in some quarters of the church it has been asserted that the Church must now recognise that an individual’s attitude to homosexuality is not a fundamental matter of faith or core test of Christian orthodoxy! An article in the Church Times declared that the most serious problem facing the bishops is that

they have made it impossible for practising homosexual clergy to contribute to the debate because they are supposed not to exist. Openly, in the *Church Times*, the writer confessed, "I have been to the licensing of a priest who was known to the bishop as a homosexual living with his partner. In this service, the bishop declared that the priest was a man of 'sound morals'." He also said, "I have been to another service for a priest in which another bishop, usually indentified as a traditionalist, expressed sympathy to the priest's family and particularly to the priest's same-sex partner. It is not surprising that those who are fiercely opposed to a tolerance of homosexuals within the Church distrust those bishops who appear to say one thing and do another." In another area of the "form of godliness," "The United Reformed Church" has decided that men and women in active homosexual relationships can become serving ministers if their local church does not object! It had been agreed in special assembly of this Church, that such a relationship would not be a ground to reject a candidate for religious training!!

A former high dignitary of the Anglican Church has endeavoured to philosophise about his Church's dilemma as follows:—

"So where do we begin? The first step, I believe, is to acknowledge that the issue is not going to be settled by strongarm tactics, publicity stunts or accusations of bad faith. The heart of the problem lies in the nature of Christian belief itself. A faith which takes history seriously cannot escape the tension between loyalty to what has been given in the past and receptiveness to contemporary knowledge and experience. It follows that there will always be contested areas, that not all questions have simple answers, and that not all moral dilemmas are soluble, as least in the short term.

For both sides to admit that homosexuality is a genuinely contested area would be a major step forward. It would allow the mutual exploration of different beliefs, without the threat of take-over bids. It could lead to the mapping of some areas of common concern, and perhaps to agreement on some moral boundaries. Within the areas of uncertainty and disagreement, there might be growth in mutual respect. It will not be easy, and on the sidelines there will be those who cry, "fudge, hypocrisy and compromise." I would myself describe it as a small advance in learning afresh how to love even our most uncharming neighbour."

These remarks are very revealing. If some in the Church, who are decrying "compromise," are "on the sidelines," what does that say about the extent of the declension of the Anglican Church from their former beliefs? Many in the Church obviously are disregarding the clear instruction of God's holy word, and are looking askance at those who do. It is indeed a time of "blasphemy" and of a leadership that is "reprobate concerning the faith." But such prevailing folly, and disregard, has a price to pay; as the scripture warns, a time is coming when "their folly shall be manifest to all."

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

Interest continues in our booklet concerning the history of the Christadelphian body. It is good to have the opportunity to witness in this way.

In the midst of holiday festivities which December brings, how grateful we feel to know the origin of these celebrations and to be separate from what cannot please our Father. Even to the multitudes who keep this day, clearly the commercialism, attitudes and practices cannot help but cause aversion at what is claimed to be a "holy day."

J. A. DeF.

MANCHESTER, *Ryecroft Hall, Audenshaw.*

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

We have been mindful of one who has been suffering from acute infirmity, knowing that we can draw upon that profound help which was so exemplified in the healing miracles of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Enquiries continue from far and wide for our literature.