

MARCH 1998

A Monthly Magazine issued by

The Remnant of Christ's Ecclesia

in opposition to the Dogmas of
Papal and Protestant Christendom

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"

"JOY"

"FAITH AND WORKS (1871)"

"A BIBLE CLASS"

"QUESTION FROM B.G."

"SIGNS OF HIS COMING"

"NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS"

All Communications

D. Lancaster,
227 Moston Lane East,
New Moston,
Manchester M40 3HY,
England.

J. A. DeFries,
146 Gardner Street,
Fredonia,
New York 14063,
U.S.A.

AT THE TABLE OF THE LORD.

"THEY SHALL KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD"

How impressed we are by the words occurring again and again in the prophet's message to Judah and, Brethren and Sisters, to ourselves. What is it that could bring one to believe and accept that God is indeed the LORD (Yahweh) - the all-powerful, all-knowing, all-seeing, the One God who is everywhere present? Help is found in recent readings as Ezekiel conveyed God's warning to Judah:

"... the land is full of... crimes, and the city is full of violence. Wherefore I will bring the worst of the heathen, and they shall possess their houses: I will also make the pomp of the strong to cease; and their holy places shall be defiled.

... they shall seek peace, and there shall be none.

... I will do unto them after their way, and according to their deserts will I judge them; and they shall know that I am the LORD."

Ezekiel 7:23-27.

How fearful and clear was the warning! Six years later this prophecy came to pass, a sure confirmation that God was indeed the Almighty. As promised, His words did not return "void" or empty, but accomplished "that which I please" (Isaiah 55:11). This has been explicitly so since the time of Adam, and will be through the future, witnessing surely that "I am the LORD." Such was the case as God spoke to Ezekiel:

"Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me."

Ezekiel 3:17.

To warn is also used as admonish, teach or shine. The Almighty causes the light of His word to shine forth that all may know what is His will. Thus the prophet became the Almighty's watchman, often suffering anguish, fear and sorrow in doing so. What exactly is a watchman? The concordance explains: one peering into the distance, alert, watching for danger, in readiness to warn of unexpected trouble. The dictionary adds helpfully: one whose duty is to constantly survey in readiness to warn. A watchman then constantly lifts up his head, patiently alert for danger, swiftly warning. He must be very keen, knowing what to look for, always ready to act. If he clearly warns, and in a timely manner, he has done his duty and is blameless should his warning be unheeded. We find an example of an alert watchman in our recent reading concerning Jehu, who was chosen of God to bring His vengeance upon the

house of Ahab and Jezebel, evil rulers over Israel. Jehu was anointed by Elisha to become king over the ten tribes in the place of the present King Joram, son of Ahab, and was commissioned to bring God's judgment upon the whole house of Ahab. To carry out this divine decree, Jehu went to Jezreel where King Joram was. As he approached:

"... there stood a watchman on the tower in Jezreel, and he spied the company of Jehu as he came, and said, I see a company"

II Kings 9:17.

Thus warned, King Joram in fear sent two horsemen to meet Jehu, asking: "Is it peace?" The horsemen failed to return, being retained by Jehu. Whereupon the alert watchman warned:

"... the driving is like the driving of Jehu ... for he driveth furiously."

II Kings 9:20.

This faithful watchman was able not only to warn of danger, but was also able to identify who was approaching, for he recognized Jehu's accustomed means of driving. Jehu slew in Jezreel King Joram, the son of Ahab, taking his place as king over the ten tribes, and also slew all Ahab's 70 children, fulfilling the word of the Lord. As he did so, Jehu said:

"Know now that there shall fall unto the earth nothing of the word of the LORD, which the LORD spake concerning the house of Ahab: for the LORD hath done that which he spake by his servant Elijah."

II Kings 10:10.

Elijah had foretold of this devastation (I Kings 21:21) 15 years previously. Surely this accomplished prophecy was a witness to God's statement:

"... they shall know that I am the LORD."

Although Ezekiel was divinely chosen, the Lord addressed him by name only twice, but spoke often to him as "son of man." Indeed he was a son of Adam, as we all are, but in obedience he faithfully performed his duties, often at great risk, warning Judah and Jerusalem. While a captive in Babylon, he in vision was carried back to the temple in Jerusalem and was shown the evil his people practiced. There the Lord spoke to him:

"Son of man, lift up thine eyes now ... and behold northward at the gate of the altar this image of jealousy in the entry."

Ezekiel 8:5.

This image of jealousy was an altar to a pagan god erected in God's temple. Further, he was told to enter the temple itself where he beheld:

"... every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, pourtrayed (carved) upon the wall round about."

Ezekiel 8:10.

Let us remember this was the holy temple built by Solomon under God's hand and plan, whose walls had been "carved with cherubim and palm trees" (I Kings 6:29). How utterly defiled that holy place had become with the idols and abominable beasts pourtrayed thereon. Here too "sat women weeping for Tammuz (a pagan god)" (Ezekiel 8: 14). In addition, 25 men were seen with their backs to the temple, engaged in worshipping the sun. The Lord said to His watchman:

"... Hast thou seen this, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations ... ? For they have filled the land with violence, and have returned to provoke me to anger: and, lo, they put the branch to their nose."

Ezekiel 8:17.

These people defied and blasphemed their God, and defiled His holy place. Ezekiel, His watchman, was told to warn of the terrible judgments to come about because of these shameless desecrations.

"Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them."

Ezekiel 8:18.

Further, the prophet was shown specific judgments which were to come upon His people in Jerusalem, His holy city. These would "begin at my sanctuary ... Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain:" (Ezekiel 9:6-7). Indeed, six years later His word exactly came to pass as Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar's army destroyed the temple and Jerusalem. How Ezekiel would grieve over the plight of his people! Yet he continued in his faithful warnings, that all might know what meant these words: "I am the LORD." Watching and warning for 21 difficult and dangerous years, Ezekiel endured this work in the sure knowledge that God's hand was with him. His example can be a source of strength and determination with encouragement for each of us now, as in a small way the endeavor is to be faithful watchmen, discerning the signs of Jesus' return to bring righteousness, judgment and ultimate

peace to this evil and violent world. It is a wonderful time to think about. The Spirit's warnings are there for our help.

The prophet Ezekiel was not the only watchman for God's people; previously Jeremiah had carried His concerns to those in Jerusalem:

"... every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely.

They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace

Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken."

Jeremiah 6:13-14, 17.

The words of this watchman also went unheeded. The captivity of God's people and the destruction of Jerusalem came about shortly after Jeremiah's warning, marking the beginning of Gentile rule over God's land and city, which has continued for over 2600 years. In our days, how grateful we must be that the Almighty sent those who alertly watched, warning of danger, and now helping even us to earnestly seek His way, convinced that the time is nearing when His heralds will cry out: "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him" (Matthew 25:6). Shall we be ready?

Isaiah, another of God's watchmen, helps us to be ever alert for that cry:

"Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: ...

Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak: behold, it is I.

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion."

Isaiah 52:1,6-8.

This is the heartfelt hope of His children, the fulfillment of God's promises from the time of Adam. Each of us, Brethren and Sisters, are to be watchmen, looking ahead, knowing His purpose, and faithfully witnessing to it. Perhaps the hardest part of watching is the necessary waiting, lifting up the head lest when the time for the trumpet to call, the opportunity passes us by. We look with hope to

that day when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9), as all adversaries shall have been destroyed, leaving only those who "know that I am the LORD." At that time, Jesus Christ and His faithful watchmen will rejoice together, saying:

"... Alleluia (Praise ye the LORD); Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the LORD our God."

Revelation 19:1.

J.A.DeF.

JOY

How needful it is Brethren and Sisters, to draw help and encouragement from the experiences of those in the Scriptures who have gone before. In this regard, we can gain help and insight from the witness of Paul and Barnabas, as we read in the Acts of those at Antioch who conspired against the word because the hope of Israel was now extended to the Gentiles. In jealousy these Jews stirred up the people to reject the Apostles' gospel message:

"But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts."

Acts 13:50.

The work of Paul and Barnabas was succeeding, with both Jews and Gentiles anxious to hear the gospel. However, upon the next sabbath day when they met to teach, the multitude was so great, of both Jews and Gentiles, that the Jews grew envious and contradicted and blasphemed Paul's teaching. Paul and Barnabas were then forcibly expelled from the city, but still went forward to spread the gospel with joy among the Gentiles elsewhere:

"But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium.

And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost."

Acts 13:51-52.

That word "joy" means to be cheerful or calmly happy. Even in the midst of persecution and hardship, we read of the apostles' joy as they felt the hand of God upon them, guiding and directing their witness. Because their hearts were filled with a spiritual joy, they were better able to respond in a right manner to the disappointment and rejection by some.

This joy was spoken of by Jesus as he interpreted the Parable of the Sower for His disciples:

“ . . . 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.

In this parable, there was obvious joy upon hearing the word, yet that joy eroded when trials and testings came to prove their depth of spiritual commitment. In contrast, the seed (or word) which fell on good ground was valued and cultivated, multiplying a hundredfold as that “good news” was spread through word and deed. The word is received initially with joy, for its enlightening promise of hope, however, the true test is to use that word daily, becoming grounded and rooted in His precepts, reflecting that joy in one’s living in a way that brings honour to the Almighty and His Son, thereby bringing forth fruit even in the midst of hardship.

This same joy was promised to Zecharias and Elisabeth who though barren and well past the age of childbearing, still desired a child. An angel of the Lord appeared unto Zecharias as he ministered in the priest’s office, saying:

“ . . . Fear not, Zecharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.”

Luke 1:13-14.

Think of the joy this news would bring this elderly couple, not only to have a child, but one who would be given the work of preparing the way for the Messiah.

“For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord . . . And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.

And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

Luke 1:15-17.

It is interesting to note that John the Baptist’s later reply to his own disciples’ question regarding the Lord Jesus, speaks of this same joy:

“Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.

He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled."

John 3:28-29.

How pleasing a mind like this would be to the Almighty. John received the work given him with joy and rejoiced to see Jesus' coming. He did not attempt to usurp the Lord's work or glory, but was happily content in the role he was given, and with humility could say, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (vs.30).

Further we read of Jesus's own spiritual joy which He desired to pass on to His disciples saying:

"As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."

John 15:9-11.

Later, to comfort these same disciples who did not understand His soon departure, the Lord Jesus said:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy."

John 16:20.

Is our response always joyful—full of calm happiness, secure in the knowledge of His care and protection, no matter how difficult the circumstances in our daily living? James reminds us to be joyful even when we fall into trying situations:

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience."

James 1:2-3.

It is hard for the flesh to rejoice when difficulties come, yet James reminds us that these trials are sent to prove our faith—to reveal the true desire of our hearts to God. If our joy and spirituality is evident only in prosperous, happy times and not when persecution, illness or hardship are upon us, then we have failed in our duty to follow His example.

Paul, encouraged in this same manner, reminding his Hebrew brethren, and us today, to:

“ . . . lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.

Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Hebrews 12:1-2.

This joy that the Lord Jesus knew, must be within all who seek to follow after Him. A joy that prompts us to put aside sin and the temptations within and without, and walk in obedience to His word. What joy we have, to know He intercedes for those who call upon His name! What joy to know that through Him our sins may be forgiven! What joy to know of the purpose God has intended for this earth and of the kingdom of peace and justice He has planned for those that are His! In this hope Brethren and Sisters, let us earnestly endeavour to be found approved at His coming.

M.C.S.

FAITH AND WORKS.

(The Ecclesial Magazine 1871)

From the time of Luther down to the present day, the positions which faith and works respectively occupy in the scheme of redemption have afforded a never-ending topic for theological controversy. The extreme to which Roman Catholics went in regard to good works being the only means of salvation, caused the Protestant reformers to fly to another extreme in affirming that salvation was the result of faith alone without works. That those who form part of the apostasy should mistake on this subject, as well as on others, is not to be wondered at, seeing that they are in such a state of darkness respecting the plan of salvation. But, it is somewhat surprising that any who have embraced the truth should have vague or erroneous views on this subject. In many cases, it arises from placing too much stress on one set of passages, and not giving due consideration to another series. Luther the great apostle and father of Protestantism, in order to establish his dogma, rejected the epistle of James as spurious. And those who have learned their theology at his school have, practically, though perhaps not avowedly, done the same thing. Thinking that James and Paul contradict each other, and preferring the latter as an authority, they lay great emphasis on a few isolated passages in his epistles,

and ignore the teaching of James. The apostle James was evidently a very practical man, if we may judge from the tenor of his epistle. In the first chapter, he points out that sin comes through yielding to the lust of the flesh, and introduces an exhortation on practical religion by saying: "Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only." The second chapter is devoted to an argument against "respect to persons on account of their wordly position, etc." which he enforced by asking a few pointed questions respecting faith and works. The third relates to the use of the tongue. The fourth inculcates various duties to God and man. And the fifth, which begins with a denunciation against heaping-up corruptible treasure, consists mostly of an exhortation to practice patience and prayer.

It is in the third chapter that the Apostle shows the intimate connection that exists between faith and works. He commences the argument by saying: "What does it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?" - (verse 14). This is equivalent to saying that faith without works cannot save a man. The apostle, before answering the question, illustrates his meaning, first by a suppositious case, and second, by an historical fact, well known to all readers of Genesis. He says: "Supposing one professing to have faith, see a brother in want, but do nothing to supply that brother's want, what is the good of his faith?" He concludes that faith such as this, which is not accompanied by works, is "dead". He then refers to Abraham, and asks whether the father of the Jewish nation was not "justified by works when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?" Anyone familiar with the history of the Jewish patriarch will, at once, perceive the force of this question. Abraham had been promised that he and his seed should possess the land of Canaan; and that he should become the father of a great nation. It is obvious that this promise could not be fulfilled unless he had a son. He waited patiently a long time before there were any signs of this necessary preliminary coming to pass. At last his wife Sarah bore him a son, whom he called Isaac. This first, and only child gradually grew until he became a young man. At this stage, Abraham was sorely tried. He was commanded by God to offer up as a burnt offering the son on whom his future hopes were set. If he had been a man of weak faith, or his faith had been "dead" he would probably have reasoned somewhat in this way: "If I take the life of my only son before he becomes a parent, how can I be

the father of a great nation, and how can I have any seed to share with me the promised inheritance? To kill my son will be equivalent to committing suicide; it will cut the link which is necessary to bring upon me the promised blessings." But it does not appear that Abraham indulged in any such fleshly thoughts as these. He knew that the command to offer up his son came from the same God, who had given him the promise. He staggered not at the promise through unbelief ... being fully persuaded that what God had promised He was able also to perform (Rom. 4:20-21) He would probably say to himself, "If God intends me to take away the life of my son He will, nevertheless, fulfil His promise; for He that gave him to me in the first instance, can also restore him to life." The Apostle Paul intimates that this thought ran through Abraham's mind, by saying that "the father of the faithful accounted that God was able to raise Isaac up even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure" (Heb. 2:19). Thus Abraham, through having believed God's promise, was enabled unhesitatingly to obey God's command respecting Isaac. In the words of James: "Faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect." (ch.2:22). This leads the Apostle to point out that "by works a man is justified, and not by faith only," (v.24); which is equivalent to saying that faith without works is insufficient to bring salvation to any man.

The epistles to the Romans and the Galatians are thought to be opposed to such a conclusion as this; but a little consideration will show that they contain nothing inconsistent with it. On the contrary, they afford evidence in support of it. It is quite true that the apostle says "A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom. 3:28), and that "a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ," (Gal. 2:16). But of what "works" is the apostle here speaking? The works pertaining to the gospel law of liberty? Certainly not. He means the works of the Mosaic law. He is writing to two ecclesias, in which there were Judaizing believers desirous of re-imposing the "yoke of bondage" abolished by Jesus Christ.

He says nothing whatever against the works of which Jesus spoke when saying:

"Let your light so shine before men that they may SEE YOUR GOOD WORKS and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16)

Much misapprehension on this subject arises through not duly considering the meaning of certain words and phrases. It is forgotten that the inspired writers often use different language to teach the same thing. Hence, controversy respecting it is, in many cases, nothing more than a fight about words.

The Failure to Rightly Divide the Word of Truth

The following shows how some over emphasise "Christian Freedom:-

"The man who makes law the principle of his life is in the position of a slave; all his life he is seeking to satisfy his master the law. Whereas a man who makes grace the principle of his life has made love his dominant principle. He is the free man... love is always more powerful than law"... (William Barclay).

"With Jesus things are different. His priesthood is permanent. He has offered himself. The offering has been accepted by God for eternity. There is no need to repeat it. In a sense it is going on all the time, for the life, death and resurrection of Jesus is the meeting place of time and eternity. The eternal has flooded in to history. We participate in that meeting; His holiness, his blameless purity are mediated to us. He meets our need for a life that is higher, nobler and greater than we dare even to think about without him. He transforms our sinful, hellish existence here below into life with a heavenly perspective. We too, can be holy, blameless and pure, through the single and complete sacrifice of Jesus. It is Jesus himself who guarantees this..."

The writer of this second extract of examples then goes on to quote the words of a hymn by Charles Wesley, as follows:

"Jesus, the name to sinners dear,
The name to sinners given;
He scatters all their guilty fear;
He turns their Hell to Heaven."

Another example of the tendency to a perspective of "faith and not works" is seen also in the following:-

"When we live by faith as branches of this blessed vine, are righteous with his righteousness, justified by his blood and merits, and sanctified by his word and Spirit, and find that we are united to him, we may be sure that death cannot conquer us, and nothing take us out of his hands,

for our life being hid with Christ in God, we know that we shall live, because he liveth . . . and being found in him, having the righteousness which is of God by faith, we may boldly answer to all that can be charged to our terror." (Richard Baxter 1615-91)

The contributor to this article has personally met minds very pleased with the "freedom" they believe they have through the blood of Christ. The expression has been ". . . all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags . . . but Christ is my personal Saviour . . . the blood of Jesus cleanses me."

The contrast in the above examples with the article from the ecclesial magazine of 1871 underlines the blessing of truth in its "rightly dividing the Word of the Lord;" It is a pure and sure light in the darkness—, certainly it is necessary to have faith, to please God, with all the hope which this brings through Christ. But faith, if it be true, also brings obligations to it.

The quotations from the religious spokesmen, of course, are correct to a degree, in emphasizing there is no hope without the saving life of Christ, a revelation of God's love, but much exposition does not go far enough to impress that there is an important spiritual standard, required of those who are blessed with the hope which is in Christ.

A BIBLE CLASS

"BUT THE BIRTHRIGHT WAS JOSEPH'S"

I Chronicles 5:2.

A question may arise as to why Joseph was given the birthright after it was taken from Reuben because of his wrong doing. Also, where did Judah fit into this situation? In Israel the birthright belonged to the firstborn son who would then succeed to his father's position and, in addition, would receive a double portion of his property. The firstborn had a special place in God's plan for Israel, as revealed in His instruction to them through Moses, at the time He brought His people out of Egypt's bondage:

"Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine.

... the LORD slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt ... therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all that openeth the matrix, being males; but all the firstborn of my children I redeem."

Exodus 13:2, 15.

The privilege of the birthright therefore belonged to the firstborn. However, it could be taken away because of wrong doing, as in the case of Reuben, Jacob's firstborn; or it might be sold, as was done by Esau who "despised" it.

Jacob had two wives, Rachel, whom he dearly loved, and Leah, her older sister, who was deceitfully first given to Jacob by her father. Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, was the son of Leah, for Rachel was barren. She grieved and unceasingly prayed for a son until:

"... God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb. And she conceived, and bare a son; ...
And she called his name Joseph; ..."

Genesis 30:22-24.

Thus Joseph became Jacob's firstborn, succeeding Reuben. Joseph, when he came of age, was to be used by the Almighty to save Israel from starvation in the great famine. He was sold into Egypt, and under God's hand became the chief ruler under Pharaoh. In this position he brought Jacob and his brothers into Egypt where there was adequate food and so sustained them there.

Further help in our consideration is found when Jacob, near the end of his life, spoke unto his twelve sons:

"and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days."

Genesis 49:1.

Inspired by God, he revealed what would be their future as children of Jacob, ultimately as the twelve tribes of Israel, heirs of the promise to Abraham. Of Reuben he said:

"Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power:

Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father's bed; ..."

Genesis 49:3,4.

Thus Reuben did not excel, having lost the God-ordained privilege of the birthright.

Of Joseph, his succeeding firstborn, Jacob said:

"Joseph is a fruitful bough, ... the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; ... who shall bless thee ...

The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors ... they shall be on the head of Joseph "

Genesis 49:22,24-26.

Therefore, Joseph the firstborn of Rachel received the birthright and became the means of salvation for his father and brothers.

However, returning to I Chronicles 5, we are further shown that:

“... the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright. For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler; but the birthright was Joseph’s.’

I Chronicles 5:1-2.

This is significant to our understanding, for here it is revealed that the genealogy (pedigree or generation record) was that which established the right of succession to an inheritance. An example is found at the time of Israel’s return from Babylon under Jeshua and Zerubbabel, when the genealogy of certain priests was sought: “... they were not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood.”

Ezra 2:62.

In Matthew I and Luke 3, we find the genealogy of Jesus Christ, establishing His right to receive the promises so long ago made to Abraham and David. Also going back to the prophecy of Jacob to his sons helps to reveal why genealogy dictated Judah’s right:

“Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise:... The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.”

Genesis 49:8, 10.

Jacob through the Spirit was able to reveal that of the tribe of Judah would come the Messiah, the Son of God, to restore the kingdom of Israel and to rule (bear the sceptre) over all the earth, as Paul reminds us:

“... Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness (Jesus Christ) is the sceptre of thy kingdom.”

Hebrews 1:8.

How did the tribe of Judah come to prevail, as Jacob prophesied? David, of Judah, years later was anointed king over Israel. Thus through David, the genealogy of Israel’s kings was of Judah. God promised this to David because of his faithfulness:

“... when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee ... and I will establish his kingdom.

He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.”

II Samuel 7:12-13.

The Lord Jesus, the greater Son of David (see the genealogy in Matthew I and Luke 3), of the tribe of Judah, will establish that eternal kingdom upon His return to the earth. We are striving and hoping to be with those who one day will rejoice as accounted worthy to be part of:

“... the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven...”

Hebrews 12:23.

Let us labor diligently to hold fast to that hope, remembering that this great mercy is possible solely through God’s grace, granted to those who yield their lives, believing and obeying Him. Let us remember as well, that it so easily can be taken away! Must we not then heed Paul’s exhortation:

“Wherefore we receiving a kingdom that cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.”

Hebrews 12:28.

J.A.DeF

Question from B.G.

Our correspondent has referred to the following Remnant article of November last:—

THE RICH YOUNG MAN

We have read in our portion in Mark, the record of one who asked a logical question in regard to his future eternal life. This individual knew there was a promise or hope of everlasting life, for he came to Jesus asking what we ourselves might ask:

“And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?”

(Mark 10:17)

In answer to his question, the Lord Jesus cited the law: “Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.

And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.”

(Mark 10:19-20)

Being a natural Jew, this young man was familiar with the law, believing he had endeavoured to keep it from his youth. However the Lord Jesus, through the Spirit’s help, perceived there was a lack:

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

And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions."

(Mark 10:21-22)

He says on the above:

"Do you ever wonder why Jesus omitted the other (sixth) commandment in re. neighbour (as distinct (from) God)—that is "do not covet"?

(... this young man was familiar with the law) ... must have known command not to covet was omitted. Think about it."

The Remnant's comments

First of all it may help by considering what the Hebrew word rendered "covet" actually means; Heb.chamad, i.e. to delight, to desire, to lust. But where the tenth commandment is declared in the book of Deuteronomy, in the following:-

"Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbour's wife, neither shalt thou covet thy neighbour's house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or anything that is thy neighbour's."

(Deut. 5:21)

The Hebrew word rendered "covet" in this place is, HEB.AVAH i.e. to wish for, greatly desire, long, lust(after). On the other hand "desire thy neighbour's wife" in this place is CHAMAD as used in Exodus 20:17 as "not covet thy neighbour's wife". There must be a reason for the use of these different words in the original. Such variation perhaps indicates an aspect of some slight behavioural difference in attitude in relation to the unlawful desire warned against. In the case of contact with the neighbour's wife, the desire could motivate a subtle, tempting approach to the wife. In the other case of the neighbour's possessions the approach might be different but certainly just as heinous, as in the case of Ahab whose desire led to the despoiling of Naboth of his vineyard through the action of Jezebel.

The Apostle Paul writes about this tenth commandment of the law as follows:-

“What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.”

(Romans 7:7)

The original word the Apostle used rendered covet is, Grk. EPITHUMEO i.e. set the heart upon, long for. The Apostle Paul used it when he declared of himself, “I have coveted no man’s silver, or gold. . .” (Acts 20:33)

Now turning to the reply of Jesus to the rich young man, Jesus said, “Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother “ Here are six commandments relating to that aspect of the law of Moses that concerns the neighbour. The apparent difference in the listing of the commandments is that Jesus refers to the Tenth commandment as “Defraud not”, Grk. APOSTEREO i.e. to deprive, to despoil, destitute, kept back by fraud. This word is found in the following, where it is translated fraud:-

“Behold the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by FRAUD, crieth. . .”

(James 5:4)

There must be a reason why Jesus used the words “defraud not” in replying to the rich young man? It was the tenth commandment but in His reference He spoke with a particular meaning for the circumstances of one who was very rich. It was not an alteration, but conformed to a latitude as seen in the different hebrew words used in Deuteronomy and Exodus describing the requirements of the same law.

The fact is that a man who has great riches may have inherited an accumulation as a result of the fraudulent behaviour of the previous generation. The temptation to hold on to the ill gotten gain is obviously strong. The young man thought he was blameless. But what about the tenth commandment? Jesus in His perception exhorted him to “. . . Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow me.” (Mark 10:21)

This was a personal exhortation from Jesus, and concerned a particular circumstance. It was not a general command to seek poverty, though it did convey a lesson that too great a seeking for betterment can be a stumbling block and a hindrance.

SIGNS OF HIS COMING

"... now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do." (Genesis 11:6)

The proud enterprise of mankind in the early times was noted in heaven, and so divine intervention came about to curb the works of men before they completely got out of hand. Language was confounded and:

"... the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city (Babel)." (Genesis 11:8)

As we look at the world today the same thought arises, will "... nothing ... be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do."? Anticipations of new inventions have recently been voiced, as follows:

Mobile telephones with video cameras and screens to enable people to watch films or play computer games where ever they are. Video postcards from those on holiday, that will act as film screens to display sights and sounds of where the holiday maker is staying.

Contact lens for the eyes linked to the internet, which when activated will enable the wearer to read E-mail and programme the World Wide Web without opening the eyes. New car designs providing anti-collision radar thermal imaging systems to enable driving in fog; also on-board computers to warn of mechanical faults; and links with satellite systems to indicate geographical locations.

A Planet Mars landing, and the establishment of a human colony there (expected in the next few decades). Thousand passenger aircraft.

In vitro conception and growth to term maturity in extra-uterine incubators.

Computers connected directly to the human brain and able to recognise and respond to thoughts.

The extending of the human life span.

The above items are only a few of the scientific expectations that are circulating amongst the so called 'intelligentsia'. They are expecting to be able to predict future health or illness by genetic investigation, and to develop artificial lungs, kidneys and livers, functional artificial eyes, as well as replacement joints.

The Creator obviously is being left out of such ambitious expectations. A recent so-called scientific finding reveals how greatly men discard the revealed word of God as follows:-

"Research in Australia suggests that the dry Outback is the result of systematic burning of vegetation by Aborigines 50,000 years ago. The northern part of Australia at one time was drenched by summer monsoons, but by 10,000 years ago at the beginning of the Holocene period when the African and Indian monsoons began to intensify, the Australian one did not do so. Something regional must have modulated the Australian monsoon. The only mechanism powerful enough to alter the monsoon is vegetation, and archaeological evidence shows that the first human beings reached Australia from South-East Asia about 50,000 years ago. Consistent burning by these people during dry periods altered the basic eco-system preventing the normal recovery of vegetation during the subsequent wet phase. Computer simulations suggest that a "vegetated Australia" would have enjoyed an extra three inches of rain a month in the interior during the monsoon. Failure of the Summer monsoon may be a direct consequence of human activity "

It all sounds very plausible does it not, except that it directly denies the authority of the Bible. However the subject of present day climate change is also coming to the fore. Some interesting comments from the National Press focus on this subject as follows:-

"Failure to agree meaningful cuts in greenhouse gas emissions... is not just a failure for the United Nations, it is a failure of the entire democratic process and a betrayal by our generation of future generations. A simple view of democracy is that it depends upon the ability of individuals to make their voices heard above the clamour of vested interest... global warming threatens the eco-systems which sustain life on this planet and will probably lead to a massive breakdown of agricultural production within three generations."

"Car-fixated countries and profoundly ignorant business people all over the world are in continual search for justification for their stubborn refusal to engage with the climate-change issue..."

There have been many other comments in the above vein, but at the same time scientists are talking about new car productions equipped with radar and computers to enable these being used whatever the weather.

THE REMNANT

Will there be nothing to restrain human activity? The world that does not recognise God the Omnipotent King, fails to realise that God can intervene. He did in the plain of Shinar in that early time, and undoubtedly is aware at the present time of man and his works. The time of such intervention is near as the new millenium approaches.

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

As there is renewed interest in possible reunion among the Christadelphians now divided, we again invite our readers to write for the free booklet dealing with the history of these divisions.

The annual winter party scheduled for February 14th is anticipated for its enjoyment and companionship, by young and old as well.

J. A. DeF.

MANCHESTER, Ryecroft Hall, Audenshaw.

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

As Spring begins to appear in the earth again, bringing increased light and new growth, the mind recalls the words of Acts 3:19 which speak of "the times of refreshing (that) shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you." The revival in the creation, seen in the new shoots, is a vivid witness to God's promise which will not fail, that He will ultimately revive His people, as yet bound by the infirmities of this time of probation.