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A WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

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

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AT THE TABLE OF THE LORD.

“TO STIR YOU UP BY PUTTING YOU IN REMEMBRANCE”

Peter spoke these warning words to his brethren, reminding them that “... shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me” (II Peter 1: 14). He wrote this in A.D. 66 and died in Rome within a year or two, crucified for the name of Jesus. What did he want his brethren to remember? He makes it clear:

“For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

II Peter 1:11.

This speaks of the gospel, the hope of Israel, taught by the prophets, the law, and the teaching of Jesus Himself, fulfilling the essentials which were in God’s purpose from the beginning. Peter reveals how this “good news” was made known:

“For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”

II Peter 1:21.

These holy men were moved, driven by the irresistible power of God, inspiring them as they communicated His message.

Today we have listened to the words of these holy men: Nehemiah, Micah and Peter. Chronologically they prophesied in this order: Micah (about 750 B.C.), Nehemiah (445 B.C. and Peter A.D. 66), a period of over 800 years. Let us listen, Brethren and Sisters, to the words of the Spirit which speak of our lives now, our hopes and our faith to be accomplished, God willing, when Jesus Christ returns.

First, we listen to Micah whose name asks: Who is like unto Yahweh? He himself questioned:

“Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? ... Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.”

Micah 7:18,20.

There is none like the Almighty God; He alone speaks and it is done. Micah prophesied some 30 years prior to the ten tribes of Israel being taken captive to Assyria. Ever since, they have been a dispersed people, scattered among many nations. Yet here is His word that He will perform the truth promised to Abraham and

Jacob - i.e., Israel regathered into their land by the Son of God at His return. Micah worked during the reign of Pekah, Pekahiah and Hoshea over these ten tribes. They were evil kings, leading their people into idolatry. It was during Hoshea's reign that they became a scattered people without a place of their own. Why was this so?

"Yet the LORD testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets .. saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, ... which I sent to you by my servants the prophets.

Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the LORD their God."

II Kings 17:13 - 14.

Let us then listen carefully and hear as Micah testified in the days of these stiff-necked kings:

"Hear, all ye people; hearken, O earth, ... let the Lord GOD be witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple.

... I will make Samaria as an heap of the field, and as plantings of a vineyard: and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof."

Micah 1:2,6.

Samaria, Israel's capital, was built upon a hill. Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, captured the city after a three-year siege and did actually roll the stones of its walls and buildings into the valley: he laid flat the city, taking the ten tribes into captivity. Micah further warned:

"... Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; Is it not for you to know judgment?

Who hate the good, and love the evil;...

Then shall they cry unto the LORD, but he will not hear them: he will even hide his face ... as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings."

Micah 3:1-4.

The prophet continued to convey the Lord's word:

"Hear ye now... remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam ... answered him... that ye may know the righteousness of the LORD."

Micah 6:1,5.

Balak hired Balaam to curse Israel, but God would not allow this (Numbers 23). Balaam then counseled Balak that as long as God is with His people, they cannot be cursed. However, if they can be caused to offend God, God Himself will plague Israel (see Numbers 23:15- 16 along with Numbers 25:1-3). In the days of Micah, Israel

had departed from God, serving idols, marrying the daughters of the alien, blatantly disregarding His laws. What did God require of Israel:

“He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.?”

Micah 6:8.

Israel heard not these words, and they became dispersed among the nations where they remain until this day. Micah warned, Micah pleaded with them: “Hear . . .”—but they would not. We, his people today, are allowed to hear God’s same words, which could have saved them if they had given heed. Let us take them to heart, striving to do “ . . . what is good; and what doth the LORD require . . . ?”

Also today we have read of Nehemiah, another holy man of God. He was sent to the very few of Judah who had returned from captivity to Jerusalem - almost 300 years after Micah. The ten tribes were long gone into captivity (721 B.C.); Judah and Jerusalem had been conquered by Nebuchadnezzar (588 B.C.); and, after 70 years of captivity in Babylon, a remnant of Jews were allowed to return to Jerusalem in order to rebuild their temple. It was to these few the prophet Nehemiah was sent. The temple already had been rebuilt; however, the wall and buildings of Jerusalem still lay in ruins, as messengers from Jerusalem conveyed to Nehemiah (446 B.C.):

“... The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.”

Nehemiah 1:3.

When Nehemiah heard these words he:

“... sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven.”

Nehemiah 1:4.

This holy man of God, having prayed, then appealed to King Artaxerxes, requesting that he be allowed to go there to rebuild the wall, thereby removing the reproach. Upon arriving in the city and viewing the desolation, he addressed his brethren:

“... Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach.

Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king’s words that he had spoken unto me. . . .”

Nehemiah 2:17-18.

In response to his plea, the remnant in Jerusalem moved whole-heartedly:

"... Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work."

Nehemiah 2:18.

Inspired by Nehemiah's encouragement, the work began so that the reproach of almost 150 years' duration might be removed. All labored in this massive task of rebuilding the wall encircling Jerusalem. We do not know how lengthy the wall was, but all the remnant in Jerusalem joined in this immense work: the goldsmiths, the merchants, the priests, the Levites, Nehemiah himself leading in the endeavor. These were not skilled masons and carpenters; they needed to learn how to build. It was not an easy task, but joined together in this restoration, spurred by Nehemiah's words from God, they labored, inspired by their great desire to please Him. The wall was completed in "fifty and two days":

"... it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God."

Nehemiah 6:16.

The reproach was removed and the defence of Jerusalem restored as God was honoured. How glad these workers would be and how privileged they would feel! After this work was completed, Nehemiah, aware of the help and joy from God, returned to Persia, as he had promised King Artaxerxes he would.

Sad to say, some years later when returning to Jerusalem, Nehemiah discovered with pain and dismay that there had been a serious backsliding to their old ways - willingly uniting with the alien, marrying their daughters, forsaking the "tithing" to the Levites, and trading on the Sabbath. Why and how could this be? Perhaps it was because of complacency. God had blessed their work, the wall was restored, the gates were up, and so they may have felt: We don't need to worry about our enemies anymore! In that complacency there was danger of letting down, a relaxing concerning God's word—His commandments. Most certainly this resulted in such evil doing, so that God was much displeased. Does it not remind us of Balaam's advice to King Balak - i.e., the only way Israel can be plagued is by turning from their God? Then He will bring disaster upon them. Nehemiah, the holy man of God, spoke plainly to these rebels:

"... I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them

swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons ...

Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? ... even him did outlandish women cause to sin.

Shall we then hearken unto you to do all this great evil, to transgress against our God in marrying strange wives?"

Nehemiah 13:25-27.

Let us heed these words spoken by this holy man of God, as he turned his people back to God. Brethren and Sisters, being human as was Israel, we see how easily we can lose our perspective feeling safe behind a wall of defense. But we forget the subtlety of our flesh - that serpent nature which looks for the gaps in that wall. Let us listen, watch, be alert, fearing this subtle power, which is the father of the lie (John 8:44). The antidote to that serpent power is the words of "holy men of God (who) spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

Turning now to think about another Israelite who loved God —Peter was such a man. It was not always so, for we remember his resolute words to Jesus:

"... Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both unto prison, and to death."

Luke 22:33.

This was his determination, but we also remember that as Jesus had foretold, he would fail. Thus within 24 hours, in weakness he denied the Lord Jesus three times, and as the cock crew he realized with shame his failure:

"And Peter went out, and wept bitterly."

Luke 22:62

Jesus had previously exhorted Peter:

"... when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

Luke 22:32

Did Peter's denying Jesus strengthen his brethren? Surely not! Can we see why Peter "wept bitterly"? As Jesus saw Peter's need, we see how He encouraged him to "feed my sheep." To feed sheep requires a careful diligent tending as a faithful shepherd, providing for the flock, and keeping them from harm. These experiences helped Peter to overcome his fleshly fears and weakness, helped him to become truly converted - clearly changed from a man of the flesh to a man of spirit. Thus he could "strengthen" - or as the word is used - to establish his brethren, giving of himself in this work of the Lord. Later Peter did go to prison; he ultimately died for the name of Jesus. But he had diligently given of himself to strengthen his brethren and feed His sheep, as we have recently read:

THE REMNANT

“Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance;
Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle
Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my
decease to have these things always in remembrance.”

II Peter 1:1 3-15.

Peter died in Rome shortly thereafter, crucified for the name of Jesus Christ, truly a holy man of God who spoke as moved by the Spirit.

Brethren and Sisters, let us listen to the words of the Holy Spirit which we have heard through our three brethren this morning. Let us be stirred up to keep them in remembrance, that we may be continually “converted” - putting away the thinking of the “old man” and being subject as the “new man” of spirit - more determined to follow Peter’s strengthening words:

“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.”

II Peter 1:19.

J.A.DeF.

“LOVE UNFEIGNED”

We have recently read the second epistle of John addressed to . . . “the elect lady and her children, who I love in the truth;” (II John 1:1). This letter is preserved for our help and encouragement as well, that we, endeavouring to be known as His, may be helped to walk in the way that John outlines here.

His salutation to this “elect lady and her children” speaks of truth and love, two aspects most vital to the unity and fellowship to be found in His body:

“Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.”

II John 1:3.

Truth and love—two aspects, that God in calling out a people to be His, has revealed through his word and manifested in the life of His Son, the Lord Jesus. John rejoiced to find this lady’s children walking in truth and goes on to speak of the importance of love:

“And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.”

II John 1:5.

Love in the Truth is the ingredient that binds those joined in fellowship. Without true love for our brethren and sisters, our walk and vocation before God is a sham, for we cannot profess to love and follow the precepts of our Father, without loving those joined in that fellowship with us.

“Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning . . . he that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.

But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.”

I John 2:7, 9-11.

This old commandment is in harmony with the new covenant through Christ of love for the brethren, and John expands this thought saying:

“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."

I John 5:1-3.

The flesh may look upon God's commandments as "grievous" or hard to bear, too constraining and difficult. However, when we realise the vastness of God's love for His children, that he provided His only Son, not only as an example to follow in our living, but as a perfect sacrifice for sin, we cannot help but be touched and inspired to react in a way that reflects a love for Him and His Son, Jesus Christ. With this in mind His commandments are not grievous, and to obey them is a reflection of our thanksgiving for all he has graciously bestowed.

Paul spoke so eloquently regarding the importance of love over all other attributes, when he wrote to his Corinthian brethren saying:

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity (love), I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge: and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity (love), I am nothing."

I Corinthians 13:1-2.

In the same context, Paul wrote to Timothy reminding him of the end of God's commandments:

"Now the end of the commandment is charity (love) out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:"

I Timothy 1:5.

This is the means whereby we can apply in our living, that love for God and His Son—by displaying love for one another in sincerity by both deed and word, just as Peter confirms:

"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently."

I Peter 1:22.

To love fervently and unfeigned is to love with sincerity with no ulterior motives, without hypocrisy, loving our brethren as we would ourselves. This is the love that binds and unites the members of His household into one fellowship. Without it, we are not a "family" joined to God and His Son, but a congregation of strangers.

When asked of all the commandments, which was the greatest, the Lord Jesus answered:

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

This is the first and great commandment.

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

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

Matthew 22:37-40.

John, perhaps the disciple closest to the Lord Jesus, who learned of love from the Master, rejoiced to see this love growing in this “elect lady and her children” who had embraced the Truth:

“I rejoiced greatly that I found thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.

And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.”

II John 1:4-5.

We too need to absorb and apply this wisdom in our own living, realising that the grace, mercy and peace spoken of by John earlier in this epistle, can be achieved only as we walk in love one toward another, as exemplified by our Mediator the Lord Jesus, whose entire living was a manifestation of His love for God and for His brethren.

M.C.S.

"...THE WORD OF OUR GOD SHALL STAND FOR EVER."

Isaiah 40:8

A questioning of the soundness of the present wording of Bible scripture, as translated, is a common occurrence. There is a derogatory term which speaks of "corrupt texts." The unspiritual mind fails to realise that God is surely in control, and His declared word is His witness of what He intends to do with this good earth.

Through the prophet Isaiah God declares:-

"...my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord..."

For as the rain cometh down, and... watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth... bread to the eater:

So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void..."

Isaiah 55:8-11.

What the world fails to perceive, is that God will not permit His word to be corrupted.

It is now fifty years since the first of the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered by an Arab shepherd boy in a cave in the Valley of Jericho. The government of Jordan made first claim on the Scrolls, and they were handed over to a group of scholars to study. Later many of the Scrolls came under the control of a museum in Israel. The initial impact of the discovery however was dimmed as scholars began to argue on the meaning this remarkable find. Some declared that the Scrolls pre-date Christ. Others maintained that they told, in a kind of code, the crucifixion of Jesus and of His resurrection, and spoke of a struggle between James the Lord's brother and the Apostle Paul concerning the mosaic law, Paul being designated as "the Wicked Priest." This idea, of course, is nonsense, as the New Testament declares the unity of James with Paul, over Paul's mission to the gentiles.

When the scrolls were found Harry S. Truman was President of the United States and Stalin still ruled in the Soviet Union, and King George VI sat on the throne of the United Kingdom. But what has the world done about the wonderful find since that time? There seems to have been a degree of reluctance to accept this striking witness, for it has been covered over by vain scholarly debate. That the scrolls are a wonder is evident by a miracle of preservation, for the scrolls were written on parchment made from the salt-treated but untanned hides of goats and sheep, some of which are now

extinct as a particular species of sheep. The ink used was also made of vegetable extracts. Yet they survived over 2000 years.

In this discovered material there is considerable detail of the Jewish religious community, the Essenes, the existence of whom was described by Josephus the Jewish historian as from B.C. 150 (the time of the High Priest Jonathan) to the first Jewish war of A.D. 66 to 70. But what is sometimes forgotten is that amongst those scrolls dealing with the beliefs of the Essenes, there was, in Hebrew, all the books of the Old Testament except the book of Esther.

As those books of the Old Testament were examined, the accuracy the Bible was perceived. The years between have not brought about "corrupt texts" at all. An example from Psalm 37 in an Essene Commentary is indicative, as translated:-
"The wicked borrows and does not repay, but the righteous is generous and gives, Truly, those whom He (blesses shall possess) the land, but those whom He curses (shall be cut off)."

The words in brackets in the translation have been added to explain the flow of the wording, because certain words have disappeared from the scroll because of deterioration.

The above wording can be compared with the wording of Psalm 37 verses 21-22 in the King James Version as follows:-

"The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth.

For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off."

The meaning of the wording in the scroll is exactly the same as in the Bible today.

Another example from the scrolls is from Isaiah:-

"Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, You shall be saved by returning and resting; your strength shall be in silence and trust.

But you would not. You (said), No. We will flee upon horses and will ride on swift steeds. Therefore your pursuers shall be speedy also. A thousand shall flee at the threat of one; at the threat of five you shall flee (till) you are left like a flagstaff on top of a mountain and like a signal on top of a hill. Therefore the Lord waits to be (gracious to) you; therefore He exalts Himself to have mercy on you. For the Lord is a God of justice. How blessed are all those who wait for him."

The Essene scribe commenting on the above refers it to be a proclamation against the congregation of those who seek smooth things in Jerusalem, despisers of the words of the Law. A comparison with this text can be seen by looking in the Authorised Version (Isaiah 30:15-18).

"For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not. But ye said, No; for we will flee upon horses; therefore shall ye flee: and, We will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift. One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one; at the rebuke of five shall ye flee: till ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on an hill.

And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him."

It is evident that the quotation as received today in the King James Version, is essentially the same in its meaning as in the ancient text, found in Cave 4, in the desert close to the shore of the Dead Sea, where thousands of parchment fragments were found. Up to that time of discovery no Hebrew documents dating to significant antiquity existed to provide comparison with the present day wording except the small Nash papyrus, containing the Ten Commandments, found in Egypt, and now in the Cambridge University Library.

Sadly, however, for forty years, a strange secrecy about the Scrolls held sway. It was not until 1988 that restriction on their examination began to lift, when the Huntington Library of San Marino, California, a famous research institution, opened its complete photographic archive of the Qumran Scrolls to all qualified scholars. The Israel Antiquities Authority attempted, along with the official editors, to resist this easing of restriction. However Israel's parliament, the Knesset, brought pressure upon the Antiquities Authority, which had to give way. Almost immediately the Scroll photograph archives at the Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies, and the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center at Claremont opened their doors to competent research scholars. Previously these Centres had been legally compelled to restrict access only to persons approved by the Jerusalem Antiquities Authority.

But how very significant it is that the complete Isaiah Scroll from Cave 1 can now be studied, which is a thousand years older than the pre 1947 Hebrew text of the whole of Isaiah in the Ben Asher codex from Cairo, dated AD 895.

The following comment by a distinguished scholar involved with the Scrolls is an apt summation.

“Looking at the Qumran discoveries from an over all perspective, it is, I believe, the student of the history of Palestinian Judaism in the inter Testamental era (150 BC - 70 AD) who is their principal beneficiary. For such an expert, the formerly quite unknown sectarian writings of the Dead Sea literature have opened new avenues of exploration in the shadowy era of the life of Jesus, the rise of Christianity and the emergence of rabbinic Judaism. From the Jewish side, it was previously poorly documented. The rabbis of the first and second centuries A.D. had not permitted religious writings of that epoch to go down to posterity unless they conformed fully to their ideas, and although some of these texts were preserved by Christians (viz the Apocrypha and many of the Pseudepigrapha), the fact that they served as a vehicle for Church apologetics caused their textual reliability to be suspect. But the Scrolls are unaffected by either Christian or rabbinic censorship, and now that their evidence is complete, historians will be thoroughly acquainted, not with just another aspect of Jewish beliefs or customs, but with the whole organisation, teaching and aspirations of a religious community flourishing during the last centuries of the Second Temple.”

One last thought comes to mind; the comments of the Bible scholar above, refers to the Apocrypha, which became textually suspect. It is for this reason, that it finds no place in the Authorised Version of the Bible. Is not this an evidence of an over ruling that ensures the purity the Word of God? But what a sad commentary on these modern times it is, that the world at large does not perceive the greatness of the blessing which has been given to it. The Bible, which reveals the Eternal Creator to mankind, who has declared through His Psalmist, that “the words of the Lord are pure words . . .” (Psalm 12:6)

R.ROBERTS on 2 SAMUEL 24 v 1

James's words amount to the assertion that in the ordinary course God influences no man in an evil direction; that good and not evil is the object of all He does. There is no contradiction between this and the fact illustrated in the quotation from 2 Samuel 24:1, that when men are obnoxious to Him, He works against them in a sense opposite to "delivering them from evil." "The hearts of all men are in His hands, and (as occasion serves) He turneth them whithersoever he will." In special cases, He puts things into the hearts of men for the development of special situations. In the case recorded, David was drawn into a course which brought judgment upon Israel, whose condition was such as to have kindled the Divine anger against them.

A BIBLE CLASS

“THOU HAS AFFLICTED ME WITH ALL THY WAVES”

Psalm 88:7

The title sets the tone for this psalm of David—a pouring out of his heart before God while under sore affliction. The Concordance helps in rendering the translation of this title as follows:

“A Song or Psalm for the sons of Korah (being made smooth), to the chief Musician (the One who overcomes) upon Mehalath (affliction and weakness) Leannoth (pay heed), Maschil (instruction) of Heman the Ezrahite (for the faithful Israelite indeed)”.

Psalm 88: Title.

The “sons of Korah” are those in the spiritual process of being made smooth—having the rough edges of their carnal nature tempered through trial and testing, and thus becoming more pleasing to the Almighty. Mahalath is to overcome through affliction and weakness, Leannoth, to pay heed to the Maschil or instruction for Heman the Ezrahite or one who is a true Israelite in spirit.

Humility and weakness are not characteristics in which the flesh delights. Rather, the carnal man prides himself in his strength and self-sufficiency, and is often unwilling to ask for help when troubles come. In contrast, the spirit man is one who submits his life to the hand of God to direct as He sees fit. In this psalm David cries out, acknowledging his weakness, and beseeches God for help and deliverance as he struggles beneath trying circumstances:

“O LORD God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before thee:

Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry:

For my soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave.

I am counted with them that go down into the pit:

I am as a man that hath no strength:”

Psalm 88:1-4.

David felt low and without strength, recognising that the only One he could turn to was the “LORD God of my salvation”—the Only source of help and deliverance to save him from man’s natural end—the grave.

In the course of this affliction, David felt these trying circumstances pounding upon him as waves do upon the seashore, as our consideration explains:

“Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves. Selah.”

Psalm 88:7.

The word for “waves” as used in our consideration is breaker, reminding us of the ocean waves which break one after another on the shore, with pulsating regularity, sometimes churning the sand and sculpting the shoreline with their destructive force. David felt held under by the force of affliction as it washed over him, seeming unrelentless at times. He no doubt yearned to escape yet knew this was the Spirit’s hand upon him for good, shaping and molding him into a man after God’s own heart. Therefore in faithfulness he could say “Selah,” meaning, value it considering the end. He looked to the end result promised for the man who has faithfully endured such affliction. These, the apostle John while exiled into Patmos, saw in vision:

“ . . . These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”

Revelation 14-17.

Another who felt overcome by the waves of affliction was Jonah—a prophet who tried to run from God and the work given him. We remember Jonah’s circumstances. While trying to flee by ship, he was thrown overboard and swallowed by a great fish sent from God. Out of the fish’s belly Jonah appealed to God:

“For thou hast cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me.

When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.”

Jonah 2:3-4.

He found himself in the depths of despair—afflicted because of his lack of trust and obedience. However, he came to acknowledge through this affliction, that God was his only source of hope and salvation, and was therefore rescued:

“But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD. And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.”

Jonah 2:9-10.

Jeremiah the prophet was another who found himself in the midst of affliction, being sent to prophesy to Israel in captivity. God had delivered them into the hands of the Chaldeans to afflict and chastise them because of their rebellion against His precepts. Through Jeremiah, they were told they were a people "without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not:" (Jeremiah 5:21). Yet even in the midst of this affliction was His care for them evident, with a promise of His protection extended for those who would yield to Him:

"Fear ye not me? saith the LORD: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?"

Jeremiah 5:22.

Just as the sand is set as a boundary for the sea, so that the waves cannot reach beyond a certain point, so too are the waves of affliction ordered by the Almighty. He will not send us more than we are able to bear, as Paul reminds his Corinthian brethren:

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

I Corinthians 10:13.

How difficult it is while in the midst of affliction to recognise its spiritual benefits and say as did David, Selah—value it considering the end. Yet if we are striving to become known as His, to share in the hope held out to those who endeavour to overcome, we must accept affliction as necessary to shape and mold us into men and women more spiritually pleasing to Him.

M.C.S.

SIGNS OF HIS COMING

"When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work... Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest."

Psalm 95:9-11

The Apostle Paul referring to the above question explained:-
"For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest... Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest..."

Hebrews 4:3-11

A marvellous witness to the purpose of God is the seven day week accepted by most nations. In early times the Jewish law, given at Sinai, required the seventh day to be the day of rest. After the ascension of Jesus into Heaven, His disciples met on the first day of each week to remember Him. But for a while Jewish followers of Christ observed also the seventh day as well as the first. But gentiles who responded to Paul's preaching of the gospel had never kept the seventh day. These observed the first day for the "breaking of bread" which came to be called the Lord's Day, and the seventh or sabbath day lapsed. But still, every week of seven days did have a day of rest, from the time of Constantine. Therefore one day in seven brought cessation from labour, and this was kept up until recent times. But now the first day of the week is seen to have lapsed into one of activity, with the opening of shops, and the roads busy with those seeking desired purchases. Nevertheless there is still a vestige of making one day in seven different from the other days.

The Apostle Paul showed, in referring to the Psalms of David, that the weekly sabbath is a token of a greater sabbath in the divine purpose. Unfortunately the world at large does not perceive this, even though every week witnesses to it.

We are now almost at the end of the second millenium of the gentile calender since Christ, and the world is indeed taking notice of this fact. In Britain considerable preparation is being made for this third millenium. Prior to Christ, as witnessed by the word of the Most High, there were four millennia from the time of Adam. So in total six millennia are almost complete. Surely then, the seventh coming millenium will bring the fulfilment of which the Psalmist and the Apostle wrote? But men do not regard this time

in that sense as very significant, except to note that in the march of human events this beginning of another thousand years is a signpost for history.

In Britain the Millenium Dome is being erected at considerable cost and the leader of the nation has predicted this construction as an awesome one. It is planned that this massive structure will have twelve vast pavilions. One of the organisers at the forefront of this Millenium project has declared that, "We are on course to make the Dome the most talked-about and successful event in the world in the year 2000."

By January 1999 it is planned that the Dome's operations staff will be recruited, and that June 1999 will see the Dome's Pier completed. Then in November 1999 the installation of its contents will be in place, and in December transport services to it will begin to run and then on December 31st the Dome will open.

"This will be a lasting legacy. It will last a decade and become a national landmark", the British leader has declared, going on to say, "I want today's children to take from it an experience so powerful and memories so strong that it gives them that abiding sense of purpose and unity that stays with them through the rest of their lives."

One of the zones of which there are to be thirteen, is to be called the "Spirit Level". This is to be a reminder, it has been said, of the fact that the Millenium is actually an anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ. It is to have a peaceful garden walk, and a tent-like central structure exhibiting various religions, and said to be a celebration of the spiritual side of life in general. As the visitor walks along a weaving pathway he will see displays on the history of religion and will pass two waterfalls, he will then reach a canopy, and in the dark of this inner structure he will hear music and see rays of light playing on water and on steam. As the canopy becomes suffused with light the visitor will again walk out into the greenery of the surrounding garden. Such a design, no doubt, will impress from a human point of view, but what of Christ, and His promise? And what of the spiritual significance of it being two thousand years since He came into the world? Christ's words are clear:

"Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

Luke 21: 24

"And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

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

Verses 27-28

These words are largely forgotten or ignored. The concentration of men's minds and hopes are largely on the coming marvels of science they are studying to produce. Such as Robotic Maids to do the house work. Robot Vacuum Cleaners, Computerised Refrigerators that keep track of groceries in the home, and re-order as required by direct contact with the suppliers. Light emitting polymers which will make the electric light bulb obsolete etc. etc. Men are bound up with their own purposes, forgetting that God has a purpose with His creation.

The word of God, however, remains a living witness for these times concerning a purpose for His people:-

"After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.

Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord ..."

Hosea 6:2-3

The new millenium is the third day.

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

This last month has brought great blessing from our Father, particularly regarding health and also one's daily work arrangements. In this we are grateful for the overruling care in answer to prayers of many.

J. A. DeF.

MANCHESTER, Ryecroft Hall, Audenshaw.

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11.00 a.m.

Thursdays: Bible Class 7.15 p.m.

Interest in our booklets continues as we receive requests from various parts of Ireland, in response to our advertising by post.

The work of sending out our magazine is also one that gives us the satisfaction of doing something that may be useful to others. Not only is the mailing widespread but varied, our issues not only going to Australia and New Zealand, but also Austria, Romania and Africa.