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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
THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED**

For the last few weeks we have been reading John's record of Jesus' life and work, written somewhere between 85-90 AD — many years after Jesus' death. Having lived this long, the apostle had experienced much suffering and affliction as well as exile for the name of Jesus. Being the disciple "whom Jesus loved" (John 21:20), he was close to his Master, joined in a special bond. Given this relationship, he was well enabled to write about his beloved Saviour from a close and personal point of view. This relationship began as Jesus "called" John, along with James his brother, as recorded:

"... he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship ... mending their nets: and he called them.

And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him." Matthew 4:21-22.

There must have been something in these men that caused Jesus to choose them as companions in the work. They were humble fishermen as were their partners, Peter and Andrew (Luke 5:10). They must have had qualms about leaving their father as well as their means of livelihood, but Jesus encouraged them, saying:

"... Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him." Luke 5:10-11.

James and John were among the twelve ordained to be Jesus' apostles, sent forth to preach, as He bestowed:

"... power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils."

Mark 3:15.

These two brethren, along with the others, went about this work with awe at the power of God which they perceived working in Jesus.

John witnessed for over sixty years and suffered much for his stand for truth. James his brother was killed by Herod (Acts 12:2), after twelve years of service as an apostle of Jesus. We can realize the grief this would cause John. He could have been angry, vengeful; but he continued in the divinely given work for more than another fifty years.

Jesus especially loved John (John 21:23) — not that He did not love His other apostles; but John appears to have had a special place in Jesus' heart. Why was this so? What was there about John that

endeared him to Jesus? If we can discern this, perhaps we can draw closer to our Lord and Master. First of all, John learned to be humble, indeed he never mentioned his own name in writing his record of Jesus' life and work. He was not always humble, for he and James had requested when Jesus asked what he could do for them:

“ . . . Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory.”

Mark 10:37.

Jesus did not directly answer their request, but gently said:

“ . . . Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?”

Mark 10:38.

As they replied: “We can” — Jesus continued:

“ . . . Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.”

Mark 10:39-40.

The Lord Jesus was drinking of that cup and enduring that baptism (whelming) required of Him by God. He had yet to achieve the victory over His flesh nature, which this involved. He helped James and John to perceive that they too had a time of probation, a time of proving, before they could even hope for such a place with Jesus in His kingdom. In due time Jesus did indeed become baptized by water and the spirit. He continued to drink the cup given to Him until He died on the cross, having always obeyed His Father's commands, and now sits at His Father's right hand. In due time, John and James if faithful in their work as apostles, drinking of Jesus' cup, and overwhelming their own flesh, could hope for the time of Jesus' return when He will join to Himself all who in humility and love can take up their cross and follow Him. Jesus said: “. . . it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared” (Mark 10:40). His work was to prepare the way, as He told His disciples when He was about to be crucified:

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

In my father's house are many mansions (abiding places):

. . . I go to prepare a place for you.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may

be also.”

John 14:1-3.

Sixty some years later John was shown, through the vision of The Revelation, the end results of Jesus’ preparing a people, which would include James and John, fulfilling God’s purpose:

“And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”

Revelation 21:2.

James and John will be among those who will become Jesus’ “bride” — having been judged acceptable.

The love Jesus had particularly for John was also because he “stood by” Jesus in His trials. When Jesus was betrayed by Judas and taken to the high priest’s palace, we are told:

“Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest.”

John 18:15.

John, although well known by the high priest, “stood by” Jesus.

John further “stood by” during Jesus’ last agony on the cross, along with Jesus’ mother Mary, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene (John 19:25). Of this we read:

“When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.”

John 19:26-27.

Almost immediately after entrusting the care of His mother to John, Jesus cried out in victory: “It is finished: . . .” and gave up the spirit (John 19:30). His work was done, He drank of the cup fully. How much John loved Jesus, possibly facing dire consequences as he “stood by” — willing to suffer and die with Him if required. He would remember Jesus’ words spoken earlier to His disciples:

“... If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.”

Matthew 16:24, 25, 27.

John gave his life to the service of God for another sixty years. He, along with the apostles, received the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:3-4) on the day of Pentecost, enabling them to carry on that work.

Immediately their faith and determination was tested as Peter and John, preaching the gospel in Jerusalem, were put in prison (See Acts 4:3). They testified of the word of God before the elders and scribes:

“... when they saw the boldness (confidence) of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done.” Acts 4:13, 21.

Helped by the gift of the Holy Spirit, John and Peter witnessed by their words as well as by their confidence and trust in God that they were true brethren of Christ, teaching the word of God as he had directed them. The Spirit of God shone forth, confounding their persecutors.

John continued his witness, inspired to write the Gospel of John, his three epistles to his brethren, and the book of The Revelation while he was exiled on the isle of Patmos “for the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 1:9). Nor did his witness end there; the Bible dictionary reveals that he was delivered from exile shortly after writing The Revelation, and he returned to Ephesus, and there continued to teach the word of God and the name of Jesus Christ until his death.

As we contemplate the life of this “disciple whom Jesus loved,” is he not an example for us, giving his life from the day of his calling — a simple, humble fisherman — until his death? What inspired him in this long work? Was it not his love for Jesus and for God? He truly denied himself, took up his cross, and walked in the way of his beloved Jesus, trusting in His words which John recorded:

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: . . . I go to prepare a place for you.

. . . I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” John 14:1-3.

Can we picture the joyous reunion in that day of judgment, as Jesus embraces John, the disciple whom He loved? Brethren and Sisters, let us take John’s example to heart, following in that hope of everlasting joy granted when Jesus returns to join to Himself all those who have striven to show such love.

Are we, Brethren and Sisters, showing such love? Are we willing, as was John, to put aside our own wants and needs, even our livelihood, ready to follow Jesus? Are we ready to “stand by” those in need — to reach out to comfort, to lift up, able to do so in love because we are aware of needs, especially in time of trial? Are we close enough, loving and willing enough that those in trial can turn to us for support with confidence? Do John’s words help us to emulate his love for Jesus and for his brethren?

“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.” I John 3:16, 18.

John in love dedicated his life to Jesus and his brethren. As a result, he became known as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” How blessed indeed he was! May it help us all to think of this!

J.A.DeF.

“JAMES’ EPISTLE”

We have been instructed and encouraged on many occasions from James’ epistle written to his brethren “scattered abroad” — whether by distance or time:

“James a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.”

James 1:1.

Several times throughout this letter, James specifically addresses his brethren on the subject of unity — the fellowship of those joined together in the one body, made possible by the Lord Jesus. Unity of mind and spirit is essential in the household of faith, in order that all serve God in a spirit of truth and humility.

James begins this epistle saying:

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

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

But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” James 1:2-4.

This being “entire, wanting nothing” is the same thought of being at one with the Father and His Son — a state of perfection that all strive for, but only One has achieved. This aim must be a priority for

those who would walk in faith, for James warns of what will result without this singular objective:

“A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”

James 1:8.

Double mindedness is a manifestation of the flesh, and can be one of many tests to be faced during the perfecting process. In this same vein, James continues, describing the double minded:

“... For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.”

James 1:6.

To be tossed as a wave to and fro gives the idea of going either one way or the other without direction or purpose. What is the remedy? James continues:

“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.

Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.”

James 4:8.

How can this cleansing of the heart be accomplished in order to wash it free of the influences of double mindedness? James explains:

“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.”

James 4:10.

Only through humility, and an endeavour to cut off the flesh's influence, is approach to God possible, in the hope of being at one with Him and His Son.

James continues explaining the dangers of being doubleminded in word or action:

“Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.

Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?

Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.”

James 3:10-11.

Practically, it is impossible for a fountain to yield both fresh and salt water at the same time. The mingling of both types of water will only result in the corruption of the fresh by the salt. In nature where fresh rivers meet ocean waters, the resulting co-mingling areas are known as “brackish”. An appropriate term as described in the Dictionary as, “salty or nauseating” — able to sustain marine life, but not drinkable or useable by man. James uses such examples from nature to emphasize the importance of being single minded in purpose:

“Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among

you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.” James 3:13.

“Meekness of wisdom” is a humility born from an understanding of His word, growing into works pleasing to the Spirit. James continues to describe this wisdom:

“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.” James 3:17-18.

Peace is described as the absence of conflict or distress, thus James’ words imply that if there is unity of mind and spirit, there will be peace among brethren. James’ epistle was an impassioned message to his brethren that they grow in this spirit through control of the fleshly inner man:

“My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.” James 3:1-2.

James goes on in this third chapter to speak of how a bit is used in a horse’s mouth to control its movement. With this comparatively small metal instrument in place, weighing less than a pound, a small rider can control the actions of even the great Belgians or Clydesdales—muscular and vigorous animals, weighing hundreds of pounds. This line of thinking must then be extended by the man of faith in an effort to bridle the inherent evil of the uncontrolled tongue:

“For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind:

But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil full of deadly poison.” James 3:7-8.

With the help of James’ epistle, let us endeavor Brethren and Sisters to walk in singleness of purpose after the example of the Lord Jesus — seeking to be men and women of peace and humility, anchored through whatever life brings, by the hope secured through God’s mercy, in providing His Son as our Mediator and Redeemer.

M.C.S.

“--- ALL THINGS CONTINUE ---.”

(2 Peter 3:4)

The people of these modern times expect things to continue in a general sense, as they always have continued. Of course they pride themselves in scientific and engineering developments, which are expected to become more and more marvellous.

Evolution has dominated the thinking of modern man. The lesson of Noah is regarded as a myth, and it is the evolutionary theory that is largely responsible for this.

The scripture, however, bears witness to the true position:-

“--- there shall come in the last days scoffers --- saying --- since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:

Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:

But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto --- the day of judgment --- of ungodly men.” (2 Peter 3:3-7).

Consider what a Master of Arts and a Doctor of Divinity has had to say about Noah:-

“The Table of Nations (Genesis chapter 10) --- It is an attempt to explain the origin of the various nations ---. It need hardly be said that the various races of mankind now existing cannot be traced back to a single ancestor at a period so near to us as the date to which the Old Testament assigns Noah; nor indeed do peoples originate in the way here described ---. The name Nimrod has not been discovered in the cuneiform inscriptions, and the identifications proposed are most uncertain. --- The Confusion of Speech (Genesis chapter 11) --- is an aetiological story naturally not historically, answering the question, why is it that though the races of mankind have sprung from a common ancestry they speak so many different languages? The narrative presumably originated in Babylon, though no cuneiform parallel has been discovered, and it may have expressed the attitude of the nomads towards the building of Babylon rather than that of the Babylonians themselves. It has been adapted by the

Hebrew narrator. - - - Possibly some unfinished or dilapidated structure may have given rise to the story (i.e. The Tower of Babel and confusion of the languages)."

The writer of the above was connected with the Methodist Religion and was a Fellow of Merton College, Oxford, and also a Professor at the University of Manchester. The world regards the authority of such to speak on the subject on which they have gained eminence. So the evolutionists get tacit support from such scholars for their soul destroying view, which undermines faith.

No wonder then that men think "all things (will) continue." A recent news report reveals this as follows:-

"Politicians - - - are among writers of letters to be stored in a special Royal Mail vault for 1,000 years. - - - The post, to be opened in 3000 AD, is expected to give an insight on the views of people today."

(A Royal Mail spokesman said:-)

"We invite everyone to compose a letter to our descendants. Messages might explain our hopes, fears and aspirations, or simply send good wishes to the people who inherit our world. (One of the letters was from a lady aged 95) who ran a needle-craft shop in Leicester until last year. - - -"

So is fulfilled the prophecy in the Epistle of Peter, that in "the last days" the attitude will be "all things continue as they were;" and mankind "willingly ignorant" of the revealed Truth in the Word of the Creator.

THE WITNESSES

AN HISTORICAL LESSON

The Body of people which has focussed on the Hebrew name of God, YHWH, using the sixteenth century attempt to translate the name Jehovah, has grown from a small beginning into a world wide organisation.

Its history is significant. Charles Russell was its founder. He had been influenced by a William Miller's previous efforts, who had preached in the north eastern United States that Christ would return to the earth between March 21st, 1843 and March 21st, 1844. As the time approached for this purported fulfilment, a body of people grew round Miller. A temple was dedicated in Boston, with over three thousand members. These adherents prepared for March

21st, wearing white robes for their expected being “carried away”. The date, of course, came and went. William Miller then announced that he had made a miscalculation. Christ would come on October 22nd. So enthusiasm continued; and farming communities no longer bothered about their growing produce, as Christ would come before the winter. But “The Midnight Cry” publication had to state in its October 24th edition, “It is a cloudy and dark day here — the sheep are scattered — the Lord has not come yet.” William Miller at this juncture gave up his predictions. But then a follower of Miller, one Hiram Edson, said that he had received a revelation. “On the date that had been given by Miller, Christ had actually emerged from His palace to begin a cleansing of heaven.”! “When this was finished Christ would manifest Himself on earth.”

Charles Russell, having looked at Miller’s writings, founded his own movement, predicting that Christ would come in 1878. Soon he had a following. The disappointment of 1878 was revised to 1914.

Charles Russell died in 1916, and Joseph Rutherford became the leader of the Movement, changing the name from Russellites to Jehovah’s Witnesses. He pronounced that “Millions now living will never die”, and began to advance his own ideas, discarding some of Charles Russell’s teachings. So came his prediction that Christ would come in 1918. This was revised to 1920, then 1925 and later 1941.

Can it not be seen by such history, why this religion came to say that Christ has actually come, but is working unseen in His fight in the earth against a personal diabolos? This appears to be a veiled attempt to cover the prophetic miscalculations.

Another important aspect of the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ beliefs is their assertion that 144,000 faithful ones will find, as spirits, a place in heaven. The majority however they say will have the earth, living in immortality therein, at the appointed time. In this context it is not without some significance that Charles Russell (when he was a young man of 23 years) concluded in 1875 that Christ had come back in 1874; but as an invisible “presence in the upper air”, but would be seen in 1878. When this did not happen Russell said that the dead had been resurrected in heaven instead, during 1878. Joseph Rutherford, when he took over, did alter some of these previous ideas. Now it is 144,000 Witnesses; an actual number; some of whom are alive today, and who will be alive at Christ’s coming, who will then inherit the favoured place in heaven.

The Jehovah's Witnesses are so sure of their biblical understanding that in 1951 they published their own translation of the Bible. It has been called the New World Translation. But its text deviates in many places from the Authorised Translation. They are however confident of the superior scholarship of their own translation committee; but in fact the deviations actually give support to their own particular doctrines.

Where however, is their Bible understanding in the light of the following evidences?

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."

(Matthew 5:5).

"For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

(Matthew 24:27).

"Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth; behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not."

(Matthew 24:25-26).

"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."

(Matthew 25:13).

Christ's coming work, obviously, will be known, seen, and experienced by His faithful ones when He appears. His words make this clear. And the inheritance Christ promises for those who are His is this good earth, where He Himself will be, for that is the reason for His promised return.

**“ETHIOPIA SHALL SOON STRETCH OUT HER HANDS
UNTO GOD.”**

(Psalm 68:31)

Let us make no mistake about it, this Psalm reaches into the future and the return of Jesus Christ from heaven. He is referred to as follows:-

“Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men - - - .” (verse 18).

Ethiopia that is spoken of, which “shall soon stretch out her hands unto God” at the return of Jesus, is, in the hebrew original, the land of Kuwsh (Cush). The genealogy of the sons of Noah, after the Flood, describes Cush as one of the sons of Ham (Genesis 10:6). The concordance describes the name to mean the black race. It is a race that has greatly suffered, particularly in recent centuries with slave-trade exploitation.

The prophecy of Habakkuk refers to their afflictions:-

“I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction - - - .

Was the Lord displeased? - - - .” (Habakkuk 3:8).

God certainly is displeased at injustice and violence where ever it is, and ultimately the nations will have to pay for it.

How sad is the news which is coming out of Nigeria. This country has the largest population of African countries, and a potential for greatness. It has much natural wealth, such as petroleum, natural gas, coal, tin, iron ore, uranium, limestone, marble and forest. It exports a considerable amount of petroleum, also cocoa beans, rubber, palm products, ammonia and fish. Yet it is in a very poor state. Some of the blame for this must be attributed to its former lamentable military dictatorship which overthrew the elected civilian government in 1993. Oppression followed, and instead of prosperity the wealth of the country has been plundered by its military leaders. It seems that this misrule and mismanagement has also allowed other nations to exploit the natural wealth of the Country. International Oil Companies have made a fortune out of Nigeria’s resources; it is the seventh-largest oil producer in the world. But there is no evidence of prosperity. Lagos, the commercial capital is very shabby, and the Nigerian Electric Power Authority runs a system that constantly breaks down, resulting in black outs. Most of the people live in abject poverty and are far worse off than their parents of thirty years ago. Their savings have been evaporated by an outrageous inflation, resulting in a crumbling infrastructure. The new civilian government of the last twelve months, is trying to

bring about an improvement, but what a task it has, with a devalued currency and a national debt of about nineteen billion pounds. It has managed to freeze 120 Swiss bank accounts of the former General who was part of the military government, and it is thought that other money has been salted away in France, Germany and Luxembourg. These previous leaders, indeed, have much to answer for, but they seem to be getting away with it. It is not just one leader who has done this; the successive military leaders of the last two decades have been plunderers of these long suffering people. A measure of the ineptitude and the breakdown of Nigeria is seen in Nigeria Airways with most of its aircraft grounded abroad because of unpaid debts and lack of technical upkeep. It has been said that if the new government could get its hands on the money the former leaders misappropriated they could greatly reduce the enormous national debt, but it is not certain that this great loss to the nation can be recovered. But Nigeria is only one example of the sad condition of the African Continent. Other countries of this potentially rich region of the globe are also suffering exploitation and grinding poverty. No wonder prophetic scripture speaks in the way that it does, but with the implied promise of deliverance when:-

“Ethiopia (Cush) shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.”

A BIBLE CLASS

“MY SOUL MELTETH FOR HEAVINESS”

Psalm 119:28

This psalm of David is a pruned song, giving instruction and help that the man of God may know what is required in order to be kept in the care of the Almighty. Our verse under consideration is an expression of David’s mind as he struggled with sorrow and trouble:

“My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word”. Psalm 119:28.

The word “melt” means to “drip or pour out”, also conveying the idea of “crying out”. “Heaviness” is used as “grieving or sorrow” and is used in a similar context in Proverbs 10:1:

“The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.”

Proverbs 10:1.

In our consideration, David laments for the sorrow that life can bring as the spirit man struggles against the man of flesh. This struggle is part of the proving that comes to those who endeavor to walk after God's precepts being guided by His word. This is why David concludes this verse asking God to "strengthen thou me according unto thy word". He was keenly aware of his perishing nature and that his only hope of resurrection to life eternal was a spiritual quickening from God, as promised to those who endeavor to keep His word:

"My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word." Psalm 119:25.

It is interesting to note that this section of eight verses from verse 25 to 32 is entitled, "Daleth" a Hebrew word meaning "to quicken". We see further evidence of David's hope and faith in the power of God to quicken from the grave those who have endeavored to please Him as he wrote:

"The LORD hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death.

Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the LORD:

This gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter. I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation." Psalm 118:18-21.

The Lord Jesus was known as a man of sorrows for He had to constantly battle the will of his inherited flesh nature in order to follow God's word perfectly. He endured not only the jealous and unjust attacks made by the Scribes and Pharisees but also the daily struggles that come from within, in order to walk uprightly before the Almighty.

In dealing with persecution and sorrow, David admitted to feeling at times cast down or depressed, a feeling we all at times have shared:

"As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?

Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." Psalm 42:10-11.

Why do we become cast down? Is it not because we are of the dust and our flesh complains, becoming depressed, for it does not like to be restrained from fulfilling whatever it desires. However, God

brings tests and trials through the circumstances of life to prove what is in our hearts, and what is our first priority, just as He did to Israel through Moses' words:

"All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers.

And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no."

Deuteronomy 8:1-2.

As David wrote of how heavy his heart became at times — melting with pain or sorrow, he was revealing his human frailty which can easily become depressed with hard circumstances. To counter this he prayed for strengthening that his spirit might be bolstered in order to overcome:

"Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me."

Psalms 138:7.

As we may face hard circumstances and trial, let us keep David's resilient spirit and faith in God in mind. Though at times he felt his soul melting for heaviness, he did not yield, but looked to the Almighty for strength and spiritual renewal in order to continue in His way.

M.C.S.

ECCLESIAS' RESPONSIBILITY

Speaking of Christ's message to the Ecclesias Dr. J. Thomas wrote the following:-

"He was not left at liberty to send it to what congregations his own prudence might suggest; but he tells us, in the tenth and eleventh verses, (Revelation chapter 1) 'I came to be in spirit in the Lord's day: and I heard behind me a loud voice as of a trumpet, saying, I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last; and what thou beholdest write for a scroll, and send to the Seven Ecclesias which are in Asia; to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamos, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.' Hence there was no alternative. The Apocalypse must be sent to these seven. In obedience, therefore, to this command, in writing he primarily addresses himself to 'the seven ecclesias which are in Asia.' " - - - "seven were selected rather than any other number, to indicate that what was written to the seven was written to all the "One Body" throughout the Habitable in seven successive states thereof. No one of the ecclesias existed that could say it had no interest in the things apocalypsed. - - - The salutation was to these as the representatives of the saints and faithful everywhere. - - - " 'He that hath an ear, let him hearken to what the Spirit saith to the ecclesias!' These words occur in each of the letters to the Seven Ecclesias. They are addressed to every one that hath an ear for the truth; to every one of 'the servants of the Deity', for whose instruction the Apocalypse was communicated. By hearing, or attending to what is spoken, as exhorted imperatively to do, they would be preserved from 'grievous wolves', 'seducing spirits', 'demons', and 'deceivers', with whom religious society abounded, as at this day; and their minds would be kept in lively expectation of the promises. Thus they would be 'blessed', and prepared to receive the blessings of the covenants. "These words seven times repeated, give us to understand, that what is said in each particular letter is not confined to the particular ecclesia addressed, but to all the ecclesias. - - - "

When we read the letters to the ecclesias it is obvious that there were things wrong in at least five of them. The Spirit thus revealing their wrongs, it was obviously expected at that time, that all would

“hear”; this implies more than just hearing, as Dr. Thomas explains. It shows the principle, does it not, that all ecclesias are responsible for each other? It would be of no use for one ecclesia saying of another ecclesia, “the trouble in that other ecclesia is for the Brethren and Sisters there to deal with it or otherwise; they have their ‘autonomy’, we must leave them to it, and not interfere.” Would that be hearing? Neutrality is not a standing with the Spirit. Those in Asia who responded to the message had the duty of condemning what the Spirit condemned. If what was condemned was not put away, then all who agreed with the Spirit would be required to condemn; but it was not to be a negative condemnation. The Spirit’s reproof was for the purpose of saving from failure and evil. Those who appreciated the wisdom of the Spirit’s reproof would be expected to make endeavour to help their Brethren in another place. As Dr. Thomas says, they were all of the One Body. Indeed, as “the angel (messenger) of (each) of the ecclesias” received the pertinent message, all right thinking members of the One Body would be required by the Spirit to support the messengers, or any who were willing to convey the message.

Present day over emphasis of “ecclesial autonomy” has been disastrous to what was once the One Body, now inextricably divided. Ecclesial Autonomy in excess has allowed error to work, the consequence of this eventually, was, various ecclesias, though finally deciding to make a stand for the right, found it was too late. The wrong had become entrenched, so no reconciliation could be found. Christadelphia today comprises scores of factions. Where in this situation is the One Body? Reunion of some fellowships has not put it right; especially as there is no pertinent recognition and admission in the re-union of the failure of those in the wrong, who caused the original division. Indeed there has been criticism of those who stood for what was right. It has been an ignoring of the call to “- - - hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias.”

Invitation

Any of our readers who would like an outline history of Christadelphian divisions will be gladly sent this booklet on request.

“SIGNS OF HIS COMING”

“Yea, and what have ye to do with me, O Tyre, and Zidon, and all the coasts of Palestine? will ye render me a recompence? and if ye recompense me, swiftly and speedily will I return your recompence upon your own head.”

(Joel 3:4).

The continuing trouble on Israel's border with south Lebanon is a set back for the Jewish people. At the time of writing more Israeli soldiers have been killed and wounded. It was the seventh attack in less than three weeks. A United Nations Commission has been trying to calm the situation, but the Hezbollah Organisation, which holds implacable hatred against the Jews, seems determined to keep things unsettled. It has apparently received several thousand anti-tank missiles from Iran via Syria. These rockets, originally produced in the United States, are very destructive, and are being used effectively by Hezbollah. An American official said in Washington: “We can only interpret the event as a deliberate attempt by Hezbollah to wreck the prospect for peace in the region.” Israel's population are quite dismayed by the continuing loss of life by their young soldiers in south Lebanon; the situation has been described as “our very own Vietnam.” The sad fact is that the Lebanese Authorities are neither capable or caring enough to do anything about this Islamic Guerilla Force operating against Israel on their southern border.

The Hezbollah (Party of God) organisation; and what a misnomer name; resulted from the 1979 Iranian revolution when the Shah of Persia was overthrown. The Iranian Revolutionary Guards sent a force to Lebanon with the intention of spreading their revolutionary ideas among the Mohammedan Shi'ite population of Lebanon. Their behaviour since that time indicates they are against peace in the Middle East. It is a very nasty situation.

But what a history Lebanon has had in these recent times. Since achieving independence in 1943, Lebanon joined the Arab League, and was in the First Arab War against Israel (1948-1949). In 1958 extremist Muslims revolted against the moderate leadership of the country. Later the Palestine Liberation Organisation (P.L.O.) was founded in Beirut. Then in 1971 the PLO which had become strong in Jordan was forced out by Jordan's king, and so became established in Lebanon. In 1975 there was civil war between Lebanese “Christians” and Muslims supported by the PLO. Syria then intervened, and the hostilities ceased in 1976. Then in 1978 as a

result of Arab activities Israel invaded Southern Lebanon. An international United Nations peacekeeping force, as a result, became involved in an effort to quieten the frontier, but its effect was only limited. In 1982, Israel, still irritated by attacks from Lebanon by its Arab opponents, invaded again. The PLO then withdrew from Beirut (arranged by an international peacekeeping force) and re-established its headquarters in Tunis. In 1983 Israel agreed to withdraw its own troops, but not Syria. A Muslim militia then took control of West Beirut when the international peacekeeping force withdrew in 1984. A year later Israel's troops were actually withdrawn. After much internal trouble between "Christians" and Muslims a more stable situation resulted with Syrian help. But then in 1993 Israel was provoked into attacking guerilla strongholds in south Lebanon, because of Hezbollah activities. The United States and Syria both worked jointly to get an agreement for a cease of the use of force upon this troubled frontier. But within three years Hezbollah had gone back on their word.

And now, at the time of writing, Hezbollah are again targeting highly dangerous rockets upon Jewish troops; killing and maiming. It is a situation which was known of, all those years ago, as described in the prophecy of Joel. How sad that this beautiful part of the Middle East should be so troubled. Lebanon has lots of water, and though the shore line is narrow, the mountains rising abruptly only a short distance from the sea; the terraced mountain fields are very fertile producing a wide range of agricultural produce. But dissatisfied human nature is not content with what it has, and so it allows itself to become embroiled in an ongoing misery. Arabs of the area are determined to "recompence" their hated southern neighbours, not aware or not caring of the word through the prophet:-

“--- if ye recompense me, swiftly and speedily will I return your recompence upon your own head.” (Joel 3:4).

That time is coming, and when it does it will be swift and irrevocable. It will be the time when:-

“The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake; but the Lord will be the hope of his people, AND THE STRENGTH OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL.”

(Joel 3:16).

NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS

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

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11.30 a.m.

Sunday Afternoon Class 1.45 p.m.

Midweek: Bible Class: Forestville, Hamburg and Fredonia

Every Third Week: Revelation Study

Our thoughts and prayers are with our Manchester brethren in the difficult and ongoing work given them. The responsibility is special with great care needed, but it is under the hand of our Father, through Whom we all seek help and guidance.

The response to our inviting Christadelphians to receive the Remnant Magazine is an encouraging and ongoing effort for the next several months.

J.A.DeF.

MANCHESTER, Ryecroft Hall, Audenshaw.

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11.00 a.m.

Thursdays: Bible Class 2.00 p.m.

Letters we have had from correspondents abroad reveal a world wide deterioration of morals and of considerable injustice. Particularly can we perceive a sense of dismay in letters from some parts of Africa.

It is a privilege that we have been enabled to continue our work with the magazine, in the endeavour to show that God, in His holy word, gives the cast-down encouragement to look at His promise that He will put right all that is now wrong.