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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

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AT THE TABLE OF THE LORD
"DOEST THOU WELL?"

Recent reading has directed our attention to Jonah. He is well known, indeed his name is commonly used to identify one whose presence brings "bad luck". However, we know God chose Jonah to go to Nineveh (the capital city of the Assyrian Empire) to witness to its wickedness, saying:

"Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me." Jonah 1:2.

Jonah was given a formidable work, for Assyria was a great nation, an oppressor of Israel. Faced with such a responsibility:

"... Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD."

Jonah 1:3.

He tried to flee from the countenance of God. Those who know and fear Him, realize it is impossible to flee from His presence. David, a man after God's own heart, when he had sinned so grievously concerning Bathsheba, prayed:

"Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me." Psalm 51:11.

Indeed, his mind was:

"Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." Psalm 139:7-10.

Jonah's flight from God's presence was without success, for God sent a great storm, endangering the ship. The crew, fearing for their lives, cast lots to learn the cause of God's storm, and the lot fell upon Jonah (v. 7). When they asked Jonah who he was, he replied:

"... I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land."

Jonah 1:9.

We may wonder: Was Jonah what he professed to be — a Hebrew, one who is "passing through" this life, looking for the promise of a kingdom to come? Was he a true son of Abraham to whom these promises were given? Did he truly fear the Lord? If he had, would

he have tried to hide from His presence? He recognized that the storm occurred because of his failure:

“... I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.”
Jonah 1:12.

Jonah was cast out of the ship by the fearful crew, “... and the sea ceased from her raging” (v. 15). As the sailors witnessed God’s hand at work, they:

“... feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.”
Jonah 1:16.

But what about Jonah as he struggled in the sea, far from land? Did he fear, did he make a vow? We aren’t told, but he was miraculously cared for:

“... the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.”
Jonah 1:17.

The Lord “prepared” this to save Jonah from perishing. The word “prepare” comes from a root meaning to weigh out. The Almighty in His wisdom and mercy considered Jonah and appointed a means of salvation for him. It was also a test of Jonah! How did he respond as he found himself in the fearful darkness of the fish’s belly? He prayed unto the Lord, saying:

“... I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell (grave) cried I, and thou heardest my voice.”
Jonah 2:2.

It was in affliction that Jonah turned to God for deliverance:

“When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee ...”
Jonah 2:7.

In desperate straits, Jonah turned to God and vowed:

“... I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.”
Jonah 2:9.

In dire need, he promised to pay that which he had vowed. To “pay” is the Hebrew word “shalam”, meaning to finish, to complete, or to perfect. His fearful experience had renewed his determination to finish the vow that he had made. Mercifully God heard his prayer and:

“... spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.”
Jonah 2:10.

How merciful and forgiving He was, providing Jonah opportunity to fulfill his vow and sacrifice with the voice of thanksgiving.

The Lord again spoke unto him:

“Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.” Jonah 3:2.

He was required to do that which he had refused — to warn Nineveh of God’s coming judgment. Jonah did this, telling the people:

“... Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” Jonah 3:4.

The king and people of Nineveh believed and heeded Jonah’s warning, and repented as they reasoned:

“Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?

And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.” Jonah 3:9-10.

But Jonah, instead of rejoicing that Nineveh had listened, was exceedingly displeased and very angry (See Jonah 4:1). Why should he have reacted in such a manner? Nineveh was a fierce enemy of Israel. Perhaps Jonah hoped it would be destroyed. Also Jonah had said: “... Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” This did not happen, and could it be that he was angry because his word did not come to pass? Whatever the reason, did Jonah’s personal feelings of anger and displeasure prevent his rejoicing that Nineveh did repent and God did not overturn it? To be “angry” means to blaze up, to be incensed. Against whom was he incensed? Was it against himself? No! Was it against Nineveh? No! He was incensed against God because He had spared Nineveh, forgetting the fear and reverence for God which he had expressed while in the fish’s belly (Jonah 2:9). Is it not true that lack of reverence can cause one to blaze up in spite of all good intentions? Had not Isaiah warned of the consequences of such lack?

“Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou! or thy work, He hath no hands?

Woe unto him that saith unto his father, What begetteth thou! or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth?”

Isaiah 45:9-10.

The word “striveth” means to grapple and complain — also to be an adversary. In yielding to personal feelings, Jonah went directly against his own earlier words about God when he had fled from His presence:

“... I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.” Jonah 4:2.

Did Jonah show any of these godly qualities in his displeasure and anger at God’s deliverance of repentant Nineveh? Clearly he did not!

Yet God in a kind rebuke sought to correct Jonah, as He asked:

“... Doest thou well to be angry?” Jonah 4:4.

Jonah, we are told:

“... went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city.”

Jonah 4:5.

Jonah’s mind was: Will God really save the city? He questioned God’s decision. Again, in merciful kindness toward Jonah:

“... the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd.” Jonah 4:6.

After this, to test Jonah:

“... God prepared a worm ... and it smote the gourd that it withered.” Jonah 4:7.

Further, God also prepared “a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die ...” (v. 8). Then God again said to him:

“Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death.” Jonah 4:9.

Again, strong personal feeling caused Jonah to blaze up at God, who in mercy had provided the gourd, and then took it away to test Jonah’s spirit. Where was his trust in God whom he professed to know as “a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth thee of the evil” (Jonah 4:2)? Where was his fear of the Almighty? Where was his determination to “sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving”? What of his determination that “... I will pay that that I have vowed” (Jonah 2:9)?

Brethren and Sisters, does not the example of Jonah help us as we strive to submit to our Father, to honor him above all, to walk before Him in fear and reverence for His word? Does not the Almighty also look upon us with great patience, mercy, graciousness, and with slowness to anger, seeking to help us in our struggle to keep the vow we have made? How do we respond to this great

mercy? Is it in a godly manner, pleasingly grateful to Him, honoring Him, and offering the thanksgiving of praise, not only in words, but with willing actions? When we fail and He rebukes us — saying: “Doest thou well?” — do we put away our own desires, submitting to His will? Are we striving to obey His command given to Israel through Moses?

“... Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy.”

Leviticus 19:2.

It is a struggle between our desire to serve God in willing obedience, and the strong “wants” of our flesh. These “wants” are always present to tempt, and can sometimes cause us to rebel against our Father’s will — even after He has questioned: “Doest thou well?” — not just once, but often, reminding us of His will: “Ye shall be holy.”

God prepared much to help Jonah “be holy” — but in vain, as he let his fleshly reactions alienate himself from the One who sought to save him. Jonah knew that “Salvation is of the LORD.” Do not we also know that He is the only hope of everlasting life with His Son? Let us rejoice in that graciousness — submitting, fearing, and honoring the One who sustains us in that most precious hope.

J.A.DeF.

“PRAISE YE THE LORD”

In our recent portions we have read the 117th Psalm — the shortest Psalm written by David. It is but two verses — truly a pruned song with all that is superfluous removed, leaving an important kernel of understanding for our help:

“O PRAISE the LORD, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people.

For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the LORD endureth for ever. Praise ye the LORD.”

Psalm 117:1-2.

David speaks of all nations and peoples praising God, but we know even at his time, all did not praise Him. David was looking forward in faith to the end of God’s purpose when His people will rule as kings and priests with the Lord Jesus over all the earth.

Because of its brevity, this 117th Psalm focuses our attention upon how we must serve Him now in this life, by giving praise to His name — an Alleluia, through obedience, humility and gratitude for all blessings granted.

David said, "his merciful kindness is great toward us". To think of His majesty and might and that His care is directed toward His little ones is a humbling realization. That He who created all, and directs all in the earth, should be mindful of a few today, makes us full of awe and wonder.

John, in Revelation speaks of the praise to be given God at the end of His purpose, when all the faithful from the time of Adam, will in gratitude, sing Alleluia:

"And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:"
Revelation 19:1.

Psalm 133

A Song of degrees of David

Another of David's short Psalms with only three verses, entitled a Song of degrees, also looks forward to that end, when all the earth will unitedly praise God's name in the Kingdom age:

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments.

As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."

Psalm 133:1-3.

The anointing oil was poured upon the high priest's head as he was messiahed — a looking forward to Christ our High Priest who will hold that office eternally:

"And thou shalt put the mitre upon his head, and put the holy crown upon the mitre.

Then shall thou take the anointing oil, and pour it upon his head, and anoint him.

I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest's office.

And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God."

Exodus 29:6-7, 44-45.

Through the anointing of Aaron and his sons to the priest's office, there was made possible a means of intercession for the children of Israel — to carry their prayers to God. This looked forward in faith to the place of His Son, of whom Aaron was a type, who now sits on

the right hand of the Father, interceding for His people as their prayers come before Him.

The 133rd Psalm goes on to speak of the “dew of Hermon”, reminding of how God refreshes the earth, watering it even in the absence of rain. We see the figure of that dew from God’s words through Moses:

“Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.

My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass:

Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God.” Deuteronomy 32:1-3.

Just as the dew, or “small rain” comes to refresh and water, so too does the word of God give nourishment and life, imparting understanding to help the mindful hearers walk in hope Zionward.

There are only three verses in this 133rd Psalm — few words, yet David conveys the full understanding of how fellowship in the Truth brings unity now among brethren and the hoped for eternal unity with God and His Son for those who endeavor in obedience to walk after Christ’s example.

What a wonderful blessing is held out in these two short Psalms — speaking of the beauty of fellowship and unity now, as brethren work together to walk in obedience and love, looking for the time of refreshing upon Zion when His merciful kindness will bestow upon those found approved, an anointing unto life eternal. Truly “his merciful kindness is great toward us.”

M.C.S.

“ISAIAH THE PROPHET”

In more recent times suggestion has been made that there was an early Isaiah, followed by a later prophet, who contributed to the book of Isaiah. The following is an example of what has been said:-

“Chapters 1 to 39 (of Isaiah) are a combination of various collections of prophecies or prophetic narratives mostly, but not wholly, belonging to the age of Isaiah. - - - the prophecies of Isaiah can in some, though not in all cases, be referred to particular periods of his life - - - chapters 50 to 66 - - - are the work of a prophet who was the contemporary

of Cyrus, and had already, when he spoke or wrote, witnessed part of his (Cyrus) victorious career, and predicts that he will make yet further conquests - - - ."

Such an exposition lacks faith to realise that God's purpose ensured that His predestination could not be thwarted. The words of Isaiah were truly prophetic:-

"Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him. - - - I will give thee - - - hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me."

(Isaiah 45:1-4).

Why do so called expositors of the scriptures fail to recognise what Isaiah clearly declares? God named Cyrus before he was born. His name, scripturally, was not written at a time when the Persian Emperor was in political action; but prophetically through God's servant. Cyrus, when aware, was so impressed by God's word, that he declared:-

"Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? The LORD his God be with him, and let him go up." (to Jerusalem)

(2 Chronicles 36:23).

Coming to the New Testament it is interesting to note the following:-

"And he (Jesus) came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.

And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias." (Luke 4:16-17).

Jesus thereupon read Isaiah 61 verses 1 & 2. Now these words, the modern expositors would say, are the voice of the Second Isaiah. But where is there any indication for this in the inspired word of Luke's record?

On another occasion it is recorded that Jesus said:-

"He answered - - - unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me."

(Mark 7:6).

Jesus was quoting from Isaiah 29:13. According to the expositors this was the First Isaiah speaking, because these words are in chapters 1 to 39 which, say those modern professors, are the work of the First Isaiah. But there is not the slightest indication for this view in these gospels, which pronounce in both examples, for Isaiah as the same Isaiah. Jesus did not speak of two Isaiahs: do they know better than He!? Consider the following, from the hand of a renowned writer of "the Church", that comes to us from 150 years ago:-

"We now enter upon the latter part of this book, (i.e. chapters 50 to 66), in which the name of the prophet (Isaiah) is not mentioned: but it proceeds, as in one continued discourse, is full of consolatory topicks, and treats almost entirely, and most clearly, of Christ and evangelical subjects. The whole seems to have been written after the deliverance of the Jews from the Assyrian invasion, and towards the close of the prophet's life; and the style and imagery are elegant, rich, and often most sublime: so that it cannot be read without great delight, by one that relishes beauties of that kind; even should he be ignorant of the spiritual and prophetic meaning of the sacred writer."

So there was no confusion in the mind of this "Church" scholar of an Isaiah One and an Isaiah Two. The holy scriptures were respected at that time, if not wholly understood. But then came Darwinism; it undermined respect for the Word of God; and so the influence of the doubters prevailed. Today the expositors preach their own theories and interpretations, revealing scepticism, which is really lack of faith in the inspired word of God.

**"- - - LIKE A LAMB, AND HE SPAKE AS A DRAGON"
(Revelation 13:11)**

Towards the end of March last, the Pope made a visit to the Middle East. His first place of call was Jordan, where he was welcomed by its king Abdullah. While there he visited Mount Nebo; a Vatican spokesman saying:-

"The Pope wanted to see the Holy Land through the eyes of Moses. But unlike Moses the Pope intends to go there."

In a speech the Roman Catholic leader said it was needful now

for Middle East peace and an end to injustice and human rights abuse. He said, "No matter how difficult, no matter how long, the process of seeking peace must continue." It was a message for Palestinians and Israelis; for Christian denominations and for Muslims and for Jews who were to be met during a week long tour of the area. (Some Arabs, however, were not wholly enthusiastic about the visit, nor were some Jews).

Obviously much thought had been given previously about this journey for the Pope had declared, prior to his leaving Rome, that he asked for forgiveness for all the sins committed over the centuries in the name of the Catholic church. It was an apology mainly for the Crusades and the Spanish Inquisition. Such a change of Roman Catholic attitude, no doubt, was intended to mollify the lingering historical ill-feeling, not only of Moslems, but of churches not of the Catholic persuasion. The Spanish Inquisition was particularly reprehensible, but there was also a papal inquisition. For example in the late twelfth century, a Calabrian abbot, Joachim of Flora made an exposition which divided history into three ages: one of the Father, one of the Son, and one of the Holy Spirit. Each of these he subdivided into seven others. His own generation, he said, was in the second age, and the sixth period of that age; as a result the third age of the Spirit was near. Then the visible Church would be dissolved into the Church invisible and "the everlasting Gospel" would be ushered in. The date he gave for this great event he said would be AD 1260. This figure he had taken from the Book of Revelation, drawing upon the symbology of "the woman" fleeing from the dragon into the wilderness where "she" is protected and nourished for 1260 days (or years), in "her" need. Therefore (the exposition went on to say) the papacy by then would have served its historical purpose, and would give way to the nobler third age.

Of course the papacy did not like this exposition, so the Office of the Inquisition was instituted. Pope Gregory IX replaced bishops, who previously had dealt with heretics, with selected friars. These said that the constraint they exercised on heretics was out of love for their souls. Church penalties became more extreme, fines and imprisonment were replaced by the death penalty of burning. Augustine had said that the offending limb must be removed to save "the body". The body, the friars declared, was "the Church", and the offending limb was the heretic, so to burn the heretic was an act of love towards the community, and also towards the heretic who might be persuaded by fear of the fire. The inquisitors tried to

secure confession of guilt by blandishment or intimidation, along with solitary confinement or torture. If the heretic recanted he might have the mercy of life-long confinement, chained up in a dungeon; or he might have the mercy of being strangled before being burned. The friars did not themselves put their hand to these stringent measures, but rather left it to the civil magistrates and their henchmen with a plea for mercy, but these were made to understand that if they heeded this veneer of a plea, they would themselves be excommunicated.

On the subject of the Crusades, which the vatican now laments, that warfare seriously commenced in the 11th and 12th centuries. Heavily armed men streamed eastwards. It was said to be out of idealism, but many were drawn to a conflict with the Muslims out a greed for the spoil they might capture. "We shall slay for God's love", it was said. A spokesman for the Church (Bernard) declared:-

"A Christian glories in the death of a Muslim because Christ is glorified. The liberality of God is revealed in the death of a Christian, because he is led out to his reward."

Criminals were encouraged to join the crusading expeditions, with the pope promising that those who lived could hope for a new life in the east. A manor for the knight, with Muslim slaves; and freedom for the European serf. Sadly the peasants, fired up by Church propaganda, decided to commence the crusade on their own doorstep. So it was declared:-

"We have set out to march a long way to fight the enemies of God in the East, and behold, before our very eyes are his worst foes, the Jews. They must be dealt with first."

As a result the First Crusade was launched with a massacre of thousands of Jews; many in the towns of Germany. Slaughter of this kind also commenced the subsequent Crusades.

This is then the terrible history which the papacy now laments. It is the history of "christian" religion having had an appearance of a lamb; but consider its voice and its works of the past. And also consider what the word of God has declared for the future:-

"--- the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings --- ." (Revelation 17:14).

A BIBLE CLASS

**“THOU SHALT REMEMBER ALL THE WAY
WHICH THE LORD . . . LED THEE”**

Deuteronomy 8:2

The Almighty spoke these words through Moses at the end of Israel's 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. He spoke as they were preparing to enter the promised land. God had ordained that they should so wander because of their refusal to enter the land at Kadesh-barnea. Had they obeyed God's earlier command to enter, they could have done so in a matter of days (Deuteronomy 1:2), instead of 40 years later. The men of Israel, 20 years old and over (approximately 600,000) at Kadesh-barnea, were sentenced to die in those 40 years because of their unbelief. As the wilderness journey ended, a new generation (again about 600,000) was to enter. As they prepared themselves, God spoke to them through Moses:

“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 swore 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.

How did the Almighty prove and humble Israel during those long years? Where there was no food, He in mercy provided manna — bread from heaven. Where there was no water, He miraculously produced it from the rock. Their raiment did not wax old; nor did their feet swell (blister). No man could so provide for them in a wilderness! These were the provisions of God, revealing His mercy and power on their behalf.

The manna was to teach “that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live”(Deuteronomy 8:3). Accordingly, by that word manna appeared, to be gathered every morning (except on the Sabbath). For almost 13,000 mornings, during those 40 years, the manna was there. Without it, Israel would have died. Also, as they realized that their clothes did not become worn, nor did their feet blister, they would perceive this could only be by God's provision. This would humble them as well as try their spirits, to see if in

gratitude and fear they would readily submit to His word. As they failed to do so, God chastened them as a father (Deuteronomy 8:5). As the years continued, one by one the original 600,000 died, until finally only two were left — Joshua and Caleb — who in fear and reverence for God, had urged Israel to conquer the land at Kadesh-barnea. These two had implicit trust that God would provide all the help necessary to overcome the inhabitants of the promised land.

All this Israel was to consider, remembering how their God had cherished and provided for them during those 40 years. Indeed, as they were about to enter the land God, knowing their ways, warned:

“Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him.
For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land . . .
When thou hast eaten, and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee.”
Deuteronomy 8:6-7, 10.

The Almighty further warned those 600,000 waiting to enter the land:

“Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments . . . which I command thee this day.

Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied; Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, . . .

Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness,

. . .

And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth.”

Deuteronomy 8:11-15, 17.

How easily one can forget that all blessings are of God, and simply attribute them to one’s own power or ability. God’s warning against such fleshly thinking was: “Remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years.” Was man able to provide manna? Was man able to bring water out of the rock? Could man preserve his raiment for 40 years — or prevent his feet from blistering while walking in that hard wilderness way? The answer is an emphatic NO! Yet how easy it is to forget God’s provision

when things are going well, when all needs are met, and one is comfortable. Again the word of God warned:

“And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish.

As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God.”

Deuteronomy 8:19-20.

How great was God’s mercy for His people Israel, providing for all their needs as He led them with the pillar of cloud and fire through that scorching desert. He in mercy has called a few today to be His people, separate from the world, often beset with evil, violence and corruption. He has promised a kingdom to come, ruled over by His Son, for those who strive to honor Him, and who in fear and love seek to live by His word. Let us, Brethren and Sisters, remember how God in love and mercy has led us, chastening when required, as well as providing all that is needed, in body and spirit, to survive in this evil and violent world. He is proving, humbling us to see what is within our hearts. As He searches each heart, what does He find? Do we face up to temptations, which are to prove our faith, our trust in His word? We have the example of Jesus to help us overcome. His human nature tempted Him to change stones into bread, through the power which He had just received at His baptism by John. His response was:

“... It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

Matthew 4:4.

He glorified God by His obedience to: “It is written.” Let us give heed to that divinely written word, remembering that it is only through His covering we have been, and will be helped, by yielding to Him in our days of humbling and proving.

J.A.DeF.

THE EARTH IS FILLED WITH VIOLENCE

The above from Genesis chapter 6 reveals the situation in the world prior to the divine intervention at the time of Noah.

Jesus refers to it in connection with His own prophecy of what He will find at His Second Coming:-

“---as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.”
(Luke 17:26).

Jesus went on to describe a situation, when the world would be completely given over to self gratification. Which is what is so evident at the present time. The greatest priority in human behaviour is for money. But not everyone is able to acquire wealth, which leaves a disgruntled under-class. Hence some places in the cities of the nations are “no go areas”. And where guns are restricted, knives are used in mindless viciousness, to satisfy the desire to intimidate and gain from those who are jealously perceived as “the better off”. But the “gun culture” nations which have fire-arms permissiveness, are even more dangerous. Thinking people look at this trend with a degree of dismay; the deterioration is unmistakable, and there is obvious perplexity at how to deal with it, for the younger generation are moving away from the moral standards of previous generations. Behaviour is careless, with increasing violence, and much drug taking.

A recent article in the national press reveals an amazing pessimism, as follows:-

The article suggested there could eventually be ‘walled estates’ for the protection of houses and the families of the more affluent.

“That in a few years one in every two men may have a criminal conviction by the age of thirty.

“That many couples will want to work from home to avoid using ‘the poor violence-racked public transport’. People will have personal radar to give warning of the approach of unidentified strangers.

“The ‘walled communities’ will be increasingly a target for young criminals. Though the members of such will not prey upon one another because they will have strong guard patrols in their estates.

“Shopping will be increasingly under camera scrutiny. And the courts will have difficulty over trial by Jury because of intimidation.”

A drama has been prepared for circularisation on the above theme. Is it too pessimistic? Well, the British Government is endeavouring to fund a greater police presence in England and Wales. Scotland is also being catered for, which, because of its autonomy arranges its own law and order measures. There is a degree of alarm in government at an already 2.2 per cent rise in crime, with Home Office officials warning that crime is set to rise. "Foresight", the Government's futures forecasting agency, has declared that there will be an increase in the number in the population of young men aged 15-20 over the next 10 years; and that is the group most involved in crime, and so, says this agency, "we expect to see crime increase" as a result. But is the increasing crime and violence only in the wealthy areas of the West? Not at all. Deterioration is seen in Eastern Europe and in Asian countries. Africa is also not exempt, nor is New Zealand and Australia. There is indeed a world wide decline. It is the time of which Jesus forewarned; comparing the days of the coming of the "Son of man", to the time of Noah.

GRACE

From the third and fourth chapters of Luke, recorded during the Lord Jesus' early ministry, we learn of His baptism by John. Being filled with the Holy Spirit, He endured forty days temptation in the wilderness before coming to Nazareth, the town where He was raised by Mary and Joseph. On the sabbath day, He went to the synagogue, where He was known by the townspeople, and read from the book of Isaiah:

"The spirit of the LORD is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

To preach the acceptable year of the LORD. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Luke 4:18-21.

His words were different from those of the scribes, pharisees

and priests that the people were accustomed to hearing. In these few words, He proclaimed to those privileged listeners, the gospel mission given Him of God. Those who had known him from His youth, were amazed at His knowledge and understanding, and thinking Him to be a simple carpenter from a local family, were impressed by the grace and power of His words:

“And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph’s son?” Luke 4:22.

They did not realize He was not Joseph’s son, but the son of God, and being filled with the Almighty’s Spirit and zeal to accomplish His Father’s will, He spoke with power and authority.

This word “gracious” comes from a prime root meaning “to be cheerful” and is used to mean “gift, joy or favor”. This is an attribute of God, given to man in His kindness and mercy, as seen from the beginning, for after condemning all men to die He made a promise:

“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” Genesis 3:15.

We know this was ultimately accomplished by the Lord Jesus, who as promised to Adam and Eve was provided to be a covering, seen in the coats of skins:

“Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.” Genesis 3:21.

He became the covering established by the shedding of blood — a means of deliverance from the sentence of death given to all mankind. This was God’s gift, freely given in His graciousness, that there might be a kingdom established one day, to be ruled by His Son in righteousness and inhabited by those who love and obey Him. John, from Revelations wrote of this same hope provided through God’s grace:

“And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all Amen.”

Revelation 22:12, 20-21.

John too gave thanks for the “grace (or gift) of our Lord Jesus Christ”, acknowledging that without Him, there would be no hope for any to escape the bonds of death.

What mercy is seen in God’s gracious promise to the faithful,

for we are all failing creatures who do not deserve such love and consideration:

“But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.” James 4:6.

What a marvellous gift, God in His grace has provided in His Son, as a means of salvation for those, who will through obedience and humility, endeavor to follow after His example. To this end, Peter exhorts the faithful:

“But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.”

II Peter 3:18.

M.C.S.

“SIGNS OF HIS COMING”

“And they of the south shall possess the mount of Esau; and they of the plain the Philistines: and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria: and Benjamin shall possess Gilead.” (Obadiah verse 19).

Israel has had to struggle against the Arabs since its inception in 1948. It managed to stem the invasion of Arab nations at its birth. Was successful in its war against Egypt in 1956. Found itself having to fight against Arabs in its own territory from 1964 when the Palestine Liberation Organisation was founded. Was again at war with Egypt in 1967 having also to contend with Syria and Jordan; it succeeded in extending its territory into the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza and the Golan Heights. The Arabs, however, tried again to put down Israel by the surprise attack of Egypt and Syria in 1973, only to be thwarted and repulsed by the Israeli forces. With the help of the United States, the Camp David talks of 1979 ended with the signing of a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt, and the following year, United Jerusalem was declared the capital of Israel. Then in 1982 Israel invaded South Lebanon to quell the Palestinian guerrilla attacks from that territory. But the intifada (Palestinian opponents) continued to be troublesome by their stealthy attacks. In 1991 Iraq launched missile attacks on Israel, but these stopped as a result of the successful conclusion of the Gulf War. Two years later Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation signed a peace accord granting autonomy to the P.L.O. in Gaza and Jericho, and

the following year a peace agreement between Israel and Jordan was ratified.

What a long struggle it has been, with eventual improvement, but only at the expense of giving up control of some of the hard won territories. Now, at the time of writing, Israel has stated that it is ready to pull back its troops from Mount Hermon (the Golan Heights) in a controlled reduction of its military presence.

But there are still pricking thorns in Israel's side. These are the Arab splinter organisations, which act independently of the P.L.O. They oppose negotiations with Israel on the grounds that the Jewish kingdom has been created on Arab and Moslem land. They do not want a peace settlement, and are supported in this by funds from radical groups in Tehran (Iran).

No doubt there are many in Jewish circles, and amongst the diplomats of western powers, who say at the present time, "Will there ever be real peace in the Middle East?" The scripture, however, does not leave that question unanswered. The LORD has a purpose which the Arabs cannot thwart. His displeasure is evidenced in the following testimony:-

"Therefore as I live, saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Surely Moab (the Arabs) shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah - - - the residue of my people shall spoil them, and the remnant of my people shall possess them.

This shall they have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified themselves against the people of the LORD of hosts." (Zephaniah 2:9-10).

Furthermore the prophecy of Obadiah declares:-

"--- there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the Lord hath spoken it--- they (Israel) shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria: and --- Gilead --- .

And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD'S."

(Obadiah vv 18-21).

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

Efforts at the highest level have failed to resolve the thorny question of peace between Israel and Syria. This adds to the Middle East tension, watched with care and fear.

The recent visit of the Pope to this region did little to achieve toward peace in that area. The state of Israel remains a "burdensome stone" and a "cup of trembling" to the nations. The only sure solution requires the return of Jesus Christ to establish His Father's kingdom. When the law shall go forth from Jerusalem and men yield to it, all the world will then be at rest.

We long for that time with hope and yet with fear. Let us watch in obedience and faith.

J.A.DeF.

MANCHESTER, Ryecroft Hall, Audenshaw.

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11.00 a.m.

Thursdays: Bible Class 2.00 p.m.

The increase of interest for this magazine encourages our efforts to produce it. In other directions there is also a work with which we are required to occupy ourselves, and in this we have the close association of our Brethren and Sisters across the sea.