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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 EDIFYING OF THE BODY OF CHRIST”

Recent readings have brought our attention to a vital need as we strive to please our Father. Paul’s words help us:

“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.

With all lowliness, and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Ephesians 4:1-3.

He wrote these words from prison in Rome just a few years prior to his death at the hand of the Romans. Our brother devoted his life, after his conversion on the way to Damascus, to the building up of the unity of the spirit in that bond which God requires of His people. A bond is something that joins or ties together individual parts into a unit, making it useful for the one who joins it. Such is the human body, made up of many members, which by themselves have certain functions, but when bonded together by joints, ligaments, muscles, etc., is a functioning, living body. This is what God requires of His people — to be a living assembly of many parts and abilities, joined by the bond of peace into a unity of mind and spirit. This helps us as we struggle to be members of the body of Christ now in probation, hoping and praying to be gathered into that “One Body” when Jesus returns to accomplish His Father’s purpose.

The “bond of peace” is that which makes this possible. Peace, as used here by Paul, is a joining, unity, lack of conflict, quietness — in a recognition that each part must do its assigned work to accomplish its Maker’s purpose. Paul continued, as he used this illustration to reveal God’s purpose with His people:

“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” Ephesians 4:4-6.

Jesus Christ is the means of peace, made possible through His victory over His flesh nature as He died on the cross, the unblemished Lamb of God. Knowing He was soon to be crucified, He comforted the disciples so that they would not be troubled:

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I

said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass, ye might believe.

Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.

But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, and let us go hence.”

John 14:27-31.

“Peace I leave with you” — a peace, a living in unity, made possible by His going forth to His death as a means of propitiation for His people. It was the peace of God, not as the world knows peace, but is known only among those striving to be that one body, conquering self as Jesus did. The world seeks “peace” but cannot find it, for they are not united but made up of many parts, all struggling to achieve their own desires, their own purposes.

The Almighty helps those who are His children, who are united in His purpose, as Paul continues:

“But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.”

Ephesians 4:7-8, 11.

The Almighty gave His grace — the gift of Jesus Christ — for His people, that they might be helped in the struggle, like Jesus, to submit to His will. This was promised from the beginning, revealed in the law, in the Psalms and the prophets. One of His promises was given through Isaiah:

“... the LORD himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel (God with us).”

Isaiah 7:14.

Further, Isaiah conveyed God’s promise:

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of peace.

Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts

will perform this."

Isaiah 9:6-7.

All this is part of God's promised grace, to be seen in Jesus Christ when He returns. We have that hope, Brethren and Sisters, even as we sing: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. They shall prosper that love thee." What grace and mercy we know as we strive to glorify God, not only in words, but in striving to do His will — not our own — in the spirit of His Son, as He exclaimed: "Abba, Father."

Going back to Paul's words, he reveals why this grace of God is given:

"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ,

From whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by the which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

Ephesians 4:12-16.

"For the edifying of the body of Christ" — this has been God's purpose from the beginning: the building up of one body in Christ until He returns, when those who have been engaged in this God-given privilege may be joined to Him in the perfect unity of "One Body." This is God's grace — that there has been the provision of Jesus Christ to bring this about. We remember Paul's message to his brethren in Rome:

". . . the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 6:23.

Wages are earned for work that we do. A gift is something that is given, not earned. God gave His Son as a means of escape from the law of sin that inevitably brings death, apart from His grace provided in Jesus Christ. As a part of His grace, God grants to those seeking to be His faithful servants in their time of probation, certain abilities to be used to edify or build up the body. As Paul revealed, some were apostles, some were prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and

teachers. Each had an ability different than the others. Apostles are those who are sent forth to do God's work; prophets foretell what is His purpose; evangelists proclaim the gospel; pastors are keepers and feeders of His sheep; and teachers are gifted to instruct, to give knowledge. Each one is part of His body who, directed by the Head, Jesus Christ, are to use their several abilities for the perfecting (making fit, framing and joining together) of those striving to be a part of that one body. Paul has shown us how this can be done:

“... speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.

From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”

Ephesians 4:15-16.

All this must be motivated by love for God, and for one's neighbor, which is the fulfilling of the spirit of the law. We remember how just before Jesus' ascension, He three times asked Peter: “Lovest thou me?” And Peter replied: “Yea, Lord.” Jesus' reply was: “Feed my sheep” (John 21:15-17). Peter went about this work of feeding His sheep. The work of a shepherd is to feed, nourish, but also to protect, to tend, and to safeguard. Peter faithfully pursued this duty — his part in edifying the flock in love. All this is a part of growing up “into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.” (Ephesians 4:15).

Brethren and Sisters, we have been given God's plan for His house. We have been given certain capabilities. We have been given God's grace seen in the provision of Jesus Christ, who is the Head of that house. Let us use our abilities, our capabilities to:

“... walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.”

Ephesians 4:1.

According to the dictionary, a vocation is a summons or impulsion to perform a certain function or career. We have been called and given this vocation through the grace of God. Let us then heed Peter's words, as he obeyed Jesus' command to “Feed my sheep”:

“... brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

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

II Peter 1:10-11.

May that house soon be assembled, of which Jesus spoke:

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

also in me.

In my Father's house are many mansions (abiding places):
if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a
place for you."

John 14:1-2.

Do we now contribute to the edifying of that house in love?

J.A.DeF.

THE SPIRIT OF A SOUND MIND

Recently we have read the second epistle written by Paul to his
dearly beloved brother Timothy, whom he regarded as a son in the
faith.

"When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in
thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy
mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.

Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the
gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.
For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power,
and of love, and of a sound mind." II Timothy 1:5-7.

Paul's intention was to encourage Timothy in the ministry as well as
to stir up within him the spiritual gifts he had been granted. He
applied the knowledge received, each day in his living, not in fear
but with confidence in the power of God, granted through a sound
mind grounded in His word.

"But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned
and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou has
learned them;

And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures,
which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through
faith which is in Christ Jesus." II Timothy 3:14-15.

Paul was writing to Timothy while a prisoner in Rome for the
name of Christ, and reminded that he too may in time be called upon
to suffer the same:

"But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life,
purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience,
Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at
Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of
them all the Lord delivered me.

Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer

persecution.”

II Timothy 3:10-12.

From all of his persecutions, God had delivered him, and this was his message to Timothy and to all of like precious faith who should later read this epistle, that we too may be instructed in the ways of righteousness:

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.”

II Timothy 3:16-17.

The Lord Jesus also taught His disciples that they too should expect persecution because they followed Him and would therefore be hated by the world:

“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep your's also.

But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.”

John 15: 18-21.

Just as the Lord Jesus chose the twelve, He also chose Paul on the road to Damascus, appearing unto him in vision, knowing that his heart could be touched and his life brought into His service. Paul changed from one who persecuted the followers of the Lord Jesus, to being one of Christ's chief ministers in spreading the gospel of peace through His name.

“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

These things I command you, that ye love one another.”

John 15:16-17.

These all were inspired to go forth and do many great works as God stirred up the gift of spirit within them — not done out of fear but out of love for Him and His Son.

Paul in writing to those as Corinth conveyed this same message

of hope in God's deliverance in the midst of persecution:

"For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life:

But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:

Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;"

II Corinthians 1:8-10.

Paul obviously believed and kept this knowledge of God's deliverance close to his heart, for he often wrote to his brethren encouraging them not to be timid or fearful but to walk boldly in faith, knowing God would deliver them from all adversity. Peter also taught this same truth:

"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished."

II Peter 2:9.

To overcome the flesh's natural instincts requires one to truly serve God acceptably and to hope in His deliverance. Trusting in His ultimate deliverance, the faithful must then persevere and bear what adversity may come to try them, knowing as did Paul and Peter that He will care and comfort them through all their difficulties if they but cleave unto Him.

This same trust was evidenced by Daniel and his three brethren while captives in Babylon. They were not timid or fearful in speaking to the king, choosing instead the threat of death rather than serve the idols of Babylon. Theirs was a witness to their faith in God's deliverance:

"Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? . . . but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

But if not, be it known unto them, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.” Daniel 3:14-18.

Returning to Paul's encouragement in II Timothy, can we more readily value his instruction and help to Timothy, that we too may be of the same mind, believing that out of whatever persecutions we may endure, the Lord will deliver us? If that can be our mind, we can face whatsoever comes to try us, by putting away fleshly thinking and cleaving to the purity of His word, that we may hope in His mercy to be complete, “thoroughly furnished unto all good works”.

M.C.S.

ELIJAH

A recent article in an ecclesial magazine, not connected with us, did provoke some questions over suggestions made concerning Elijah and his work in the future. The following are extracts from this article:-

“One of the several signs which will precede the return of the Lord Jesus Christ will be the re-appearance of Elijah. Over the years, different views have been put forward about the re-appearance of Elijah in these last days. Many believe that Elijah does have an important part to play in the days to come; others believe that John the Baptist has already fulfilled the prophecies about Elijah's role. This article is aimed at presenting scriptural evidence that Elijah will reappear in the days ahead, and will play a crucial part in bringing the Jews back to God in a spirit of repentance.

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Reference is then made to the transfiguration of Christ:-

“As (Jesus) was praying, the appearance of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became dazzling white. And behold, two men talked with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. (Luke 9:29-31).

We frequently focus on the tremendous encouragement this discussion with Moses and Elijah must have given to Jesus. But we don't often consider the effect on Moses and

Elijah as they talked with the Lord. Both Moses and Elijah had unfinished ministries. Moses had not been permitted to bring his people into the promised land. Elijah was taken before he had been able to bring Israel to a state of repentance from its increasing rejection of God. Here on the mount, they were permitted to talk with the one in whom all things were to be fulfilled. --- To talk to Jesus about the completion of that work of redemption through his sacrifice must have been exhilarating to Moses and Ejjiah." ---

May we at this point raise the question "Can a vision be an actual event?" Jesus said to His disciples after the transfiguration, "Tell the VISION to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead." (Matthew 17:9). Moses was dead, and Elijah also, long before that time. Their appearance before Christ in the actual sense is yet to come. Any suggestion that Elijah in being "taken up" when his work for the Truth had ended, into a unique position, that made his different to all others, would be erroneous. (--- "death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Romans 5:12). But we continue extracts from the article in question:

"--- Jesus also pointed out that the work of John the Baptist had typified the work of Elijah:

'I tell you, that Elijah has already come, and they did not know him, but did to him whatever they pleased.

--- Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.' (Matthew 17:12-13).

It is these words of Jesus which have caused some uncertainty about whether or not Elijah will reappear in the last days. On the one hand, Jesus said that Elijah "is to restore all things." On the other hand, he said, "I tell you that Elijah has already come." If we had no other scriptural references than these words in the gospels, we might be left wondering just what Jesus meant. However, as often occurs in God's Word, there are other quite powerful passages which leave us in no doubt that Elijah must reappear in these last days, and will once again play a pivotal role in turning the hearts of the Jews back to their God. Malachi 4 is the best known of these chapters. It is important to note the context. It is a chapter about "the great and terrible day of the LORD." There is only one period of time to which this time can refer — the day of God's great judgments upon the people and nations of the world. --- We can be quite certain --- that the "great

and terrible day of the LORD" will be unprecedented in God's wrath against the nations. The point to note is that Elijah is to come "before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes." The second point to note is that the work of Elijah will be specifically to turn the heart of the Jews back to God, just as his role was in his Old Testament ministry: "He shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers. --- (Malachi 4:6). Today in Israel we are witnessing a spectacle which parallels many periods in Old Testament Jewish history. We see a people who have largely rejected God and His ways. --- The precedent of Old Testament history tells us that on all such occasions in the past when Israel has rejected God and gone her own way, punishment would result. --- We should not be surprised to see a further period of punishment for Israel, almost certainly in the form of further exile, before she finally repents of her Godlessness and turns once more to her God:

"I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken --- half of the city shall go into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city." (Zechariah 14:2).

There is no doubt from this verse that Jerusalem will be defeated and that some (half) of the people will go into exile. If this prophetic interpretation is correct, it is not difficult to imagine the effect on the Jews of this catastrophic loss of Jerusalem. We recall their devastation at the time they were exiled in Babylon. --- We can expect the same feelings of loss and devastation in the event of another defeat of Jerusalem. It would be with this scenario that Elijah will be pivotally involved. His work will be, first, to remind the Jews of the faith and trust in God's power and promises held by their fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: --- This great work of Elijah will include re-teaching them the importance of the law of Moses; --- to prepare modern day Jews for the coming of their Messiah, and it is imperative that they see that the law pointed to Messiah. No longer will the Jews regard the Bible as a "dusty old book --- of no relevance to us today", but Elijah will show them that these promises and the first covenant are essential to their acceptance of Messiah WHEN HE ARRIVES. Elijah's work, as with John

the Baptist, will involve a work of preparation, a turning of Jewish hearts to their Messiah, by an understanding and acceptance of the promises and the law of Moses. There is, incidentally, more than a hint in several scriptural passages that Moses may be with Elijah in this great work. This great work of turning Jewish hearts to the things of God once more will set the scene for the outpouring of repentance by the Jews AT THE COMING OF JESUS. They will recognise him as their Messiah. --- So it will be that Elijah as with John the Baptist, will be involved in this great work of preparation for the coming of Jesus, and their acceptance of him. --- Elijah will preach repentance BEFORE THE COMING of God's Son as King of kings and LORD of lords. ---

As we wait and watch, let us be aware that the tumultuous events of these last days will include the coming of Elijah to a devastated Israel, to turn their hearts back to God through the faith and promises of the fathers."

We ask the question, "has not the writer overlooked, in this exposition, some most important salient facts of truth?" The Apostle Paul says, "For we must ALL appear before the judgment seat of Christ," (2 Corinthians 5:10). Is Elijah excepted? The very Apostles of Christ will appear before it. The first thing at the return of Christ is the resurrection and then the judgment. And it is particularly recorded "--- we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (go before) them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord - - - ." (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17). Are Elijah and Moses excepted from this procedure? The inference of these words is that all responsible to the Truth will have an equal involvement at the appropriate time. Would this not also include Elijah? Why should we think his case is different than anyone else? Certainly in the work of the Saints, and the preaching of the Everlasting Gospel, before that final great judgment, Elijah will be particularly involved with Israel. But in considering that coming "great and terrible day of the LORD", this will be a development as a result of Christ's coming, and not before He comes. And it is most important to get this in perspective as this emphasises Christ's warning:-

"--- if the goodman of the house had known what hour the

thief would come, he would have watched. - - - Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not." (Luke 12:39-40).

There are also other warnings in this vein:-

"For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction. - - - But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief." (1 Thessalonians 5:2-4).

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promises. - - - But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. - - -" (2 Peter 3:9-10).

The Jews will indeed come to accept their Messiah as they are delivered from their sufferings, but they will be as unaware of His coming as all the rest of mankind who are ignorant of the Truth. The work of Elijah will bring to them true knowledge after Christ has returned.

A BIBLE CLASS

"THY COMMANDMENT IS EXCEEDING BROAD"

Psalm 119:96

The 119th Psalm is composed of 176 verses, arranged in groups of eight, with each verse in each group beginning with the same Hebrew letter. In addition, each group of eight expresses a particular thought or theme. The theme associated with our study appears to be "the end":

Let us look at these verses with this thought in mind:

"For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven."

Psalm 119:89.

The margin refers to Psalm 89:

"I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever . . .

I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant.

Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah."

Psalm 89:1-4.

The Almighty's covenant with David promised a throne, a kingdom, a house, a Son, which would endure forever, to be fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. Having this covenant in mind, David knew God's word is indeed "forever . . . settled in heaven" — as the word "settled" means established, ordained:

"Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth. They continue this day according to thine ordinances . . ." Psalm 119:90-91.

In the beginning, God established the earth by the wondrous power of His word; for He said: "Let there be . . . and there was . . ." (Genesis 1:3):

"And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good . . ." Genesis 1:31.

That great power of His word was very clear to David, as he continued:

"Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction. I will never forget thy precepts for with them thou hast quickened me.

I am thine, save me; for I have sought thy precepts."

Psalm 119:92-94.

David did indeed delight in God's word, for it revealed the end of God's purpose, the hope of eternal life, a quickening forever in accordance with His covenant with David. As he rejoiced in such sure mercies, David expressed his faith in God's word:

"I have seen an end of all perfection: (but) thy commandment is exceeding broad."

Psalm 119:96.

(The word "but" is not found in the original text, nor in the Hebrew Psalter.)

Through God's word, David was helped to see the end result of all "perfection." This word "perfection" comes from a root meaning to end, complete, finish, or bring to pass. David's hope was fastened upon this promised end. What is that end? Through His prophet Isaiah, God promised a Son to be born, the seed of David, whose name shall be called:

"... Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth, even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."

Isaiah 9:6-7.

Further, the Almighty's word promised:

" . . . it shall come to pass in the last days (end), that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD (Zion), to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem." Isaiah 2:2-3.

As David contemplated this end, promised through the Almighty's word, we can see how he delighted in that word, looked toward the accomplishment of these promises, and said:

" . . . thy commandment is exceeding broad." Psalm 119:96.

Indeed, God's law, His word is all-encompassing, providing all that is needed to sustain to His ordained end, those who turn to it, delight in it, and strive to live by it, looking to the end of that purpose with faith and hope, as did David. What trust he expressed as he exclaimed:

"My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him.

In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah." Psalm 62:5, 7-8.

He is indeed our refuge! Do we value His word, looking to the end, as the word "Selah" implies?

J.A.DeF.

RENDER THEREFORE TO ALL THEIR DUES

Romans 13:7

Paul is writing here to his Roman brethren as he brought the message of the gospel of Christ to the Gentiles. Let us back up to the twelfth chapter of Romans which gives some background concerning our subject under consideration:

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

Romans 12:1-2.

The knowledge of the Truth brings a responsibility to apply the spirit in one's living by putting away the natural thinking of the flesh and conforming to the ways of God — offering one's thinking and indeed entire life up as a living sacrifice through self denial. Speaking to these Romans — Gentiles unfamiliar with the law and its precepts, Paul would first lay down a foundation of truth, teaching of the salvation from death possible through belief in God and His Son Jesus Christ. Upon that base, he goes on to expound concerning the practical matters of life and how to respond as a new man of faith by saying:

“Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, VENGEANCE IS MINE; I WILL REPAY, saith the Lord.

Therefore IF THINE ENEMY HUNGER, FEED HIM; IF HE THIRST, GIVE HIM DRINK: FOR IN SO DOING THOU SHALT HEAP COALS OF FIRE ON HIS HEAD.

Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Romans 12:17-21.

Here is seen an extreme contrast in the reactions of the natural man versus what the Spirit finds pleasing and acceptable, therefore, they were to give place to their own natural feelings of vengeance and wrath by overcoming them with love and kindness after the example of Christ.

Paul then continues in this thirteenth chapter by teaching in a

similar manner of other practical matters that must be embraced by a man of faith:

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.”
Romans 13:1.

Although many leaders and world politicians may think they control their own destiny, to make war or create peace, it is God alone who is in charge and who appoints over the kingdoms of men whomsoever He will to suit His ultimate purpose with this earth. Nothing is established in the ruling of the earth’s nations unless it be in agreement with God’s purpose. Therefore in accord with every soul being subject unto the higher powers, our verse under consideration continues:

“Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.”
Romans 13:7.

We must conform to the laws of the government under which we live, as long as those laws do not conflict with the laws of God. If they demand dues or taxes, we must render them faithfully as law abiding citizens. Peter, exhorted the brethren in his day to avoid following the example of those who:

“walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and **despise government**. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.”
II Peter 2:10.

When the Lord Jesus was asked if it was lawful under God’s law to pay taxes to the Romans He replied in the same manner:

“... Why tempt ye me? bring me a penny, that I may see it. And they brought it. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Caesar’s. And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s. And they marvelled at him.”
Mark 12:15-17.

The scriptures further reveal that Jesus did not feel Himself above paying tribute or tax money to the Romans, and rendered to them that which was due being a subject Israelite under Roman rule. He instructed Peter to cast a hook into the sea and in the mouth of the first fish he caught would he find money enough to pay the tribute owing for himself and for Jesus:

“Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou

shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.”
Matthew 17:27.

To follow the example of the Lord Jesus we must endeavour to take control of our own living — giving no leeway for the flesh to exert its corrupt power of persuasion upon us and secondly to live a gentle, peaceful life, without causing harm or hurt to any. With this in mind Paul exhorted Timothy and those with him that:

“ . . . first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;

For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;”
I Timothy 2:1-3.

This is why we are taught through the Spirit to be in submission to those in authority, that we may live a quiet and peaceful life knowing it is part of our test in probation that we submit our living to serving Him faithfully and in so doing to **“render therefore to all their dues”**.
M.C.S.

SIGNS OF HIS COMING

“For when they shall say, Peace and safety - - - .”

(I Thessalonians 5:3).

The above prophecy is particularly meaningful relating to the present World situation.

The United States President is rightly concerned about SAFETY after what happened at the New York Trade Centre. The American leader is keen to eliminate any potential threat, particularly to the United States. As the President puts on pressure to face up to Iraq as a rogue state, the leader of that country, by sleight of diplomacy, has agreed to allow into his country, inspectors to determine the measure of Iraq’s war capability. The question is not asked why did he not let inspectors in before? What did he have to hide previously if, as he purports, he is the leader of a nation which no longer has aggressive intent?

Naturally the U.S. Government is sceptical, and has been preparing for some time to deal with the danger by military intervention. Of course Iraq has countered by clever propaganda. Iraq’s Deputy Prime Minister has declared that the comments that

Iraq has weapons of mass destruction are “devious tactics and lies”. “I hope”, said this Arab spokesman, “the people of Britain stop their Prime Minister from making these ridiculous claims. And I hope something good comes out of - - - developments between my country and the United Nations.” “These accusations from Washington - - - are based on pretexts and lies - - - just a tactic to enforce an aggression on Iraq - - - the United States threat against Iraq is of fascist and imperialistic nature.” He hopes his hearers will forget about Iraqi aggression on Kuwait, and the previous Iraq-Iran war.

The United States President is a cautious man, though some endeavour to make out that he is not so. His priority however is SAFETY, and particularly the safety of the United States, after what the Arab enemy showed themselves capable of. The following comment appeared in an English National Newspaper it was from a reader:-

“Your editorial (of September 13th) compares Iraq with Israel and misleads by doing so. Iraq is a tyranny led by a dictator who has waged war on neighbouring countries and attacked his own people.

Israel is a democracy with a free press and a country that has held its hand out in peace with neighbouring Arab dictatorships only to be greeted by war.

Whereas Israel has attempted to make peace with an enemy who strap bombs to their chests and blow up her civilians, Iraq has stated its hatred of the West loud and clear. Iraq is a country which played the destruction of the Twin Towers on TV to celebratory music. It - - - its government (is) deposed, the WORLD WILL BE A SAFER PLACE.”

This is the SAFETY part of the argument; but then on the other side are those who are saying PEACE. And on the comments about Israel, it may be as well to remember that after the Six-Day War, in 1967, Israel proposed to create an autonomous entity in the West Bank, leading possibly to an independent Palestinian State. The Palestinian leaders rejected this, so peace did not come.

The peace lobby however is very vociferous. A respected South African political figure has criticised the President. The gist of his words was that the United States leader does not have the right to say that Iraq’s offer (to allow arms inspectors into Iraq) is not genuine. He went on to say that the U.S. think they are the only power in the world. Russia and China have also opposed any new

United Nations resolution approving action against Iraq at this time. They have also been joined by France so there is a split in the so-called United Nations. A French spokesman said "the world should test Iraq by quickly sending in inspectors. We must let the words (of the Iraqi leader) speak for themselves." The leader of the exiled Iraqi National Congress has pointed out that it would take some time to uncover and destroy the sites (of the threatening missiles) even if the Iraqi President was deposed. Presumably this ex-Iraqi knows more than most. It will, however, be seen from comments from Europe and the East, there is a considerable voice for PEACE. War must be avoided, is the cry.

In England there are many comments in this vein, as the following published examples show:-

"Like millions of others, I am opposed to war with Iraq, but so many people seem to have the attitude (that America's and Britain's leaders) have made their minds up and there is nothing we can do - - - .

But there is. We live in a democracy and if you are opposed to war with Iraq, why not write to your Member of Parliament.

- - - Recent opinion polls suggest that only half of Americans support the attack on Iraq, and this figure drops to twenty per cent if the United States has no allies. - - - ."

Another comment reads:-

"So they have got the evidence about weapons of mass destruction, but we cannot see it just yet. - - - If they know the evidence why can't they tell us the main points?

And what a coincidence, that this evidence (should be referred to) now, just as it becomes clear public opinion is against war."

So comes a fulfilment of scripture which declares for these last days:-

" - - - when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction. - - - " (1 Thessalonians 5:3).

Well, certainly, the attacks upon the New York Trade Centre and the Pentagon was SUDDEN DESTRUCTION, and there is no telling where the destruction will come next.

At the time of this article being written, Europe is proclaiming peace, and America is proclaiming safety. But the true situation is, as the Bible message so clearly indicates, that there will be neither peace nor safety.

NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS

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

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11.30 a.m.

Sunday Afternoon Class 1.45 p.m.

Midweek: Bible Class: Forestville, Hamburg and Fredonia

Every Third Week: Revelation Study

As 2002 draws to an end, the world is in a troubled state beset by economic problems; war against terrorism; distress of nations; famine; addiction to drugs and a widespread breakdown of ethics and morals. We do not know what 2003 may bring but the signs in the earth indicate that the "day of the Lord" cannot be far off, when Jesus will return to establish God's kingdom as promised in His Word.

Our witnessing to this state of affairs and its solution, according to God's plan, continues as approximately 3000 invitations to write for information are mailed each month, asking for His blessing upon this work.

J.A.DeF.

MANCHESTER, *Ryecroft Hall, Audenshaw.*

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11.00 a.m.

Thursdays: Bible Class 2.00 p.m.

The year 2002 is now drawing to a close and this engenders the thought, What will the New Year bring?

It is a privilege and a responsibility to be enabled to witness to the Truth in these closing days of the "times of the gentiles".

God is merciful and gracious in providing for the continuance of such a work.