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A WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

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

"Take heed that ye be not deceived"

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AT THE TABLE OF THE LORD
“RISING UP EARLY AND SENDING”

Over the ages the Almighty has sent many prophets, “rising up early and sending them.” In mercy, God has sent these prophets as His witnesses, testifying of His power, and encouraging His people to turn unto Him. If they would obey, these prophets spoke of the blessing and mercy God would provide. If they would not hear the word of God, the prophets warned of their condemnation to come. In each case, they conveyed God’s testimony and subsequent judgment. Much of God’s truth has been revealed through prophets, from the beginning of His creation to the culmination of His testified purpose at the end of 7000 years.

Let us go back to the beginning, to the creation, and Adam and Eve. He blessed Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden; and, in turn, required obedience to only one command:

“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat.

But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”
Genesis 2:16-17.

Here was the first prophecy given by the Almighty, foretelling what would come to pass if they disobeyed His word. Seduced by the serpent’s lie, Adam and Eve did eat of that tree, and from that day forward they, and all men as their seed, became dying creatures.

However, God in mercy promised a means of escape from that death through the seed of the woman, who would wound the serpent in the head. This prophesied of Jesus Christ who was to come and conquer His flesh nature, inherited from His mother, Mary. God also proclaimed that there would be enmity between the serpent and the seed of the woman.

In due course, Cain was Adam and Eve’s firstborn, followed by Abel. There was enmity between Cain, the seed of the serpent, and Abel, the seed of the woman, as Cain in anger killed Abel in spite of God’s giving him opportunity to repent (Genesis 4:5-7). Thus Adam and Eve experienced first hand the enmity and the sure death which God had prophesied because of their disobedience. In accordance with God’s promise of a seed of the woman, Seth was born:

“And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth; For God, said she, hath appointed me

another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.”

Genesis 4:25.

Cain, the seed of the serpent, was sentenced to be a fugitive and a vagabond, wandering with no hope of a future, but inevitable death. Seth (meaning “appointed”) was of the seed of the woman, guided by God’s hand in the way wherein there was the promise of escape from that death. This was God’s mercy and grace revealed in Jesus as the seed of the woman. God — “rising up early and sending” — did indeed promise strength, peace, comfort and trust for those who believed in His Word.

In our recent reading in Isaiah, we go forward 3200 years to the time of Hezekiah, who became king over Judah and Jerusalem in 726 BC. Five years later, in accordance with God’s warnings through His prophets, the ten tribes of Israel were taken captive by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, because they had failed to heed God’s word.

Shortly thereafter, Sennacherib, the next king of Assyria, invaded Judah and threatened Jerusalem, with the same fate that befell the ten tribes. However, there was a difference! Hezekiah listened to the word of God through His prophet Isaiah. Encouraged by the prophet, Hezekiah had repaired the neglected temple, destroyed the idols and false altars, and restored the Passover feast. Pleased with the king’s faithfulness, the Almighty helped Hezekiah: “. . . thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought that which was good and right and truth before the LORD his God.

And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered.”

II Chronicles 31:20-21.

In the midst of this prosperity, Sennacherib threatened Jerusalem. When Hezekiah himself was sick unto death, this was a seemingly disastrous situation. Again, God sent His prophet Isaiah to help Judah’s king, as he spoke:

“Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.” Isaiah 51:1.

What is the rock, from which he was hewn? We go back to another prophet, Moses, who centuries previously spoke to Israel as they were about to enter their promised inheritance:

“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.

He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.” Deuteronomy 32:1-4.

Moses further spoke of Israel when God forsook them:

“How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had shut them up?

For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.” Deuteronomy 32:30-31.

God was their Rock, defeating their enemies, as long as they depended upon Him. They were, in a sense, children of that Rock, hewn from it, as Isaiah exhorted: “. . . look unto the rock whence ye are hewn.”

To hew means to cut or carve, or as stone is quarried out of a pit. When Solomon was preparing to build the temple, he sent hewers of stone in the mountains (I Kings 5:15). Further:

“. . . the king commanded, and they brought great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house.

And Solomon’s builders and Hiram’s builders did hew them, and the stonesquarers: so they prepared timber and stones to build the house.” I Kings 5:17-18.

As a consequence of the hewing, squaring, and fitting — and probably numbering — they were to fit into the God-given plan for the temple. We are further informed:

“And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building.” I Kings 6:7.

How carefully and according to plan that temple was built, its parts being “made ready” — or as the word means: perfect, just, whole — perfectly fitting together into the house of God. It makes us think of the bride of Christ, the new Jerusalem, those hewn, cut, squared, numbered, and perfectly joined together, as John saw in vision on Patmos:

“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.

This bride was “prepared” — or as the word also means, “made ready.” Let us look at the parable of the ten virgins, wherein five were ready when the bridegroom came:

“... they that were ready went in with him to the marriage:
and the door was shut.” Matthew 25:10.

Can we see why God, through Isaiah, said:

“... look unto the rock whence ye are hewn . . .”
Isaiah 51:1.

Isaiah further spoke to Hezekiah and Judah:

“Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare
you: for I called him alone and blessed him, and increased
him.”
Isaiah 51:2.

God did call Abraham alone out of Ur of the Chaldees; Sarah, his wife, and Lot, his nephew responded to that special calling. Abraham went trusting in God’s word, even at a ripe age of 75. Why did God choose Abraham alone, and none others out of all who dwelt in Ur? He knew Abraham’s heart, his spirit of obedience; knew he was one in whom His purpose could be accomplished. As a result of Abraham’s response, the Almighty made a covenant with him:

“... Get thee out . . . unto a land that I will shew thee:
And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee,
and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.
And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that
curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be
blessed.”
Genesis 12:1-3.

In the passage of time, Abraham was greatly blessed. He was the father of a great nation, who possessed the land promised, and conquered the enemies who cursed them.

Brethren and Sisters, we are Gentiles, yet heirs of this covenant made to Abraham through baptism, having been buried into the death of Christ, and having risen a new man — “heirs according to the promise” — of Spiritual Israel — Sons of God. Indeed, we are blessed! And we look forward to the further fulfillment of that promise when Jesus returns to establish the kingdom of God upon this earth.

Isaiah reminded Hezekiah and Judah: “Look unto Abraham . . . and unto Sarah” — and the promises made to him. To further encourage, Isaiah continued:

“For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her
waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden,
and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness

shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody." Isaiah 51:3.

Hezekiah hearkened, Hezekiah looked, Hezekiah trusted in God's word through His prophet. We know the result. Sennacherib and his army did not so much as shoot an arrow into Jerusalem. God destroyed his army; at the same time, Hezekiah was healed of His terminal illness — all because of his trust in the LORD and in the help given by God's prophet, Isaiah.

We sing in our anthem the words of God (Isaiah 51:3). Do we find comfort, strength, trust and confidence in God's promises, soon to be accomplished when Jesus returns? Isaiah further prophesied:

"Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away." Isaiah 51:11.

What blessing, what joy lies ahead for those who do hearken, look, and trust in the words of His prophets, whom He sent: "... daily rising up early and sending them."

We may feel that today there are no prophets; but there is provided their testimony throughout God's word, from Genesis to Revelation. Let us turn to His prophets, His law, and the Psalms, so that this hope — His blessing and grace — may be alive in our hearts, helping us to heed Jesus' words:

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

Luke 21:28.

J.A.DeF.

MERCY REJOICETH AGAINST JUDGMENT

(James 2:13)

In the second chapter of James, the apostle speaks directly to his brethren of the need for faith coupled with mercy, untainted from a respect for persons, as we read beginning in verse 1:

“My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.

For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;

And ye have respect to him weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:

Are ye not then partial in yourselves and are become judges of evil thoughts?”

James 2:1-4.

He goes on to speak of the faith of Abraham and Rahab who were justified not by their faith alone but also by their works:

“And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?”

James 2:23-25.

This faith must be coupled with works and tempered with mercy as he goes on to explain:

“If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.”

James 2:15-17.

We know God has given His word to those called in obedience and in accordance to that word will they be judged. It is not the letter of that word that will give life at the judgment seat of Christ, but only as those called have absorbed the spirit of love and mercy contained therein and have displayed these qualities to others.

“If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:

But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are

convinced of the law as transgressors.” James 2:8-9.

The Lord Jesus was asked, what is the great commandment and He answered that the whole duty of man was to love the Lord thy God and thy neighbour as thyself. If a man loves God but shows no mercy to his neighbour, he has broken the spirit of the law and will himself be judged without mercy, in accordance with James' words from our consideration:

“For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.”
James 2:13.

To understand the meaning of this verse, is further enhanced by an understanding of the word “rejoiceth” which means “to exalt”. Mercy is then exalted over judgment, showing how important this quality is in the Almighty's eyes. The Lord Jesus was also very clear when teaching of the need for mercy:

“Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I for give him? Till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.” Matthew 18:21-22.

Jesus then went on to elaborate the need for mercy and forgiveness by using the example of a certain king who called in a debtor who owed him ten thousand talents. Because he could not pay, the king commanded the man be sold along with his wife, children and all his possessions so that the debt could be satisfied. The servant pleaded for mercy and patience and the king, moved with compassion generously forgave the debt. This same servant who had been shown such great mercy found a fellow servant who owed him a hundred pence — a pittance in comparison, refused to hear his cries for mercy but had him cast into prison until his debt was repaid. Upon hearing of this callous treatment, the king was angry saying:

“Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.” Matthew 18:33-34.

Jesus concludes this parable with the thought, “So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.” (Matthew 18:35).

At another time, the Lord Jesus taught, “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.” (Matthew 5:7). What greater mercy than to be found acceptable at His judgment seat? Therefore, are

Jesus and James' words very clear — by the bestowing of mercy upon others, mercy can be stored up against the judgment day to come.

When the Pharisees saw Jesus sharing a meal with "publicans and sinners", they said to His disciples, "why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?". How evident was their lack of humility as well as their unwillingness to show kindness or compassion to another. The Lord Jesus' answer was to the point:

"They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Matthew 9:12-13.

By their very question they revealed they were respecters of persons. They brought sacrifice out of duty, not understanding the mercy seen by the shedding of blood as a covering for their own sin.

"The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh." Proverbs 11:17.

A merciful man does good to others but this mercy will be accounted to him for good at the judgment seat of Christ, in contrast to the cruel who can expect to receive no mercy in that day, because they have shown none during their time of probation.

Of that last day, the Lord Jesus said to John in vision:

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

Revelation 22:12.

That reward at the judgment seat of Christ will not be automatically positive, but based upon every man's work. Knowing how frail is our flesh and how prone to weakness and sin, this is a grave warning. Therefore, let us always keep in mind James' helpful lesson that, "mercy rejoiceth against judgment".

M.C.S.

THE HOUSEHOLD (Dr. J. Thomas 1855)

Jesus, the Melchizedec High Priest of Israel, has a Household as well as Aaron had. A proof of this is found in the words of Paul. In writing to certain Hebrews who had BELIEVED the gospel of the kingdom and name of Jesus, had OBEYED it in having their "bodies washed with pure water", he says, "Christ is a Son over his own house, WHOSE HOUSE ARE WE, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of THE HOPE (Acts 28:20; 26:6-7) firm unto the end." (Hebrews 3:6, 14). Now Jesus speaking for himself and others said, "THUS it becomes US, to fulfil all righteousness." It is therefore necessary for all "HIS HOUSE" to do as he did, but with this modification of the significancy of the deed, namely, — He was baptized as the initiative of his own holiness, sacrificial and priestly; they must be baptized into His AND into a development of their own conformable to his; and with this induction for a beginning, thenceforth "continue patiently in well doing" that they may be holy as he was holy in the days of his flesh; as it is written, "Be ye holy because I am holy."

Jesus and his Household are the future kings and priests prepared of God to rule Israel and the Nations for Him. The law and the prophets which attest the righteousness of God requires them all to put on that righteousness by bathing. Jesus commands the same thing and says, "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law TILL ALL BE FULFILLED." Therefore he said to his apostles, "Go and preach the Gospel to every creature;" and "teach them who receive your proclamation to observe whatsoever I command you." By virtue of this saying the apostles became the depositaries of his commands; so that in the words of Jesus, "He that heareth them heareth him, and he that despiseth them, despiseth him; and he that despiseth him, despiseth Him that sent him." Now, Peter, who was one of these plenipotentiaries of Christ, commanded Cornelius, "A DEVOUT MAN, AND ONE THAT FEARED GOD WITH ALL HIS HOUSE: AND GAVE MUCH ALMS TO THE PEOPLE (Israel) AND PRAYED TO GOD DAILY, — Peter, I say, "COMMANDED" this company of pious Gentiles, who believed the word Jesus began to preach in Galilee, "to be baptized in the name of the Lord." The apostolic style of address was, "Children of the stock of Abraham, AND WHOSEVER AMONG YOU FEARETH GOD, TO YOU IS THE WORD OF THIS SALVATION SENT." A man's supposed piety did not exempt him from the necessity of believing and obeying the gospel of the

kingdom, or, as Paul styles it, "the word of this salvation". Peter went to Caesarea to tell pious, god-fearing men, "words whereby they should be saved." But, however pious they may be who are ignorant of these SAVING WORDS, they are alienated from the life of God through that ignorance (Ephesians 4:18). Piety in general, has so little to do with an understanding of the word of the kingdom and the obedience it enjoins, that it has passed into a proverb, that "ignorance is the mother of devotion". In a certain sense this is true. THE MOST IGNORANT ARE FOR THE MOST PART THE MOST PIOUS, AND THE MOST INTOLERANT OF THE TRUTH AND ITS OBEDIENCE. This is PHARISAISM whether it flourish in the first, or in the nineteenth century: and in reference to which Jesus has said, "Except your righteousness exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of the heavens." Pharisaists "appear to men to be righteous"; but men uninstructed in the gospel of the kingdom are incompetent to distinguish the counterfeit from the true. A man in this century will have no more ability to enter the kingdom of the heavens, if his righteousness exceed not that of contemporary churchmen of the strictest sect, than would those addressed by Jesus whose righteousness might be on a par with the peitists of his age. Shall it be said that it was necessary for the Melchizedec High Priest, who was innocent of transgression, and who for thirty years had enjoyed the favour of God and man, to be immersed in a baptism of repentance for remission of sins; but that it is not necessary for the pious who would compose his household, who are sinners by nature and practice? Nay, if it were indispensable for Jesus to be buried in water that he might begin a career of holiness to Jehovah in coming up out of it, it is infinitely more so that all should tread in his steps of perfect faith and obedience, who would be invested with "robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb" having their loins girt around with the girdle of truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and their feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; and on their heads the helmet of salvation. An immersed High Priest requires an immersed household. There is one law for both, as there was one baptism for Jesus and his apostles; on whom as upon all others of the household, the necessity is imperative to fulfil all the righteousness foreshadowed in Aaron and his sons. There is no discharge from this necessity for Jew or Gentile; "for THUS it behoveth US to fulfil all righteousness".

"I BEHOLD SATAN AS LIGHTNING FALL FROM HEAVEN"

(Luke 10:18)

The above words spoken by Jesus were in connection with the report of disciples, who had previously been sent forth in the preparatory work, to:-

"- - - heal the sick (in the cities they visited) and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you."

(Luke 10:9).

The report was:-

"- - - Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name."

(Luke 10:17).

Jesus was pleased by this report and encouraged His disciples in expressing that He:-

"- - - beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven."

(Luke 10:18).

This remark of Jesus has been taken up by many as proof of a personal devil. To help to a true perspective, the original text has to be examined. The greek word rendered DEVILS is daimonion from daimon, meaning, TO DISTRIBUTE. The possible equivalent of this meaning is seen in the Old Testament word "shed", rendered devils, meaning, that which is shady and malignant. "Shed" is also connected with another hebrew word "shuwd", which means TO SWELL UP. There is also the hebrew "showd", which is used in Job 5:21 referring to DESTRUCTION, in the comment "- - - neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh". The original basic meaning, therefore, describes the sad reactions, sometimes violent, of those affected by their illness.

But there is also the word Satan to consider. The greek word is Satanas THE ACCUSER. In the hebrew the word means AN OPPONENT, that which is adverse. In its accusative aspect it is seen in the work of Job's so called friends who wrongfully condemned him.

Let it not be thought that the above is a twisting of the original meaning to provide an answer that eliminates the teaching of a personal Devil. The terms Satan, the Devil, and devils are meaningful descriptions of all that is adverse to well being in this life, which is undoubtedly affected by the original curse, because of sin. But that curse is to be ameliorated when the Kingdom of God appears. Hence the words of Jesus to His disciples, "- - - heal the sick - - - and say, - - - The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." The miracle of the healings that were effected by the work of those disciples, who were

given special powers of healing, was a testimony and an earnest of what will ultimately be revealed when the gospel which they preached comes to pass. Their work for Jesus, who intended to follow in confirming what they had done, was a wonderful beginning to a merciful heavenly working which is ultimately to remove all that is adverse in God's good earth. The power that will ensure this was manifest when "the devils were subject to the disciples through the name of Christ." The daimonion were indeed immediately pacified. It was a sudden weakening of that which is evil. Hence Jesus exulting that He beheld Satan (that which is adverse) as "lightning fall from heaven". It was an impressive, eloquent expression. Lightning falling from heaven is of very rapid effect, and is also a very visible phenomenon. The instant healing work of those disciples who were given the necessary power to do miracles, promises those good things which are yet to come when the power of The Kingdom is fully manifest.

A BIBLE CLASS

Prove All Things

(I Thess. 5:21)

In this fifth chapter of I Thessalonians, Paul in writing to his brethren in anticipation of Christ's second coming, concerned for them that this day not overtake them unawares:

"But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.

For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober."

I Thess. 5:1-2, 4, 6.

He is concerned that they be sober and vigilant, executing the precepts of God in their living, which were exemplified so perfectly by Christ. He enumerates these spiritual attributes, beginning at the 14th verse of our chapter and among which is our verse under consideration:

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

I Thess. 5:21.

To "prove" is to test, discern or examine and comes from a prime root meaning "to think", giving the thought of being actively mindful of all that comes. To prove for oneself is to compare against a set standard and not blindly follow the thinking or dictates of others. There are many references which speak of the need for proving, such as Paul's instructions to his Roman brethren:

"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.

Here Paul encourages his brethren to go beyond the natural impulses of the flesh, which are common to all, and to offer their living as a holy sacrifice by denying self in order to prove acceptable before God.

In Revelation, the Spirit commends the ecclesia at Ephesus for their proving:

"I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and

how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars.” Revelation 2:2.

Also in I John, the apostle warns:

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.

And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.” I John 4:1-3.

John was saying if one professes Christ came not in the flesh, this doctrine does not align with the word and therefore must be rejected to maintain the purity of the Truth. A proving against the perfect standard of God’s word is the only means of a just test.

Also under the law was instruction given to His people regarding proving:

“And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die.

And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken?

When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.”

Deut. 18:19-22.

Going back to the New Testament, Paul also wrote to Timothy reminding him of the standard against which all things could be proved — God’s Word, to verify that which was right in his living and in the work of ministering which he had been given:

“But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast 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.

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, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” II Timothy 3:14-17.

From the beginning, God’s creation was good in every aspect, but was spoiled because of man’s disobedience. The serpent was made a creature “more subtil than any beast of the field” by God as a test or proving of the man and woman. Would they believe the warning given by God that to eat of the tree of knowledge would bring death, or would they believe the serpent’s lie? Being made free willed creatures they had a choice, but failed to prove the serpent’s words against the standard of Truth given by God. From that day grew enmity between man and the serpent — between the spirit and the flesh.

We today have the same choice as well and must be sober and vigilant, ready to prove what is right, lest we too believe the serpent’s lies. To help His children in their choices, Paul reminds that the Lord in mercy has granted spiritual armor to protect and guard:

“But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love: and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.” I Thess. 5:8.

The breastplate of faith and love protects the heart while the helmet protects the mind wherein can dwell the hope of salvation. If the man of God is fortified with faith, love and hope, these spiritual attributes will guard and keep him against the subtlety of the flesh, by proving all things from His word.

All through our lives are choices to be made in a test or proving of our faithfulness and love for God and His Word. Therefore, let us take Paul’s admonition to heart by looking to the standard of our proving — the Lord Jesus, who in every aspect of His living chose to serve God perfectly.

M.C.S.

THE COMING OF CHRIST (R.R. 1873)

Question:

Will the Messiah come privately or in a way that all the world will know? I read that he will come as a thief in the night, yet another passage says that he will descend from heaven with a shout and the sound of a trumpet.

R.R.'s answer:

Christ's coming will be both public and private. It will be private first, as shown by the fact that he sends first for his own people that he may judge them — (Luke 19:15; Psalm 1:4-5; 2 Thess. 2:1; 2 Tim. 4:1). At this time the world at large are ignorant of his presence. The armies of the nations occupy the land of Israel as invaders, and do not know of the Lord till he appears with the saints to pour out judgment upon them. — (Joel 3:11; Zechariah 14:5). Then they shake at his presence — (Ezekiel 38:20). Afterwards, messengers are sent to the rest of the nations who have not seen the glory, that they may know what has taken place. — (Isaiah 66:19). The nations not believing gather their armies to fight against the lamb. — (Rev. 19:19).

Christ comes as a thief upon the world, but not upon his own brethren. — (1 Thess. 5:2). He comes to them as a friend expected and watched for. — (Rev. 15:15; Mark 13:34, 37). The "shout" and the "sound of the trumpet" represent the power used in the raising of the dead; for the raising of the dead is set forth as the result of them — (see 1 Thess. 4:16; 1 Cor. 15:52). This is "the voice of the Son of Man." "The hour is coming", said Jesus, "in which all that are in the graves shall HEAR HIS VOICE and shall come forth, they that have done good to the resurrection of life. ---" "He that raised up Christ from the dead shall RAISE UP US ALSO BY HIM". — (2 Cor. 4:14). As a shout is a common way of awaking people asleep, it is a natural metaphor as applied to the act of calling from the dead those who are asleep in Jesus: and as the sounding of trumpet was the appointed method of convening the heads of the assembly of Israel under the Mosaic economy, it is natural that it should come to be used of that great gathering together of the heads of Israel at the coming of Christ. It does not follow that a literal trumpet sound will be heard. The literal trumpet-blowing of Israel's camp life came to be used figuratively of any act of calling attention or gathering people together. Thus "Set the trumpet to thy mouth". — (Hosea 8:1). "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion." — (Joel 2:15). "The great trumpet shall be blown." — (Isaiah 27:13). In all these cases, the context shows the

trumpet is used in a figurative sense. And this is notoriously the case in the Apocalypse. It is "in the days of the voice of the Seventh Angel WHEN HE SHALL BEGIN TO SOUND", that the mystery of God is finished, or His purpose fully manifested and fulfilled. It is under the sounding of this symbolic trumpet that the time of the dead arrives. — (Rev. 11:15-18). There can, therefore, be little doubt that the "last trumpet" of 1 Cor. 15:51 is the seventh (or last) trumpet of Rev. 11:15.

These are trumpet-soundings that are not heard by the world. They are heard only by such as have had their ears opened by the truth to hear; and the last trump will, in a special sense, be "heard" by the dead, who, under its operation, will come to life, and re-open their eyes and ears, and come to the great gathering of saints.

True, there was the literal voice of a trumpet, "long and loud", in connection with the declaration of the first covenant from Sinai, but that system was altogether "a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image thereof." — (Heb. 10:1). We need not, therefore, look for a repetition of its incidents in a literal form. The substance is of Christ, and the great power that assembles the dead from their graves is the trumpet-voice of the Son of Man — the power of which is seen in its effects and not in an audible sound.

The resurrection of the dead will, doubtless, be as private in relation to the world as was the giving of the law at Sinai, the resurrection of Christ, and his ascension. The world will make the acquaintance of the saints for the first time when, with Christ, they appear on the scene as the breakers of the power of the nations. Then will the coming of Christ be apparent "in a way that all the world will know."

SIGNS OF HIS COMING

A.D. 2003

"O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy."
(Habakkuk 3:2).

The hebrew of the original rendered "revive" is CHAYAH which means "to live". It is linked with the hebrew word CHAVAH which is found in the quotation from Psalm 19:2 "Day unto day uttereth speech and night unto night sheweth knowledge." The English word sheweth is the translation from the original hebrew of CHAVAH. This possibly helps to an understanding of Habakkuk's plea, "O LORD revive thy work in the midst of the years." The LORD is shown by the wonder of His creation. Each clear night reveals a starry expanse and a shining moon, according to its phases. It is a witness of the Living God, and in it is the continuing promise given to the "father of the faithful", Abraham, who was told before his name was changed from Abram:-

"--- Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them. --- So shall thy seed be."
(Genesis 15:5).

So Abraham's name was changed from Abram (Genesis 17:5) "but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee." Referring to Christ and those out of the nations who belong to Christ. This unalterable Truth is to be made clear, "in the midst of the years", to a world which at present is ignorant of it. For the "knowledge" of it will be made alive in the earth, in its coming to pass.

"Midst" of the years is another word worthy of consideration in this context. The hebrew word translated "midst" is QEREB which means "the centre". Its root word is QARAB meaning "to approach" or "be brought near". This root word is in Malachi:-

"And I will come NEAR to you to judgment ---"
(Malachi 3:5).

Following this Malachi depicts the condemnation that will follow upon all falsity and oppression, but linked with this prophecy of coming judgment there are also words of kindness and forbearance:-

"--- I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."
(Malachi 3:6).

It is the measured response to Habakkuk's plea:-

"--- in wrath remember mercy." (Habakkuk 3:1).

The signs of the times undoubtedly reveal the "nearness of the

LORD" to those who seek to respond to God's word. But as yet the knowledge of this is hidden from mankind as a whole which thinks, in the midst of these multiplying years, as the Apostle Peter foretold:-

"--- there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,

And saying, Where is the promise of his coming?

for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."

(2 Peter 3:3-4).

But a great revealing will certainly come in accordance with the yearning of God's prophet Habakkuk. The Apostle Peter was full of faith in this, and so we have his expression of certainty:-

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness: but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come ---."

(2 Peter 3:9-10).

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

Recent correspondence and telephone inquiries with Christadelphians give opportunity to witness to the importance of the doctrine of fellowship.

Substantial response to our September mailing to the general public reveals the anxiety, perplexity and worry over what the future holds.

J.A.DeF.

MANCHESTER, Ryecroft Hall, Audenshaw.

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11.00 a.m.

Thursdays: Bible Class 2.00 p.m.

The new year has now arrived. This coming time will undoubtedly be exciting, for we can expect events that will conform to the ancient but certain prophecies of the Spirit.

All things are in the hands of the Most High, and the on going purpose of Heaven cannot be thwarted.