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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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All Communications

D. Lancaster,
227 Moston Lane East,
New Moston,
Manchester M40 3HY,
England.

J. A. DeFries,
146 Gardner Street,
Fredonia,
New York 14063,
U.S.A.

AT THE TABLE OF THE LORD
"EXCEEDING MAGNIFICAL"

We are reminded in our recent readings of David's preparations for the building of the temple for God. He was not allowed to build it himself, because he was a man of war, having shed much blood. However, he did prepare for its building by zealously assembling the required materials that Solomon his son would use. These preparations occupied David's time and desires, along with his duties as king over his people. We read of his zeal and determination:

"... Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be builded for the LORD must be exceeding magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all countries: I will therefore now make preparation for it. So David prepared abundantly before his death."

I Chronicles 22:5.

Prepare means to erect, to set, to fashion, or to make ready. David could not erect it, but he did give a large portion of his life to making ready for it. In doing so, he was given its pattern from the Almighty:

"All this, said David, the LORD made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern."

I Chronicles 28:19.

The pattern would reveal all the materials necessary for the building of that temple. Gold, silver, brass, iron, hewn stones, precious stones and timber in vast amounts were needed, for the temple was to be "exceeding magnificent." David organised the gathering of all these necessary stones. The timber was to be cut in Lebanon, carried to the Mediterranean Sea, floated in rafts to Joppa, and then carried overland to the site of the temple in Jerusalem. David also contributed of his "own proper good" of gold, silver, brass, precious stones, and added that which was dedicated from the spoils of the nations he conquered.

However, there was another aspect that took much of David's time and effort. He appointed priests, Levites, porters, singers, and players upon instruments, which would be necessary for the service of the temple to glorify and praise the Almighty. David further organised the assignment of all these so that their services might be done decently and in order. For example, we have read of the Levites whom he appointed for this work:

"Now the Levites were numbered from the age of thirty years and upward: and their number by their polls, man by man, was thirty and eight thousand.

Of which twenty and four thousand were to set forward the work of the house of the LORD; and six thousand were officers and judges:

Moreover four thousand were porters; and four thousand praised the LORD with the instruments which I made, said David, to praise therewith." I Chronicles 23:3-5.

Every one of the thirty eight thousand were assigned to a specific part in the service of that temple. Twenty four thousand "were to set forward the work of the house of the LORD." "Set forward" means to excel, to oversee, and the word is also used in many of David's Psalms as "the Chief Musician" or to the one who excels, the Victor. "Six thousand were officers and judges," whose duties would be to supervise those so serving the house. Another four thousand were porters — doorkeepers to guard the sanctity of the house — an important work. Another four thousand praised the LORD on instruments which David the king made, to be used for the praise of God. He made harps, cymbals and psalteries, much like a lyre. What care David showed, giving his thoughts, time, and effort in zeal for the house of God, that it might indeed be "exceeding magnificent" in its appearance and in the glorifying of the God of Israel!

Let us look at one aspect of his work — the appointment of the singers and players on instruments. We find details of this in our reading this morning:

"... David and the captains of the host separated to the service of the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals. . . ." I Chronicles 25:1.

We might ask: How can one prophecy with a harp or psaltery or with cymbals? The concordance reveals that the word "prophecy" involves a speaking or singing by inspiration. Those chosen to be singers and players upon instruments were 288 Levites, divided by course, under the jurisdiction of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun. We read of their assignment:

"All these were under the hands of their father for song in the house of the LORD, with cymbals, psalteries, and harps, for the service of the house of God, according to the king's order to Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman.

So the number of them, with their brethren that were instructed in the songs of the LORD, even all that were cunning, was two hundred fourscore and eight."

I Chronicles 25:6-7.

This was according to the pattern given to David, in order to make the temple “exceeding magnificent.” They “were instructed in the songs of the LORD” to fully accomplish this. “Instructed” is also used as diligently expert, learned; not just ordinary singing, but carefully taught, diligent in following their instruction. In addition, they were “cunning” — able to discern, consider, or perceive the importance of giving their best to glorify God. As these 288 Levites raised their voices in harmony, playing upon their instruments, what a glorious sound it would be—all dedicated to the magnificence of that house! All this was to be done under the direction of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun.

We know about Asaph (meaning to gather), whose name is found in the titles of twelve Psalms. In Psalm 50, entitled “A Psalm of Asaph (the Gatherer),” we read of God’s purpose with His people:

“Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.

Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.

He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. Gather (asaph) my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.

And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself, Selah.” Psalm 50:2-6.

In the day of the LORD, those who have joined themselves to Him by a covenant, will be gathered to His judgment seat; and, if found faithful, they will be joined to Jesus Christ, the Gatherer, as eternal kings and priests in His kingdom. It is noteworthy that verse 6 ends with the word “Selah” — value it, considering the end — a reminder of the end of God’s purpose to be accomplished with His people who have given their living by diligently working to glorify Him.

“Heman” (meaning faithful) is mentioned in the title of Psalm 88 — including the words: “Maschil (instruction) of Heman.” In this Psalm, he cried unto the LORD because of affliction and weakness, seeking strength to endure:

“O LORD God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before thee: For my soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves. Selah.”

Psalm 88:1, 3, 7.

Recognizing that the Almighty does place affliction upon His people

to test their faithfulness, Heman sought help to endure under this testing, expressing his trust in God with "Selah" — value it, looking to the end.

We also find Jeduthun's name (meaning praise and thanksgiving) in the title of three Psalms of David. For example, in Psalm 39, the title reads:

"To the chief Musician (Victor), even to Jeduthun, a Psalm of David."

Here is a means of giving acceptable praise unto God:

"I SAID, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.

LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is: that I may know how frail I am.

Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah." Psalm 39:1, 4-5.

The mind of one seeking to give praise unto God is quick to realize that his ability is as nothing before God, and seeks His mercy and strength, valuing it, looking to the end of God's purpose.

David did not live to see the temple completed, but gave of his living and strength to prepare for its building by his son, Solomon. After David's death, Solomon did build it, using the materials and people David had prepared. When it was completed according to the pattern, and the ark of the covenant was placed therein:

"... the Levites which were the singers, all of them of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthun . . . being arrayed in white linen, having cymbals, and psalteries, and harps, stood at the east end of the altar . . .

It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD, . . . saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud . . .

So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God." II Chronicles 5:12-14.

Here was God's pattern accomplished, as the house of God was indeed "exceeding magnificent" — filled with His glory. How those who were privileged to be there would rejoice, having had a part in the preparation and building of that house, echoing David, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun's praise and faith, evidenced in their word:

“Selah” — value it considering the end. The songs of joy, of praise, of thanksgiving would indeed fill that magnificent house of the LORD!

As we read of David’s zeal for that house — accumulating all the necessary materials, assembling the people who would do the work of that house — it should inspire us. Brethren and Sisters, let us emulate that zeal and determination, valuing the privilege, and looking to the end of that purpose, when Jesus returns and the house of God is assembled in Jerusalem. John saw this hope while on Patmos:

“... I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia (praise ye the LORD); Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the LORD our God:

And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.

And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the LORD God omnipotent reigneth.”

Revelation 19:1, 5-6.

Here is the end of God’s plan. Here is the house of God assembled. Here is the multitude of voices raised in praise and thanksgiving. Here is the house of God “exceeding magnificent.” Do we value it? Are we zealously preparing for it, giving of our time, our resources, desiring to glorify God now, by obedience to His will, in the hope of being a part of that purpose when Jesus returns, to build that eternal House of God?

J.A.DeF.

"MY COMELINESS WHICH I HAD PUT UPON THEE"

(Ezekiel 16:14)

Our verse under consideration was written by the prophet Ezekiel while in captivity in Babylon. He had gone into captivity with Judah and Jerusalem that he might admonish and turn them from their wickedness, by reminding them of all the blessings they had received at the hand of the Lord in times past:

"Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations.

I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to excellent ornaments: thy breasts are fashioned, and thine hair is grown, whereas thou wast naked and bare.

Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine." Ezekiel 16:1-2, 7-8.

God chose them to be His people and Jerusalem as the city where He would put His name, yet they abused their privileged position. The prophet Ezekiel goes on further to tell them they had been washed and anointed, clothed with costly garments and jewels, fed the finest of food and prospered as a nation when they were little in their own eyes and walked after His precepts. When they were close to God, His blessings flowed over them as a garment, making them feared by the surrounding nations because the Lord was with them:

"And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord GOD."

Ezekiel 16:14.

"Comeliness" as used in this verse means to be magnificent, to have beauty and glory — all adjectives we associate with the Almighty. By Ezekiel's time, Israel had turned away from God, blending themselves into the surrounding heathen nations, adopting their idolatries and forsaking the Lord's way. His comeliness — His magnificence and glory had been draped about Israel as a protective covering, yet they refused to receive His gifts by preferring to walk in their own ways and so were delivered as a captive people into the hands of Babylon.

Through Moses, He delivered His people out of Egypt, covering

them with His comeliness and love by giving them His law and establishing a covenant with them. They would be His peculiar treasure and know His care and blessing if they would walk after His ways. He set before them salvation and the hope of life — a Rest to last for eternity, seen in type in the promised land which they were to inherit:

“A land which the LORD thy God careth for: the eyes of the LORD thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.

And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, That I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil.”

Deuteronomy 11:12-14.

What a great privilege to be a people separated unto the Lord, to be led by His statutes in the hope of eternal life, while enjoying His care and favor in their present life. However, they did not appreciate the comeliness he had placed upon them, but chafed against their unique position, longing instead to be like the surrounding heathen nations.

“But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was.

And of thy garments thou didst take, and deckedst thy high places with divers colours, and playedst the harlot thereupon: the like things shall not come, neither shall it be so.”

Ezekiel 16:15-16.

Because of this, Jerusalem was brought low — thrown down from their exalted position of comeliness. They squandered the gifts and honor given them of God on their heathen neighbors, in an attempt to ingratiate themselves into their way of life, forgetting the need to be separate and holy from that which was worldly and vain.

David in contrast was one keenly aware of the manifold blessings offered by God and who in appreciation, penned his thanksgiving many times in the psalms:

“For the LORD hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation.

This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her

poor with bread.

I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.

There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed.

His enemies will I clothe with shame: but upon himself shall his crown flourish." Psalm 132:13-18.

This psalm was one of David's, "Songs of degrees", written for those going up spiritually to Zion, who shine with beauty from an inward light created from faithfulness and obedience. This same beauty or comeliness showered upon Israel was written of by Isaiah who said:

"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.

For; behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.

And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." Isaiah 60:1-3.

Jeremiah, another prophet who grieved for the lack seen in His people wrote of their fall from comeliness:

"All that pass by clap their hands at thee; they hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem, saying, Is this the city that men call The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth?" Lamentations 2:15.

Jerusalem's beauty became tarnished when they turned away from God and mingled themselves with the surrounding nations. They took their sons and daughters in marriage, breaking the bonds of fellowship they had with God, and willingly brought discord and division into their homes by turning aside from His precepts to worship heathen idols of wood and stone. They spurned His gracious offer and because of their lewd behaviour, could no longer be considered a candidate for the Lamb's bride. They were therefore delivered into captivity to Babylon because they had lost their comeliness before God.

Are we spiritually comely Brethren and Sisters? Do we reflect the godly attributes of love, humility, mercy and righteousness so perfectly seen in the Lamb, the Son of God? We must if we hope to be chosen, in His mercy, as part of His bride at Christ's judgment seat. To the comely, those who during their time of probation have sought shelter in the Rock, will the Bridegroom say:

"O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of

the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely."

Song of Solomon 2:14.

M.C.S.

"--- THE ROCK POURED ME OUT RIVERS OF OIL"

(Job 29:6)

Job lived in the land of Uz, and Uz is referred to in connection with Aram, as follows:-

"The children of Shem; Elam, and Asshur, and Arphaxad, and Lud, and Aram.

And the children of Aram; Uz, and Hul, and Gether and Mash."

(Genesis 10:22-23).

Aram appears in the name Padan-aram. Padan means the plateau; the Table land; and when connected with Aram, describes the Table land of Aram. It was from that area that Abraham and his descendants came. It was in the same area, it seems, that Job lived, in the land of Uz. Today that country is named Iraq.

It is interesting to note that Job declared that he was blessed with "oil out of the rock." The hebrew word is SHEMEN and means GREASE. So then was there set, all those years ago, a feature which would concentrate the minds of the nations in these last days upon the area, because of the huge reserves of oil under the permeable rocks?

The modern oil industry started in Western Ontario in 1857. Two years later further petroleum was found in Pennsylvania. A steam engine was used to drive a punch twenty metres below the surface and an oil boom started. Soon further deposits were found not only in the United States and Canada, but also in Mexico and Venezuela where commercial production began in 1878. The nations then began to look eastward, and oil was found in Iran (1908), Iraq (1923), Bahrain (1932), and Saudi Arabia and Kuwait (1938).

Within twenty five years the Middle East out produced the other areas, for the oil reserves there are immense, so the world became largely dependent on the cheap production from that area for its industry and rapidly developing transport.

At the time of writing it has been revealed that United States and British special forces are already in Iraq searching for Iraq's missile weaponry sites, and also the oilfield locations, for it is feared

that if it comes to war with Iraq, its leader will order the destruction of the oil wells; this will be a considerable set back for immediate future supplies. After Saudi Arabia, Iraq is the next largest petroleum producer.

The U.S. is so concerned about oil that it has maintained a presence in almost every country that either has oil or borders on an oil producing nation. With the increasing doubt about Iraq's international intentions the U.S. has built up its power base in the Middle East. Many thousands of American troops are in the Persian Gulf. In Kuwait the U.S. 3rd Infantry division has lined up tanks and artillery on the Iraq border.

It has been said that if America had access or friendly control of Iraq's oil fields it would be less dependent on Saudi oil. Saudi Arabia which holds the largest oil reserves is in a position to dictate world oil prices, and it has been mooted that there is a possible danger of radicals in the Middle East establishing a militant Islamic government there. Iraq's oil then becomes important in the equation.

It is not just the commodity itself that is important, it is also the price of it. To help to control costs the U.S. has pumped millions of gallons of crude oil into the vast caverns of old mines under Mexico, Texas and Louisiana. If there is oil price inflation as a result of war, this huge reserve could help to stop the price rocketing, and so protect the U.S. economy.

A former U.S. President, the father of the present leader, who led successfully in the Gulf War (1991) was actually politically undermined afterwards when American motorists faced a considerable increase in petrol prices. America's present leader will not have forgotten this, so not only is oil supply part of the equation, but also oil prices. No wonder then that the U.S. is spending at least 20 per cent of its huge military costs on oil supply defence. This is concentrated on Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran, where two thirds of the world's supplies are located.

How striking is this world situation. Was it prepared all those years ago, when in a small way, Job, and perhaps others like him, in the land of Uz, spoke of oil out of the rock? Did it feature in their life-style as a blessing of provision? Though later, in the case of Job, he had great reverses which he endured with proverbial patience. The observation of Job then, that "the rock poured me out rivers of oil", is a very interesting one. The question it raises is, "was it actual experience, or was it prophetic metaphor?"

REMARKS OF F.K. (UGANDA)

(A reader of the "Remnant" but not of our fellowship)

"I hope according to what you say or do we shall make all others truly and sincerely agree and believe that God and not any man at all is the very Father of Jesus Christ."

Extracts from paper of F.K. on the above subject.

Matthew 1:1-25 and Luke 3:23-38. - - - The very important message given in the two genealogies---connect with the prophetical message of Ezekiel 21:25-27:-

"And thou profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end.

Thus saith the LORD GOD; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown; this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high.

I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him."

--- The truth as to who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ --- the following scriptural passages:-

In Genesis 3:15 Adam understood that the promised SEED of the woman, would have nothing to do with SINFUL MAN --- for example like Adam was the father of Cain. ---

King David was also promised a Son who would equally be David's son and also God's son. --- Not Solomon who built the first Temple in Jerusalem now in ruins. ---

Solomon in becoming King of Israel was highly exalted above his brothers, --- and his brother Nathan was abased, both of them sons of Bathsheba.

Zedekiah the last named King of Judah and a descendant of King Solomon (fell) --- and --- the abased Nathan's name --- in exaltation when his descendant Mary's son Jesus Christ (will) ascend and sit on the throne of David. In Luke's genealogy --- Joseph is shown and mentioned as the would be father of Jesus. ---

Note that Joseph was the son of Jacob according to Matthew's genealogy. Yet Joseph is shown again as Heli's son. --- Heli was the father of Mary and therefore father in law of Joseph. Thus, via Jewish custom, girls are not mentioned in the two genealogies. ---

Rightly, Joseph would have been a king if Solomon's right to kingship had not been terminated. --- To maintain

kingship in David's House - - - Nathan was, as promised, exalted in Jesus Christ - - - to sit on David's throne for ever - - - the truth of Ezekiel's prophecy. - - - .

Robert Roberts on the above subject.

God's purpose was to effect reconciliation, redemption and deliverance on a plan that required that the deliverer be a Son of David, a Son of Abraham, a Son of Adam — as well as the Son of God. The moment - - - arrived to bring this deliverer on the scene. - - - The Angel Gabriel arrived with that moment to announce the event - - - to a virgin of "the house of David".

The proof that Mary was of the house of David need not trouble us long. The promise requires it, for if Mary were not a descendant of David, then was Jesus not "of the seed of David according to the flesh", for he had no actual human father. Then the co-existence in the gospel narratives of the two lines of descent from David involves the certainty that one of them (Luke's) was Mary's; for it is not conceivable that two mutually incompatible genealogies could have found currency among believers in the first century with apostolic sanction, as these two accounts undoubtedly did. They are mutually incompatible if they are both Joseph's; but they are not so if one of them is Mary's: they are in that case two co-ordinate pedigrees — both correct, and both germane to the case. That Mary does not appear by name in either of them is not a difficulty when we remember that it had ceased to be a custom at the time these genealogies were drawn from the public registers, to recognise the female element in the genealogy. If the woman were an important link, she appeared either by her husband or other male relation. In this case she appears by her father.

Heli was Mary's father, and Heli is the first link in the chain of descent given by Luke. This is somewhat obscured by the ambiguous parenthesis, with which the chain starts. The parenthesis relates to the popular impression that Joseph was the father of Jesus; but in the common version, the parenthesis is made smaller than it really is. It consists of the words, "being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph". The common version limits the parenthesis to the words, "AS WAS SUPPOSED", and creates the obscurity. The obscurity is at an end if we read Luke as having said, "And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed the son of Joseph, but in reality) of Heli, who was of Matthat, etc."

There would remain then but the simple question why Joseph's genealogy should be given since Joseph was not the father of Jesus.

This seems sufficiently answered by the reflection that there would have been legal confusion in Christ's relation to David, if Joseph, the husband of his mother had not also been of Davidic extraction. In the eye of the law, husband and wife are one, and if Joseph had not been of David, he would have eclipsed and marred the Davidic relation of Mary. Joseph, in his own right as a descendant of Solomon, could have imparted "a title clear" to David's throne: but Joseph was not to be the father of Jesus, though he was to be the husband of his mother, and the legal father only of her son. The case was totally exceptional and peculiar in all its bearings; and the difficulties and necessities of it were beautifully harmonized in Joseph and Mary being independently related to David through separate lines of descent — one (Joseph) through Solomon, and the other (Mary) through Nathan, thus uniting in themselves the royal rights of David's house, which passed by law and blood to their wonderful Son.

A BIBLE CLASS
“LET HIM BE IGNORANT”

I Corinthians 14:38

First Corinthians is one of Paul’s earliest epistles, written to those at Corinth to whom he had taught the gospel and there established an ecclesia. In I Corinthians 12, he reminded them of the spiritual gifts granted by God. He exhorted them to use these gifts for the honoring of God and for the help of their brethren and sisters. In I Corinthians 13, he wrote concerning the role of love in the use of these gifts, concluding:

“And now abideth faith, hope, charity (love), these three; but the greatest of these is charity.” I Corinthians 13:13.

In our chapter under consideration, Paul wrote of the need to show this love by using the gifts given to edify the ecclesia, speaking of edifying seven times in this chapter. We find this word means to build a house. Paul’s exhortation was to help his brethren use their God-given abilities to build up and strengthen the ecclesia, that God might be glorified. In this desire he wrote:

“Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.

For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.

But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.” I Corinthians 14:1-3.

If one speaks in an unknown tongue, his hearers are mystified, for they cannot understand the message. This is why at Pentecost the apostles were enabled to speak in many languages, so that they might go forth and preach the gospel, as Jesus had instructed. The important aspect of teaching is that it be done in a way that brings understanding and knowledge; else the prophesying is to no avail. Paul reminded:

“He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.”

I Corinthians 14:4.

To “prophesy” as used by Paul, involves a foretelling of coming events, revealed by inspiration. If this is not spoken with an understanding, Paul reminds:

“ . . . except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air.” I Corinthians 14:9.

Where then would be “the edification, and exhortation, and comfort”? (Verse 3). Paul instructed:

“For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.

For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.” I Corinthians 14:31-33.

Speaking in unknown tongues, or all speaking at the same time, can only yield confusion, and therefore a lack of the edifying which is pleasing to God.

We are given the example of Mary:

“Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.” John 12:3.

When Judas Iscariot objected, Jesus rebuked him:

“... Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this (ointment).” John 12:7.

Mary’s simple faith and love for Jesus, filled the house with a sweet smell. By this act, the house was edified by Mary’s understanding of Jesus’ work soon to be fulfilled by His death, in obedience to His Father’s will. In contrast, we see Judas’ self-motivation to sell the ointment and give the proceeds to the poor.

Paul further addressed his brethren:

“But if any man think himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.

But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.”

I Corinthians 14:37-38.

We find that “ignorant” used by Paul is composed of two words: (1) not, and (2) understand, think or perceive. Paul then instructed that if a man did not understand or perceive, he should recognize his inability to fully prophesy, and refrain from doing so; for if he lacked, would the house be edified or filled with a sweet odor? The one may have gifts other than prophesying, and should use them to edify the house in accordance with his ability and understanding. Paul continued his instruction to help in this question:

“Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.

Let all things be done decently and in order.”

I Corinthians 14:39-40.

Those who had the ability to prophesy were encouraged by Paul to covet such work because of their gift of understanding. "Covet" involves the thought of being zealous or fervent. Those given the greatest ability to prophesy should be zealous in pursuing this work; while others, who may not be so versed, would defer to those who are best suited, to the edifying of His house. Thus all things might be done decently and in order, avoiding confusion: "for God is not the author of confusion."

As each member of the house zealously uses the particular ability given to him, will not the house be built up in faith, in understanding, in love for God and for one another? Paul understood this and prophesied to his brethren:

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth (is edified?) unto an holy temple in the Lord:

In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Ephesians 2:19-22.

This is our hope, Brethren and Sisters. In love, let us covet to do those things which will best edify that house!

J.A.DeF.

SIGNS OF HIS COMING

“--- thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. - - - I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.” (Isaiah 14:13-14).

The above prophecy, of course, referred to the ambition of ancient Babylon. But prophecy in the Word of God often has more than one meaning.

Latter day Babylon is not lacking in ambition. Man is looking beyond the confines of this good earth that has been given to him.

The late President John F. Kennedy (forty years ago) was ambitious of landing a man upon the moon, and then returning him safely to earth. But thoughts of reaching up into the sky had been circulating long before.

In 1903 K. Tsiolkovsky wrote, and published, an article on astronautics. Twenty three years later (1926) U.S. engineer Robert Goddard fired the first liquid-fuel rocket.

Then with the coming of the Second World War, Wernher von Braun developed the V2 rocket.

But it was in 1957 that the first space satellite, Sputnik 1, developed by Russia went up to orbit the earth. This was followed by Sputnik 2, carrying a dog named “Laika”, which survived the initial thrust, but died on board seven days later.

The next year (1958) the U.S. sent up satellite Explorer 1.

In 1961, Russia sent up Vostok 1, with Yuri Gagarin on board, and he was recovered after a single orbit.

This was followed in 1962, by United States Friendship 7, containing John Glenn, the first American to go into orbit.

Then in 1963 June Valentina Tereshkova, in Vostok 1 (Russia) became the first woman in space.

1967 saw the tragedy of Vladimir Komarov who was killed when the Russian rocket-ship, Soyuz I, crash landed on the Earth.

Then a remarkable event occurred. On July 20, 1969 Neil Armstrong, of the United States, was the first person to walk on the moon’s surface.

Russia followed (1970) with its Luna 17, with a space probe from it, which took photographs and made soil analyses of the Moon’s surface.

The next year (1971) the Russian Salyut 1 was launched. It

was the first orbital space station to be visited by crewed spacecraft.

Skylab 2 followed (1973). The first United States orbital space station.

Then in 1975, the U.S. and Russia made a joint space enterprise, linking up Apollo 18 and Soyuz 19, in space.

Europe then entered this field, when its Space Agency sent Ariane 1 in 1979.

This was followed in 1981 when the first reusable crewed spacecraft Columbia was developed by the U.S.A.

Five years later there was the tragedy of Challenger (U.S.A.) which exploded shortly after take-off, killing its crew.

But the U.S. persisted, with the shuttle Discovery (1988).

Russia also had the Buran shuttle, and the Russians Manarov and Titov lived in space station Mir for 365 days.

In 1995 the U.S. space shuttle Atlantic docked with Mir and exchanged its crew members.

Mir continued, measuring 44 feet long, and carrying out space experimentation.

So in less than 40 years, men's ambitions for space moved forwards in leaps and bounds. Are they satisfied at what they have achieved?

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, authors were letting their imaginations run away into stories of scientific exploits. For example there is the French writer Jules Verne; and also the English author H. G. Wells, who were notorious in describing impossible science exploits as though real. But men are now determined to carry on in space, dismissing doubts of what was once thought unachievable, intending to make them real. The plan is for man on the Planet Mars in less than 10 years time. This project has been given the name Prometheus (the fictional Greek god involved with fire). Mars the fourth planet from the Sun is much smaller than the earth, but has white polar caps which advance and retreat according to the seasons, similar, in a way, to the earth. Men are interested; they are ambitious to get there. But though they now have powerful rocket vehicles, Mars is a long way off. A chemical-powered rocket would take six months to get there, though its speed is 18,000 miles per hour.

But now scientists are turning to atomic power, which they estimate will give propulsion well over 70,000 miles per hour. At this speed the journey to Mars would take two months. A space-scientist administrator recently commented:-

“Current propulsion systems are like exploring the old West in covered wagons --- and we have been restricted to the same speed for forty years. With the new technology, where we go next will be limited only by our imagination. The laws of physics are the only things controlling how fast we go anywhere, what we do and whether we can survive the experience.”

A European space mission might not be too far behind the United States, it has been said. A science director at the British National Space Centre made the comment that a combined European assault on Mars could be ready in the next twenty years. It has been declared that frozen water has already been found in large quantities just beneath the surface of the Red Planet, this will make survival possible.

A president of the Mars Society has boasted that using atomic power will give mankind the means to extend human civilisation to the heavens.

One commentator in a National Newspaper has let his imagination run riot in an article, as follows:-

“The ancients believed that stars and planets are inhabited. --- The Moon was said to be a resting place in the cycle of death and rebirth. Modern space exploration has opened a new prospect — of actual, physical aliens. --- If they exist, some of them are bound to be more advanced than us. --- I think it is quite likely that we are on the verge of contact with a higher and wiser culture than our own. ---”

No thought is given to the Most High in such speculation, or in Space-craft endeavours. But God’s word testifies to His awareness of such things. To the latter day Babylon the divine declaration is:-

“--- thou has said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, --- I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to SHEOL.”

(Isaiah 14:13-15).

The fact that there is such an advancement of Man’s ambition indicates the time of heavenly intervention in this earth is near. God has set His demarcation for man in the holy witness of His Word of Truth:-

“Ye are blessed of the LORD which made heaven and earth. The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD’S: but the earth hath he given to the children of men.” (Psalm 115:15-16).

Will God allow man’s pride to exceed itself? The ancient prophecy gives a clear answer.

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

We rejoice with our brethren in Manchester, as help has been granted to retain the use of the hall, where they have met for over 30 years. For this we thank our Father, as He has answered the supplication of all.

Advertising to the general public is continuing, with about 3,000 invitations for literature being mailed to surrounding cities and villages. Not many responses have been received, but each month there are a few, which encourages in this work.

J.A.DeF.

MANCHESTER, Ryecroft Hall, Audenshaw.

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11.00 a.m.

Thursdays: Bible Class 2.00 p.m.

In these changing times, with momentous decisions by governments which repercuss on everyday life, what a blessing is our recent enablement to continue occupancy of our Sunday Hall.