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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
"IF THE LORD DELIGHT IN US"**

In our present readings, we have traveled with our brethren in Israel toward the land promised to Abraham and his seed. They were miraculously delivered from Egyptian bondage through the blood of the passover lamb upon the side posts and upper door posts of their houses. They left Rameses in Egypt, protected by their God at the Red Sea, and saw Pharaoh's pursuing army destroyed in the sea. At Mount Sinai they heard the voice of God, received the law given there to Moses, and built the tabernacle — all under the Almighty's hand.

They left Sinai and began their journey toward the land promised to Abraham centuries prior. A few days into this journey, led by the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night, they came to Kadesh-barnea located on the border of the land of Canaan. Here God commanded Moses:

"Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them."

Numbers 13:2.

In obedience, Moses chose 12 who were leaders of their tribes and said unto them:

". . . see the land, what it is; and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many; And what the land is that they dwell in, whether it be good or bad; and what cities they be that they dwell in, whether in tents, or in strong holds;

And what the land is, whether it be fat or lean, whether there be wood therein, or not. And be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land . . ." Numbers 13:18-20.

At God's command, the 12 spies went into the land. Why did not the Almighty simply lead Israel into the land? He knew exactly what the land was like, knew the strength of the people; for it was the land that He had told Abraham would be possessed by his seed. Was it a test for Israel; would they trust in God, in His promises, in His guidance and protection? Would they remember His deliverance from Egypt, and His hand upon them in their journey to the edge of this promised land?

Twelve searched the land, saw that it was all that God had promised — that it was indeed fruitful and flowing with milk and honey. Of the twelve, ten told Moses:

"... We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and

surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it.

Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak (giants) there.

The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan." Numbers 13:27-29.

Two of the spies, Caleb and Joshua, said:

"... Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it." Numbers 13:30.

Twelve saw the same things in the land; ten gave a negative report. Two said: "... we are well able to overcome it." What was the difference in their thoughts? Ten feared the land, the people, the giants, the high walled cities. They ignored or forgot that God had promised them this land, had led them out of Egypt, protected them from Pharaoh at the Red Sea, and destroyed Pharaoh and his army. They forgot the fire and cloud, although it was ever present. Their fear was due to lack of trust in God's promises, God's provisions, and God's presence with them!

Joshua and Caleb knew God's hand was with them, and faithfully said: "... we are well able to overcome it." Theirs was a vastly different spirit; rather, a fear, an awe of God, and a trust in His promised word that He would not fail nor forsake Israel IF they put their trust in Him. Joshua and Caleb further expressed their conviction as Israel rebelled against God, and desired to appoint a captain and return to Egypt:

"... The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the LORD delight in us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey.

Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread (whom we can consume) for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not." Numbers 14:7-9.

Canaan's defense, or covering as the word means, departed before God, while Israel's covering — the cloud and fire of God's presence — was always with them, as they had so well experienced since leaving Egypt. What was Israel's reply to God's plea through Joshua and Caleb?

"But all the congregation bade stone them with stones..."

Numbers 14:10.

In all Israel, there were only four people in whom the Lord had delight — four people (Moses and Aaron, Joshua and Caleb) who trusted in Him, believed His word, His promises, knowing that they were well able to overcome any adversary standing in the way of God's purpose. They believed that what the Almighty said, he would do — IF He delighted in them. To delight also means to favor, desire, be well pleased, to have pleasure. How few there were who gave pleasure to God as Israel stood at the border of their promised land; but, through fear, said: "... let us return into Egypt" (Numbers 14:4).

The Almighty then determined to destroy all of Israel (except those faithful four), and said to Moses:

"... I will ... make of thee (Moses) a greater nation and mightier than they (Israel)." Numbers 14:12.

Moses interceded with God, lest the surrounding nations would believe that God was not able to bring Israel into their promised possession, if He killed them at Kadesh-barnea. The Almighty heard Moses, and said:

"... I have pardoned according to thy word:

But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD,

Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice;

Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it."

Numbers 14:20-23.

In judgment upon those who rebelled, the Almighty again spoke:

"... As truly as I live, saith the LORD, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you.

Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; ... according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me,

Doubtless, ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun."

Numbers 14:28-30.

In addition, the ten spies who failed to delight the Lord:

"... died by the plague before the LORD."

Numbers 14:37.

The 600,000 who rebelled against the Lord did die, one by one, as they wandered in the wilderness for forty years. Their graves marked the path of their wandering until all died. Only two of those responsible at Kadesh-barnea entered the land — Caleb and Joshua — whose faith and submission to God delighted Him. Moses and Aaron were not allowed to enter the promised land, because they failed to sanctify God at the rock, when proved by Israel, they struck the rock twice and said:

“... Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?”
Numbers 20:10.

Moses and Aaron lacked in acknowledging that only God could bring forth water from a rock, thus failing to sanctify Him; they did not delight Him!

As we contemplate Israel’s failure to honor God, their lack of fear and awe of Him, we can be helped in our determination to react to His mercy and grace in a way which will cause Him to delight in us, His children. We need that help, for being flesh, we naturally are more inclined to delight “self” instead.

What can we do to cause God to be delighted in us, Brethren and Sisters? We have an example of One who totally submitted to God, even to His death on the cross, Jesus Christ His son. We remember His words as He came to John the Baptist to be baptized with the baptism of repentance, for He was of Israel. John protested that he was not worthy to baptize Him. Jesus replied:

“... Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness . . . ”
Matthew 3:15.

John baptized Jesus; as the Spirit of God descended like a dove and lighted upon Him, a voice from heaven spoke:

“... This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”
Matthew 3:17.

Through Jesus’ submission and determination to fulfill all righteousness, God was well pleased — delighted in Jesus — as He began His ministry.

On another occasion, Jesus, along with Peter, James and John, went to a high mountain, and Jesus was transfigured in a vision before them:

“... and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (delighted); hear ye him.”
Matthew 17:5.

If we hope to be pleasing to God, do we not need to “hear him”? Jesus, His Son, as He taught His disciples to honor, obey, and glorify God, submitted to His will, trusted in Him and His word. Let us

listen to Jesus' words to Peter, when he was a Satan (adversary) to Jesus' determination to go up to Jerusalem to be crucified:

“... thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.” Matthew 16:23.

In love for Peter and for all who seek to follow him, in obedience to His Father, Jesus then said:

“... If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” Matthew 16:24.

We fail, we do not always follow Him, when self is not denied, but allowed to motivate. We don't always delight God, in spite of our struggles to do so. Why is this so? Is it because of fear, weakness, our adversaries (and “self” is our biggest adversary)? Like Israel at Kadesh-barnea, there are many reasons to fear: giants who seem unconquerable, walled cities which are too strong and established — too entrenched to be conquered. We are only a few striving to be “... a remnant according to the election of grace” (Romans 11:5). Help is there for those who trust in God's word, who delight in tribulation and trial as a means of proving their faith. We have all experienced God's hand to deliver, to encourage, to heal, to comfort in tribulation or loss. Let us remember Joshua and Caleb's conviction which so delighted our God:

“If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey.

Only rebel ye not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; ... the LORD is with us: fear them not.”

Numbers 24:8-9.

J.A.DeF.

THE GOD OF JACOB IS OUR REFUGE

In reading David's 46th Psalm, the title gives us a glimpse into his mind as he penned these words:

“To the chief Musician for the sons of Korah, A Song upon Alamoth.” Psalm 46: Title.

Many biblical scholars view these titles as merely musical notations without spiritual significance. However, we can see how important these titles are to the content and theme of each particular Psalm, for they have been especially provided for our help and understanding. The translation of this particular title is as follows:

"To the Victor, for the sons being made smooth, A song of the virgins".

The Victor is the One who has overcome and been victorious over His flesh nature as seen in Christ. Each one of us has a victory to achieve and must follow His example, walking as did He and endeavoring to react in a Christ-like manner in whatever circumstances we may face during our time of probation. The thought of "being made smooth" is in line with the idea of overcoming — all the rough edges honed and chipped away — much like a rough diamond is cut and polished revealing the inner beauty hidden beneath its surface. "Alamo" is the thought of those veiled or covered — making us think of the Bride of Christ, those to whom this psalm is directed, that they may grow in spiritual understanding in the hope of being found acceptable through His mercy, before His judgment seat. Longing to become part of that number, David writes in verse 1:

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."
Psalm 46:1.

God is always present and knows what in our personality needs to be smoothed or cut off in order to become acceptable before Him. David's own rough edges were exposed on occasion and he was brought low because of failure, but he looked to God for reconciliation through repentance.

"Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed,
and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah."

Psalm 46:2-3.

These natural catastrophes would invoke fear in any yet with trust in God, the Creator whose hand is ever present, we can be assured He will protect and care for His little ones — those who trust in Him, though calamity surround them.

David reminds those looking in hope to the end of His promise, of the Kingdom age to come in verses 4 and 5:

"There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.

God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early."

Psalm 46:4-5.

This describes the future dwelling place of God, where He will be seen in the midst of spiritual Jerusalem — His people, the Bride of

Christ. David with the eyes of faith saw this promised inheritance, as did John in vision while in exile on the Isle of Patmos — suffering for the name of Christ as one of those “being made smooth”:

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

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacles of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

Revelation 21:2-4.

Using the image of His “bride” as those to be found approved at His judgment seat, helps relate the natural figure of a man and woman joined together in love and commitment, to speak of the ultimate spiritual joining of God and His people. John in Revelation speaks of this same figure:

“And I looked, and, lo, a lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads.

And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts (living ones), and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.

And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.”

Revelation 14:1, 3-5.

Those before His throne are termed “without fault” because they have endeavoured to follow the Victor during their time of probation — their rough edges smoothed through trial and testing.

These words allow us to raise our eyes above the momentary problems of today to the goal set before us. This is not for the world to perceive but written for those who respond to His call. We know the day is coming when this vision of John and hope of David will be realized. The world’s corrupt institutions established by men, will be toppled, and a new righteous order will be created, ruled by Christ and His Bride — those who during their time of probation

have endeavored to walk after His example.

Just as in the days of Noah when the ungodly were wiped clean from the earth, so too will a new heaven and new earth be established as the habitation of the righteous, where God will be pleased to dwell among them.

What a wondrous blessing is in store for those who endeavoring to walk in His precepts are mindful that His eye is upon them, watching to see if they value the covering given through Christ and who remember David's words of encouragement and hope:

"Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah."

Psalm 46:10-11.

M.C.S.

"HAVING THE UNDERSTANDING DARKENED - - -"

(Ephesians 4:18)

The Apostle in writing the above accusation was speaking of the ignorance of men, blind to the Truth of God, because of lack of reverence for His word.

Many centuries have passed since those words were written, and undoubtedly a form of respect for the Bible developed. But what ignorance came with the twentieth century. Great technological advance occurred, but with the increase of knowledge came also a "darkening".

Recent statements from intellectuals reveal a complete ignoring of God's word. Consider the following report:-

"Three fossilised skulls have been unearthed that provide the most ancient glimpse of modern humans, plug a crucial gap in the fossil record and offer the most striking evidence that the first Homosapien was born in east Africa. Besides the 160,000-year-old Ethiopian fossils, hailed as landmark finds from the dawn of humanity, palaeontologists also discovered - - - Stone Age tools. - - - The fossils fill a major gap in the human fossil record. The mixture of primitive and modern features indicates that they are probably immediate ancestors of today's humans.

The team has assigned the fossils to a new subspecies of Homosapiens.

Homosapiens idaltu (idaltu means "elder" in the Afar language), We have lacked intermediate fossils between pre-humans and modern humans between 100,000 and 300,000 years ago. --- the new fossils --- provide strong evidence that Homosapiens and Neanderthals co-existed, rather than the former descending from the latter. This backs studies that show that genetic diversity in Africa is greatest, since humans have evolved there for the longest."

This explanation gives the impression that very clever investigation has taken place. In actual fact it is a made-up surmise. It is still a "theory" which originates in human imagination. The true explanation is given in God's holy word:-

"And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed ---.

And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads.

The name of the first is Pison; that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah. --- And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia.

And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates."

(Genesis 2:8-14).

This is not an ambiguous description, the Euphrates is still identifiable, and it was in that area that man originated. The beginning of man's migration is also recorded:-

"And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, ON THE EAST OF EDEN."

(Genesis 4:16).

Later (after the Flood), it is recorded:-

"--- as they journeyed FROM THE EAST --- they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there."

(Genesis 11:2).

Men have chosen to discard God's explanation. Another evidence of ignorance of God's word is seen in the following scientific comment:-

"Humans became hairless or 'naked apes' to deprive fleas, ticks and other blood sucking insects of a home, rather than to stay cool in hot climates, scientists claim. In time hairlessness became a sexually attractive trait, ensuring that it was passed down through the generations.

The (new) theory --- challenges the widely accepted view

that humans became hairless to keep cool. --- Hairlessness is made possible in humans owing to their unique abilities to regulate their environment via fire, shelter and clothing. Clothes and shelters allow a more flexible response to the external environment than a permanent layer of fur, and can be changed or cleaned if infested with parasites."

What saith the scripture? The account in the book of Genesis is clear:-

"--- they (Adam and Eve) were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed." (Genesis 2:25).

Through sin Adam and Eve fell from God's grace, and so became ashamed, for which need "the LORD God (made) coats of skins, and clothed them." (Genesis 3:21). Intellectual surmising then, is seen to be in contradiction to God's declared witness of His work and purpose.

Other instances of modern rejection of the Bible could be quoted, but note the following blatant suggestion from a University professor:-

"Mount Sinai, where Scripture says Moses received God's Law, is located in Saudi Arabia, not Egypt's Sinai Peninsula — moving a key site for Judaism into the nation where Islam was founded --- the holy mount must have been an active volcano since it shook and emitted fire and smoke (Exodus 19:18) --- records ancient and modern have been carefully examined to fix the site. --- Present day Mount Bedr in north-western Saudi Arabia (is the place) since there were no ancient volcanoes in what was later named the Sinai Peninsula. --- It was near Mount Bedr, Moses experienced God's call at the 'burning bush' --- this was caused by flammable natural gas, or volcanic gas escaping from the ground."

So the veracity of the Bible is ignored. The Bible says:-

(when the Israelites left Egypt) --- "God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea: ---" (Exodus 13:18).

On crossing the Red Sea:-

"They went out into the wilderness of Shur."

(Exodus 15:22).

"And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt." (Exodus 16:1).

Soon they came to Horeb where God gave instruction to Moses:-

“Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.” (Exodus 17:6).

Note what followed this incident:-

“Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim.” (Exodus 17:8).

Amalek and Rephidim were not in Saudi Arabia. And following this IN THE THIRD MONTH the children of Israel came to Sinai and “camped before the mount” (Exodus 19:2) where Moses was to be given the Law.

So the scripture details how Israel reached Sinai, and shows where Sinai was situated. The fire on Sinai did not have to be volcanic. Moses testified to Israel:-

“- - - the LORD thy God is a consuming fire. - - -” (Deuteronomy 4:24).

The suggestion that Mount Sinai was in Saudi Arabia shows how ignorant of the Word of God is the modern world. No wonder respect for it deteriorates when actual dignitaries of the Church write as follows:-

“- - - Professor - - - makes the point that ‘many educated people in the West’ have given up on religion because they no longer find its theory tenable. There are also very many thinking people within the Church who are seriously dissatisfied with most of its traditional doctrines AND MUCH OF THE MATERIAL IN THE BIBLE - - -. There clearly could be a very effective expression of Christianity without all the old irrelevant and artificial theology, and in keeping with contemporary New Testament scholarship - - - to accept that the new approach can happen only in new groups and movements would merely confirm the Church in its old-fashioned irrelevance. - - -”

What ignorance is shown here. There can be no “effective expression of Christianity” without observing all that Jesus said. His complete upholding of all the word of God is clearly shown:-

“- - - man shall not live by bread alone, but by EVERY WORD OF GOD.” (Luke 4:4).

“- - - the scripture cannot be broken. - - -” (John 10:35).

“- - - verily, I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” (Matthew 5:18).

A BIBLE CLASS
"I SHALL GO SOFTLY"

Isaiah 38:15

These are the words of Hezekiah, king of Judah, when he was in dire straits. The army of Sennacherib, king of Assyria, was at the gates of Jerusalem, threatening to destroy the city and take its inhabitants to Assyria, just as Shalmaneser did in 721 BC (9 years prior). At the same time, Hezekiah was warned by Isaiah, God's prophet:

"... Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live." Isaiah 38:1.

The king's reaction was to turn his face to the wall and pray unto the LORD:

"... Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore." Isaiah 38:3.

With the help and guidance of Isaiah, Hezekiah walked in truth and with a heart seeking to be wholly dedicated to God. In mercy, God responded to his fervent prayer through Isaiah:

"Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years; And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city.

And this shall be a sign unto thee from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that he hath spoken.

Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees . . . ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees . . ."

Isaiah 38:5-8.

How avidly Hezekiah would look for that sign; how he would rejoice as the sun returned as God commanded!

In his rejoicing, he spoke of his agonizing:

"... I did mourn as a dove; mine eyes fail with looking upward: O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me."

Isaiah 38:14.

"Undertake" means to be security for, to be occupied in one's need. The dictionary defines it to take upon one's self, agree to do, give a promise or pledge to do or take responsibility for — giving the example of an undertaker who handles matters for funeral arrangements. There is the instance when Judah took the responsibility for Benjamin's safe return, if Jacob would allow

Benjamin to go with his brethren to Egypt. He said to Jacob:

“I will be surety (undertake) for him; of my hand shalt thou require him: if I being him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever.” Genesis 43:9.

David expressed the same thought:

“I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to mine oppressors.

Be surety (undertake) for thy servant for good: let not the proud oppress me.” Psalm 119:121-122.

Hezekiah, in his oppression, cried out:

“... undertake for me” (Verse 14).

God did — He added 15 years and removed the threat of Assyria. As Hezekiah received God’s gracious help, his words were:

“What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it: . . .” Isaiah 38:15.

Hezekiah did more, as he vowed:

“... I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul.” Isaiah 38:15.

He was determined that no matter what the bitterness or difficulties, he would walk softly for the remaining years granted to him by his merciful God. He expressed this as he made his vow:

“Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.

The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day . . .

The LORD was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments (harps of praise) all the days of our life in the house of the LORD.”

Isaiah 38:17, 19-20.

God did indeed undertake for Hezekiah! In gratitude, he vowed to praise the LORD by “going softly” all the days of his life. What is involved in “going softly”? The word is also used as gently — a looking to God for guidance and help — not going forward in our own ways. It is acting in a way that pleases Him, trusting in Him, asking Him to “undertake for me” — because we fail and need His hand.

This was Hezekiah’s vow — to “go softly” for his remaining 15 years. As he did so, he prospered, to the extent that when the son of the king of Babylon sent a present and messengers to honor him:

“... Hezekiah was glad of them, and showed them the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the

spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures . . .”

Isaiah 39:1-2.

Hezekiah gloried in his treasures, his riches, his house, he bragged to the ambassadors from Babylon. Isaiah quickly stepped in and rebuked Hezekiah:

“ . . . Hear the word of the LORD of hosts:

Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD.”

Isaiah 39:5-6.

Within 24 years (BC 588) this came to pass, when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and the temple; and the time of the Gentiles began. Why did Hezekiah fail in this manner? Was it because he was living his 15 years of extended life in peace and safety? Had he neglected to “go softly” — perhaps feeling he no longer needed to pray: “. . . undertake for me” — relying on his own strength and prosperity? We find the answer in the record in II Chronicles concerning this particular time:

“Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him (forsook him), to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.”

II Chronicles 32:31.

God does test those who seek to serve Him, such as David, and even the Lord Jesus, as they cried out: “. . . Why hast thou forsaken me?” It is a proving. Was Hezekiah walking softly, praising, submitting under God’s hand? Or, had he forgotten that all his riches, his house, Jerusalem itself would not be there had Sennacherib taken Jerusalem? Would Hezekiah even be alive for these 15 years? How easily we can do the things that we like to do to satisfy self, rather than please God! Only One walked softly all the days of His life, the Lord Jesus, as He submitted to the hand of God, and praised Him through all His living. He passed the test as He cried out: “It is finished.”

Let us, Brethren and Sisters, heed the lessons of Hezekiah’s extended life, and determine that we will “go softly” — haltingly, as Jacob did for the rest of his life, after wrestling with the angel all through the night. Remember, his name was changed from Jacob (supplanter) to Israel (a prince with God) because of His trust in God, helped as he halted. As he limped through life, would he not be saying, in humility and subjection to God: “. . . undertake for me”?

J.A.DeF.

"HE THAT HEARKENETH UNTO COUNSEL IS WISE"

Proverbs 12:15

Our verse under consideration is taken from the words of Solomon — one granted great spiritual wisdom of God. Yet how ironic that at the end of his life, this great king renowned for his wisdom throughout the world, did not listen to God's counsel and advice but became in his own words, "an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished." Eccl. 4:13. Our verse under consideration in its entirety reads:

"The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise." Proverbs 12:15.

This word "counsel" means advice, to deliberate, to consult or guide. We know the greatest advice we can receive is from the Great Counsellor, who has given His Word as our guide. This verse from Proverbs differentiates between the wise and the foolish — those who hearken and those who scorn counsel and walk in their own ways. The scriptures record the end of the foolish in Noah's time when God brought judgment against them:

"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." Genesis 6:5-6.

Even after Noah preached, giving warning of God's coming judgment for one hundred and twenty years, only eight hearkened to the Lord's counsel — Noah, his three sons and their four wives, making eight that were saved from death in the ark. One that hearkens to counsel is wise — especially one who embraces God's Word and endeavors to walk therein. The fool is right in his own thinking but is devoid of hope. To those who hear the admonition of the spirit however, is held out the hope of an escape from death. Of the fool, Solomon writes:

"Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.

For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.

But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil." Proverbs 1:31-33.

Dwelling in safety gives the thought of being covered and protected under His wings as David wrote in the Psalms:

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.

Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.

He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler."

Psalm 91:1-4.

Solomon goes on further in the Proverbs to speak of the great benefit of counsel — not only God's, but that given by our brethren and sisters:

"Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety."

Proverbs 11:14.

If God did not provide the means for counsel from His word, there would be no hope to recover when one walks amiss. His counsel is given not only through the word but also through the help of faithful brethren and sisters:

"Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established."

Proverbs 15:22.

If there is no working together in fellowship, in one purpose, there could be no help available. Yet the counsel or help given and received, all works towards the one goal for those bound in fellowship and faith.

When we fail to take counsel and act on our own thinking, disastrous consequences can occur, just as happened to Joshua and the children of Israel. Upon entering the land they were commanded to destroy the inhabitants and possess their land. However, the Gibeonites knowing this, came disguised in old clothing with moldy provisions as if they had travelled a great distance to make an alliance of peace with a far neighbor.

"They (the Gibeonites) did work wily, and went and made as if they had been ambassadors, and took old sacks upon their asses, and wine bottles, old, and rent, and bound up;

And old shoes and clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them; and all the bread of their provision was dry and mouldy. And they went to Joshua unto the camp at Gilgal, and said unto him, and to the men of Israel, We be come from a far country: now therefore make ye a league with us.

. . . And Joshua said unto them, Who are ye? And from whence come ye? And they said unto him, From a very far country thy servants are come because of the name of the

LORD thy God: for we have heard the fame of him, and all that he did in Egypt.

And the men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD." Joshua 9:4-6, 8-9, 14.

After Joshua and the princes of Israel had made a pact of peace, they learned that they were indeed neighbors, but because they had sworn an oath, they were honor bound to keep it. However, because of their deceit, the Gibeonites were made to be servants — hewers of wood and bearers of water unto the house of God. This sentence they accepted because their lives had been spared. Joshua and the children of Israel would remember this incident as a moment of folly for relying upon their own judgment and not seeking God's counsel before hand.

Paul counsels Timothy, his son in the faith, reminding him of the source for all knowledge, help and counsel:

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

And that from a child thou has 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.

We being flesh, wander out of the way that glorifies Him and need His counsel and that of our brethren and sisters, for we can't counsel ourselves — our own thinking gets in the way to blind us to the truth of our circumstances. We have to be ready to listen to counsel and correction and put away self if we hope to be known as one of His little ones who, "hearkeneth unto counsel (and) is wise".

M.C.S.

SIGNS OF HIS COMING

“--- When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. --- Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see and be ashamed for their envy at the people; yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them.” (Isaiah 26:9-11).

The ancient prophecy is undoubtedly speaking of the coming heavenly solution to the ills of this present world. It will begin in the land of Israel where the United States is greatly endeavouring to bring about peace between the Jews and the Palestinians. The American leader has good intentions, but it is an impossible task. Only the power of Heaven will achieve deliverance. But how heartening is the prophetic promise:-

“In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; ye shall have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.

Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.” (Isaiah 26:1-3).

The righteous nation who will “enter in”, is referred to in the same chapter:-

“Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body, shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as of the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.” (Isaiah 26:19).

These words describe the resurrection of the dead; God’s people who are delivered from the bondage of sin and the grave. They will be a multitude of redeemed and will enter into the place prepared for them in the City of Peace. But that same time will be one of great evil upon the world’s inhabitants. So Isaiah declares:-

“Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.

For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity. ---”

(Isaiah 26:20-21).

The inhabitants of the earth are going to have to learn to be very different, and how greatly this is needed. A recent Muslim published declaration stated:-

“As a follower of Islam, and the teachings of the Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) I along with other Muslims

totally condemn acts of terrorism.

It is in teachings of the Prophet that it is forbidden to kill innocent men, women and children in or out of a war and also it is forbidden to burn down houses and fields. --- This is the teaching of the Prophet from over 1,400 years ago --- terrorists come back to the teachings of the prophet and do not misquote verses of the Quran to your advantages. That in itself is another major sin."

But in the face of this what is the stance of the Muslim Cleric Leaders of Iran? It is reported that Iran's nuclear programme could become "irreversible" unless it is stopped within the next 18 months. A Uranium enrichment plant is being built at Natanz; this, when finished, will make Iran's nuclear capability self-sufficient. The government in Teheran, of course, say this plant is to produce low-enriched uranium for civilian reactors. But once this is a fact, then Iran will have the option of producing highly-enriched uranium for nuclear weapons. Why an oil-rich country needs atomic civilian reactors is left for people to draw their own conclusions. It is certainly not an economic decision. Further to the east India and Pakistan have such weapons, also China; and North Korea is intent on following suit. What of the world situation then? Is it getting any better?

The President of the U.S.A. is well aware of the danger which faces the world. His recent statements are significant, the following are some of his comments:-

"This is a moment of historic opportunity in the Middle East."

"A dictator in Iraq has been removed from power. Reformers in the Middle East are gaining influence. We have reached a moment of tremendous promise, and the United States will seize this moment for the sake of peace."

The President has been formulating a plan to bind the United States economically to a free trade zone with the Middle East, hoping by this to bring about a steady stability. They are good intentions, but man cannot do it. The only hope is help from the Most High, and this is promised in His Holy Word, which declares:-

"Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us." (Isaiah 26:12).

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

Ongoing inquiries and interest in the work of witnessing gives encouragement in this work.

Our sister's recovery from recent surgery continues, enabling a return to the meeting, which is a great blessing and source of gratitude to all.

J.A.DeF.

MANCHESTER, Ryecroft Hall, Audenshaw.

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11.00 a.m.

Thursdays: Bible Class 2.00 p.m.

Endeavours continue here to help one who seeks unto us. We do try to remember that the "call" is of God, therefore we greatly need His help and guidance in all the work which is given to us.