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The Remnant of Christ's Ecclesia

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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
"THOU HAST AVOUCHED THE LORD"

This morning we have been with our brethren of Israel as they were poised at the border of their promised inheritance. The Almighty instructed them concerning their responsibilities, modifying the law given on Mt. Sinai to fit their changed circumstances in the land. In Deuteronomy 26, He spoke of their bringing the firstfruits of the land as an offering, in gratitude for His mercy and grace. As they brought the firstfruits, they were to speak these words:

"... A Syrian ready to perish was my Father (Jacob), and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous.

And he hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey.

And now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land, which thou, O LORD, hast given me. And thou shalt set it before the LORD thy God, and worship before the LORD thy God:

And thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the LORD thy God hath given unto thee . . ."

Deuteronomy 26:5, 9-11.

In their rejoicing, Moses further instructed Israel:

"This day the LORD thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments, thou shalt therefore keep and do them with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.

Thou hast avouched the LORD this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice:

And the LORD hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments;

And to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour; and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the LORD thy God, as he hath spoken."

Deuteronomy 26:16-19.

To avouch is to certify, to determine, to publish. In effect, Israel was renewing the vow made at Sinai as they heard the word of the LORD:

"... All that the LORD hath spoken we will do . . ."

Exodus 19:8.

All those who were responsible perished in the wilderness because they refused to enter the land at Kadesh-barnea. Now, 40 years later, their children were to renew that vow from their hearts. Their fathers had rebelled, but now they were to vow in obedience to their God, as He would enable them to conquer the land promised. Brethren and Sisters, we also fail to keep that which we have avouched, but God does keep His word for those who struggle to do the same.

As our brethren avouched their determination to obey, there were only three still alive, who 40 years earlier had vowed at Mt. Sinai: Moses (who was not allowed to enter the land), Joshua, and Caleb. They feared the LORD and kept His commandments. This is the history of God's mercy and grace to His people from the beginning. God spoke in Eden, saying to Adam and Eve:

“. . . 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.

They did not obey that one simple commandment; tempted by the serpent's lie, they did eat and did surely die. All their descendants became dying creatures. God, in mercy and love for His creatures, gave a means of escape from that sentence of death through the provision of skins to cover their nakedness. This God-provided covering spoke of His promise of a seed (the Lord Jesus) who would wound the head of the serpent, and be a means of removing sin through His blood shed — His life given in complete obedience to His Father's commands. How great is God's mercy in this provision of Jesus Christ for all who will avouch and keep His word, and so have hope of finding a place in the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The Almighty continued to instruct His people as they were preparing to enter the land. Moses and the priests said to Israel:

“. . . Take heed, and hearken, O Israel; this day thou art become the people of the LORD thy God.

Thou shalt therefore obey the voice of the LORD thy God, and do his commandments and his statutes, which I command thee this day.”

Deuteronomy 27:9-10.

In confirmation of this requirement, the tribes of Israel were to assemble on Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim, and listen to the Levites as they spoke His words. Hearing how disobedience would cause them to be “cursed,” they responded:

“... And all the people shall say, Amen.”

Deuteronomy 27:26.

“Amen” — so be it — giving evidence of their avouching God’s words, and accepting responsibility if they failed to do do. If they obeyed, God would bless; if they failed, God would curse. God does bless, showering benefits upon those who turn to Him in love and fear. Those who fail to keep their vow, He will curse. “Curse” involves, as the dictionary reveals, a calling down of evil, to denounce scathingly. To help Israel (and ourselves) to understand this, the Almighty gave them examples of the blessings of curses which they would receive. In Deuteronomy 28. we read:

“And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and do all his commandments . . . that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth:

And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God.”

Deuteronomy 28:1-2.

In contrast, the Almighty warned His avouching people:

“But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee.”

Deuteronomy 28:15.

If our brethren kept the Almighty’s word, great blessings would be granted: (Deuteronomy 28:12-13). If they disobeyed, great evils would be brought down:

“... ye shall be left few in number.”

Deuteronomy 28:62.

Let us remember, there were only three standing there listening to the words of the Almighty, who had obeyed over the 40 years in the wilderness: Moses, Joshua and Caleb — a confirmation of the sureness of God’s word.

The situation is much the same today. God’s word is ignored or disregarded by most of the world, because it requires a submission to Him, a denial of self with its lusts. Jesus made it very plain as He spoke to His disciples:

“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which

leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

Matthew 7:13-14.

Indeed, the way to eternal life is narrow — the gate is strait, or with many obstacles in the way, as the word means. How can we find that way which leads to that gate? God in His kindness has given His commandments to those who sincerely seek His way, His gate. His commandments are as signposts that point the way, warning of dangers, and of obstacles which fleshly thinking puts in the way. Peter was an obstacle to Jesus when He was going to Jerusalem to suffer crucifixion. When Peter heard this, he said to Jesus:

"... Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee."

Matthew 16:22.

Peter loved Jesus, but failed to perceive that it was God's will that Jesus must die, to "fulfil all righteousness." Peter was not a help but an obstacle, and Jesus rebuked him:

"... Get thee behind me, Satan (adversary); thou art an offence (stumbling block) unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." V.23.

Savour means to exercise the mind. Peter failed to set his mind upon the things required by God; he expressed his own thoughts concerning Jesus' impending death. Jesus called him a Satan — an adversary — hindering rather than helping Him in His submission to God's will. Jesus in love for Peter corrected him, as He said to His disciples:

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

Jesus was walking in that narrow way, obediently following the signposts pointing to the narrow gate.

As we seek to be His followers, Brethren and Sisters, do we not have to deny our own thinking, lifting our minds to "the things that be of God"? Paul helps us in that determination, as he wrote to his brethren in Philippi:

"Let this mind (savour) be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

Who, being in the form of God (as the Son of God), thought it not robbery (a thing to be grasped after) to be equal with God.

But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant (as son of man), and was made in the likeness of men:

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled (denied)

himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Philippians 2:5-8.

We have remembered Jesus here this morning, perceiving His victory over His flesh nature, as He became the Saviour, the Anointed Christ, at God's right hand, to intercede for those who have avouched:

"... the LORD this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice."

Deuteronomy 26:17.

To those who have avouched and are determined to follow those signposts, to follow Jesus His Son who so perfectly walked in that narrow way, indeed great blessings are promised, as well as present helps in times of need.

With these thoughts in mind, let us heed the words of the Almighty to His people:

"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them."

Deuteronomy 30:19-20.

The way is clear — the signposts are there! We have avouched to walk therein, and have the example of the One who walked perfectly in it, always subject to His father. We have said, "Amen" — so be it — to those things which can help us, and No, to those things which can hinder us, bitterly curse us, and cost us the precious hope of eternal life in that promised inheritance!

In these last days, as we wait with hope and fear for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to judge whether we have indeed chosen life, let us watch and wait, so that:

"... 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.

KEYS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

(Matthew 16:19)

The subject of our consideration came about as the Lord Jesus questioned His disciples, saying, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" (Matthew 16:13). The answers were varied:

"And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets."

Matthew 16:14.

But His real concern was who they His disciples thought He was, perhaps in an effort to test the depth of their faith and belief in Him:

"He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?"

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Matthew 16:15-16.

Perhaps it was because of Peter's normally impulsive nature that he answered first, but the Lord's reply to his answer was full of reassurance:

"Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Matthew 16:17-19.

Peter came to this conclusion from the words preached and the miracles performed by the Lord Jesus. As an eye witness, his heart was moved by the working of the Spirit exhibited in the Lord Jesus and his faith increased so that he had no doubt that this indeed was the Christ they had been waiting for. Because of his faith, the Lord commended him and promised that to him would be given the "keys of the kingdom of heaven". He knew Peter's faith could be relied upon in the future even though he would yet encounter times of struggle.

Many in the world have erroneously interpreted these words — believing in the false doctrine of souls heaven-going. They have designated Peter as the custodian of the gates of heaven, allowing or rejecting souls into this realm. The significance of Peter receiving the "keys of the kingdom of heaven" is an intimation that he would play a major part in the spreading of the gospel of Christ after His death and resurrection. Those brought to the Truth through Peter's efforts

were as "bound in heaven", and those disfellowshipped from the Body of Christ were as "loosed in heaven".

In Luke is recorded the events surrounding Peter's calling:

"And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Genneseret, And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.

And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship."
Luke 5:1-3.

Being fishermen by trade, they had toiled all night long to catch fish but had returned empty. The Lord Jesus with the power of the Spirit knew this, but commanded them to launch their ship out into the deeper water and throw down their nets. Without any real hope, they did so with the result that their nets surrounded so many fish they broke. They called to their partners in the other ship to come to their aid and they filled both ships with so many fish they began to sink. Peter's reaction is evident of his instant belief and faith:

"When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man. O Lord.

For he was astonished, and all that were with them, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken:

And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, **Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch often.**"

Luke 5:8-10.

Peter and the other apostles, were chosen specifically to carry out the Lord Jesus' work of preaching the gospel after His death and ascension to His Father. They preached the same gospel as did He, adding to the listeners their own experiences, while privileged to share His days on earth.

Paul speaks of this sure foundation upon which the teaching of the gospel was established being a fellow labourer in this endeavour:

"For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. **For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.**"

I Corinthians 3:9-11.

Peter was also selected to bring the first Gentile, Cornelius the centurion into the Body of Christ, when at that time it was limited to the Jews alone. Thus bringing a new revelation to the apostles that the way had now been opened for the admission of all men, who would hear, into the house of God. Perhaps Peter was chosen for this momentous work because of his strong faith and belief, for he perceived the major change set before them all of opening the door of faith now to the Gentiles:

“Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.” Acts 10:34-35.

The “keys of heaven” he had been given by Christ was the knowledge of the gospel to be preached to all men so that through repentance, salvation might be offered to those willing to yield their living and walk after Christ’s example. With this knowledge of the gospel, he held the “keys” to the door of faith, through which all men could be granted into the fellowship of Christ and the Father.

M.C.S.

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST (R.R. 1872)

What are we to understand by Christ entering into the holy place — heaven itself — by His own blood?

(Hebrews 9:12 & 24).

In the testimony referred to, there is a mixing of the language of type and antitype, which is likely to lead an undiscerning reader into mistakes. This need not surprise us after Peter’s testimony that, in Paul’s letters,

“--- are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures.” (2 Peter 3:16).

The type is the holy place in the Mosaic tabernacle, with its appurtenant ordinances of sacrifice, blood, and priesthood, all of which have their substance or spiritual significance in Christ. (Colossians 2:17).

The priest of the first covenant carried the actual blood of slain victims into the holy place, and sprinkled it on the altar, or on “the

unclean", if the case demanded it, to the purifying of the flesh of the subject of the operation. It is not so with Christ, the "high-priest of good things to come." His blood "PURGES THE CONSCIENCE FROM DEAD WORKS" (verse 14), not by a literal sprinkling upon us, but by an understanding of what His blood-shedding means. We are "washed from our sins in His own blood" (Revelation 1:5), not by a literal ablation, but by enlightenment with regard to what was accomplished in His death; for His shed blood (symbolised in the memorial wine) is but the symbol of His death.

"He poureth out His Soul (life or blood) unto death."

"For the life of all flesh is in the blood."

(Leviticus 17:14).

When Christ said, "this is my blood of the new covenant which is SHED FOR YOU", he but explained the gospel fact that "CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS, ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURE" (I Corinthians 15:4). He did not mean that the crimson fluid in His body would literally be of any value to us, but that the laying down of His life for us would secure our salvation. A similar parallel is observable in the chapter which is the basis of the question; and this parallel contains the answer to the question. Having spoken of "the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit OFFERED HIMSELF without spot unto God" (v. 14). Paul says it was not necessary he should "OFFER HIMSELF OFTEN, like the high-priest who entered into the holy place EVERY YEAR with the blood of others, for then must He often have suffered" (verses 25-26); showing that His "suffering" was the "offering" of himself, and that His blood is the symbol of His suffering. "But now ONCE (hath He offered) to put away sin by the SACRIFICE OF HIMSELF (verse 26). He was "ONCE OFFERED TO BEAR THE SINS OF MANY" (verse 28). It was in this offering of himself in sacrifice that He accomplished what Paul describes as "ENTERING ONCE BY HIS OWN BLOOD INTO THE HOLY PLACE." Not by the blood (or sacrifice) of bulls and goats, like the Mosaic priests, but by his own blood (or sacrifice of himself). "Laying down His life for the sheep", He pleased the Father (John 10:17), and "opened a new and living way through THE VEIL, that is to say, HIS FLESH". (Hebrews 10:20). Here Paul identifies the flesh and blood nature of the Messiah as the antitype of the veil. That this is right was shewn by the rending of the temple veil at the moment Christ died on the cross. It was by the rending of His veil-nature that the way was opened. On the other side of the veil — the resurrection side — was the holy place which He entered by

means of His death, therefore, "BY HIS OWN BLOOD"; for had He not laid down His life, the anti-typical holy place, or spiritual state, must have remained barred against both him and those He died to save. He did not take His actual blood into this state, any more than we make use of His actual blood when with "boldness we (spiritually) enter the holiest BY THE BLOOD OF JESUS." (Hebrews 10:19). He entered the antitypical holiest BY MEANS OF HIS DEATH, and, therefore, figuratively, ENTERED "BY HIS OWN BLOOD." His literal blood was absorbed or assimilated, so to speak, by the Spirit, when He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:3)..

It may seem a difficulty that "heaven itself", and the "presence of God" should in the foregoing remarks, appear to be applied to the state which Jesus entered by the Spirit, instead of to the locality of the Eternal Person of the Deity. But this will only be a difficulty with those who narrow their view of the matter to move locality. It must be remembered that, although there is a local habitation to the person of the Creator, there is a very important sense in which there is no locality in the relation of things to Him. He "fills heaven and earth", (Jeremiah 23:24). "We cannot flee from His presence." (Psalm 89:7; Acts 17:27). This is because the Spirit is everywhere, as the Psalm quoted teaches. Hence to enter into His presence, if it is but necessary we should be "in the Spirit;" that is, that our nature should become so assimilated to the universal spirit that we are made as conscious and perceptive of the presence of God as he is of ours. The local "heaven" is but a part, so to speak, of this universal heaven; for there is heaven, and "heaven of heavens".

Jesus entered into "heaven", as our forerunner (Hebrews 6:20), implying we shall follow; which we shall — into the antitypical holiest — the spirit state or nature, in which as "the first-born", He has preceded us, but not necessarily into the locality of the Eternal Abode. Jesus was in the bosom of the Father in the days of His flesh, though He was on the earth (John 14:10-11); and He was "on the right-hand of God", when He appeared to persecuting Saul, near Damascus. It is the dynamical rather than the mechanical relation of things that is expressed in such phrases.

LOST FAITH

Earlier this year the following report was given:-

“The public should not be told if scientists detected a huge asteroid on collision course with Earth that could not be deflected. - - - governments would be wrong to warn the public of an impending impact which could destroy all life on the planet if there was no realistic prospect of doing anything to stop it. The panic, misery and disruption that such a warning would cause would not be worthwhile unless there was some chance of preventing it. - - -

It makes sense to warn if there is something you can do but if you cannot intercept it, if you can't move people out of its way it makes sense not to occasion any further social costs. It would be better for the fewest people to know that mankind was about to become extinct in fashion similar to the dinosaurs. - - - If the object were less than a kilometre in diameter, it would have a major regional impact, flattening vast areas of land and causing huge tsunamis, but it would not threaten the future of the whole planet. It should be possible, therefore, to calculate the precise spot it would hit and evacuate the surrounding area. A body ten times larger, such as the asteroid generally thought to have wiped out the dinosaurs 65 million years ago, would give the human race little chance of surviving the impact.”

People who raise a warning of this kind, obviously do not believe in God, or if they profess that they do, reveal that they have no comprehension of what God means.

Through His holy word, He shows man how to look at the beauty which God has given man to behold.

“Praise ye him, sun and moon; praise him, all ye stars of light.

Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens.

Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded and they were created. He hath also stablished them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree WHICH SHALL NOT PASS.

Praise the LORD from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps: Fire and hail; snow, and vapour; stormy wind fulfilling his word:

Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars:

Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl:
Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of
the earth:

Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children:
Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone
is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven."

(Psalm 148:3-13).

How incongruous for any who profess to believe in God, to give even a thought that the earth might end in disaster of "an extinction-type" impact from a large asteroid. But think about the following response and reaction to the mooted warning of such a disaster:-

"If we see a monster event coming, an extinction event, common sense would tell me I want to know and that it is not up to - - - high level bureaucracy to decide whether I know or not. - - -

The reaction might not be what most people expect. Look at people on death row, people in prison camps during the Holocaust, people with terminal cancer. You might WANT TO MAKE PEACE WITH YOUR GOD, for example."

The world of science is undoubtedly clever in the wisdom of the flesh, but obviously is bereft of the true understanding of God. It speaks of God, but has no comprehension of God's purpose with this beautiful creation:

"For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else." (Isaiah 45:18).

Suggestions of a possible destruction of this good earth, flies in the face of the work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The Bible tells us clearly that one of the most important features in Christ's preaching was the Kingdom of God.

"And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom. - - -" (Matthew 4:23).

That this kingdom is to be on this earth is made clear by Christ. At the last supper before His ascension Jesus showed His disciples the position:

"And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it.

And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new

testament, which is shed for many.

Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God." (Mark 14:23-25).

The fruit of the vine, of course, is the product of this good earth, to which Christ will return in due course, when His Kingdom will be established as he clearly showed to His disciples:-

"Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me;

That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

(Luke 22:28-30).

This makes clear that the purpose of God for mankind is a place with Christ in a righteous kingdom. This kingdom will be on this good earth when a resurrected people will eat once more of the good products of this earth, obviously in a spirit invigorated body delivered from decay.

The scientific comment "I want to know before the earth is destroyed so that I can make peace with God", is completely irrelevant where the Truth of God is concerned. Such a commentator may think that the earth being destroyed and he having made peace with God, he hopes to find an abiding place in heaven. How ignorant of God's purpose is such thinking, which indicates the abjectness of the science which undermines God's word by its theories, thereby taking away respect for God's witness which results in the lost faith. The simple truth is that:-

"- - - the earth abideth for ever."

(Ecclesiastes 1:4).

THE VIRTUOUS WOMAN

Proverbs 31:10

We have recently concluded our daily readings from the book of Proverbs and in the last chapter there is a question posed:

"Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies."

Proverbs 31:10.

The meaning of the word "virtuous" denotes strength both of mind and body. The remaining verses of this 31st chapter go on to display the character and gentle spirit found in a virtuous woman — a type of the bride of Christ, displaying the qualities of character that are pleasing to her husband and those around her. The help given in this proverb is provided that we too, striving to be part of that bride, may look within ourselves and endeavour to develop that same strength of mind and spirit in order to be found acceptable before Him. Of her conduct towards her husband we are told:

"The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.

She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life."

Proverbs 31:11-12.

Her spirit shown is one of complete trust in and reliance on her husband who is the head of the household and whom she serves without shame. We recognize that in the natural condition, the flesh is prone to failure, but the example described here is a realization of the place those to be joined to Christ assume — they are covered, strengthened and nurtured as they submit to the will of God.

"She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.

She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.

She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness."

Proverbs 31:15-16, 19, 27.

One striving to be joined to Christ becomes part of His household — those united in fellowship, who must look unselfishly to the needs of others and provide whatever is needed, whether it be of a practical or spiritual nature when they see a brother or sister in want. The virtuous woman is diligent in her labors, looking beyond self and providing whatever is required to those of her household:

"She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy."

Proverbs 31:20.

She is aware and circumspect of those around her — surely an

admirable quality which those seeking to be part of the bride of Christ must develop, for it is quality not natural to the flesh.

"She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.

Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.

She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness." Proverbs 31:17, 25-26.

How powerfully this speaks to us today as we seek to submit our living and be molded according to His pattern, hoping through His mercy for acceptance before Him.

Solomon elsewhere in the Proverbs again describes wisdom as a woman:

"Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets: She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying,

How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.

Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;

But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof." Proverbs 1:20-25.

Wisdom cries out from God's word to warn man of his erring ways and to plead for attention to her counsel. To heed wisdom's warning will bring blessing from the Almighty for those who diligently endeavor to emulate the example of the virtuous woman:

"Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all."

Proverbs 31:28-29.

What a great blessing is held out for those who perceive the help in His word, both to chasten and conform to the example of His Son. The outward appearance can deceive, but those who are circumcised in their heart have a hope of one day receiving praise and honor if they diligently endeavor to become as the "virtuous woman" — His bride.

The scriptures teach that with fear comes a reverence for God and His word. We are given an example of a woman, Ruth of Moab — one not born of Israel but who through her contact with God's

people, came to be one of His.

Reading the record of Ruth, we learn there was a famine in the land of Israel and the family of Elimelech and Naomi with their two sons, travelled to Moab to find sustenance. As time went on, the two sons married Moabitish women — Orpah and Ruth and Elimelech, Naomi's husband died. After a period of about ten years Naomi's two sons also died and she was left alone with her two daughters-in-law. When news came that her homeland was now free from the grip of famine, she sought to return. She urged her daughters-in-law to return to their family homes in Moab, for what could she offer them in return if they travelled with her to Israel? Both Orpah and Ruth grieved at the thought of leaving Naomi, and while Orpah remained in Moab, Ruth was of another mind and spoke the familiar words of love and fidelity for Naomi which have become renowned:

“Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.

Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.”

Ruth 1:16-17.

They returned together to Bethlehem, arriving at the time of the barley harvest. Being poor, Ruth went to glean in the fields of Boaz, Naomi's kinsman, to provide for herself and her mother-in-law. She was kind and caring and exhibited her love for Naomi through her words and deeds. Her actions showed her to be a “virtuous woman” and she was drawn to the hope of Israel through the contact with her adopted family. In praise of her, Boaz said:

“... Blessed be thou of the LORD my daughter; for thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich.

And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that **thou art a virtuous woman.**”

Ruth 3:10-11.

She came to a fear and knowledge of God and conducted herself accordingly and it was accounted to her for righteousness, for in marrying Boaz she became great-grandmother to King David and blessed to be in the line of Christ.

Going back to the 31st chapter of Proverbs, the last few verses could very well be speaking of Ruth or of any others who desire the

attributes of the "virtuous woman":

"Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.

Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates." Proverbs 31:30-31.

God knows those who are His and what is in their hearts and minds. As we think of the qualities of the "virtuous woman", we know we fall short, but perhaps we can be encouraged by this question put to us by Solomon, for this is our goal, to be among those so called in His mercy at the judgment seat of Christ:

"Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies."

Proverbs 31:10.

M.C.S.

A YOUNG CONVERT

Brother Thomas, my gratitude is unbounded. I cannot possibly give utterance to my feelings. What a great salvation has been revealed! What a book is the Bible!! What a God is Jehovah!!! My heart swells with grateful emotion, when I contemplate these things. My thanksgiving knows no bounds — no bounds when I revert to the former contemptible, effeminate appearance which these things made, when reviewed through the medium of sectarian theology.

My efforts for the diffusion of the truth, I regret to say, can extend no farther than contention, of which I have plenty. Being only seventeen years of age, I am, of course, poor in this world's goods, or else, I can assure you, dear brother, the "Herald" should never go down for want of funds. As it is, however, my exertions in behalf of the truth must be confined exclusively to speaking, and, when the time comes, they will also be extended to co-operation in the way of funds; and then, when Jesus returns, he will reward every man according to his works.

I am afraid I have trespassed on your forbearance, but then you know how to excuse one that is in earnest.

With an earnest desire that you may be spared until our Lord returns to Zion, I remain your affectionate brother in the hope of the promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

THE ABOVE WAS WRITTEN BY ROBERT ROBERTS,
FROM ABERDEEN, SCOTLAND, TO DOCTOR JOHN
THOMAS (OCTOBER 8TH 1856).

SIGNS OF HIS COMING

“Behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, shall lop the bough with terror: and the high ones of stature shall be hewn down, and the haughty shall be humbled.

And he shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one.”

(Isaiah 10:33-34).

Lebanon of which the prophecy speaks has been a thorn in the side of Israel.

In 1945 Lebanon joined the Arab League. Three years later it joined the first Arab war against Israel. Then in 1964 the Palestine Liberation Organisation was founded in the capital Beirut. This terrorist organisation being expelled from Jordan in 1971, established its headquarters in Lebanon. In 1978 Israel was provoked into launching a limited invasion of South Lebanon in search of PLO guerillas. But in 1982, when Israel again invaded Lebanon, the Palestinians withdrew from Beirut under supervision of an international peacekeeping force, and moved their headquarters to Tunis. Nevertheless Israel continued to be threatened from the Lebanon and in 1993 launched an attack against another foe, the Shia fundamentalist Hezbollah, that had set up strongholds in South Lebanon. The U.S.A. and Syria worked to achieve an agreement to cease the use of force, but with Hezbollah continuing its terrorism, Israel ended this 1993 agreement three years later, again attacking Lebanon. But Hezbollah remains a thorn to Israel. It is a Muslim organisation founded by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, who were sent to Lebanon after the 1979 Iranian revolution. Its purpose was to spread the Islamic revolution of Iran among the Shi'ite population of Lebanon. Its guerillas have opposed the Middle East peace process, and are hostile to Israeli forces on the Lebanon- Israeli borderline. Israel withdrew completely from southern Lebanon three years ago, after which Hezbollah responded by stopping its shelling. But in August Hezbollah resumed its gun-fire when it fired into Israel from its higher position, killing an Israeli, and wounding four others. About the same time the terrorists increased their hostility on the Israeli-Lebanon border by firing rockets at an Israeli army post in the Shebaa Farms area. After the fatality at the Shlomi shopping centre, Israel issued a statement:-

“We have no desire to open a new front but we cannot agree to our people in the north being hurt. A military response may be needed, not only as a response to this provocation

but also as a reminder of the Israeli army's deterrent power which they may have forgotten."

But Hezbollah have not been deterred. They have continued to fire upon civilian areas, with an adverse effect on the Summer tourist trade around Galilee; though to date there has not been a serious casualty.

But how truly all this is a fulfillment of the ancient prophecy.

"--- the violence of Lebanon shall cover thee, and the spoil of beasts --- made them afraid, because of men's blood ---."
(Habakkuk 2:17).

It is a sore trial for Israel; but this anguish is preparing them for the day when, in their great need, they will embrace their deliverer who so sadly they rejected at His first coming.

Meanwhile they have also the terror of the suicide bombers causing havoc in their towns and villages, prepared by Hezbollah, and sent forth to cause a maximum of fear.

But Lebanon is going to have to pay for allowing such machinations to go on inside its borders. Punishment is coming, as the Word declares:-

"--- he shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one." (Isaiah 10:34).

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

The annual summer outing on August 16th was enjoyed by all amidst beautiful summer weather conditions.

We are grateful for the continual communication and shared counsel with our Manchester brethren.

The extensive power black-out in the north eastern section of the U.S.A. and Canada caused hardship and in some areas chaos — a reminder that “man proposes and God disposes”.

J.A.DeF.

MANCHESTER, Ryecroft Hall, Audenshaw.

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11.00 a.m.

Thursdays: Bible Class 2.00 p.m.

Communications are coming from countries abroad to ourselves, enquiring about our position and our stance respecting fellowship, or asking for our magazine and literature.

It appears that people know about us more than we hitherto thought.