

DECEMBER 2003

A Monthly Magazine issued by

The Remnant of Christ's Ecclesia

in opposition to the Dogmas of
Papal and Protestant Christendom

A WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

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

"Take heed that ye be not deceived"

"AT THE TABLE OF THE LORD"

"A COUNSEL OF FAITHFULNESS AND TRUTH"

"THE BODY OF CHRIST"

"LITTLE CHILDREN, KEEP YOURSELVES FROM IDOLS"

"A BIBLE CLASS"

"SIGNS OF HIS COMING"

"NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS"

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**AT THE TABLE OF THE LORD
"IT MAY GO WELL WITH THEE"**

As our brethren and sisters in Israel assembled on the east side of Jordan, preparatory to entering the land promised to them, they were privileged to hear Moses' exhortation. We have read this morning of his words:

"...Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them."
Deuteronomy 5:1.

This was nearly 40 years after their deliverance from Egypt. They were, however, a different people from those who in haste left that bondage following the plague of death upon Egypt's firstborn and Israel's deliverance through the blood of the passover lamb upon their door posts. How were they different? We know that because of their fear and unbelief in referring at Kadesh-barnea to enter the land promised to them, the Almighty decreed that they were to wander 40 years in the wilderness until those 20 years old and over (thereby responsible) should die. Kadesh-barnea was 11 days into their journey from Mt. Sinai (Deuteronomy 1:2) where they were commanded to journey and enter the land. The 12 spies who had been sent to explore the land reported back to Moses and Israel after 40 days. If Israel had trusted in their God, they could have entered into their promised possession in about 50 days after leaving Mt. Sinai. Because they listened to the 10 spies who feared the walled cities, the giants, and the large population of the land, it became 40 years before they would possess their promised inheritance.

As Moses spoke at the Jordan River these instructions from God (Deuteronomy 5:1), there were only two (Joshua and Caleb) left of the over 600,000 men at Kadesh-barnea. Aaron was gone, Miriam was gone, Moses soon would be gone. He was 120 years old, while the faithful spies, Joshua and Caleb, were both about 80. The rest in Israel would be just under 60 years. What a witness this would be, confirming the infallibility of God's word. Each man standing before Moses would be able to ponder: Yes, my father died in the wilderness, just as God said it would be. Let us go back for a moment to Kadesh-barnea where all Israel endorsed the report of the 10 fearful spies, spurning the faithful pleas of Joshua and Caleb:

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

Instead, because of unbelief:

"... all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and

against Aaron: and the whole congregation said . . . Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! (after only 11 days).

. . . wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt?"

Numbers 14:2-3.

In righteous anger God spoke to those who had so wickedly rebelled against His word:

"... as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you: Your carcases shall fall in this wilderness;

. . . ye shall not come into the land . . . save Caleb . . . and Joshua . . .

But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised."

Numbers 14:28-31.

The things which they felt were impossible came to pass. The 10 spies who persuaded Israel to rebel "... died by the plague before the LORD" (Numbers 14:37)—the first of over 600,000 to perish because of unbelief. As Israel left Kadesh-barnea, the dying began. Perhaps the older men died first, and the younger might say: Well, he was old, it's a natural death. But as time went by and each day brought more deaths, they would begin to believe God and to fear. As the dying continued, Israel's route was marked with graves until the long, weary wandering was finished and God commanded through Moses:

"Now rise up . . . and get you over the brook Zered . . . And the space in which we came from Kadesh-barnea, . . . was thirty and eight years; until all the generation of the men of war were wasted out from among the host, as the LORD sware unto them."

Deuteronomy 2:13-14.

Crossing the brook Zered marked their wandering's end and a going forward to enter the land. Again the word of God was unailing; by the end of 38 years all the warriors were consumed, wasted by death. The two remaining years gave Israel time to conquer Og, king of Bashan, and Sihon, king of Heshbon, so possessing their land on the east of Jordan. This was not the entire land promised, but it was given to two and one-half tribes who deserved it, providing they would go over Jordan and help the remaining tribes to conquer the land west of Jordan (Canaan).

As all these arrangements were accomplished under God's

hand, Moses said to faithful Joshua, whom God had chosen and encouraged to lead Israel when Moses died:

“... Thine eyes have seen all that the LORD your God hath done unto these two kings (Og and Sihon): so shall the LORD do unto all the kingdoms whither thou passest.

Ye shall not fear them: for the LORD your God he shall fight for you.”
Deuteronomy 3:21-22.

This was Moses’ conviction after 80 years of a life devoted to God — in Midian, then in Egypt, and through the wilderness. In all these years Moses submitted to His hand, knowing His power and desiring to sanctify Him. At the time when Miriam and Aaron rebelled against him, God spoke highly of Moses:

“(... the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.)”
Numbers 12:3.

However, we remember Moses did fail to sanctify God at the rock, when he and Aaron, provoked by Israel’s murmuring for water, said:

“... must we fetch you water out of this rock?”
Numbers 20:10.

God, angered at this presumption, decreed:

“Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.”

Numbers 20:12.

Moses, yielding and in sorrow for his failure, submitted to God’s word. Yet as he spoke to Joshua, encouraging him in this great work of bringing Israel into their inheritance, he must have rued his hasty and presumptuous words, and he:

“... besought the LORD at that time saying, . . .
I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon.”

Deuteronomy 3:23, 25.

This was his yearning, his goal through all those long years, knowing it was rightfully denied by the Almighty because of failure. God was angry and answered: “Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter” (Deuteronomy 3:26). We can understand Moses’ longing, but God, the righteous Father, had spoken. Thus He rebuked Moses. Moses and Aaron took to themselves that which only God could do, asking: “. . . must we fetch you water out of this rock” (Numbers 20:10)? However, Moses submitted and God instructed him:

“... charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him:

for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see.”

Deuteronomy 3:28.

Many, many memories and lessons must have gone through our brother’s mind as he stood before Israel, encouraging them:

“Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the LORD he is God . . . there is none else.

Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee . . .”

Deuteronomy 4:39-40.

It had gone well with Moses; it had gone well with Joshua and Caleb. It had not gone well with those 600,000 in Israel who day by day for 38 years died, as God had decreed, realizing it was the result of their unbelief. These events would be in Moses’ mind as he exhorted his brethren who would shortly enter the land:

“ . . . Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them.”

Deuteronomy 5:1.

We, Brethren and Sisters, hoping and praying that we may be allowed to enter the promised kingdom of God, can reach out for this help and for more of Moses’ wisdom as he exhorted: “learn . . . keep . . . do.” To “learn” implies goading one’s mind and heart, as pertaining to the use of a rod in teaching. Along with this meaning, we are additionally given the words: expert, diligent and skillful — the results of the goading by a faithful and righteous teacher, having the instruction firmly planted in one’s mind. Notably we must see that having learned God’s judgments and statutes is not enough. There must be a “keeping” of them, a guarding, a hedging about — protecting that which is greatly valued. If we regard the Almighty’s word as the means of life, will we not store it up, value it as treasure from heaven, not merely repeating it, but as Moses urged, “doing” — using it, following it, obeying it in hope of the promise it reveals? This exhortation echoes throughout God’s word to His people. James much later encouraged his brethren:

“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”

James 1:22.

James illustrated a “hearer only” as one who sees himself through the word of God for what he truly is — a sinner, failing, needing the physician’s healing. But “hearing only”, he forgets what he is like and goes along failing to change. James then speaks of him who:

“...looketh into the perfect law of liberty (God’s word), and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”

James 1:25.

“Shall be blessed” — it shall go well with him. It is the same message for us.

As Moses stood before Israel, 120 years old, “his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated” (Deuteronomy 34:7). Yet, he was shortly to die. Looking back over his life, he knew he had been a “doer” with that one exception. He did have the hope of eternal life when Jesus, a “Prophet like unto Moses” (Deuteronomy 14:10) returns to establish God’s kingdom upon this earth. He was content, he was meek, he had placed his hands upon Joshua, strengthening him for the work of leading Israel. And, he was grateful that he had been allowed to look upon the land which Israel would shortly receive — no doubt glad and hopeful for his people. Thus he died completely subject to his God in this and all things. We believe it will “go well” with him when he is resurrected to face Jesus’ judgment.

Brethren and Sisters, how we do pray it also may “go well with us”. The Almighty reveals how this can be possible and tells us clearly, as He did to Moses:

“O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!”

Deuteronomy 5:29.

Let us heed and keep the words of our brother, as he exhorted his brethren in the wilderness: “Hear, O Israel . . .”

J.A.DeF.

A COUNSEL OF FAITHFULNESS AND TRUTH

In our recent daily portions from the book of Isaiah we find the prophet praising God for His many benefits:

"O LORD, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth." Isaiah 25:1.

Isaiah was sent to the rebellious house of Judah and Jerusalem — a people whom he describes in the first chapter:

"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, o earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.

The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.

Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward." Isaiah 1:2-4.

They had forgotten the covenant made with Him and all He had done to deliver them, first from Egypt and to establish them in a promised inheritance flowing with blessings:

"For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall." Isaiah 25:4.

Further in verse 8 he looks forward to the promises and blessings to be extended in the future:

"He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." Isaiah 25:8-9.

Isaiah reminds of all God's blessings and care, given to those who had now become dull of hearing, turning their backs on their Deliverer. This same thought is repeated many times throughout Isaiah's writing that they might hear and repent:

"Hast thou not heard long ago, how I have done it; and of ancient times, that I have formed it? now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldst be to lay waste defenced cities into ruinous heaps.

Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were

dismayed and confounded: they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb, as the grass on the housetops, and as corn blasted before it be given up."

Isaiah 37:26-27.

He had laid waste the enemies of His people into "ruinous heaps" — but all this they had forgotten as they turned their back upon His goodness, looking instead to their own pursuits and ambitions. Yet in mercy He sent His prophet Isaiah in an attempt to turn them to repentance:

"Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? Who hath told it from that time? Have not I the LORD? and there is no god else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me.

Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else."

Isaiah 45:21-22.

The allegiance that He looked for, required an understanding of what He had done in the past, He would do now in the present and again in the future. This understanding helps us today likewise, for we have a much longer history to look back on — recalling His many wondrous deeds. The benefit that we know, David enumerated when he wrote:

"Bless the LORD, O my soul: and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's."

Psalms 103:1-5.

We were reminded as we met at the Lord's table this morning of those to be found approved at His judgment seat, who in gratitude will praise Him saying:

"And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

Isaiah 25:9.

The "saved" are those who during their time of probation heeded His counsel and waited upon Him, trusting in His guidance and direction instead of walking in their own ways. Abraham whom God called out to become a patriarch over His people, was one who truly waited upon the Lord and his faith is recounted by the apostle Paul:

"Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become

the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, SO SHALL THY SEED BE.

And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb:

He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God.

And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

And therefore IT WAS IMPUTED TO HIM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS." Romans 4:18-22.

And . . .

"For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, Saying, SURELY BLESSING I WILL BLESS THEE, AND MULTIPLYING I WILL MULTIPLY THEE.

And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise." Hebrews 6:13-15.

As we contemplate Paul's words, we see how God's counsel spoken centuries ago, promised a priest to intervene for His people — a foretaste of Christ who was not yet born:

"For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;

To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is King of peace.

Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; **but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually."**

Hebrews 7:1-3.

We have each known help and guidance from God, and in times of future tests, let us remember the helps we have known and be strengthened to push on Zionward. Let us, as did Isaiah, praise Him in our living through a walk of faith and in so doing, say in our hearts:

"O LORD, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth." Isaiah 25:1.

As we walk on in hope, waiting for His word to be fulfilled, we know His guidance and counsel will not fail those who look to Him, but will continue on in faithfulness and truth.

M.C.S.

THE BODY OF CHRIST

From a magazine, not connected with ourselves, may we quote some recent observations which are not indicative of a oneness of spirit.

"--- How often have we heard phrases like 'they ought to have thought about the consequences of their decision', after an ecclesia has reached a decision over many months and after much discussion and prayer? It always seems easier to criticise and condemn, than speak to the brethren and sisters of the 'offending' ecclesia. Many of us will have suffered the horror of realising how wrong we had been in making a judgment --- when we have learnt more about the situation. ---

Sadly all this means that the one body to which we belong is not as united as we know it should be. What is the antidote to this sad situation? Why can we not behave as one body? It is only in the scriptures that the answer can be found. --- The goal to be one body, is more to do with changes in ourselves than in sorting out other brethren and sisters. --- We have a judge who will not judge after the seeing of his eye or the hearing of his ear, but with righteousness --- yet we can think it justifiable to criticise the actions of other ecclesias for situations when we can only ever know superficial details. --- We are prone to take it upon ourselves to 'keep the ecclesia pure'. But how can it be, when the ecclesia is made up of mortal and sinful men and women? Do we believe that we have been left completely to our own devices until Christ returns? Or do we believe that we can confidently place matters concerning the care of the brotherhood in the hand of God through prayer?

Has the writer of the above forgotten about the true example of spiritual concern?

"This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare:" (2 Corinthians 13:1-2).

Does the writer, speaking about "superficial details", not consider it should not be so left, but rather it is a duty to find out the basic facts, enabling right judgment to be taken with the aid of

witnesses? He hints that matters of ecclesial care can be left in God's hands through prayer. But what then does he make of 1 Corinthians 12:25?

"That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another."

The sad fact is that the writer in the magazine, not connected with ourselves, is trying to find the answer to a situation, which in his own words, means the "body to which (he) belongs is not as united as (he knows) it should be."

The position is not indicative of oneness of spirit.

“LITTLE CHILDREN, KEEP YOURSELVES FROM IDOLS”

(1 John 5:21)

There is a religious organisation in Canada which claims to be God’s Church, which collaborates with a church of a similar name in the United States. The people of this religious society are very concerned about old pagan traditions having an erroneous veneer of christianity at the present time.

The following are extracts of one of their publications extensively advertised:-

“How did Christmas become a Christian festival? - - - What does God have to say about the celebration of Christmas? Does it matter to Him whether we keep Christmas? - - - A feast with the semblance of Christmas, Sacaea, was celebrated thousands of years before Christ’s birth. In 2000 B.C., in what is now Iraq, a five day festival with exchanges of gifts, the performance of plays, accompanied by processions and merrymaking, marked the death of winter and heralded the New Year. - - - It is likely that those beliefs from the East spread into central Europe. - - - In the depths of winter, for example, people lit bonfires in the hope of reviving the dying Sun and bringing warmth to the ground. Also they decorated their homes with evergreens — holly and firs — to show dormant seeds and lifeless plants that all was not dead. When the sun eventually shone again, they rejoiced in their success, and no doubt vowed to repeat the magic forever after.

This publication then goes on to refer to Christmas day:-

No precise day is known for the birth of Christ, but it is certain that He was born late in the reign of Herod the Great, king of Judea until his death in what we now call 4 B.C. For centuries after Christ’s death, several different dates, from April to December, were proposed for the celebration of Christmas. - - - In time, Christians almost everywhere accepted December 25 as Christmas Day, a date coinciding roughly with celebrations for the winter solstice, Yule and Saturnalia. - - -

The celebration of Christmas on December 25 in the church begins only in the middle of the 4th century. Until then, the opposition against it was in some cases very severe (Origen, Arnobius, Clemens Alexandria, Epiphanius), since it was considered a pagan custom to celebrate with festivities the

birthdays of kings. - - -

In England after the Civil War, Oliver Cromwell and the Puritans outlawed Christmas celebrations as heathen. - - -

The same situation had prevailed in the New World since 1621, when a law passed by Governor Bradford of the Plymouth Colony prohibited Christmas observance. - - -

The specific establishing of Christmas is then referred to as follows:-

- - - When the Church was unable to forbid Christmas celebrations, the customs were given a superficial "Christian" meaning and, as such, were then permitted.

--- Later on they were actually commanded --- the Western Church ordered it to be celebrated forever on the day of the old Roman feast of the birth of Sol, as no certain knowledge of the day of Christ's birth existed. --- Christmas went from being the feast day of the risen SUN to the feast day of the risen SON.

Having so condemned pagan myth, now disguised as Christian commemoration, the publication originating in Canada and the United States, claiming to be from those who are God's Church, then goes on to show a belief in an unseen power causing such world delusion.

Worship of pagan gods and participation in its customs are described in the Bible as demon worship. And to introduce pagan rites, which might in some cases look similar to Christian practice, into the true worship of God, is identified with idolatry. Satan knew that God would send Jesus Christ to die for mankind. Many Old Testament scriptures foretell in great detail Christ's first coming. Satan's strategy to oppose God was twofold. First, he influenced people to create a universal myth of a pagan Saviour who would be worshipped under different names, and who would have some similarities with Jesus Christ and what He would accomplish, so that people could later, view Christ as only "another" Deliverer. --- The second part of Satan's strategy to oppose God was to see to it that those who believe in and follow Jesus Christ, the Son of God, would be bombarded with the (already existing) aspects of pagan religions, inducing them to absorb those "in the honour and glory of Christ". Sadly, over the centuries MANY who claimed to be Christians DID fall for Satan's evil tactics and schemes by incorporating into their worship of God certain pagan

doctrines, customs and rites. - - -

We humans can come up with all kinds of reasons to hang on to our traditions and beliefs. We somehow want to justify our actions rather than coming to terms with the truth of the matter - - - we don't give up easily, even when shown to be wrong. - - - Do you know that you can be sincere in your worship of God and Christ, and still worship in vain? - - - Professing Christians celebrating Christmas today may think they do it to honour and worship God — but they repeat exactly the rites that pagans used to serve their gods. - - - Notice 2 Corinthians 6:14-17: "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers - - - what agreement has the temple of God with idols? - - - Therefore come out from among them and be separate. - - -" The entire "Christmas story" is a lie and a deception, created by men under the influence of Satan who is the father of lies (John 8:43-45) - - - Those who do celebrate Christmas "wander beyond the teaching of Christ", thereby leaving "God behind". - - - You have heard the conclusion of the matter (Ecclesiastes 12:13). We challenge you to act on it.

Oh, how sad it is, to see such zeal, but as Romans 10:2 says "- - - they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." To say that "Satan knew that God would send Jesus Christ to die for mankind (and whose) strategy (was) to oppose God (and so) influenced people to create a universal myth of a pagan Saviour", reveals that after condemning idolatry under a veneer of christianity, they likewise have belief in a pagan god, namely Satan, a god who opposes the One True Living God.

At no time have the people of God believed in a supernatural powerful being who is the opposer of God the Supreme. The testimony of the Spirit from the earliest time declared:-

"Unto thee it was showed, that thou mightest know that the LORD he is God: there is none else beside him."

(Deuteronomy 4:35).

Reference is sometimes made to the serpent in the Garden of Eden, as being the opposing supernatural Satan. How ignorant such a suggestion is. The very record denies it. To the tempting serpent it was declared:-

"Because thou hast done this (deceived Eve) thou art cursed above ALL CATTLE, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the

DAYS OF THY LIFE."

(Genesis 3:14).

So the serpent was stricken and in the course of time it died like all the other cattle. It is absurd to read into the Genesis account, a supernatural opposer of God's purpose with mankind, which from the Beginning were created with "free choice."

The scriptures make the position concerning temptation and sin clear:-

"- - - every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of HIS OWN LUST (desires) and enticed.

Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

(James 1:14-15).

Other scriptures are referred to by those who believe in a supernatural Satan, which can be shown to be descriptions of sin in the flesh of human nature, which is prone to sin. There is no space here to go into these. But what is so startling in this consideration of a work of people claiming to be "God's Church", anxious to resist the idolatry which has crept in under a guise of christianity, is that even as they disclaim such idolatry, they are guilty of upholding another aspect of it in their wrong interpretation of scripture.

"- - - in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to - - - doctrines of devils. - - -"

(I Timothy 4:1).

A BIBLE CLASS
"I MAY TELL ALL MY BONES"
 Psalm 22:17

In our study of the 22nd Psalm, we see as is so characteristic of the psalms, the mind of David and the spirit of Christ contained in this pruned song. The title of this psalm is actually the first verse:

"To the chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shahar, A Psalm of David."
 Title: Psalm 22.

The "chief Musician" is translated as "victor" or "the one who overcomes", speaking of the Lord Jesus' ultimate victory. "Aijeleth" is translated as a doe or hind, giving the thought of power. "Shahar" means dawn or early morn, also giving the thought of to inquire early and diligently.

The first few verses of this psalm show the flesh's struggle as David cries out during trial and testing:

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?"

O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent." Psalm 22:1-2.

These words penned by David were no doubt very much in the mind of the Lord Jesus during His crucifixion as He brought to mind God's Word in order to sustain Him. In His agony on the cross He too cried out David's words:

"And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, la-ma sa-bach-tha-ni? That is to say, MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?"

Matthew 27:46.

God had not forsaken Him but had only stepped aside to test Him. He was near and watching as His Son endured the harsh cruelty of crucifixion. The Lord Jesus would draw strength from the knowledge that soon this trial would be over and with the dawn (Shahar), a new morning would come, bringing His resurrection unto eternal life in power and strength (Aijeleth), if He could but endure. How much David's words reflected His own last struggle on the cross:

"My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.

For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.
 They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my
 vesture. But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my
 strength, haste thee to help me." Psalm 22:15-19.

These are the words of someone in great distress — as both David and the Lord Jesus experienced. They knew the same mockery and persecution, but realised God was near and was their only source of help and strength when all was said and done. How much David's prophetic words must have meant to the Lord Jesus as He recalled this psalm and saw their fulfillment during His crucifixion:

"And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, **THEY PARTED MY GARMENTS AMONG THEM, AND UPON MY VESTURE DID THEY CAST LOTS.**

And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.

Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders said,

He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him." Matthew 27:35, 39-42.

In our verse in Psalm 22 under consideration, David writes:

"I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me"

Psalm 22:17.

To "tell" is to score or count, giving the thought of a frame so gaunt and spare that his bones protruded and could be counted. In another psalm, David writes in a similar fashion:

"My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread.

By reason of the voice of my groaning **my bones cleave to my skin."** Psalm 102:4-5.

We have seen photographs of those delivered from the concentration camps at the end of World War II. Many were walking skeletons with just a covering of skin over protruding bones for lack of flesh on their bodies. Certainly their bones too could be counted.

As David and the Lord Jesus were strengthened to endure by drawing on God's word, so too will those who trust in the Almighty, as David wrote further in this 22nd Psalm:

"For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the

afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.” Psalm 22:24.

The Word inspired the Lord Jesus during His agony on the cross, for He quoted David’s psalm near the end, and as He saw His garments being parted and the Roman soldiers casting lots for his coat, the fulfillment of David’s prophecy would encourage and strengthen him to endure until the end.

Job was another who knew hard trial and testing both physical and mental:

“He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain:

So that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat. His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen; and his bones that were not seen stick out.

Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers.

If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness;

Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, **Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.”**

Job 33:19-24.

Job, as David and the Lord Jesus, suffered greatly, yet though his flesh was almost consumed away and his bones could be counted, he knew God would not desert him and stayed his hope on Him. He could see in faith the “ransom” that would be paid for his life in the promise of a Messiah who would serve His brethren as a Mediator between God and man — the Lord Jesus Christ.

What a help God’s word is as it not only gives direction to those who will hear, but also illustrates faithful examples like David, the Lord Jesus and Job to strengthen and reveals prophecy as well as confirming that same prophecy as it is fulfilled.

M.C.S.

SIGNS OF HIS COMING

“Stay yourselves, and wonder; cry ye out, and cry: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink.” (Isaiah 29:9).

These words concern world opposition to God’s purpose, as Isaiah says, it concerns:-

“- - - the multitude of all the nations - - - that fight against mount Zion.” (verse 8).

Moral deterioration amongst the peoples of the world is very evident. Violence has increased. Also dissatisfaction with governments. The media of the world, at times, rises up to an almost hysteria of condemnation of their leaders. The peoples, in their selfish, self interest, demand more and more from national funds with no thought of where it is to come from.

But the younger generation is prepared to find much money for personal indulgence. The scripture speaks of a time of a state of drunkenness, but not with wine. Has there ever been a time, hitherto, when both “high and low” are looking to drugs, some a newly developed commodity, to satisfy their craving for a kind of euphoria of the flesh.

A recent investigation that has been published concerning the situation in Britain has been very revealing. It commenced with the headline “the use (of drugs) is rife in every level of British Society.” A spokesperson for the Authorities declared:-

“The middle classes take it for recreation. - - - It is now a cancer sweeping through the country and spreading across all communities.”

Whether in cities or in rural areas, samples of possible drug activities in a careful investigation of places of popular visit, have been proved to be positive. Even in expensive Westminster restaurants (London), favoured by members of Parliament; and also places that cater for the legal profession; traces that have been examined, show, in the words of the report, that “cocaine use has reached endemic proportions.” But cocaine use is equally rife in rural areas, “in country towns such as Hereford, or among the (affluent) places of Cirencester or Cheltenham.” Police believe that drug-gang wars among the drug suppliers, who object to encroachment of rival suppliers upon their own particular territory of sale is the cause of the increasing gun crime in Britain.

The money that can be made by the dealers reveals why drug suppliers risk apprehension by Officers of the Law who are trying to

curb this vice in society. For example cocaine which comes from Columbia, Peru, Bolivia and Venezuela is sold at £1,000 a kilo in those places. But when it is imported into Britain, it is immediately sold at £25,000. But, then, the drug distributor divides into what is described as "quarter keys" which are eight-ounce parcels, which sell for £8,000. These are again divided into grammes, and each gramme sells for £60, which is not guaranteed to be absolutely pure, for often the drug is mixed with glucose. So the kilo of cocaine, bought in South America for £1,000 becomes worth more than £100,000. The danger in its use, is that it destroys dopamine, serotonin (important for thought process) and the adrenaline systems. The addicted, when the drug has passed through their bodies, crash down into depression (sometimes very severe), this is because of their loss of dopamine.

The possible dangerous consequences to those in Authority of becoming drug dependent does not bear thinking about. But certainly it is not beyond the bound of possibility, and certainly the availability for those inclined, has been indicated by the recent investigation which concluded there is evidence of drugs being used in the vicinity of Parliament and places where people in high places of the Law are seen to visit.

Looking then at prophetic scripture, there is certainly a warning for these last times. God's witness to His Holy Word has been undermined by men who have criticised the Truth of His divinely inspired record, so God declares:-

"Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?

Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay: for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? --- in that day (the Day of the Lord) shall the deaf hear the words of the book --- and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel."

(Isaiah 29:15-19).

In that day the world will be delivered from those "drunken, but not with wine."

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

Mailing of invitations for our literature began again in September. Supplications are for help and encouragement in this work of casting bread upon the waters.

As the year comes to an end we rejoice in the guidance and help in our desire to glorify the Almighty by submission to His will, praying for His mercy in the day of judgment.

J.A.DeF.

MANCHESTER, *Ryecroft Hall, Audenshaw.*

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11.00 a.m.

Thursdays: Bible Class 2.00 p.m.

As another year is coming to its conclusion, and looking back on the months that have passed, we see that we have been helped in the continuing work, which has resulted in interest from various parts. The efforts of all, for all HAVE been involved, bear witness to the blessing of our unity.