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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"

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AT THE TABLE OF THE LORD

“YE ARE MY FRIENDS”

In our recent readings, we have listened to the words of Jesus, after He had taught His disciples concerning the vine and the branches.

“Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.”
John 15:15.

Here is a changed relationship between Jesus and His disciples. They were no longer servants, but friends. What is the difference between a servant and a friend? The servant obeys his master’s orders, even if he does not know what is in the master’s mind. He may not like to be a servant, but obeys because it is his responsibility. A servant probably would wish to be free of such obligations and to serve self, but is bound as a servant to serve others.

What is a friend? One who is a close associate; one who has the same mind, the same desires. He walks in the same way and has the same goals. Friends enjoy one another’s company, they help each other in trouble, in sadness and need, they share in one another’s joy. True friends are bonded together with love and concern. Jesus makes it very clear who are His “friends”.

“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.”
John 15:14.

How is this different from the relationship of a master and a servant? Jesus again speaks plainly:

“As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in His love.

These things have I spoken to you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

This is my commandment, That ye love one another as I have loved you.

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”
John 15.9-13

The bonds between true friends are based on mutual love for each other. Love is more than words; it is evidenced in works done for each other- just as Jesus laid down His life for His friends. Jesus’

joy was to do his Father's will, and the Almighty loved Him. What evidence was there of that love? Paul tells us of Jesus' joy:

"...who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."
Hebrews 12:2

The Lord Jesus died in obedience to His Father's command, rejoicing in doing so because of His love for God and for those whom His Father had given him as His friends.

We are striving to be friends of Jesus and thereby friends of God, in the hope that when He returns to establish His Father's kingdom, we might become true "sons of God"- made possible by the giving of His life.

We are Gentiles - aliens from the hope of Israel- but through baptism into Jesus' death, we might be heirs of the covenants made with Abraham and David because of their love and obedience to His word.

There are examples of those who were friends of God, to help us in our striving to be such. Going back to the beginning, we read of Enoch:

"And Enoch walked with God..

And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years.

And Enoch walked with God...."
Genesis 5: 22-24.

Enoch faithfully walked in the way of God, as would a friend. Paul wrote of his faith:

"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

Hebrews 11.5-6.

Enoch obviously was a friend of God as he walked in His ways, pleased Him, and was taken away - removed from his location - not resurrected to eternal life. The only One who was so raised from death was the unblemished Lamb of God. All others remain in their graves until His return, in accordance with God's decree that all are dust of the ground, and return to dust, because of the first Adam's transgression.

Noah was also a friend of God.

“But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.

....Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.”
Genesis 6: 8-9.

Again, Paul helps us:

“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.” Hebrews 11: 7.

What is the grace that Noah found in the eyes of God? It was being saved from death in the flood, by building an ark according to the Almighty's directions, and laboring for 120 years in its building while enduring ridicule from those around him. He was justified when the flood came, and only eight souls who walked as friends of God were saved from death. The ark is a symbol of the Lord Jesus, the means of escape from the law of sin and death for those who are His friends, exhibited by faith in God's word and by striving to walk in His ways.

When we think of those who were called friends of God, our minds go to Moses, of whom it is written:

“And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend...”
Exodus 33:11.

Moses' spirit is revealed for us as he answered the Almighty:

“Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight; and consider that this nation is thy people.

And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name.”
Exodus 33; 13, 17.

Surely the Almighty was with His friend, Moses, guiding him and Israel in His ways. Israel generally murmured and complained; as a result all those who rebelled at Kadesh-barnea - being 20 years old and older - died in the wilderness because of their unbelief. They failed to walk in God's way.

Going back to Jesus' words: “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.” (John 15:14), we can perceive who are His friends - those who strive, like Him, to walk with God. John, that disciple whom Jesus loved, was His friend, as he witnessed for many years after Jesus had ascended to His Father. What a blessing

it was that John, His apostles and disciples could see Jesus, could hear His words, touch His wounds from the cross, be close to Him and walk with Him until He ascended to His Father. Brethren and Sisters, we physically cannot be that close to Him, but we can hear His words and can know of His overcoming and ultimate victory over self as He died on the cross. We are bound to Him through that victory, striving to be His brethren and sisters, and therefore His friends, as heirs according to the promises.

It is helpful that the word 'friend' in the Greek is philos the root word meaning love or fondness for Love is the basis of true friendship, whether it be in relation to God, Jesus, or those who are our brethren and sisters who are striving to walk with God. We have read this morning God's word to Israel through His prophet Hosea:

"When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.

I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms...

I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love..."

Hosea 11:1, 3-4

From the concordance we find that 'bands' is also used as cords or wreathen work - a woven cord which is strong and flexible. When we think of wreathen work, we are reminded of the breastplate, found over the heart of the high priest as he went into the holy place. Chains made of golden wreathen work fastened the breastplate over His heart as cords or 'bands of love'. Aaron, the high priest, obeying God's command.

"...shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the LORD continually." Exodus 28:29

David also helps:

"God is the LORD which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords (of love) even unto the horns of the altar."

Psalms 118:27

It was upon the horns of the altar that the blood of the sacrifice was placed, making it acceptable unto God, if offered with love. How important is love, as we strive to present our bodies 'a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.' (Romans 12:1).

Further help is given by Paul as he wrote of the role of love in all that we do.

“And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and though I give my body to be burned (a sacrifice) and have not charity (love) it profiteth me nothing.”

I Corinthians 13:3

As we strive to be friends of Jesus, by doing whatever He commands us, we look with hope to the time of His return when, if accounted acceptable, we may become the eternal sons of God. Let us remember the words spoken concerning Jesus:

“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.

Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” John 1:12-13.

‘Power’ is ability, authority, right, strength - given by God to those who are the friends of Jesus, now in their time of probation, joined in love to Him until He comes. Let us strive to yield our bodies a living sacrifice, acceptable as a sweet savor unto God, bound to the altar with cords of love.

J.A.Def

BECAUSE AS HE IS, SO ARE WE IN THE WORLD

1 John 4: 17

Our verse under consideration as well as the entire fourth chapter of 1 John speaks of the relationship of God and the Lord Jesus with His people.

When the Lord Jesus was asked what is the greatest of the commandments, He answered:

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

This is the first and great commandment.

And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Matthew 22: 37-40

The law was fulfilled in these two commandments. How can we show our love to God who cannot be seen? By walking in humility and obedience after His commandments and showing love one for another.

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

He that loveth not, knoweth not God: for God is love.”

1 John 4:7-8

John’s teaching is clear that love is the foundation of God’s word and the greatest act of love ever made was by the Lord Jesus, who willingly laid down His life for His friends. Through belief in Him is our love perfected as John continues:

“Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.”

1 John 4: 17

This is not a wordly ‘boldness’ full of pride or arrogance, but rather a confidence or assurance in the promises that God has made to His people through belief in His Son. His life was set forth as an example to His friends that as He overcame the temptations of the flesh, so should they endeavor in like manner to walk after Him. He came into this world, born with the same flesh nature as are we and was tempted both from within and without. Therefore, in overcoming His own carnal nature He became a compassionate High Priest - able to mediate for His people because He knows what we are enduring from day to day.

“For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.

Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.” Hebrews 2: 16-18.

He was in the world but not of it. Born with a flesh nature but through perfect obedience never transgressed, thus becoming a perfect example for His brethren and sisters who would follow after Him in hope. This is our hope that as He overcame the world so can we, however, unlike Him we fail but through His mediation we can be forgiven when repentance is sought through His name.

“And now, little children, abide in him that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.” 1 John 2: 28-29.

The only way to become His brethren and sisters is to exercise this understanding in one's living and walk in hope of mercy at His return to judge those responsible to the word.

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not."

1 John 3: 1-2

Although our walk is not in perfection as was His, God has provided through His love for us, a covering for sin in the sacrifice of His Son when repentance is sought.

How can we live in this world but not be part of it? Perhaps Noah's example gives help:

"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.

And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air, for it repenteth me that I have made them.

But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD."

Genesis 6: 5-8.

Why did Noah find grace in God's eyes? Because his thoughts were of God and through his belief and walk he proved himself different from those around him in the world.

"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." Hebrews 11: 7.

Noah condemned the world, not by acting as they did with violence, but through his actions proved himself a man of peace while preaching of the coming judgment of God for one hundred and twenty years. He taught of the hope of life available in the ark for any who would hear and repent.

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit."

Romans 8: 3-4 .

Walking with God and not after the flesh can only be accomplished when we are striving to be like those faithful of old as Noah, who set forth an example of faithfulness while living in a time of wickedness.

We need to be tested while living in this world just as the Lord Jesus was tried to see if our walk is based on the love of Christ - showing forth God's precepts in our living, doing good to all men and not succumbing to the world's passions. Therefore, should we rejoice when trial and testing came upon us, for by so doing is our heart measured against the standard He has established. When we feel overwhelmed with the task set before us, let us remember that He walked in the same path but in perfection, never compromising though He knew the same temptations and more than we face today.

M.C.S.

'THE STARS....AND AS THE SAND....'

Abraham took the son of his old age to the land of Moriah by heavenly direction. The question was, would Abraham, the father of the faithful, be prepared to give his son as a sacrifice? The scriptural account relates:-

"And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son..."

But then from heaven came the angelic voice to stay Abraham's hand.

So as the scripture says, Abraham had 'not withheld (his) son, (his) only son...' It was a great demonstration of faith, but also was an earnest of a much greater event that was to come. As the scripture declares:-

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

As a result of his faith Abraham was given a wonderful promise:-

“...by myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son,...That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore....

And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed....” (Genesis 22; 16-18)

In the sublime sense this promise reached beyond Isaac, Abraham’s son. As the Apostle Paul explains:-

“Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.....the covenant, that was confirmed before of God...” (Galatians 3: 16-17)

Now those who are to be of Christ in the glory of God’s kingdom are spoken of as ‘.....a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters.’ (Revelation 19:6) When this comes to pass, it will fulfil the ancient promise. What is so remarkable about the promise is what has come to light in recent times. The innumerable people of Christ, in the ultimate sense, finite man is not able to calculate.

The final figure will comprehend the faithful population of Christ’s kingdom, who at the end of Christ’s millenium will be joined, as stars, to the already glorified faithful of those years from the Beginning which had gone before. The figure of the stars is awe inspiring. The General assembly of the International Astronomical Union have revised upwards the number of stars in the VISIBLE UNIVERSE. The figure is seventy, with twenty-one noughts added on. Telescopes were pointed at one small region of the sky close to earth, to try to count the number of the galaxies. The brightness of each galaxy enabled an estimate to be made of how many stars each galaxy contained. Having done this a scaled up estimate was then made to cover the entire sky. This figure compared with grains of the sand of the sea shore, calculating 100 grains of sand to the inch, which is one million to the cubic inch, brought the calculation that nine million miles of beach might provide the same number of grains as the number of stars in the sky. Such a figure brings home to the human mind the Psalmist’s powerful testimony:-

“What is man, that thou art mindful of Him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” (Psalm 8:4)

Such figures emphasise the greatness, and the love, in God’s promise.

A BIBLE CLASS

"I AM THE FIRST, AND I AM THE LAST"

Isaiah 44:6

The background allows us to perceive God's help through His prophet Isaiah. The prophet came to Hezekiah, king of Judah in a time of trouble and turmoil. Sennacherib with his Assyrian army was threatening to capture Jerusalem. At the same time, Hezekiah was stricken with an illness unto death. Trusting in God, the king prayed for help in these dire circumstances. In response, the Almighty sent His prophet to sustain the king.

Isaiah prophesied for 62 years during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah (Isaiah 1:1). The first three of these kings despised God's word and worshipped idols, served false altars, denied the only true God and served self. When the Almighty called Isaiah to prophesy concerning these kings, his reply was:

"...Here am I; send me."

Isaiah 6:8

With Isaiah's help Hezekiah was a faithful king who trusted in God, and turned to Him in his time of trial. In response to Hezekiah's supplications, God caused the army of Sennacherib to depart from Jerusalem without even shooting an arrow into the city. Hezekiah's illness unto death was healed and 15 years were added to his life. What mercy and strength God provided for Hezekiah as he sought help in his perilous circumstances! How he would rejoice as he watched the Assyrian army leave Jerusalem, and felt his own health and strength return, as God cured his illness.

The work of Isaiah did not stop with the relief of Jerusalem and the healing of Hezekiah. He encouraged Judah to recognise that the Almighty is always ready to help those who rely on Him.

"Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant, and Israel, whom I have chosen.

Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun (Jerusalem), whom I have chosen."

Isaiah 44: 1-2

The Almighty did indeed form man in the beginning, and is mindful of all those who have sought to glorify Him. Further, Isaiah spoke God's words to Judah, reminding them:

"Thus saith the LORD the king of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.

And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them.”
Isaiah 44: 6-7

God did create this earth, and has appointed and called a people since that creation!

How great is His power, His mercy, His help - just as Hezekiah experienced. Indeed, all those who have striven to serve Him from the time of Adam (such as Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and many more) have known His hand upon them for good. He further spoke through Isaiah, exhorting His people:

“Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.”
Isaiah 44: 8

Hezekiah and Judah were His witnesses, having experienced his power and His mercy on their behalf. There have been faithful witnesses from the beginning and will be until the end of His purpose with this earth. Who are these witnesses? They are those who believe God’s words:

“I am the first, and I am the last, and beside me there is no God.”
Isaiah 44: 6

Who could create the earth, who could establish mankind upon the earth; who works on behalf of His people, as he has done from the beginning of His creation? Indeed, ‘...beside me there is no God.’ There are many false gods, idols - as the rest of Isaiah chapter 44 makes so clear. These idols are man-made, they have no power and are unable to speak, think or move: indeed they are unable to perform anything!

We have seen how God is the first, for He has worked since the time of Adam. We might ask, How is He the last? Paul helps us as he wrote of God’s purpose to be accomplished by Jesus Christ when he returns to establish God’s kingdom upon this earth for one thousand years. At the end of the one thousand years, Paul explains:

“Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power,
And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.”

(Corinthians 15: 24-28)

Through his word we are witnesses today that indeed He is the first and the last, and that beside Him there is no God. With that knowledge and trust in His Almightyness, we are helped to fear not, neither be afraid; for if God is for us, who can be against us? We need that assurance to conquer our natural feelings and fears, looking with hope to the promised fulfilment of His word when Jesus Christ returns to establish his purpose for eternity.

J.A. Def

**"MY GOD, THINK THOU UPON...THE REST OF THE
PROPHETS..."**

(Nehemiah 6:14)

What a desperate situation it was for Nehemiah at the time of the Jewish restoration. Nehemiah was the instigator of the building up of the walls of Jerusalem, but there was resistance to his endeavours by a people of mixed race that had occupied the land of Israel at the time of the Jewish exile to Babylon. But Nehemiah had faith and courage, and so the scripture testifies:-

"So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days." (Nehemiah 6:15)

The working of those resistant to an appropriate Jewish establishment is clearly defined by the ancient record:-

"My God, think thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and on the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear."

(verse 14)

The similarities of the situation with circumstances in Israel at the present time is clear. People of Islam are very anti-Jewish.

It perhaps is not always realised just how influential the people of Muhammad are in this modern age. Amazingly they stem from a prophet who lived about AD 570 to AD 632, who, according to tradition, was not able to read or write! The Koran (their Bible) was written about AD 651 by Arab scholars; and modern Arabic does not significantly differ from the classical Arabic, the language of Muhammad, which was the language on which the Koran is based.

The power of Islam is shown in the number of its adherents, they number well over a billion people. Their zeal and fanaticism was, for example, seen last February when well over two hundred people were crushed to death and as many more were injured in

Saudi Arabia. It was the time of the annual Hajj pilgrimage. More than two million Muhammadans had flocked to Jamarat Bridge in Mena to throw stones at pillars representing the devil on the Muslim Eid al Adha feast of sacrifice. A Muslim minister explained there had been some failure in organising this great event and so the crush got out of hand. His words were, 'I assure you that all of the preparations are always made but we don't always know God's intentions. What happened will be evaluated.' This sad stampede, however was not a one-off event. In 1990 more than 1,400 were crushed to death. More than a 100 in 1998, 35 in 2001, and 14 were trampled in 2003. The fervency in which Islamic tradition is upheld is obvious. It is such fervency which is posing a deadly threat to various areas, and particularly in Israel by suicide bombers.

The grave difficulty in Iraq is because of such fanaticism. There was a division in Muhammed's followers after his death in AD 632. There was argument over the succession. He was followed by caliphs Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali. Ali was the prophet's son-in-law, and the Shi'a tradition began, as the party, within the Islamic community, that supported him. They developed a theology based on what was claimed as the mystical role of Ali as Muhammad's true successor. The Shi'a branch is the majority Muslim section in Iraq, at the present time. But there is also fanatical opposition from the Sunni sect, which has always maintained that Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali are to be equally regarded as caliphs.

The outcome of this persistent difference from the days of Muhammad's death is the cause of the dreadful deaths perpetrated by Sunni suicide bombers in Iraq. This is making it very difficult for the U.S.A. to establish an Iraqi government with a sound judiciary and stable economy. But the threat to the stability of Iraq does not remain there. A trend has been developing which is being called 'fundamentalism'. The seeds of this phenomenon is said to have been sown by Muhammad Abd al Wahab (1703-1792). He called upon Muslims to return to the fundamentals of Islam. Various local factors stemmed from this man's ideas. For example the Muslim Brotherhood was founded in Egypt (1928) by Hassan al-Banna, this spurred on the growth of many contemporary movements. These are at the forefront of opposition to governments, which they view as corrupt. This so-called Islamic revivalism seeking power in the Muhammadan world, uses inaccurate interpretations of Islam to further its ambitions. For example women's basic rights are denied despite the equality of the sexes, as prescribed by the

Koran. These are a threat to the peace of many countries, causing worry to various governments, particular western ones.

It is a development, which is the fulfillment of the prophecy of Jesus, who said:

“....there shall be....distress of nations, with perplexity....Men’s hearts failing them for fear...”

(Luke 21: 25- 26)

And in Israel there is a repetition of what occurred in Nehemiah’s day. However the ultimate deliverance of the Jews at that time is an earnest of the deliverance that is coming to them in these days.

“EVER LEARNING, AND NEVER ABLE TO COME TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH”

11 Timothy 3:7

Upon reading Paul’s letters to Timothy we see how he was encouraging his young brother in his ministry of the gospel of Christ and also warning of some who had once embraced the one true hope, but who now had fallen away:

“This thou knowest that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me: of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.”

11 Timothy 1 : 15

Of two others Paul goes on to say:

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.

And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus;

Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some.”

11 Timothy 2:15-18

Timothy was a young man and looked to Paul as a father to instruct him not only in his conduct but to guide and instruct him in the work of ministering to the Truth. Paul goes on to warn Timothy of those who may have only a form of godliness saying:

“..in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud,

blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce despisers of those that are good. Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.” 11 Timothy 3: 1-5

He was not speaking of the world here - but rather of those who had once embraced the Knowledge of the Truth as he goes on to explain:

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall heap to themselves teachers having itching ears:

And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.” 11 Timothy 4: 3-4

The requirement for being a good teacher of the gospel was as Paul said, to exhibit a life of godliness and to turn away from those who speak one thing but do another. Those who have a form of godliness which is in appearance only, but do not carry it forward with good works. Of these Paul says they are:

“ Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the Truth.

Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.” 11 Timothy 3: 7-8

Never having a sure foundation rooted upon Christ, they are ever learning but never able to grasp the simplicity of the gospel message because their focus is not singly upon serving God and walking after the example of His Son.

There have always been difficulties for those who endeavour to embrace God’s Truth and there will be many with only a form of godliness that may through deceit lure away the faithful from their one true path. Therefore, Paul warns Timothy that he be not deceived, just as Jesus warned His disciples in the same manner:

“ Judge not, that ye be not judged.

For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest then the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considered not the beam that is in thine own eye?

Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, let me pull out the mote out of thine eye: and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye: and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." Matthew 7: 1-5.

Those who embrace the Truth whole heartedly in word and walk will be known by their actions, "by their fruits ye shall know them", and likewise those who traffic in deceit. Not everyone can embrace the Truth if they refuse to give their heart wholly to God's service - no matter how much study or learning they have of the scriptures.

"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

11 Timothy 2: 19

Paul had experienced the treachery of those who once he had considered brethren:

"For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescans to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.

Only Luke is with me. Take Mark and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry."

11 Timothy 4: 10-11

Paul had personally experienced the falling away that occurs in each generation, losing those from the faith who once he had considered brethren. In this manner he writes to encourage in Hebrews:

"Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.

Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."

Hebrews 12: 15-17.

The priests, scribes and Pharisees during the Lord Jesus' day had a knowledge of the Truth but had not allowed it to circumcise their heart. Instead of living humbly serving their brethren, they took great pride in their lofty positions before the common people -

thus exhibiting a form of godliness that they might be approved of men. These the Lord Jesus called a "generation of vipers", because they revered the traditions of men more so than the commandments of God. Without repentance and a true knowledge of the spirit contained within His word, they could not hope to attain unto the Kingdom of God. To have a form of godliness without a willingness to walk after His precepts in humility and love is not only empty but must be repugnant in God's sight.

M.C.S.

SIGNS OF HIS COMING

"And I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him."
(Psalm 89:23)

This Psalm appears to be referring to David, the king of ancient Israel. For it declares:-

"I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him:

With whom my hand shall be established: mine arm also shall strengthen him."
(verses 20 & 21)

But then a more significant emphasis is given:-

"Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.

My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him.

His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven."
(verses 27-29)

So it is evident that the direction of the Psalm is towards Jesus Christ, the Greater Son of David.

Now as His return draws closer, the words of verse 23 take on a particular meaning for these last days. "I will beat down his foes....and plague them that hate him."

In the original Hebrew the word translated plague is NEGEPH and means A TRIP (that is to bring down) which is a figure of an infliction of disease.

In these modern times much disease has been brought under control by a huge range of medications which science has developed.

But what is so startling, is that at a time when anti-biotics have suppressed many of the old persistent diseases, new ones are beginning to emerge, and what a threat they are.

In the past 25 years, thirty highly infectious diseases have emerged, and it has been stated that some of these have come from animals. For example there has been AIDS and variant CREUTZFELDT - JAKOB DISEASE. The danger is that air- travel can cause rapid world proliferation of infection, not possible in earlier times.

Africa is an area that has been particularly afflicted. Microbiologists in 1983, discovered that HIV is responsible for people developing AIDS. HIV has existed in chimpanzees for many years. Natives who moved into African forests for logging decided to kill these animals for meat. So began HIV on a large scale, for some village dwellers, who later migrated to the cities, took the virus with them.

Today 42 million people are thought to be infected with HIV and 3 million people have died from AIDS in 2002.

Then there is Avian flu which has spread across ten Asian countries. It jumped from chickens to humans in 1997. This was not through eating the birds, it was through handling live birds. Forty five million birds have either died or been culled in an endeavour to eliminate the epidemic. The fear is that once it passes over to people it may spread rapidly from person to person.

Hepatitis B is another serious disease, it kills a million people a year, with hundreds of millions suffering from it. A percentage of these will develop liver failure or liver cancer. It has been found in Indonesia among Orang-Utans and also in Chimpanzees.

Then there is the Ebola virus, identified in 1976. Sudan and the Congo are affected. Humans can get it just by contact with infected dead animals. It is in gorillas and chimpanzees, and once infected it can be passed on. There are fears that illegally imported bushmeat, or an infected person flying in, could bring it to a Western country. It is a dreadful disease, causing organs to dissolve, and kills up to 90% of infected people in a week. Hundreds of people are known to have died from it.

Another nasty infection is the VARIANT CREUTZFELDT-JAKOB DISEASE. It was discovered in Edinburgh in 1996. It is caught from infected beef, and is similar to bovine spongiform encephalopathy. Sufferers eventually become immobile and mute.

THE REMNANT

It was once thought to be a condition affecting the elderly, but now recognised, it is found that the average age of its victims is 27 years; and there is no cure.

These details are rather horrendous, but are a warning, in an age of great medical improvement, that a potential for an evil infliction upon the human race still exists. It does bring home to the thinking person, who respects God's holy word, that any future resistance to God's eternal purpose with this good earth, will have to face the punishment, as defined in the words of the Psalm.

NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS

HAMBURG, NEW YORK. *Corner Southwestern Blvd. and Pleasant Avenue.*

Sunday: 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.

As we feel God's hand upon us in our daily lives, in our ecclesial work, in the witnessing through advertising and through the Remnant magazine, we rejoice at this blessing, striving to respond in gratitude for His love and care.

As events in the world indicate the return of the Lord Jesus may be near, it is a time to lift up our heads looking for and hoping to hear His words. "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

MANCHESTER: *Ryecroft Hall, Audenshaw.*

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11.00 a.m.

Thursdays: Bible Class 2.00 p.m.

As the work proceeds and counsel is needed, we are grateful for the coming alongside of our brethren overseas. This undoubtedly is a provision of our Heavenly Father, and is a builder up of the necessary unity of the Body.