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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

“DOUBTING NOTHING”

Our reading has taken us to the time of God’s purpose with this earth, as revealed to John in his vision on the Isle of Patmos:

“...Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.”

Revelation 12:10

Who is this “accuser”? It is made clear:

“...that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world.”

Revelation 12:9

The serpent goes back to the time of God’s “very good” creation. Adam and Eve lived in the garden of Eden, enjoying God’s handiwork. There was one requirement placed upon them by the Almighty:

“...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.

Some time after this specific command was given, they were tested regarding their obedience to it:

“Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?”

Genesis 3:1

The serpent was cunning, as God created it. He subtly asked Eve this question, seeking to instill a doubt about God’s requirement. Eve knew what God had said:

“...Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.”

Genesis 3:3.

She knew and therefore was responsible. The serpent, not daunted by Eve’s knowledge, replied:

“Ye shall not surely die.”

Genesis 3:4.

By so doing, he accused God of being a liar. Because of doubt created

by the serpent, Eve desired to be as the serpent said:

“...ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” Genesis 3:5.

She touched the tree, took of its fruit, and gave some to Adam, who likewise ate of it, in disobedience to God’s command. As a result, they were sentenced to die, and all men since Adam have inherited that sentence of death, becoming mortal creatures. Further, the serpent was cursed above all beasts of the field, and was to go on his belly and eat dust. God added:

“and I will put enmity between thee (the serpent) and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it (the seed of the woman) shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”

Genesis 3:15.

Thus began the enmity between the serpent and his seed (sin in the flesh) and the seed of the woman (those striving to obey and glorify God). How subtle was the approach of the serpent! First, he created doubt in the mind of Eve, and then continued by claiming that God was a liar. Jesus, speaking to the Pharisees, condemned them:

“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”

John 8:44.

The serpent was the first liar, and his seed has continued to be accusers, liars, and murderers - being of flesh nature ever since.

The enmity between the serpent and the seed of the woman began there in the garden. This was the beginning of doubting God’s word, caused by the lusts of the flesh. It was soon evidenced between the sons of Adam, as Cain in anger (the seed of the serpent) murdered Abel (the seed of the woman). This enmity has existed and will continue to exist as long as there are those who are ruled by their fleshly nature against those who are striving to be subject to the word of God.

The lusts of the flesh are desires to please self, not God, and are present in all men. We have the example of Peter, when God sent him to help Cornelius, who was a Gentile, a centurion in the Roman army. Cornelius saw a vision that he was to send for Peter in his desire to serve God. Being a Jew, Peter of himself would not have gone; but God showed him in a vision:

“...What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.” Acts 10:15.

Peter doubted what this vision meant. When the messengers of Cornelius came and sought Peter, he needed assurance to do what was contrary to his thinking.

“...the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee
Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.”
Acts 10: 19-20.

Peter was helped to conquer his doubts and was able to strengthen Cornelius and his house to become a part of the seed of the woman, seeking to honor God. As this was accomplished, Peter expressed his mind:

“...Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:
but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness
(the seed of the woman), is accepted with him.”
Acts 10: 34-35.

Putting away his doubt, Peter obeyed God’s word. Perhaps his thoughts would go back to the time when he was an offense unto Jesus. Jesus spoke of His going up to Jerusalem to be killed and raised again. Peter, not yet fully understanding the work of Jesus, moved by his own emotions, said:

“...Lord this shall not be unto thee.” Matthew 16:22.

Jesus responded:

“...Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence (stumbling block) unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”
Matthew 16:23.

“Savourest” is also used as to set one’s affections on, or to be of the same mind. The mind of Jesus was: I must do my Father’s will. Peter was thinking that he loved Jesus and would miss Him if He died - not fully grasping that God was requiring this, and Jesus was struggling to obey. Peter was a stumbling block as Jesus agonized to go up to Jerusalem and die on the cross. Jesus, in love for Peter and His disciples, exhorted:

“...If any man will come after me, let him deny himself (say NO to self), and take up his cross, and follow me.

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.” Matthew 16: 24-25.

Jesus did deny Himself perfectly - never doubting, never sinning. He fought against His fleshly nature and thereby got the victory over the serpent (His flesh), wounding it in the head as He died upon the cross. He accomplished what God required of Him as He cried out in victory: “It is finished.” (John 19: 30).

We, Brethren and Sisters, in striving to deny self and follow Him, must fight against our fleshly nature, in recognition of God's sentence upon all mankind. The flesh hates restraint, lusts after things that please self, and hates whatever condemns self-indulgence.

We have the example of Israel in the wilderness for 40 years because of doubt, unbelief that they could conquer the inhabitants of the land promised to them. As they wandered for those 40 years, they continued to doubt God's provisions, even as they saw the pillar of cloud and of fire leading them. On one occasion it is recorded:

"...the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And the people spake against God, and against Moses. Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul (self) loatheth this light bread." Numbers 21: 4-5.

They doubted God's appointing their plight; sentenced to those many years of wandering, they forgot the provision of water. Indeed, they loathed God's provision of manna. As a result of their fleshly response:

"...the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, and much people of Israel died." Numbers 21:6.

In anguish, the people asked that Moses pray for the Lord's mercy. He did, and God told him to raise up a brasen serpent upon a pole; if the people would look up to that brasen serpent, they would live. Figuratively this pointed to the death of Jesus on the cross, as He conquered that fleshly nature in Himself by perfect obedience - even giving His life in subjection to His Father. By so doing, He became a means of propitiation, atonement for all who in faith, nothing doubting, would turn to him, and through Him to His Father. Jesus Himself spoke of His purpose:

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

That whosoever believeth in him (not doubting) should not perish, but have eternal life. 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: 14-16.

How great is God's grace seen in Jesus' victory over His serpent nature as the only means of redemption for those who in faith, nothing doubting, look up to Him. Their hope of salvation and freedom from the law of sin and death, is expressed by Paul:

"For the wages (that which is earned) of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Romans 6: 23.

All those who seek this precious gift, are involved in that enmity between the seed of the serpent (self) and the seed of the woman. Satan (sin in the flesh) is always there to deceive, to create doubt in God's word, and to seduce its victims into disobedience of God's word. We have the example of Job, who did not give up his integrity, did not curse God, and did not lose his faith in God's promise given to those who overcome. We know how the adversary, the accuser of God's brethren, expressed doubt concerning Job's obedience to God. Satan, an adversary, doubted God's words about Job, and said:

"...put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." Job 1: 11.

God did place adversity (including his three "friends") upon Job for one whole year, to test his determination. These "friends" reviled, despised, and accused him; but Job never doubted that the Almighty knew his integrity and would not cause him to suffer without reason. At the end of the year's distress, Job could say to God:

"I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.

Wherefore I abhor myself (sin in the flesh), and repent in dust and ashes." Job 42: 5-6.

The scriptures are full of those who in faith and fear of God have denied self and submitted to whatever God in His wisdom and righteousness placed upon them. We read of the faith of many in Hebrews chapter 11.

Let us go back to John's vision on Patmos, and listen to the words he heard concerning a war in heaven:

"And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth (dust), and his angels (followers) were cast out with him.

And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven. Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night."

Revelation 12; 9-10.

This is the hope of spiritual Israel- the hope of all those who do not doubt God's word. They strive to follow Jesus by denying self, taking up their cross, and then crucifying their fleshly nature, doubting nothing concerning God's promises to the seed of the woman.

J.A.DeF.

ZEPHANIAH'S PROPHECY

We have recently finished reading God's word through the prophet Zephaniah, who said:

"I will utterly consume all things from off the land, saith the Lord. I will consume man and beast; I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumbling blocks with the wicked; and I will cut off man from off the land, saith the LORD. And them that are turned back from the LORD; and those that have not sought the LORD, nor inquired for him."

Zephaniah 1: 2-3,6

If we were living during this time and heard God's word through His prophet, we would be fearful and alarmed, for these words were spoken to stir up those living in Judah and Jerusalem in the time of Josiah and tell them of God's sore displeasure;

"And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The LORD will not do good, neither will he do evil."

Zephaniah 1:12

We see their minds - those that gave no glory to God with their living. In essence they were saying, there is no God - we have nothing to fear. Perhaps Zephaniah's words fell mainly on deaf ears, but no doubt there would be a few who would fear and respond, just as King Josiah did:

"Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired;

Before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD come upon you, before the day of the LORD'S anger come upon you.

Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S anger."

Zephaniah 2: 1-3

In His mercy, along with a warning came instruction of how one could avoid His wrath by turning back to His ways before His anger was unleashed. In order to seek the LORD, Zephaniah said one must be "meek", humble in heart and willing to receive instruction.

When we go back to the records of the Kings, we read of the time of Zephaniah's prophecy, when Josiah was appointed king at the tender age of eight years old.

"Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty and one years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was

Jedidah, the daughter of Adaiah of Boscath.

And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left.” 11 Kings 22: 1-2

At age eighteen, King Josiah commanded that the money collected at the Lord’s house be given to carpenters and builders so that God’s house could be repaired. Hilkiyah, the high priest then found the book of the law which must have been abandoned in the Lord’s house during the reign of the many wicked kings before Josiah, who did not inquire of God’s ways, nor wish to follow His precepts. When the book was read to Josiah, he wept for grief, realizing how far they had strayed from serving the Lord:

“And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes.

And the king commanded...Go ye, inquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us.” 11 Kings 22: 11, 12- 13.

Josiah in tearing his clothes, humbled himself, recognizing their sad position so far away from God. He took to heart the words of the Law, as well as Zephaniah’s warning, and sought God’s direction. Huldah the prophetess was sought and through her, God spoke to Josiah and all those of tender heart:

“...Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Tell the man that sent you to me (Josiah the King)

Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read:

Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched.

But to the king of Judah which sent you to inquire of the LORD, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, As touching the words which thou hast heard;

Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, said the LORD.

Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again.”
11 Kings 22: 15 - 20.

This was a gift given to Josiah because of his humbleness. His probation would be over and he would be gathered to his grave in peace before God’s wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem. He applied God’s word throughout his 31 years of reign, burning the idols and high places made for worshipping false gods which Jeroboam had established. He slew the priests of the high places and commanded that those who claimed to be wizards or have familiar spirits be put away.

He also reinstated the Passover which had not been kept by the people, thereby reminding them of the Lamb’s blood upon the door posts which would cover and protect from death, those who were members of his household. By not keeping the Passover yearly, they had forgotten the great hope extended through God’s word seen in the sacrifice of The Lamb - their Messiah.

Because of Josiah’s faithfulness in turning back to God, it was written of him:

“And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart , and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him.”
11 Kings 23: 25

This is the record of one who stood out because of his devotion and righteousness during a time of great evil.

We are privileged today to read His word and be warned, as was Josiah, of the final evil that will come upon those that refuse to hear His voice or follow after His precepts. We know He will not fail in all that has been promised and that His grace and mercy will be extended as a hiding place for those that seek Him. Speaking of this blessed time at the end of God’s purpose, Zephaniah’s word comes to comfort all those of spiritual Israel, seeking to be hid in the Lord:

“Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee; and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame.

At that time I will bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD.”
Zephaniah 3: 19-20.

M. C. S.

THE UNITY OF THE ECCLESIA

An Ecclesial magazine not connected with ourselves recently spoke of "Problems in the Ecclesia". The following extracts give information of how present ecclesial trouble is viewed:-

"Most, if not all of us will have experienced problems in our ecclesia at some time in our lives. It may be over doctrinal issues, behavioural problems, personality clashes, or disagreements over trivial issues. --Ecclesias can be split, families not talk to one another OR MEMBERS EVEN LEAVE THE COMMUNITY AS A CONSEQUENCE.---

Jesus our compassionate high priest has stood in the midst of a troublesome ecclesia. He has nurtured its members, cared for them and only lost one. He never gave up but worked with them as they were. In his dealings with them he was always positive. He is still there calling the different members with their various strengths and weaknesses and moulding them into a people who ultimately will have the responsibility of showing him to the entire world.---

On considering these remarks, we ask the question, "how does Christ's Ecclesia show Him to the world?" Is it done in a body with doctrinal difficulties, behavioural problems, personality clashes, or trivial issues? Do the words convey a serious appreciation of the situation, when the comment is made that members might "even leave the community as a consequence." of the troubled situation.

To say that Jesus was always positive though in the midst "of a troublesome ecclesia", as though He continually forgave and overlooked inevitable trouble, gives a wrong appraisal. Jesus said:-

"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 unto 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."
(John 15: 9-12)

We ask the question, is an ecclesia obeying Christ where there is troubles over doctrine, behavioural problems, personality clashes, and disagreement over trivial issues? Is love being manifested? Does the joy of Christ flourish in that situation?

We feel the comments about “problems in the ecclesia” is an attempt to excuse an untoward situation which Christ **WOULD NOT EXCUSE**. To say that Christ (in that early time) “stood in the midst of a troublesome ecclesia”, overlooks Christ’s pertinent warning to the Ecclesias. For example:-

“Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.-
--If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief.---He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias.”
(Revelation 3: 1-6)

In conclusion may we quote the foundation words of one of the pioneers of the latter day Ecclesia.

A man himself believing the truth, but willing to wink at its denial among those in fellowship in any of its essential elements, becomes, by this willingness, an offender against the law of Christ, which requires the faithful maintenance of the whole. Faithful servants of Christ cannot unite with such, on the ground that though he hold the truth himself, such a man is responsible for the error of those whom he would admit, and therefore becomes the channel of a similar responsibility to those who may endorse him in fellowship:- “He that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”

A BIBLE CLASS

“ALTOGETHER LIGHTER THAN VANITY”

PSALM 62:9

The title of the Psalm helps our understanding of this consideration,
which reads in the Hebrew:

“To the Victor through acceptable praise. A Psalm of David”

David’s desires and works were motivated by his determination to praise the Almighty. What is praise? The concordance defines it as giving thanks, honor, or glory - recognizing one’s worthiness of such. How can we best show praise? Is it not in doing what pleases the One who is worthy of praise, by subjection to His will, showing a desire to give honor? Who was the only One who gave complete praise to God? Was it not His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom God said; “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”?

David, a man after God’s own heart, praised the Almighty as he submitted to God’s word, trusted in, and turned to him for help in time of need. The words of this Psalm reflect his mind, and so help us to perceive his spirit. David wrote:

“Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation.
He only is my rock and my salvation, he is my defence; I shall
not be greatly moved.”
Psalm 62: 1-2.

“Waiteth” is also used as silence, silent - revealing what faithful waiting on the Lord involves. By being silent, one shows a trust, an awe, waiting for God to reveal or indicate what is His will - not moving ahead quickly, perhaps rashly, or confidently. For what did David long, causing him to wait on the Lord? It was his hope of salvation, in the fulfilment of God’s promise of a house, a Son, a throne, and a kingdom that would last for ever. We can perceive David’s submission and trust as he exclaimed upon receiving these promises.

“...Who am I, O Lord GOD? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?

Wherefore thou art great, O Lord GOD (worthy to be praised):
for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee,
according to all that we have heard with our ears.”

11 Samuel 7; 18, 22

As a consequence of his trust in God, David was able to resolve;

“...I shall not be greatly moved.”
Psalm 62: 2.

David did not greatly move from the path of righteousness, except for his impulsive taking of Bath-sheba, and unwisely numbering Israel. God forgave him because of his quick repentance, as he exclaimed:

“I have sinned against the LORD.” 11 Samuel 12: 13.

“I have done very foolishly.” 11 Samuel 24: 10.

Was not this praise unto God?

David further wrote of those who do not praise the Lord:

“How long will ye imagine mischief against a man?”

Psalm 62: 3.

Such do not show praise, but cause trouble. David aptly described such as “a bowing wall” and “a tottering fence.” How useless is a wall that is unstable, bowing, ready to fall; or a tottering fence, unable to do its intended purpose to fence in! Would one be inclined to praise such an unsuitable, useless wall and fence? What protection could they be?

David also wrote:

“My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him.” Psalm 62:5.

David realized that his expectation, his hope - the thing for which he longed, the promises given to him as “the sure mercies of David” - could only come from the Almighty. Was not this expectation, this waiting, a praise of God, a trust in His word? His words exalted God:

“Trust in him at all times, ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah.” Psalm 62:8.

In recognition of God’s mercy and grace, David exhorted his people to pour out their hearts to God. To “pour out” involves a gushing forth, an emptying of one’s heart to God, seeking His guidance, help, protection - a true refuge, a place to run in need, distress and repentance. The Almighty knows each heart, even as He knew David’s heart, which was so pleasing; for he praised God, not only in words but also in deeds. Those who praise, honor and obey God are precious in His sight.

In contrast, David wrote:

“Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity.” Psalm 62: 9.

In God’s judgment, when self-centred men are weighed in a balance, they are of little consequence, no matter whether of high or low degree. They are lighter than vanity, which is nothing before the Lord. An example is seen in the person of Belshazzar, the last king of Babylon - certainly of

high degree! He made a great feast for a thousand of his lords. During the feast, he called for the gold and silver vessels of the temple, which had been taken by Nebuchadnezzar when Jerusalem fell. The vessels were brought:

“...and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.”

Daniel 5: 3-4.

Here were many of high degree, heads of the great nation of Babylon. Did they praise God? Obviously not! God caused Belshazzar to see writing upon the wall, which Daniel interpreted:

“...God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it.

....Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.

....Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.”

Daniel 5: 26-28.

In that same night of feasting, the kingdom of Babylon was taken by Darius the Mede, and Belshazzar was slain.

What insignificant value - such as vanity - are men of low or high degree, who praise self and deny God. In a time of judgment, when weighed in the balances - measured against God's standard, God's word - they are as the dust of the balance, or as a drop in the bucket, compared to those who worship God in sincerity and truth. They look to Him as a refuge, and wait for Him. Their hope is salvation in the day of judgment, when Jesus returns to gather His people - those who have striven to offer true praise to God.

J.A.DeF.

“SEE THAT YE LOVE ONE ANOTHER.”

1 PETER 1:22

Upon reading Peter’s message in his first epistle, we can see he wrote to:

“...the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.” 1 Peter 1 : 1-2.

These were his brethren in whom Peter was endeavoring to stir up the hope they had embraced through Christ. He reminded them of their frail fleshly nature when he wrote:

“For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:

But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.” 1 Peter 1: 24-25.

That gospel or word was the good news of the Kingdom of God through the name of Jesus Christ. Man will fail because he is flesh, but by the word of God and the covering of Christ’s saving grace, a hope has been offered through obedience. He goes on to further explain this hope:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.” 1 Peter 1: 3-4.

To determine if they will hold fast unto that hope offered, the brethren of Christ are to be tried and tested of the Father to prove their hearts - a chastening to try them as true sons and daughters:

“wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:”

1 Peter 1: 6-7

He implored them to be as obedient children, following what had been taught by a loving Father. He also reminded how they could best display a love for His Truth through their fellowship and love of one another:

“Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.” 1 Peter 1: 22

This “unfeigned love” is a fraternal affection to be filled with intensity and purity, and indeed throughout all of Peter’s epistles, a love for the brethren is emphasised:

“Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God, Honour the king.” 1 Peter 2: 17

“Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.” 1 Peter 3:8

We know also from John’s writing how Christ’s own love for His brethren was unfeigned and fervent, so much so that He willingly laid down His life for them, leaving them His example to follow:

“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.

Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.”

John 15:12-14

It is a love far different than the definition of love known by the world, for those who love the Lord Jesus and their brethren, have endeavored to separate themselves from the world’s pursuits, and because of this spiritual separation, the world does not receive them as one of their own.

“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” John 15: 18-19

So important was it to maintain that love one for another, the Lord Jesus gave His followers a new commandment, just prior to His crucifixion:

“A new commandment I give unto you. That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” John 13: 34-35

If the love of God is truly within, it will be shown through reflection to one's brethren and sisters.

How remarkable to think of Peter walking with the Lord Jesus and being taught of His own words and here 2000 years later he is teaching us of that same love which Christ had perfected, that we might strive to walk in love after Him.

Later, the apostle Paul, who like Peter was endeavoring to teach of Christ's love, instructed His brethren to emulate this same affection one to another, emphasising the great importance of love in the lives of the brethren of Christ, regardless of any other gifts they may have received from on high:

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity (love), I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity (love), I am nothing.

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

And now abideth faith, hope, charity (love), these three; but the greatest of these is charity (love).” 1 Corinthians 13: 1-3, 13

It seems a simple thing to be able to love one another, but knowing the weakness of our flesh nature, the Lord Jesus knew we needed this reminder in order to truly be His brethren and sisters.

M.C.S.

SIGNS OF HIS COMING

“Behold, the Lord,---shall lop the bough with terror---.”
(Isaiah 10: 33)

The Madrid massacre in March had an amazing repercussion. The Spanish Government that was set for re-election was suddenly voted out of office by a swing of the electorate at the last minute, which came immediately after the devastation by the Islamic terrorists of the Spanish railways. The election defeat was reported as a sign that the Spanish people were blaming their Government for bringing about such an Arab retaliation through sending troops to Iraq in support of the U.S. and British action there. When terrorists can so influence a nation, a very serious situation is revealed. It was about this time that another incident took place in one of Israel's biggest ports. Seven people were killed and ten more were wounded by two Palestinian suicide bombers at Ashdod, near to some warehouses which stocked dangerous chemicals. It was also about this time that a ten year old boy was discovered with a bomb in his schoolbag; he was investigated at an Israeli checkpoint in the West Bank. The device was ready for detonation, being connected to a mobile phone. Israeli Security said militants who were watching the checkpoint, near Nablus, tried to explode the device by remote control as soldiers examined the bag. Thankfully for the boy and for the soldiers also, it failed to detonate. The boy was released after questioning; he had been promised money for getting the bomb across, and had previously been carrying belongings for Palestinians who have been forbidden to drive through the checkpoint.

The new government in Spain immediately, alas, declared it would withdraw its troops from Iraq unless the U.S. relinquished control to the U.N.O. Poland however has shown courage by saying that a retreat by Spain “amounts to an admission that the terrorists are stronger than the civilised world.” Japan which has also sent forces to Iraq, has declared that it will stand firm with the American and British forces.

The terrorists at the time of the atrocity sent a tape to the Spanish authorities warning:-

“You love life and we love death---(our action) is a response to the crimes that you caused in the world, and specifically in Iraq and Afghanistan, and there will be more if God wills it.”

The tape went on to warn of more attacks yet to come. What an abhorrent situation it is. The terrorist groups, operating across national

borders, wish to bring about an eventual Muslim dominance, and at the same time destroy Israel and its supporters.

But, like the Spanish people, many in Britain and even in the United States, peoples are voluble in condemning the energetic actions that have been taken against the Muslim mavericks. The critics do not stop to consider, that the September 11th attack on the New York Twin Towers, with over 3000 victims, changed political outlook. The American President realised a great threat was now emerging. He therefore determined to invade Afghanistan when the Taliban regime there did not hand over the terrorist leader, whose Al Qaeda group was based in the Tora Bora mountains.

From various parts of the world including Britain, young men from Muslim families then made their way to Afghanistan to support the Mujahideen to help oppose the U.S. and British military. In opposing Western forces they believed they were fighting against the "Great Satan". The wicked attack on New York was conveniently forgotten, or excused as a just punishment of America. The Taliban supporters of the terrorists however were defeated and the terrorists bases were destroyed, with the dispersing of Chechens, Arabs, Uzbeks and Pakistanis, and the leader of Al Qaeda escaped, to continue his operations. He actually admitted responsibility for the September 11th devastation, declaring the attack was because of America's support for Israel!

The later action against Iraq was a natural follow on against a government that, having attacked Kuwait, and then been driven out, did not cooperate to demonstrate that it was now prepared to prove it had changed its threatening ways.

That there should now be such hostile opinion against the American policy supported by the British Government, formulated to block the advance of Islamic extremism and militancy reveals a disunited world which is ignorant of the true state of things, or is filled with a cynicism which thinks "why should we be involved as long as we escape being affected." The "bough indeed has been lopped with terror" bringing down the pro-United States Spanish Government. Many are careless or indifferent to what is really a very desperate evil, in which they think their nation should not be involved.

But the evil will not go away, for extreme Islamic organisations are determined to destroy Israel. Israel, of course, cannot be destroyed, so the only, eventual outcome, will be defeat of those opposed to Israel. What a sign of the times is such a situation!

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.

We are grateful for the counsel with our brethren in Manchester in our mutual efforts with those interested in the Truth. It is a privilege and a blessing.

Our literature offering to the general public continues with a few responses, encouraging in this monthly work.

J.A.DeF.

MANCHESTER: *Ryecroft Hall, Audenshaw.*

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11.00 a.m.

Thursdays: Bible Class 2.00 p.m.

It is a privilege that we are enabled to continue a witness. Compared to the World at large it is a small voice, nevertheless it is far reaching and this brings communications from far off places as well as near.

