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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

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AT THE TABLE OF The LORD

THE BIGGER PICTURE

There are times when it is helpful to step back from every-day occurrences to examine the larger picture. We are spiritually helped to do so by our reading plan, with its two portions in the Old Testament and one in the New Testament. Today we have read in I Kings, Jeremiah, and Acts, covering three eras in the lives of God's people, each 400 - 600 years apart. They reveal the circumstances of His people, as they were under His hand. At times they were prosperous; at other times they were in tribulation according to their subjection to His commands. In all their circumstances there was a remnant. Today there are but a few under the hand of the Creator, the Father - Yahweh - I was, I am, and I will be. He created this earth and rules over it. He has revealed His purpose with His creation: a kingdom ruled by His Son, Jesus Christ, to be established and to last for eternity. He has called out a people for His Name, made possible by the victory of the Lord Jesus.

With this in mind, let us contemplate our readings here this morning. The first mention of the name Israel is found in Genesis when Jacob, the son of Isaac, Abraham's son, wrestled all night with a messenger of God and prevailed over him. As a result, the messenger told Jacob that his name was to be changed from Jacob (meaning a supplanter) to Israel (a prince with God):

“... for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men,
and hast prevailed.” Genesis 32:28

Israel inherited the promises made to Abraham, that he should be the father of many nations whom God would bless through His Son Jesus Christ. We have read this morning of Israel as a great nation under the hand of God. Solomon, David's son, reigned over Israel, some 700 years after the time of Jacob's name being changed. In that period Israel had grown to be a great nation under David and Solomon, its kings. David desired to build a temple for God, but was not allowed to do so because he was a man of war. He prepared for its building in accordance with the plan God gave him. When Solomon succeeded David, he built the temple accordingly. When it was finished after seven years, Solomon had the priests bring the ark of God into the most holy place of the temple, as we

have read this morning:

“And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD, So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of the LORD.”
I Kings 8:10-11.

God’s presence was with Israel because of David and Solomon’s subjection to His hand. Under that hand, Israel became a great nation, was prosperous, and extended from the Euphrates river on the north, to the river of Egypt on the south. Solomon was given wisdom and understanding by the Almighty when he asked for that ability to judge his people. Also he was given riches and honor, for he trusted in God. Thus Solomon and Israel prospered as the Almighty had promised. Solomon reigned over Israel for 40 years. As he aged and grew in stature and riches, he departed from his love and fear of God, marrying pagan wives, and building temples for the gods which they worshipped. As a result:

“... it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.”
I Kings 11:4.

Solomon’s heart turned from the Almighty to “self.” Consequently, under Solomon’s son Rehoboam, Israel was divided into ten tribes and two tribes. In 40 short years, the nation deteriorated from a great power to a divided nation devoid of God’s blessing. Only a few were left, who were subject to God, looking to the end of the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David.

Our reading in Jeremiah 40, takes us forward about 400 years after the division of the nation of Israel. The ten tribes were taken into captivity by the king of Assyria and dispersed among the nations, leaving two tribes as the surviving nation. The Almighty sent His prophets to encourage His remaining people to submit to His word, But it was in vain, until God’s forbearance ended and caused Nebuchadrezzar to overcome the nation. Jerusalem was burned, the temple so carefully built by Solomon, was destroyed, and most of the inhabitants were taken captive to Babylon. It was in the year 588 BC that Israel ceased to be a nation, and the times of the Gentiles began, as was warned by God’s prophets. Jeremiah

was one of the prophets sent to Judah to warn God's people of what was to come to pass, unless they turned back to Him, in obedience to His word. Jeremiah suffered at the hands of the people of Jerusalem, was in a dungeon, was threatened, and in danger of his life because he warned of the coming disaster for Israel. As a result of his faithful witness, Jeremiah was helped by Nebuchadnezzar's captain:

“And the captain of the guard took Jeremiah, and said unto him, The LORD thy God hath pronounced this evil upon this place.

Now the LORD hath brought it, and done according as he hath said: because ye have sinned against the LORD, and have not obeyed his voice, therefore this thing is come upon you.

And now, behold, I loose thee this day from the chains which were upon thine hand. If it seem good unto thee to come with me into Babylon, come; and I will look well unto thee: but if it seem ill unto thee to come with me into Babylon, forbear: behold, all the land is before thee: whither it seemeth good and convenient for thee to go, thither go.”

Jeremiah 40:2-4.

Jeremiah stayed in the ruins of Jerusalem, further witnessing to those who remained. He warned against their fleeing to Egypt. They did not heed God's warning and went to Egypt. Jeremiah went with them, continuing to witness, until Nebuchadnezzar conquered Egypt and destroyed those who refused to be subject to His word. We do not know the end of Jeremiah's life and witnessing, but we do know the end of Israel as a nation, until 1948, when it became a political entity, but not a nation subject to the Almighty.

Our next reading this morning is the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, over 600 years after the dispersal of the nation of Israel. Much happened in the meanwhile including continuing captivity for Israel. Yet the Almighty sent His prophets - Ezekiel, Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, among others, to sustain, to help, to warn, to encourage, and to bless those who, though few, were subject to the Almighty, until His Son Jesus Christ was born. Jesus came, as God promised, and preached the gospel for 3-1/2 years. In perfect obedience to His Father, He never sinned and died upon the cross, as God required, "... to fulfil all righteousness." He

was resurrected, and taught His disciples for 40 days, before ascending unto His Father's presence, to mediate for His people.

We have read this morning in the Acts of the Apostles of the Lord Jesus' work with them:

"To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

And being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.

For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence." Acts 1:3-5.

Jesus further informed His Apostles:

"... Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Acts 1:8.

On the day of Pentecost, the Apostles did receive the power of God's Holy Spirit, as "cloven tongues like as of fire sat upon each of them" and they received the ability to speak in 18 tongues, as well as to do miracles and to heal the sick. Can we enter into their minds as this marvelous power flowed into them to help in their witnessing? They would be filled with awe, with fear, and would go about their work of being witnesses to God's purpose. They continued in God's work, suffering many things for the name of God. Stephen, James, Paul, and Peter were killed for their witnessing. After their death, John was shown the vision of the Revelation in AD 96, and lived for a few years thereafter.

We, Brethren and Sisters, live almost 2000 years after John's death - a few, a remnant, a blessed people who have seen much of God's purpose come to pass. We strive to faithfully wait - looking, hoping, and praying for the Lord Jesus' return to establish God's kingdom. We don't know when this shall occur, nor are we sure of being allowed to enter into the promised kingdom. Those

responsible will be resurrected, or if alive, must be assembled to the judgment seat of the Lord Jesus - of which He spoke:

“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.

Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand. Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Matthew 25:31,34.

Here is the accomplishment, of God’s purpose with the earth, made possible through His mercy, which endures forever, for those whose hearts and minds are struggling to submit to His word - believing, trusting, and hoping in His promises made “from the foundation of the world.”

Brethren and Sisters, let us hearken to His words, as we see the signs of His Son’s return:

“... when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.”

Luke 21:28.

J.A.DeF.

A PROPHECY OF HOPE

For several months we have been reading in the Book of Isaiah. Although his witness spanned through four kings of Judah, his message to the faithful looked far beyond in faith, to give comfort and hope to generations of God's people:

“The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD.”
Isaiah 2:1-5.

Isaiah prophesied of a glorious future for God's people - a hope that will encompass all people of the world who bow the knee to Christ's sovereignty at His return. With the world under the leadership of Christ and His saints, the violence, poverty and injustice so prevalent today, will be a thing of the past. What a far cry from the evil present time when the primary goal of mankind is to their own pursuits and little, if any thought, is given to God or His ways. What a marvelous prospect it is to consider a world walking in the “light of the Lord” and actively seeking and studying His word.

Isaiah goes on to speak of the means of this peace and righteous rulership - the Lord Jesus Christ, the greater Son of David, the son of Jesse:

“And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:

And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears:

But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.” Isaiah 11:1-4.

With Christ and the saints as the teachers and rulers of this new kingdom, the earth will be a much different place. Not only will evil and violence be eradicated because of their quick and righteous judgment, but the curse placed upon the earth after the fall in the garden, will be lifted:

“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lay down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.” Isaiah 11:6-9.

The earth will be full of righteousness and peace even - extending to the animal kingdom - the lion eating straw like the ox and the law of predator and the hunted gone forever, “they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain”. It is hard to imagine with our frail and fleshly thinking, such a wondrous place as promised. Yet God’s word has prophesied this will come to pass through His Son, the Lord Jesus and the Spirit shall make it so. In the Kingdom age with Christ and His saints as rulers, wickedness will be quickly judged and punished and the gospel message will be taught throughout the earth so that an understanding of God’s word will be known by all. Those inhabitants of the world who choose to walk in His light will enjoy the benefit of this fruitful and peaceful kingdom. The prophet’s word is a call to faith and belief in

God's word, encouraging us to respond and be part of this promised reward:

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Isaiah 55:1,3.

Isaiah is speaking here of that spiritual food - the gospel message, that is provided without cost or price to any who will seek it. What a source of encouragement as we struggle to walk in the ways of His understanding.

Paul drew upon Isaiah's words when he spoke to his Roman brethren of the same hope extended to them as Gentiles:

"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, THERE SHALL COME OUT OF SION THE DELIVERER, AND SHALL TURN AWAY UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB:

FOR THIS IS MY COVENANT UNTO THEM, WHEN I SHALL TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS." Romans 11:25-27.

He was speaking to his Roman brethren, reminding of how Israel had forsaken the hope offered to them and the privilege they knew as this same hope was now extended to them as Gentiles:

"Well; because of unbelief they (Israel) were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear;

For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.

Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." Romans 11:20-22.

Those who endeavor to glorify Him now with obedience in their daily living, can be sustained and helped to overcome the inward carnal man, through the knowledge of God's promised nearness to help:

“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth:
for I am God, and there is none else.
I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth
in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every
knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.”

Isaiah 45:22-23.

The prophecies of Isaiah were provided to help and encourage the few who still sought to please Him at that time, and those in years to come, who seek to be grafted into the hope of Israel.

Today we live surrounded by a world of violence and injustice forged by man, yet to those who seek the Lord with all their heart, is the promise of everlasting life in a future kingdom of peace when the Lord Jesus returns. Surely we feel His return is near, as we see the signs throughout the earth of war, famine, earthquake and natural disasters growing more severe year by year. Yet through Isaiah’s prophecy we look forward in hope, yearning to be found approved at His coming and to share in the blessings He alone can provide.

“I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me. That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else.”

Isaiah 45:5-6.

M.C.S.

“ ---The earth was filled with violence --- it was corrupt - - .”
(Genesis 6:11-12)

The book of Genesis greatly condemns the world in which Noah and his family lived. The Apostle Peter writing about that time says:-

“ --- the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.”
(1 Peter 3:20)

Peter then goes on to say in his second epistle:-

“God - - - spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly.”
(2 Peter 2:5)

One of the particular features of the time was that in addition to the corruption, it was not only suffering violence, it was FILLED with it!

Jesus looked back to that time when prophesying of the future. Jesus declared concerning His second coming:-

“But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”
(Matthew 24:37)

What is specifically significant, in this context, is what Jesus says, when, what He foretells, BEGINS to take place:-

“ --- when ye shall see all these things, know that it (He) is near, even at the doors - - - THIS GENERATION SHALL NOT PASS, till all these things be fulfilled.”
(Matthew 24:33-34)

The present generation has seen much trouble, with the slipping away from what undoubtedly was a better moral standard of a few years ago. The techniques of those who send out the suicide bombers, are designed to cause utmost terror, and multiple casualties. The people who carry out such dreadful destruction, are not always the dregs of society. An attack in Tel Aviv, Israel, in 2003 by a British citizen, having a bomb strapped around his body, killed not only himself but three others, and injured sixty five in a seafront cafe that was busy at the time. A report said that this attacker had been urged by his sister, a school teacher, to “stay focused and determined!”

A recent complaint about the violence that has increased, has been voiced as follows in a British national newspaper:-

“The violent malevolence of Islamic extremism continues to cast its shadow over the world. On the beautiful Indonesian holiday island of Bali, Muslim suicide bombers killed 26 and injured more than 120 in explosions that ripped through three restaurants. Their victims join a mounting global death toll from a murderous ideology that has brought terror and oppression to almost every continent. New York, London, Madrid, Casablanca and Jerusalem have all been hit recently - - - attacks (have been made) in the Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheikh and the Turkish town of Kusadasi (which) led to 93 deaths. The Bali bombing in 2002 left more than 200 dead.

In Iraq, as the country struggles to create a new democracy after decades of tyranny, hard line insurgents are causing sickening levels of carnage. - - -”

Sadly, illogical people are blaming the United States President and the Iraq invasion for these troubles. Also Israel is criticised as also a monetary situation which has caused what is described as the “Third World” to be in debt. The true position is that the present violent situation has been developing since the 1970’s. Before the Twin Towers were attacked in New York (in 2001) there had been an attempt on this building. In the 1970’s came what is called a jihad, to overthrow the Shah in Iran; and the anti-western militancy has been growing ever since. Dissidents are making broadcasts across the Middle East, and sadly a significant number are paying attention to the aims of these extremists. The modern media has a considerable influence on society, and if directed by the unscrupulous, influences the thinking of people who are, to a degree, lacking in their objectivity towards world trends.

A surprising calculation has recently come to light as follows:-

“The average American child will have seen around 10,000 violent deaths on television by the age of 10, as an estimated 25,000 by the time they have completed their schooling.”

To simulate death by violence as an entertainment is not of any real benefit to young minds, and raises the question, “Can things get any better for a world which has gone in this direction?”

Jesus warned of the coming of such a trend, adding that “When ye shall see all these things know that (I) am near.”

**"...THOU SETTEST A PRINT UPON THE HEELS
OF MY FEET"
Job 13:27**

Our verse under consideration is a part of Job's response to his "friends" who accused him of disobeying God, and therefore he must be evil. In the beginning of Job's testing, he was accused by an adversary, a Satan, one who was jealous of Job's prosperity and his reverence for God. God Himself said to the adversary:

"... Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" Job 1:8.

God asked the adversary to consider Job - or, to set his heart upon Job, to know his spirit, his subjection to God. The adversary set his heart upon Job, not to praise or to honor him, but to show his enmity against Job because of his subjection to God. Such enmity, jealousy, evil thinking goes back to the beginning of God's creation, when Adam and Eve were beguiled by the serpent, the adversary, when he said:

"... Ye shall not surely die." Genesis 3:4.

This was contrary to God's one commandment not to eat of the forbidden fruit, "... lest ye die." As a consequence of Adam and Eve's disobedience God sentenced all men to die. He said to the serpent:

"... 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 (the seed of the serpent) shalt bruise his heel." Genesis 3:15.

Thus began the enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent - the adversary. Job experienced this enemy who falsely accused him - that if God took away Job's riches, his family, his servants, then he would curse God. Job did not! Instead, he stood fast, subject to God. The accuser then said:

"But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face." Job 2:5.

God did so, and still Job did not curse God, but kept his integrity and justified God's trust in his spirit of obedience.

At times Job was dismayed by the affliction which God placed upon him, to reveal his spiritual strength. He was accused of being a liar, a hypocrite, one who was proud, subject to himself and not to God. In these times of testing, he replied to his three "friends" who

came and accused him as part of God's testing, to show these adversaries that Job's faith and integrity would not fail him. He said to Zophar - one of these "friends" who accused him of being a hypocrite:

"... thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.

Thou puttest my feet also in the stocks, and lookest narrowly unto all my paths; thou settest a print upon the heels of my feet." Job 13:26-27.

Here was the work of the enmity, the adversary, in condemning, looking narrowly - looking with the eyes of the enemy, ready to accuse, to pull down, and to deceive, even as the serpent did in the garden. When God asked the adversary:

"... Whence comest thou?..." Job 1:7.

The adversary replied:

"... From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it." Job 1:7.

What was his purpose in "going to and fro in the earth" and "walking up and down in it?"

Peter reveals why, and warns:

"Be sober, be vigilant (aware, watchful); because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished (enjoined) in your brethren that are in the world.

But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect (like Job), stablish, strengthen, settle you."

I Peter 5:8-10.

The adversary does walk to and fro, seeking to deceive the faithful, tempting them to turn from serving God to serving the flesh, which is in the world:

"... the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." I John 2:16.

Even Jesus was tempted by the adversary, but never sinned, never wavered from His determination to glorify His Father, until He could cry out from the cross: "It is finished" - as He achieved

victory over His flesh nature. He thereby bruised the serpent in the head, crucifying His flesh. After His resurrection, the Lord Jesus appeared to His apostles. Thomas, not being present, said:

“... Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.”
John 20:25.

Later, Thomas did see the print of the nails in His hands and feet, and believed it was indeed Jesus raised from the dead!

Paul wrote to his Galatian brethren concerning the print of the nails:

“... God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.” Galatians 6:14,17.

The word “marks” means a stigma in the Greek. Paul figuratively bore the stigma of Jesus Christ in his body, identifying himself as one who was struggling to crucify his flesh, was determined to retain his integrity; and, like Job, “... one that feareth God, an upright man, and escheweth evil.”

Job, as he faced a time of tribulation, proved himself a God-fearing man, as he struggled to crucify his flesh. He was identified by the “print upon (his) heels” as he fought against the adversary, conquering him, as he expressed his mind:

“For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.”
Job 19:25.

From the time of Adam and Eve, there have been a few who, like Job, have feared God, have eschewed evil, and have borne in their bodies the marks (the stigma) of the Lord Jesus. They will stand before His judgment seat when He returns to gather His people. They are of the seed of the woman, and will hope to hear those longed-for words of the Lord Jesus:

“... Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

Matthew 25:34.

J.A.DeF.

A BIBLE CLASS

“Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.” Romans 14:1

In studying the afore-mentioned verse, the context of the chapter helps us to understand why Paul was writing to his Roman brethren in the spirit of edifying those of God’s household.

There may be many differing opinions among many members - not to do with matters of faith or doctrine, but of a practical nature, and to this end he said:

“Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.”

For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.

Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not;

and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.” Romans 14:1-3.

Those strong in faith must realize to push these smaller matters of daily living to “doubtful disputations” could cause a brother to stumble in faith.

“Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way.” Romans 14:13

Something as basic as diet, whether one is a vegetarian or a meat-eater, or esteeming one day over another is not significant in the bigger picture and to push one’s own views on another is not in the spirit of brotherly love. To the Corinthians Paul also wrote in like manner:

“As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.

For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,)

But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all

things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.

Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.

But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.

But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak."

I Corinthians 8:4-9.

There must have been many in Paul's time during the establishment of the early ecclesias who looked upon things offered to idols, as was common place in Roman times and sold in the marketplace, as offensive. Therefore, if a brother strong in faith persuaded a weaker brother to eat, while it bothered his conscience, it was looked upon by God as sin:

"All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.

Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. Whatsoever is sold in the shambles (market place), that eat, asking no question for conscience sake:

For THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S AND THE FULNESS THEREOF."

I Corinthians 10:23-26.

This was Paul's mind as he taught not only his brethren at Corinth but those in the ecclesia at Rome, to help them realize that those of a stronger faith must protect the weaker in their midst. This thought continues in Romans chapter 15:

"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.

For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, THE REPROACHES OF THEM THAT REPROACHED THEE FELL ON ME."

Romans 15:1-3.

God has provided a family environment in this life that we may love and support one another as brethren and sisters under

the Father's guidance. We all have different weaknesses, but where is the love for one another evident if we push our personal views on one who may be weak in faith - and tear down instead of build up that brother or sister? As Paul goes on to say in the 13th chapter of I Corinthians, that even the gifts of tongues or prophecy are worthless in God's sight, if not used in love.

"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." Phillipians 2-4.

M.C.S.

SIGNS OF HIS COMING

“ - - - In the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them - - - to turn thine hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations. - - -”

(Ezekiel 38:8 & 12)

The coming into being of the land of Israel in the twentieth century is a miraculous fulfilment. It could never have been but for the overruling of heaven, to fulfil the prophecy as given through God's servant Ezekiel.

Over the years, Palestine as it was first named, and now Israel, there has been much trouble between Arab and Jew. But Arab hostility did not deter the Jew. As the decades moved on, Jews continued to make the great effort needed, to leave those various countries where they were born, to become permanent residents in the land of their forefathers. Today, the Jews in that area formerly known as Palestine, outnumber Arabs by just a little under three persons to one. It has been a tremendous achievement. As Ezekiel declared, Israel is a land “brought back from the sword”, a nation that has been “gathered out of many people”. With great enterprise the Jews have worked with an excellent efficiency to cause “the desolate places” to become inhabited.

In the territory known as Gaza, which in Old Testament times was the land of the Philistines, and unlike in Israel proper, and also the area known as the West Bank, Arabs greatly outnumber the Jew. Israel's Prime Minister has now moved out the Jewish minority. He has been wise. The Arab majority of Gaza hated Israel being the overlord of Gaza. Not since Old Testament times has there been a Jewish majority in the coastal strip of dunes and scrub that is Gaza. Palestinians in Gaza are descendants of Arabs who fled from Israel proper, when it was established in 1948. Then, in 1967, at the time of the Israeli victory of the Six Day War, Gaza came under Jewish rule. The Jewish army was dominant, and doubtless because, for example, hundreds of thousands of Jews were ejected from some Arab countries in the 1950's, the Jews felt not much conscience about what they had done. However over the years since, it was obvious that the Arabs of Gaza found Israel's control difficult to tolerate,

security became important because, in many surreptitious ways, Arabs caused suffering to Jewish families. Israel's leader came to feel it is better to live peacefully with the other side; to separate instead of fighting over territory, such as Gaza, which is not such an elegant piece of former Palestine. One elder Israeli statesman made the plea;-

" - - - not to turn our nation that escaped slavery in ancient Egypt into a nation of masters in the land of Israel. - - -"

Israel's Prime Minister who was previously known for a stern stance against people in the Arab opposition, responded to the thinking, that in leaving Gaza to the Arabs, this can lead to a peaceful existence with these people. Of course, initially, when he began to organise a withdrawal of Jews from Gaza, those of the minority in Gaza were quite perturbed. However when the time came, the majority of the Jews in Gaza accepted compensation, leaving those Jewish settlements. But there were some hard-liners who hung on, and so were forced out of their houses by police and soldiers from Israel. Sadly there were one or two violent incidents of Jewish settlers firing on Palestinians, resulting in Arab retaliation. The Israeli Prime Minister called this Jewish extremism, terrorism. It was, however, meant that a Gaza agreement would succeed. Did not the scripture foretell it? Concerning this land, Ezekiel declared that:-

" - - - it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them." (Ezekiel 38:8)

Ezekiel adds that the Jews, at this latter end:-

" - - - are at rest, that dwell safely. - - -" (Ezekiel 38:11)

As the Israeli Prime Minister was experiencing this difficulty of a minority Jewish opposition to his plan for peace concerning Gaza, the Palestinian President came to his aid, condemning the responding Arab violence. He pleaded for calm, saying that a killing that occurred of a Jew by an Arab was "a terrorist incident", meant to sabotage the Gaza pull out. Jewish settlers showed considerable antagonism, many of them burnt their homes rather than leave them to the Palestinians, also exhuming their dead, taking their bones with them. But the unpopular measure of leaving Gaza has worked out. It is a fulfilment even as the restored land of Israel is a fulfilment.

It had to be, leading to the coming of the Lord from heaven, to establish Israel as the centre of world government, and Jerusalem as the metropolis of God's Kingdom.

NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS FOR FEBRUARY 2006

Hamburg, NEW YORK, Corner Southwestern Blvd. & Pleasant Avenue.

Sunday: Breaking of Bread 11:30am

Sunday Afternoon Class: 1:45pm

Midweek Bible Class: Forestville, Hamburg & Fredonia

Every Third Week: Revelation Study

As the winter begins to wind down, we look forward to the nearness of spring with the singing birds and the coming of the new growth, pointing forward in hope to the coming of Jesus Christ to gather His brethren and sisters to the promised green earth.

The Winter Party is scheduled for February 18th, God willing.

J.A.DeF.

MANCHESTER, Ryecroft Hall, Audenshaw.

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11.00 a.m.

Thursdays: Bible Class 2.00 p.m.

From time to time letters are received which show some interest in our position, and in our magazine. It is a casting of "bread upon the waters".
(Ecclesiastes 11:1)