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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

“FIRE CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN”

In our recent reading, we have considered the temple, as promised to David, built by Solomon. Our portion today begins:

“Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house.

And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.”

II Chronicles 7:1,3.

Thus the divine promises made to David were partially fulfilled in Solomon: that there would be a son, a king, a throne, a kingdom, a house that would last forever. The work of building the house was finished in 1004 BC, amidst great rejoicing in Israel. The Almighty was long-suffering; His mercy enduring, but some 400 years later, the temple was destroyed by fire, when Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem, ending the existence of Israel as a nation, because of their failure to keep the Lord’s commandments - serving self rather than God.

We remember how God promised David those sure mercies, and how David responded:

“...Who am I, O LORD God, and what is mine house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?

And yet this was a small thing in thine eyes, O God; for thou hast also spoken of thy servant’s house for a great while to come, and hast regarded me according to the estate of a man of high degree, O LORD God.” I Chronicles 17:16-17.

David was a faithful servant of God; indeed, he was called a man after God’s own heart. He did fail, but was forgiven by the Almighty as he quickly confessed: “I have sinned against the LORD....” (II Samuel 12:13)

His son, Solomon, also was a servant of God as he began to reign over Israel, asking for wisdom and understanding so that he could faithfully govern so great a people. Following the plan that the Almighty had given to David, Solomon completed the building of the temple, and God accepted Solomon's work; the fire came down from heaven, and His glory filled the house. We can imagine Solomon's rejoicing, in awe, as he saw the glory of God filling that house and consuming the sacrifices upon the altar. As he grew older, he turned away from being a servant of God, to serving idols. His many wives turned away his heart from God. It is striking that of all the kings of Israel, from Saul to Zedekiah, there were only a few - David, Hezekiah, and Josiah - who were faithful servants of God. Even they failed at times, but showed repentance, and so were forgiven by the ever-enduring mercy of God toward His people. The only King who never failed - a true servant of God - was Jesus Christ, His promised Son.

When Solomon finished the temple, saw the fire which came down from heaven, and the glory of God which filled the temple, he kept a feast:

"Also at the same time Solomon kept the feast seven days, and all Israel with him....

And in the eighth day they made a solemn assembly: for they kept the dedication of the altar seven days, and the feast seven days.

And on the three and twentieth day of the seventh month he sent the people away into their tents, glad and merry in heart for the goodness that the LORD had shewed unto David, and to Solomon, and to Israel his people."

II Chronicles 7:8-10:

Under the law, the feast of tabernacles was to be kept from the 15th day of the seventh month for seven days (Leviticus 23:36). During this feast they were "to offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD." How fitting that the dedication of the house occurred during the time of the feast of tabernacles - pointing forward to the time of the establishment of the kingdom of God under the hand of the Lord Jesus.

There were other occasions when the fire of God descended from heaven. In the wilderness, when Moses and Israel had finished and assembled the tabernacle:

“... Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of the congregation, and came out, and blessed the people: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the people. And there came a fire out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces.”
Leviticus 9:23-24.

We don't know what they shouted, but it may have been “Hallelujah” - praise ye the LORD - even as John saw and heard in our recent study in Revelation chapter 19.

Not all of Israel moved in fear of the Almighty as they saw the glory and the fire! Nadab and Abihu, Aaron's sons:

“... took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.” Leviticus 10:1-2.

Nadab and Abihu usurped the office of Aaron their father in offering incense. There was “strange fire” in their censers. “Strange” means foreign or profane, as in the strange woman spoken of in The Proverbs. The presumption and lack of perception of Nadab and Abihu caused the power of God to come down in the form of fire and it consumed them there before the LORD. They failed to glorify Him, but rather, glorified themselves. God's mercy does endure forever, but only for those who are striving to be His servants, doing His work, carrying out His will, rather than “... the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.”

There were others who saw and rejoiced in the fire of God as it was revealed to His servants. Gideon was one called of God to go against the Midianites, enemies of Israel. He asked for a sign from God - Judges 6:17. The angel who talked with Gideon told him to put his offering “upon this rock” - and he did so:

“Then the angel put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes.”
Judges 6:21.

Gideon, strengthened by the fire from heaven, went forth and conquered the Midianites as he and Israel shouted: "... The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon" (Judges 7:20).

Elijah knew the hand of God working on his behalf as he challenged the 450 priests of Baal:

"... call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God..."
I Kings 18:24.

The priests of Baal prayed all day, but no fire came down to consume their offering. Elijah poured water upon the altar which he had built for his sacrifice, and called upon the Almighty:

"Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.

Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD he is the God; the LORD, he is the God."
I Kings 18:37-39.

The faithful servants of the Almighty knew His power on their behalf as they bowed down before the Lord to give glory to Him.

The apostles received the power of the Holy Spirit as they gathered together after Jesus' ascent unto His Father:

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance"

Acts 2:1-4.

Here they received the power of the Holy Spirit, as Jesus had promised before He ascended to His Father. Having received that power, when "cloven tongues like as of fire... sat upon each of them," they were enabled to speak in many languages in order to preach the gospel to the surrounding countries. They rejoiced and were prepared for this work through the power of God's Holy Spirit, and were able to do miracles as they witnessed to His Word.

We, Brethren and Sisters, do not actually see the fire which comes down from heaven. We are not able to do miracles, even though having been born of water and of the spirit at baptism, into the death of the Lord Jesus. In rising from the water a new person, cleansed from sin, we have the hope of eternal life as heirs of the promises to Israel, as Paul writes:

"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.
And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Galatians 3:26-27,29.

Having been baptized into Christ, we are blessed to meet together each first day of the week to remember God's grace in the provision of His Son as our Mediator and means of atonement. If we meet in a way that is pleasing to God, His Presence can be with us, as Jesus taught:

"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Matthew 18:20.

How do we gather in His name? Paul makes this very clear as he wrote to his Ephesian brethren concerning the work of Jesus:

"For through him (Jesus Christ) we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.
Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the spirit." Ephesians 2:18-22.

As we meet together each first day of the week, as we partake of the bread and wine, are we not partaking of God's mercy which endureth forever, feeling the power of His Spirit and seen in the provision of the Lord Jesus? Let us then heed the words of Paul:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present (yield) your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

Romans 12:1.

May His Presence be with us, to consume our living sacrifice through the fire of His Holy Spirit. Is this not our earnest prayer?

J.A.DeF.

THE BREAD OF LIFE

In our recent portions from the book of John, we read of the multitudes following Jesus as he went from town to town to preach the word. They brought the sick and lame to be healed and to see the miracles He performed:

"After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias.

And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased."

John 6:1-2.

We may well imagine the excitement created upon hearing of one healing and making whole the infirmed. Many would be curious to see these miracles for themselves, not necessarily seeking the Truth of His words, and so the multitude swelled into the thousands. It was this same multitude numbering at least five thousand men who were fed by Jesus with the five barley loaves and two small fishes as we read:

“When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?

And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.

One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, saith unto him,

There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?

And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.” John 6:5-6,8-10.

There may have been many more in the crowd, since it just speaks of the number of “men” being five thousand. The Lord Jesus gave thanks to God for the food provided and distributes it to the disciples who passed the food amongst the multitude. When all were filled, he instructed that the fragments be gathered and we are told:

“Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.

Then those men, where they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.” John 6:13-14.

They perceived this was a great prophet - the One for whom they had been waiting, the Messiah. But when Jesus knew they would make Him a king by force, he quickly departed, knowing this was not yet in God’s purpose:

“When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.” John 6:15.

The next day when the people realized Jesus and His disciple had departed, they went to Capernaum looking for Him, however, when they arrived, the Lord knowing their minds, said to them:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.

Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."

John 6:26-27.

Jesus was not preaching the word to make Himself King, but rather to turn the hearts of these people back to God, that they may perceive Him as the Son through whom they could find salvation. They flocked to Him to observe miracles and be fed, but did they really believe?

"But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not."

John 6:36.

To "believe" on the Lord Jesus, required more than a casual observance from within the crowd, but a working in faith, learning the word and using it in one's living to put away fleshly tendencies and walk after His example. This reminds us of the Lord Jesus' words recorded in Luke:

"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

Luke 9:23.

This is the "work" required in following Him - to deny oneself and take up the burden of exercising the spirit man against one's natural carnal nature.

"Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.

While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light."

John 12:35-36.

These words were not new to Israel - they were spoken however, by the One sent as the fulfilment promised, through the law, psalms and prophets. Isaiah's words written hundreds of years before the Lord Jesus' birth, are clearly similar:

"Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”
Isaiah 55:6-7.

Even though the multitudes had witnessed healing miracles and the feeding of thousands, they still sought a sign to prove that Jesus was the Messiah promised:

“They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? What dost thou work?

Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, HE GAVE THEM BREAD FROM HEAVEN TO EAT.

Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.

For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.”
John 6:30-35.

Only this bread gives sustenance to the spirit man through an active faith and belief, that he may labor on to gain strength in fighting against the man of flesh.

These words exhort us today how we should seek that One who has made this hope of life possible - the “bread of life” which can sustain and feed us if we truly labor to follow after His example.
M.C.S.

"THE HOLOCAUST"

"For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land:

and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob.

And the people shall take them, and bring them to their place; and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the LORD for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captives, whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors." (Isaiah 14:1-2)

The above quotation has a reference to Babylon of old. But very often in scripture more than one fulfilment is indicated. In the context (of Isaiah ch.14) a wonderful hope to the Jew is given in the following:-

"What shall one then answer the messengers of the nation? That the LORD hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust in it." (Margin, shall betake themselves unto it.) (verse 32)

The twentieth century saw an appalling time for Jewish people. Since the conclusion of the Second World War, each January brings back an horrific memory called the "Holocaust Memorial Day". This yearly occasion brings to remembrance the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp, where more than three million people were murdered, due to the scheming of a German leadership without normal basic humanity.

Last year was the sixtieth year since the victory over the tyranny of Auschwitz, but that was only a part of the evil. Another three million people perished in hundreds of smaller death camps. They were largely Jewish people, marched into woods where they were shot and buried in pits and quarries. Local people then stole their former homes and confiscated their assets to themselves. The evil of this Nazi behaviour, which moved a national Government to undermine basic justice and fail the upholding of law and order, brings to mind God's prophetic pronouncements concerning times of Jewish suffering. Of course, most of the Jews who survived that horrendous time, are now passed away. But while they lived, they had horrendous memories of unimaginable barbarous state cruelty;

and this from people who professed to be civilised! Last year at the 60th commemoration of victory over the Nazis, representatives of various governments and of communal leaders, went to Auschwitz to lament at this mass cemetery, which is the world's largest, all those murdered people. It marked the most indiscriminate killing of people of any faith. Almost half of the world's Jews perished at that time. A cry now goes out "Never again"; and that "We must remember the Holocaust to battle against racist murders of the present and future".

But racism is still very evident. The Muslim Council of Britain would not get itself involved with anything to do with the recent Holocaust Memorial Day. It is also significant that the leader of Iran has proclaimed:-

"Today (the Jews) have created a myth in the name of Holocaust, and considered it to be above God, religion and the Prophet."

Seeking to unite anti-Semites worldwide Iran proclaims that there was no Auschwitz, and no gas chambers. It is obviously anti-Israel and is planning a "Holocaust Denial Conference". So over sixty years after the appalling Jewish suffering there is still an unhappy situation. A dark, ominous threat hovers about the Middle East. However, Israel, through God's merciful overruling still has its friends. The American President and the British Prime Minister, who supports him, are for Israel, but are against Iran.

There is of course God's wonderful promise, and what a hope this promise gives:-

"For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land; and the strangers shall be joined with them - - -." (Isaiah 14:1)

The anti-Semitism of Iran and of those joined with her sentiments will not prevail; God has infallibly declared:-

"- - - the Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust in it." (Isaiah 14:32)

A BIBLE CLASS

“THE DEW OF HERMON”

Psalm 133:3

Our consideration is a Song of Ascent - a going up to Zion, perhaps sung as His people were going up to Zion (Jerusalem) to worship God or to keep a feast. The first verse of this song reveals the mind of those going up:

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”
Psalm 133:1.

To dwell in unity involves living together, having the same mind, the same desires. Adam exclaimed as Eve was created out of his rib:

“... This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh”
Genesis 2.23-24.

Brethren dwelling in unity are one: one body, one mind, one hope, one faith, united in one purpose, to please their Creator. We read further David’s words as he meditated upon this unity:

“It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments.”
Psalm 133:2.

The anointing of Aaron, the high priest, took place in accordance with God’s instructions to Moses on Mt. Sinai:

“... thou shalt take the garments, and put upon Aaron the coat, and the robe of the ephod, and the ephod, and the breastplate, and gird him with the curious girdle of the ephod:

And thou shalt put the mitre upon his head, and put the holy crown upon the mitre.

Then shalt thou take the anointing oil, and pour it upon his head, and anoint him”
Exodus 29:5-7.

“Anoint” in the Hebrew comes from a root meaning Messiah - the anointed one - pointing forward to the consecrating of Christ (Anointed) as the One who would be The High Priest. Thus Aaron was consecrated as the high priest by the anointing oil upon his

head, upon which was the mitre with the engraving: "HOLINESS TO THE LORD." The anointing oil flowed down Aaron's beard, and down to the skirts of his garments, which included the bells and pomegranates upon the hem. It was through the work of the anointed high priest that his people could approach unto God under the law. The Lord Jesus, the Anointed of God, is the means of His people's being united as the one body, which God has ordained.

The last verse of this Song of Ascent likens the anointing of the high priest to the anointing of Jesus, as the "dew of Hermon" and of the "mountains of Zion." Mount Hermon is the highest mountain in Israel, being over 9,100 feet in height. Its top is always covered with snow. It is one of the sources of the Jordan River which flows southward through Israel until it empties into the Dead Sea. Being covered with snow as well as the highest point in Israel, heavy dew condenses upon the mountain, providing much needed water for Israel, before emptying into the Dead Sea. The "dew of Hermon" provides the life-giving water for the crops along the Jordan, even as the dew in the wilderness provided the manna that kept Israel alive during their 40 years of wandering. This provision of the water of life is likened to the anointing of the high priest, as the ointment flowed down his beard, to his skirts, as he was consecrated by Moses, at God's command. The dew also was provided "upon the mountains of Zion" - the hills of Jerusalem - where the blessing of eternal life will be granted by the Lord Jesus to those who have been judged acceptable, those who are brethren, and have dwelt together in unity during their probation.

As Moses finished conveying God's word to His people, he spoke of the dew:

"My doctrine (teaching) shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass:

Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God.' Deuteronomy 32:2-3.

The word of God is essential to life! Without it there is no hope of "the blessing, even life for evermore." The Almighty provides the fulfilment of His word in the consecrating of The High Priest, Jesus Christ, for those who "dwell together in unity" through obedience to that Word made flesh, the Lord Jesus. John helps us, as he writes:

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." John 1:14.

John was privileged to see, hear and touch the Lord Jesus, as He taught of Himself - the Christ, the Anointed of God.

As we struggle to go up to Zion, let us press on in hope, in prayer, if yet with fear, that we might know the blessing which is to be bestowed upon those who, during probation, have been joined in unity, dwelling together, all having that same goal.

J.A.DeF.

FAITH AND BELIEF

In our recent portions from the Hebrews, we read of Paul's familiar words regarding the importance of faith:

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

For by it the elders obtained a good report."

Hebrews 11:1-2.

Paul brought forward the example of those of old to his Hebrew brethren, and to us today, to illustrate how vital is the presence of faith in our living - for without it we cannot please 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 11:6.

He spoke of many from times past who obtained a good report through their faith. From Abel and his "more excellent sacrifice", to Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah and Jacob who dwelt in tents because he looked for a future dwelling place - the kingdom which God had promised.

God's plan created the earth as a dwelling place for man who was created in His image. When we think of the eons that the world has existed, we know from history how much the lives of men have changed to the present day, yet God Himself and His purpose is unchangeable. The rising and setting of the sun, the seasons in their order one after another, keep time in the same manner in which He created them. He is the true constant in this world - steadfast and unchangeable from the beginning, and what He created in the beginning was good:

“... THOU, LORD, IN THE BEGINNING HAST LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH; AND THE HEAVENS ARE THE WORKS OF THINE HANDS: THEY SHALL PERISH; BUT THOU REMAINEST; AND THEY ALL SHALL WAX OLD AS DOTHS A GARMENT; AND AS A VESTURE SHALT THOU FOLD THEM UP, AND THEY SHALL BE CHANGED; BUT THOU ART THE SAME, AND THY YEARS SHALL NOT FAIL.”

Hebrews 1:10-12.

There is no purpose in faith if there is not an end result to that faith. From the beginning God created a plan predicated upon man's obedience to His word - a reward for the faithful. Man failed in obedience, but God in mercy provided an alternative covering for man's sin through the blood of sacrifice. Paul starts this epistle to the Hebrews by preaching of this sacrifice - the Lord Jesus Christ:

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;”

Hebrews 1:1-3.

Right from the beginning, God's plan provided for One to inherit God's creation through perfect obedience to Him, and thus open the door for His brethren to follow - those who in faith believe on Him and are redeemed through His blood.

Paul was speaking to the Hebrews, those schooled in the law

from the time of Moses, but who had become so steeped in the letter of the law that they did not perceive the saving spirit of redemption contained within.

Isaiah was sent as a prophet to instruct God's people at a much earlier time, bringing the same message of hope:

"Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me.

I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.

Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel."

Isaiah 44:21-23.

The power of God alone has created all things - the soaring mountains, lush valleys and forests - a beautiful habitation for man's pleasure and use. Isaiah was speaking of these wonders saying, "Remember these, O Jacob" and believe! Regardless of the intellectual advances of science, technology or medicine in the world, man's own way will not prosper unto life. Only as one submits to God's plan with a simple belief and faith is inheritance possible in the dwelling place He has promised at the end of His purpose.

"Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

I Corinthians 1:20-21.

Man thinks of himself as wise, but it is a shallow wisdom based on fleshly knowledge, with its end resulting in the grave. Through science, man has become so wise in his own conceits that God's simple plan of obedience and faith appears as foolishness to a "man of the world". Yet it is only armed with God's instruments of faith and belief that one can conquer the impulses of the flesh by

submitting with humility to God's hand. The spirit through faith works a yielding of the flesh in order to glorify God through a humble walk, endeavoring to emulate the spirit of the Lord Jesus.

Christ's faith was without fault and therefore He perfectly glorified the Father through His obedience, thus becoming the unblemished Lamb as typified at the Passover feast. After careful observation, the lamb was slain and its blood painted upon the doorposts, protecting those within that house from death. This simply was God's plan - teaching of His Son's birth, work and death as a Redeemer for those that believe on Him and seek to be part of His household - covered by His blood.

Today we now look in faith for His return, awaiting with those of old, who have fallen asleep in faith, for the gathering together of all who have sought to please Him through sacrifice, denial, faith and belief during their time of probation.

What help these words to the Hebrews are to us today, reminding of the necessity of both faith and belief in God's word and purpose if we hope to share in the glories of His kingdom at His Son's return.

M.C.S.

SIGNS OF HIS COMING

"Ashkelon shall see it, and fear; Gaza also shall see it, and be very sorrowful, and Ekron; for her expectation shall be ashamed - - -

And I will take away his blood out of his mouth - - - but he that remaineth, even he, shall be for our God, and he shall be as a Governer in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite.

And I will encamp about mine house because of the army, because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth: AND NO OPPRESSOR SHALL PASS THROUGH THEM ANY MORE - - -"

(Zechariah 9:5 & 7-8)

January brought power to the terrorist group in Palestine, Arab elections took place there, and people claiming to be Muslim fundamentalists were given a predominant position by the Palestinians who supported them.

This group, now raised up into an influential position, have been guilty of directing suicide bombings, and of attacks upon bus transport, for example. It is a situation which does not speak well of Palestinian people who can give support to such indiscriminate violence.

Things had been looking better when the former Palestinian Government President had been negotiating with Israel to bring about a peaceful reconciliation. But his work is obviously not appreciated by many, by their voting in of the organisation which in recent years are said to have arranged at least 60 suicide attacks killing hundreds of blameless Israeli civilians. This political change in Palestine has brought problems for the United States and Britain. The United States President has said about this coming to power of the terrorist group, "the United States will not deal with Palestinian leaders who dispute Israel's right to exist - if your platform is the destruction of Israel, you are not a partner in peace, and we are interested in peace." The British Prime Minister declared this new influence in Palestine "must renounce violence or face being shunned - it is important for them to understand there comes a point where they have to decide between a path of democracy or a path of violence." But what did this new Arab leadership say to this? Their leader declared this startling change is "a victory for resistance!" Reasonable minds might raise the question "resistance to what?" Especially when hopeful negotiations had been taking

place between Israel and the previous Palestine leadership.

What of Israel's position now? Its acting Premier has made its position clear, he has declared:- "Israel will not conduct any negotiation with a Palestinian Government, if it includes any members of an armed terror organisation that calls for Israel's destruction." The stalled previous peace process has obviously been thrown into turmoil, with Israel's describing of these new Arab leaders as belonging to an "armed terror organisation".

It is a situation which brings the ancient prophecy to mind:

"--- a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod ---." (Zechariah 9:6)

But God through the prophecy also declares the solution to this unwholesome situation:-

"I will cut off the pride of the Philistines." (Zech 9:6)

Arab enmity against the Jew, and their lack of concern for a people who have so greatly suffered in recent times, do not consider that the Most High is looking down upon that Middle East situation. The word of God and the outcome that is foretold cannot be altered:-

"--- no oppressor shall pass through them any more:

FOR NOW HAVE I SEEN WITH MINE EYES."

(Zechariah 9:8)

It is possible some may say that these passages of scripture actually relate to the past, and so have been fulfilled already. Such a suggestion overlooks a most important and decisive witness in God's word as to the time of the fulfilment of these words of God's prophet:-

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation ---.

The battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the nations: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, --- even to the ends of the earth."

(Zechariah 9:9-10)

The present situation in the Middle East is indicative of fulfilment of prophecy, now taking place around Israel and its environs, a potent sign of the coming of God's King, to bring deliverance to Israel and salvation of the Jews.

NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS FOR APRIL 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

Continued counsel and help from our brethren in Manchester brings guidance in the work of His house. We are grateful for this blessing and evidence of the fellowship of the Truth.

J.A.DeF.

MANCHESTER

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11.00 a.m.

Thursdays: Bible Class 2.00 p.m.

Various contacts we have cause us to require the help of counsel. How grateful we feel that our American Brethren and Sisters gladly give consideration to what to say, towards directing us, along with our own careful deliberations, in how to respond to those who approach us.