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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

“WHOM SHALL I SEND?”

In recent readings, we have seen the transfer of the leadership of Israel from Moses to Joshua. The Almighty spoke to Joshua:

“Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.

There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swear unto their fathers to give them.”
Joshua 1:2,5-6.

God had provided a leader (Moses) to bring His people out from Egypt, through the Red Sea, through 40 years in the wilderness; and He provided Joshua to bring them into their promised inheritance. Joshua had been with Moses and had seen the trials he faced during those 40 years. God encouraged Joshua, knowing that he also would face great trials:

“Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.

Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage: be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.”

Joshua 1:7,9.

Over the years, the Almighty provided one to lead Israel: Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Caleb, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel; also His Son, Jesus Christ, Paul, Peter, John, and many others. In spite of God’s provision, Israel did not obey those leaders, but rebelled, until going into captivity, which was the end of the nation of Israel!

Why was Joshua chosen of God to lead Israel? It was because of his faithfulness, along with Caleb’s, at Kadesh-barnea, when 12 men (one from each tribe) were sent at God’s command to spy out the land. After 40 days, the twelve returned and reported to Moses:

“... We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and

surely it floweth with milk and honey;...

Nevertheless (BUT) the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there. And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said: Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it."

Numbers 13:27-28,30.

Joshua and Caleb further spoke:

"If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey.

Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; ... fear them not.

But all the congregation bade stone them with stones...."

Numbers 14:8-10.

The land was flowing with milk and honey, and was to be given to them by God; but they feared the people of the land more than they feared God. Only Moses, Joshua and Caleb trusted that God would give them the land as He had promised. Forty years later, just two people - Joshua and Caleb - did enter the land, from that generation. The rest who said: "Nevertheless" - died in the wilderness, due to their unbelief! Joshua was strong and courageous, and so was chosen to lead Israel into the land.

The Almighty strengthened Joshua and Israel, as they approached the river Jordan with its overflowing banks:

"... This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee."

Joshua 3:7.

Joshua, trusting in God's promises, led Israel through the Jordan; God stopped the overflowing river as the ark was carried to the middle of Jordan. Trusting in God, Israel went over on dry ground, and they went into the land as the Almighty had promised. As they did so, not doubting, without rebellion, no "buts," God was with Israel, as Joshua led them into the land promised to Abraham almost 500 years previously. The land was conquered and divided to each tribe and family as their inheritance, taking 25 years to accomplish this. We read of the end of Joshua's leadership:

“And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old.

And Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the LORD, that he had done for Israel”
Joshua 24:29,31.

Joshua, “the servant of the LORD,” led Israel into their inheritance, never doubting, not questioning, not saying: “Yes, but” as he submitted to God’s guidance. Are we not helped as we consider the strength, the courage, the obedience of Joshua? He relied upon God as he led Israel - pointing forward to God’s promises to be accomplished when the latter-day Joshua (Jesus) returns to gather those who, in obedience, have bowed down before God, and have learned to overcome by not doubting, and not saying: “but ...” or “nevertheless”!

We are further helped in our reading of Isaiah. He was one of God’s prophets, whom God, “rising early,” sent. Isaiah saw a vision (Isaiah 6:1-4), and he responded:

“... Woe is me! for I am undone (to be dumb or silent); because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.”
Isaiah 6:5.

The vision continued, as Isaiah felt himself unworthy to be a leader in Israel. He was encouraged, and, as in the vision, his unclean lips were cleansed:

“... Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.
Also I heard the voice of the LORD, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Hear am I; send me.”
Isaiah 6:7-8.

God did send Isaiah as His prophet to the two tribes, after the other ten tribes were taken into captivity in Assyria. They refused to submit to God’s word, trusting in false gods, and their own desires. A few years later, the next king of Assyria threatened Hezekiah, king of Judah, stating that he would capture Jerusalem. In addition, Hezekiah was threatened by a fatal disease. In his distress he called upon God through Isaiah, who had helped him to be subject to God, saying:

"... Remember now O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight: And Hezekiah wept sore."
Isaiah 38:3.

God answered Hezekiah's plea through Isaiah:

"... I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years.
And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city.
And this shall be a sign unto thee from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that he hath spoken;
Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward.
So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down."
Isaiah 38:5-8.

The Almighty, realizing that Hezekiah might doubt, gave him a sign that this would come to pass. The city was saved. Because of Hezekiah's trust in God, his life was extended, through God's mercy.

Isaiah was sent as a prophet for Judah during difficult times, teaching, encouraging, rebuking, and carrying out God's words. Of the kings of Judah to whom he was sent - Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah - only Hezekiah responded in a way pleasing to God. The other three had the help of God through His prophet, but they did not submit, did not hearken. Their minds, their hearts were not touched, in spite of God's warning through Isaiah:

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

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

Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah."
Isaiah 1:2-3,9.

Judah knew of God's mercy and grace, but rebelled, except for a few - a remnant - who heard God's word and submitted to it, looking for the blessing promised to those who strive to glorify God now, in the hope of glorifying Him for eternity. Isaiah voiced the hope of that remnant:

“And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD. I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me.

Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.

Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.” Isaiah 12:1-2,6.

This is our hope, Brethren and Sisters, as we respond to God’s mercy. In calling out “Whom shall I send?...” - how do we respond? Like Israel? “Here am I; send me” - rather than the response: I will BUT I have other things to do first? What is our priority? To whom are we ready to submit? Is it to His will, as did the Lord Jesus, when He cried out in the spirit of “Abba, Father”?

J.A.DeF.

THE SONG OF MOSES

We have recently read in Deuteronomy of Moses’ last works before his death. One was the Song of Moses and the second was his blessing to the children of Israel, tribe by tribe. It was at God’s instruction that he composed this unique song:

“Now therefore write ye this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel: put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel.”

Deuteronomy 31:19.

Moses was to rehearse these words in their ears, which would serve as a witness between Him and His people. Why was this necessary? God explained further in verse 20:

“For when I shall have brought them into the land which I swear unto their fathers, that floweth with milk and honey; and they shall have eaten and filled themselves, and waxen fat; then will they turn unto other gods, and serve them, and provoke me, and break my covenant.

And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that this song shall testify against them as a witness; for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed: for I know their imagination which they go about, even now, before I have brought them into the land which I swear.”
Deuteronomy 31: 20-21.

This song was to testify as a witness - one who has heard or seen and gives record. God knew their past weaknesses and failures and this refrain was to serve as a reminder that when they broke His covenant and evil came, they would know the reason why.

In the 32nd chapter of Deuteronomy, we have read Moses' song that gave glory to God for His care and power on their behalf and then outlined their failure to follow His precepts and fulfil their part of the covenant. This song would serve not only as a reminder but a help in the future as well, for Moses said:

“... set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law.

For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life: and through this thing he shall prolong your days in the land, whither ye go over Jordan to possess it.”

Deuteronomy 32:46-47.

Moses urged them to “set their hearts” upon all the words of God's law. It was to be the most important aspect of their living for it was intended as a schoolmaster to bring them to a knowledge of Christ. To follow His covenant was to see God's love and mercy - the means of life at the end of God's purpose.

John, an apostle of the Lord Jesus, saw a vision of this same end promised when given the Revelation, many hundreds of years later:

“And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.

And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.”
Revelation 15:2-3.

Those John saw in vision at the end of God's purpose, were singing the song of Moses and of the Lamb. Going back to Moses'

song in Deuteronomy, this scene of victory before the throne of God is foretold:

“Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people.”
Deuteronomy 32:43.

Further in Revelation, John saw those found approved, singing the song of the Lamb - a new song given only to those privileged to have been redeemed from among men:

“And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads.
And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:
And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand which were redeemed from the earth.”

Revelation 14:1-3.

The song of the redeemed was learned throughout a lifetime of submission and humility, as they sought God and endeavored to follow His covenant. Because of their faithfulness, they were identified as His servants - those joined in fellowship with God and His Son, the Lamb.

David was one who understood the importance of being counted among God’s servants at the end of time. He knew that it took a lifetime of obedience and submitting to God’s word in order to build up the man of spirit within and defeat one’s own carnal nature which constantly wars to gain pre-eminence. Therefore, he pleaded:

“So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

Return, O LORD, how long? And let it repent thee concerning thy servants.

O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.”
Psalm 90:12-14.

These words testify of David’s understanding of the frailty of man, yet also speaks of the promise and hope held out to those who

apply the teaching of the song of Moses in their living.

God's word has been given and preserved throughout the ages that His wisdom may be shared with all who seek to serve Him. Life will not go on forever - there will come a reckoning in this earth one day for both goodness and wickedness, at His Son's return.

God was with Moses - he was His witness and Israel's savior, to bring them out of the bondage of Egypt and into their promised inheritance - a land of goodness and peace. In so doing, while exhibiting God's mighty power used on their behalf, he was a foretaste of the coming Messiah promised:

"And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face,
In all the signs and the wonders, which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land,
And in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses shewed in the sight of all Israel."

Deuteronomy 34:10-12.

Just as Moses song witnessed, "it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life" - we too as believing Gentiles, grafted into the hope of Israel, have been promised an everlasting inheritance, predicated upon our obedience to the covenant established between God and His people. If that endeavor is foremost in our living, we may hope through God's mercy, to be among that throng before His throne that sing:

"...Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty;
just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints."

Revelation 15:3.

M.C.S.

"Who hath believed our report?"
(Isaiah 53:1)

These words of Isaiah, which are prophetic of Jesus Christ our Lord, have a thought provoking application to this very changed modern state of things.

Present day morals are so different to how they were half a century ago. In many of the relationships of young men and women, marriages have broken down, and following the divorce of some there is endeavour in some cases, to start again with someone else; but only for the second attempt to fail.

There is an increase of sad circumstances where there is only a poor temporary commitment, the marriage formality being completely absent!

Looking around at the general behaviour, particularly in the cities, what anger and indifference is displayed. Additionally the dishonesty is greatly increased; and then, in the term of scripture, the words of the Most High, through His prophet come to pass"--- my name continually every day is blasphemed."

Through Isaiah the spirit cries "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" (Isaiah 53:1) There was some emphatic response to the work of Christ's disciples witnessing to Him in those days gone by. But where is inclination to the wonder of Christ's example in much of mankind's modern behaviour? If there was heartfelt appreciation, in these times, of the way shown by Christ, how could there be such lamentable behaviour as seen at present? How true and applicable therefore, is the Spirit's testimony through Isaiah; "who hath believed our report?" The world fails to appreciate Christ!

How lacking now, is acceptance of the Witness of God's Word from Heaven, which describes how this beautiful world developed? So there is mans' wide spread evolution teaching.

An amazing development, near to where the writer of this article lives, is the retired church minister who has taken over a disused chapel, which he says is for the purpose of proclaiming "Christianity without religion." What does he mean? Well, he calls his congregation to what he describes as "coffee and laughter ", and hymns and sermons are put at one side. One of the rooms in

his chapel is a "laughter room". He explains that laughter is as important as prayer. Films of classic comedy are arranged for his congregation to watch, or alternatively, those who are so inclined can read the Sunday newspapers over tea and toast. What a slide away this is, even from a once "conventional form". Of course other groupings, who claim to be Christ's, are likewise only His in "form". The attractions they offer are architecture, music and singing; the importance of Christ's standards where they are concerned, are in the background, if there at all!

One of the great English Churches noticeably makes it possible to believe anything. How can there be "the belief" in this state of things? Truly Isaiah asks the question concerning Christ of what concerns His life, and of the spiritual unity in those who are His, "who hath believed our report?" What is now seen in this present world is indeed a very great sign of our times.

A BIBLE CLASS

"THOU SHALT CALL ME ISHI"

Hoseas 2:16

Hosea - whose name means "a deliverer" - was sent by the Almighty to the ten tribes of Israel. His prophecy was from 785 to 725 BC, ending just prior to the captivity of the ten tribes by Shalmaneser king of Assyria in 721 BC. His work was given of God to help the ten tribes to turn from their evil ways. Their wickedness in serving false gods was an abomination to God, who looked down upon such adulterous behavior. God said to these ten tribes:

"... I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her earrings, and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forsook me, saith the LORD" Hosea 2:13.

God in mercy pleaded through Hosea, reminding Israel of His purpose with them:

"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her." Hosea 2:14.

To "allure" means to make an opening, make simple, to persuade, to enlarge. How would the Almighty open an opportunity to change her ways? By bringing her into the wilderness, and speaking comfortably unto her "Comfortably" is also used as "to the heart" - like Hezekiah did to the inhabitants of Jerusalem when they were under siege by Sennacherib:

"And he set captains of war over the people, and gathered them together ... and spake comfortably to them, saying, Be strong and courageous, ... for there be more with us than with him."
II Chronicles 32:6-7.

God, pleased with Hezekiah's trust, caused Sennacherib to depart from Jerusalem without even shooting an arrow into the city. The Almighty spoke of His bringing the ten tribes into the wilderness, where He would speak to their hearts. God spoke the last words of the Old Testament, saying:

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:
And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."
Malachi 4:5-6.

The Lord Jesus spoke of Elijah being the forerunner of John the Baptist:

"For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.
And if ye will receive it, this is Elias which was for to come"
Matthew 11:13-14.

God further spoke to rebellious Israel:

"... I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came out of the land of Egypt."
Hosea 2:15.

There is to be a "door of hope" - of deliverance - even as Israel was delivered from Egypt; and she will sing again with joy when Jesus Christ returns to restore Israel as the nation over all this earth.

God spoke further to adulterous Israel:

"... it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call me Ishi, and shalt call me no more Baali.

For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth,
and they shall no more be remembered by their name"

Hosea 2.16-17.

In the time of the coming of the Lord Jesus to establish Israel as His kingdom, His people will no more bow down to Baali (false gods), as Israel was doing in the "... days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them" (Hosea 2:13). Instead of Baalim, their true God will be called "Ishi" - my husband. The Almighty spoke of the relationship of Israel with Him:

"... I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies.

I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD.

And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God."

Hosea 2:19-20,23.

Israel did not listen to God's prophet, Hosea, as they clung to their evil worship of Baal. As a result, the ten tribes were taken into captivity and dispersed throughout the earth.

As we listen to Hosea, God's deliverer, let us give heed to the promise made to those who call the Almighty "Ishi" - my husband - in the hope of being betrothed to Him forever by the grace of God through The Deliverer, the Lord Jesus Christ.

J.A.DeF.

THE FIG TREE

We have recently read from the record in Mark of a unique incident involving the Lord Jesus and His disciples as they traveled through the countryside of Bethany:

“And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry:

And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet.

And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.

And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.”

Mark 11:12-14,20.

It was the same fig tree, now dead and withered, at only a word from the Lord Jesus - evidence of His power, to the wonder and amazement of the disciples. As they marveled, the Lord Jesus taught them the point of this lesson, saying:

“... Have faith in God.

For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.”

Mark 11:22-24.

Herein lies the key of the Lord's ministry - “Have faith in God”. He endeavored to instill this same faith in the disciples who would carry on His ministry after His death, resurrection and ascension. He often acknowledged to His disciples that this power within Him was from God, and with faith in Him, all things are possible.

Paul in a similar manner, taught his Hebrew brethren of the importance of faith:

“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.

The Lord Jesus wanted His disciples to have this same absolute faith, for on a previous occasion, they had failed to heal because of their lack:

“...there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying,
Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatic, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.

And I brought him to thy disciples and they could not cure him.” Matthew 17:14-16.

Jesus’ response was direct and uncompromising, for He knew His time with the disciples was short, and they needed to quickly grow in faith in order to carry on the gospel ministry after His death:

“Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me.

And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour.”

Matthew 17:17-18.

After the Lord Jesus’ display of healing, the disciples were no doubt troubled and dismayed, knowing they had been given God’s power, yet had failed to heal this child.

“Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?

And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.”

Matthew 17 :19-21.

Fervent prayer would display their sincerity and earnest desire to the Almighty, the only source of help, that He may grant His power to flow within them to heal. Fasting - a purposeful denial of the flesh, would draw their minds away from their own needs and focus all their thoughts to the importance of the healing task at hand.

Mark recorded the experiences of the Lord Jesus’ as He first began His ministry - calling out His twelve disciples, shortly after John the Baptist’s imprisonment by Herod:

"Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel."

Mark 1:14-15.

The gospel He taught was the good news of the kingdom of God to come through His name as the Savior. His message to men was to "repent" or think and live differently and "believe" in what He taught, in order to have a part in that hope.

After He had called out His twelve disciples, He sent them forth with the power of the spirit to preach this gospel message and heal the sick, giving them special instructions that they:

"... should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only;
no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse:

But be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats.

And they went out, and preached that men should repent.

And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them." Mark 6:8-9,12-13.

They were to go out into the world, taking nothing for their own comfort, save a staff - having faith that all they required would be provided by the Almighty.

Walking with the help of a staff reminds us of Jacob, who leaned upon a staff because of his withered thigh:

"By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff."

Hebrews 11:21.

We are told in Genesis of how Jacob came to limp by wrestling with an angel and was blessed of God; his name being changed from "Jacob" the Supplanter, to "Israel" a Prince with God:

"And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.

And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.

And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob.

And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." Genesis 32:24-28.

This record of Jacob's perseverance teaches how the flesh must be dominated and overwhelmed in order for spiritual gifts to be increased from God.

Jacob would limp from the weakness in his thigh, needing to lean upon his staff for strength and support for every step. Every day he would be reminded of the weakness of his own flesh and that only as he yielded to God's way could his steps be guided, and thus become pleasing to the Almighty.

Going back to Mark and the lesson of the withered fig tree, we know that with His power, the Lord Jesus could have instantly created figs upon that barren tree. Instead He hungered more urgently that His disciples learn a valuable lesson concerning the power of prayer and the value of faith in God. He therefore, used the circumstance at hand that they might believe in Him as the Son and Messiah promised.

During His ministry, while living with and teaching His disciples, the Lord Jesus wisely used everyday common circumstances to teach of the necessity and power of prayer and faith. As they looked back later, how etched in their minds would be that withered fig tree - no more able to bear fruit because of the power of His word alone. These memories would encourage them to follow in His footsteps, increasing daily in the power of prayer and faith, as it should us today.

M.C.S.

SIGNS OF HIS COMING

THE SUFFERING OF ISRAEL

“- - - Ye are taken up in the lips of talkers,
and are an infamy of the people - - -
Therefore thus saith the LORD GOD; I have lifted up mine
hand, surely the heathen that are about you, they shall bear
their shame.”

(Ezekiel 36: 3 & 7)

At the time of writing the horrendous trouble happening to Israel, as a result of the hatred of the Arab faction in Lebanon, in its desire to eliminate the Jews, seems to be nearing a cessation for the time being. Superficially, the spark which set the conflict off seemed to be an incursion of Arabs into Israel, who took two Israeli soldiers captive, back into Lebanon. The true situation however, was that the Arabs had been preparing for a long time to bring about a conflict, during which they hoped to overwhelm the Jews. They had amassed a huge number of rockets, hidden away in various parts of Southern Lebanon, ready for launching into Israel. So at an appropriate time, which the terrorists thought was ripe, they struck across Israel's border, issuing various demands to the Jews which they had hopes that Israel would concede to, doubtless planning further hostile acts, once Israel began to weaken to their demands. Israel wisely took the view, that to concede would only lead to further adversity. The Arab foe, basically, is not for coming to terms, and so to eventual good relations. The long term Arab plan is to bring about the end of Israel.

Israel, however is well aware of this implacable hatred, so has carefully prepared to protect itself. So in July last, Israel successfully struck against its enemy in Southern Lebanon, where its foe was using the local inhabitants as a human shield, behind which to hide its militants and their huge cachment of weapons, to some degree. Israel proved to be competent in its actions. Roads and bridges were eliminated to prevent the terrorists easy access to the Lebanese border and so to Israel. Because these terrorists used human shields, inevitably there was loss of life, as Israel made incursions in its actions to weaken this enemy, warning in advance, Lebanese inhabitants to flee.

As the horrendous conflict raged, nations of the West made some endeavour to bring a cessation to the conflict, and this has now arrived at the time of writing. But there is large scale criticism of Israel amongst, not only Arab nations, but nations of the West.

One news comment recently read:-

"Since Israel began its incursion into Lebanon in response to rocket attacks on Israeli cities by terrorist organisation --- anti-Semitic incidents have increased across the globe. Jews have been assaulted, cemeteries have been desecrated and synagogues have been torched."

Lamentably there is obviously notably less feeling being displayed against Arabs, who actually were the instigators of the flare-up. Israel insists that it is entitled to defend itself. But much media comment tends to put Israel and its government in a bad light. At the time of this article being prepared a very interesting minority comment came to the writer's notice which identifies with what has just been stated:

"I am not particularly pro or anti Israel, pro or anti Arab --- But I do have a dislike of --- hypocrisy --- as opposed to reality, fairness and truth.

Watching the bombing of Lebanon it is impossible not to feel horror and pity for the innocent civilians killed, wounded or rendered homeless. But certain of our politicians seeking easy populism --- have called the Israeli response 'disproportionate' ---.

That accusation can only mean 'disproportionate to the aggression levelled against them'. Really? --- The entire point (of Israel's adversary) is not to resolve some border dispute with Israel; its aim is to wipe Israel off the map, as expressed by (a spokesman of the foe who is in Iran).

(That is) --- the eradication of every Israeli Jew. --- As an ex-RAF officer I am persuaded the Israeli fighter pilots are hitting civilian-free targets with 95 per cent of their strikes. These are the hits no TV network bothers to cover. It is the five per cent that causes the coverage and the horror; wrong target, unseen civilians in the cellar, misfire, unavoidable collateral casualties. Unavoidable? Israel has said in effect: 'If you seek to wipe us out we will defend ourselves to the death. You offer us no quarter, so we will offer none to you. As for the non-involved, we will try to avoid you. But if you choose intentionally, inadvertently, or through the stupidity of your government (Lebanon) to protect and shelter the killers amongst yourselves then, with deepest regret we cannot guarantee your exemption.' "

The above comment, of this media commentator, whose stance is in the minority, expresses a fairer viewpoint on the Lebanese situation. Israel wants peace, and so has accepted the United Nations initiative for a cease-fire. But even as the time when a cessation

neared, its Arab enemy fired 267 rockets into northern Israel, this was the highest daily number since the hostilities began. The endeavour now is for 15,000 UN peacekeepers to join 15,000 Lebanese soldiers in policing the Arab-militant dominated southern Lebanon. Britain's Foreign Secretary welcomed what was a compromise achievement of agreement, to stop this fighting. Britain's government spokesperson said:-

"You never get a deal like this with everybody getting everything that they want. The question is, has everybody got enough for this to stick and for it to be enforceable? Nobody wants to go back to where we were before."

Indeed, it was a desperate situation, for much of Southern Lebanon was affected; but the laments of the media about the destruction in Southern-Lebanon had said little about the 3,500 rockets which the Arab enemy fired upon Israeli towns.

Now at the time of writing of these comments, one and a half million homeless are preparing to move again towards a more normal existence. Hundreds of thousands in Israel and Southern Lebanon are heading home. But the situation is still an unhappy one. Though the Arab militants had grudgingly accepted the cease-fire, their leader warned "the war has not ended!" An indication of the continuing Arab hatred is shown in what came of the Israeli endeavour for its soldier that was kidnapped in the south by the Arab guerillas.

A member of his family made an appeal that "the United Nations has a duty to help us find out what has happened to him." He went on to say, "It is good for the country the war is over. But where is my brother? His name has never been mentioned." The father of this captured soldier, had given a Bible to the Red Cross to hand to the guerrillas for his son. The guerrillas refused to accept it! They commented that to have so responded, would have been an admission of their responsibility for him! The father of this captured Israeli made the sad comment, "If my son is alive he will cope. But we need to know if he lives. We don't want to think of the alternative."

Israel's stance on this however, still remains, that it still seeks the release of its two soldiers who were captured by the guerrillas on July 12th last, which was, as already commented, one of the sparks that brought about the conflict.

Yes then, this is still an unhappy situation, and is, and has been, even as the spirit, through the prophet Ezekiel describes, of Israel being "taken up in the lips of talkers, and (being) an infamy of the people." It is a significant sign for these last days.

NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS FOR NOVEMBER 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

Adjustments have been made in the sequence of our Bible class rotation. It has been arranged to be held sequentially in Forestville, Fredonia and Hamburg.

We are grateful for the counsel of our Manchester brethren in correspondence and inquiries from the general public and Christadelphians.

J.A.DeF.

MANCHESTER

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11.00 a.m.
Thursdays: Bible Class 2.00 p.m.

We are grateful for the close contact we have with our Brethren and Sisters, who though a considerable way off across the seas, are near to us in heart and with whom we can quickly communicate with the modern devices we now have at our disposal.

Though it is now a day of "small things" we still have a work to do in being required to respond to some who from time to time approach unto us.