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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

“UNPROFITABLE SERVANTS”

In recent readings we have considered Jesus' teaching His disciples, as He spoke in a parable concerning a servant (Luke 17:7-10):

“But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat?

And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken: and afterward thou shalt eat and drink?”

Luke 17:7-8.

This is the duty of a servant - to serve his master by obeying his directions. A servant is one hired to serve, paid as a hired servant. He is not a slave - one who is bought with a price and does not work for wages. Jesus used this parable to teach His disciples how a servant must be subject to his master and is paid for his services, as his master has made an agreement with him.

Under the law given at Mt. Sinai, God made such an agreement with His people:

“... if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine (God's creation).

And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.”

Exodus 19:5-6.

God, who is LORD over all the earth, chose Israel as His people to serve Him. Israel responded:

“... All that the LORD hath spoken we will do....”

Exodus 19:8.

By this agreement - a covenant - Israel became servants of God, to obey his commands and to receive His promised blessing, in payment for their obedience.

The Almighty through Moses gave the law to Israel, instructing them as their Master, so that they would know what He required. As a part of that law, He spoke to Moses:

“Now these are the judgments which thou shalt set before them.

If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing."

Exodus 21:1-2.

The Hebrew bought as a servant was to go out of his service in the seventh year, having served his master for the allotted time, lest he be a perpetual servant. This was God's kindness toward the servant. However, if the servant loved his master, he could:

"... plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free."

Exodus 21:5.

The relationship between the master and his servant grew to a close bond during his six years of service - a bond based on love. As he expressed his love for his master, the master took him to the judges to make the service legal. The master also bored a hole in the servant's ear as a sign that he was a loving servant whose ear is always open to his master's desires. Then "he shall serve him for ever" (Verse 6). Here was instruction for those Hebrews as to how they could be servants of God forever, IF they obeyed His commands, motivated by love for a just Master.

Jesus, as He spoke to His disciples concerning the servant, no doubt had in mind the instruction given to Israel 1500 years previously at Mt. Sinai. Jesus asked His disciples:

"Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not."

Luke 17:9.

What was Jesus teaching by this parable? He made it clear as He continued:

"So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."

Luke 17:10.

The "duty" of the servant, as the word implies, is according to what is owed - an obligation of a servant to obey his master who has paid a price for his service - even as Israel said at Mt. Sinai:

"... All that the LORD hath spoken we will do..."

Exodus 19:8.

This was their part of the covenant made at the mount. Israel failed to serve God faithfully - even made a golden calf when Moses was 40 days on the mount, and said concerning it:

"... These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."

Exodus 32:4.

Were they faithful servants, keeping their vow, remembering

the first commandment given on Mt. Sinai?

"I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage (out of slavery to become servants).

Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Exodus 20:2-3.

You might ask: How could they so quickly turn away from serving God? It was the weakness of the flesh overcoming the word of God. They were "unprofitable servants"!

All who are striving to be faithful servants, showing love for their Master, strive to overcome that fleshly weakness, but often fail. We think of David who was declared to be a man "... after mine (God's) own heart" (Acts 13:22). He did love God and was His servant. David expressed his determination to obey the commands of God, as he exclaimed:

"More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.

Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret (hidden) faults (sins).

Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion (rule) over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer." Psalm 19:10-14.

This was the thought in David's heart as he sought to be a faithful, loving servant of God. We know he failed in the matter of Bath-sheba, coveting another man's wife, committing adultery, and arranging for the killing of Uriah. Was he a pleasing servant to the Almighty? He quickly repented of his unfaithfulness, as he responded to Nathan's warning:

"... I have sinned against the LORD." II Samuel 12:13.

He realized that he was an "unprofitable servant" and had allowed the lusts of his flesh to overcome his duty as a faithful servant.

Jesus used another parable concerning servants:

"For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.

and unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to

another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.

And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two.

But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money." Matthew 25:14-18.

The lord returned from his journey and enquired of his servants concerning his money. The servant who had received five talents returned ten talents; the one who had received two, returned four. He who had buried the one talent, returned it to his lord. To the two servants who obeyed their master's command, who traded with his talents and returned a gain, the lord said:

"... Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things. I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

Matthew 25:21.

To the servant who buried the one talent, not trading and thus realizing no gain for his master, the lord said:

"... cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matthew 25:30.

The servant who in fear buried the talent, failed to get gain for his master, as he had commanded him: "...Occupy until I come" (Luke 19:13). He lacked in love for his master, overcome by fear of him. As he was cast out into outer darkness he wept, gnashing his teeth in anger.

As we, Brethren and Sisters, strive to be good and faithful servants to the Master whom we love and seek to serve Him forever, let us remember that at best, we are unprofitable servants. Being flesh, we sin, failing to follow His commandments. Let us remember David, who was a man after God's own heart, but failed at times, and displeased God; yet was forgiven because of his quick repentance. Let us remember the warning of Jesus:

"No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other: or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

Luke 16:13.

In love for the Almighty - our Father, let us plainly say: "I love my master ... I will not go out free," but will endeavor to serve Him profitably forever.

J.A.DeF.

THEY LACKED NOTHING

We have been reading recently of the life of the Lord Jesus through the record in Luke. The three and a half years of His ministry not only brought the news of the gospel to many, but also became an intense preparation to help His disciples carry on this work in His absence. At this time, they did not perceive the breadth of the work that lay before them or His end and what He would suffer. However, it was foretold hundreds of years previous by Isaiah the prophet, of what God's Son would endure:

"Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." Isaiah 53:10-12

When this prophecy was fulfilled at the Lord Jesus' crucifixion, it is recorded in Mark that:

"... with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left.

And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors." Mark 15:27-28.

As part of their instruction, we read of the chosen twelve sent forth to preach the kingdom of God and heal the sick as witnesses of the Lord Jesus. To teach of the spiritual power that would accompany them on their travels, they were given specific instructions:

"... Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece. And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where." Luke 9:3,6.

Referring to this experience, the Lord asked them:

"... When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing. Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he

was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end.

And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough."

Luke 22:35-38.

We know from the record that Peter used one of those swords very shortly against the mob that came to capture the Lord Jesus in the garden. Led by Judas, this multitude from the priests and elders came armed with swords and staves to take Jesus into custody as they would a dangerous man:

". Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.

And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear.

Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"

Matthew 26:50-54.

The disciples did not yet fully understand that this was not to be a time of defense, to take a stand against the Lord Jesus' enemies - the Romans and the chief priests and elders who goaded them. They would not really come to a full perception of Christ's sacrifice and their role as witnesses, until the Spirit's power came upon them at Pentecost. Without that added understanding, they now scattered in fear and confusion - leaving the Lord Jesus alone to face His persecutors.

"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones." Zechariah 13:7.

In Luke it is recorded that earlier the disciples had asked Jesus for a sign of when the time of the end would come. He described a time of war between nations, earthquakes, famines and pestilence in the earth, along with many trials and tribulations that would come upon them as His witnesses:

"But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake.

And it shall turn to you for a testimony.

Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer:

For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.

And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death.

And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.

But there shall not an hair of your head perish.

In your patience possess ye your souls."

Luke 21:12-19.

Throughout their association with Jesus they had learned to put their trust in Him and the Father. When they went two by two to preach the gospel and heal the sick, they went empty handed, trusting in God's provision and lacked nothing. They did not need to carry food, money, extra clothing or swords - they were under God's care as His little ones, and this was enough.

Paul in like manner taught his brethren at Ephesus that they did not need man-made weapons to protect themselves against those that would seek to harm them. God's spiritual armaments would be all that was required:

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Ephesians 6:10-11,14-17.

What a powerful lesson to the disciples and to those today who endeavor to follow in the Lord Jesus' example of peace - that neither swords nor shields made by men, but the spiritual gifts which God alone provides, can disarm the wiles of the serpent nature, in not only ourselves, but in any who seek our harm.

Through this record of the disciples' experiences read today, we have been helped and strengthened to learn that through a faithful belief and walk in His word, we too will have enough and want for nothing.

M.C.S.

"The haughtiness of men shall be bowed down - - -"
(Isaiah 2:11)

Isaiah, in prophesying about "the last days" declares:-

"The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.

For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low:" (Isaiah 2:11-12).

Truly there is a haughtiness these days in this time of increased knowledge. The advance of scientific understanding is impressive, but, alas, there is a very great lack of spiritual appreciation. The witness of God's holy word is spread world-wide. But the Bible is, in the main, left unopened upon a large number of the people's bookshelves. The scripture foretells this situation; and those who show some respect for Bible testimony exalt their own interpretation of what the scripture is declaring above its simple Truth. The Genesis account is explained away as being an allegory. But lowering respect for the Bible has an undermining effect upon its previous moral influence. Behaviour now accepted amongst the masses, which would have been very greatly frowned upon in former generations undoubtedly brings its troubles. It is the price that the present generation pays for its slide away from former respect for Biblical guidance.

A recent publicly expressed lament indicates that governments world wide have led their economies into considerable economic growth; in this, spiritual responsibilities have given way to monetary ambition. One comment, which we will repeat, is thought provoking. (It is about global climate change):-

"The world has less than 20 years to clean up its act and reduce damaging greenhouse gas emissions or face disaster. It would have as devastating an impact as a world war or the Great Depression, if allowed to continue unchecked. - (A) Government commissioned report said that rising temperatures would cause wide-spread drought and famine in the Third World, creating millions of environmental refugees. - - - One in six of the world's population would not have enough water, while one in twenty would be made homeless by flooding. Up to forty per cent of the planets species would face extinction.

Melting glaciers would initially increase flood risk and then greatly reduce water supplies. --- Unless governments take drastic action soon, the environmental changes could be irreversible. --- Delaying action even by a decade or two will take us into dangerous territory. ---"

These comments make sombre reading. A technically advanced world is threatened by its own clever achievements; and at a time when a former respect for Bible Truth, in its simplicity, has waned. Where is all this leading? The testimony of the Most High gives comfort to those who respect His Truth:-

"The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of man shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day." (Isaiah 2:17).

The "Day of the LORD" will bring deliverance to His good earth. He has declared:-

"In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped. ---" (Isaiah 4:2).

LOVE - THE BOND OF PERFECTNESS

Peter writes to his brethren - "the elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" - those who in obedience are sanctified of the Spirit through the blood of Jesus Christ. Peter encourages them onward in faith as he reminds of the reward to be attained through the resurrection of the Lord:

"...an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." I Peter 1:4-5.

He speaks of a very real and tangible blessing to be granted to the obedient, found approved at the judgment seat of Christ, yet impossible to achieve without a continuous abiding love for one another:

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

I Peter 1:22.

Peter, knowing the struggles and trials that would face each one who chose to walk after the Lord Jesus’ example, reminds that though tests will come, take hope, for life is brief and fleeting, while the promise of God endures until the end of time:

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

But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.”

I Peter 1:24-25.

That promised blessing taught through the good news of the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, is only possible to those who submit their living to Him - those who endeavor to yield their natural carnal characteristics into perfecting the spiritual attributes He displayed - gentleness, meekness, longsuffering, love, and peace unto all men. In this endeavor Peter further teaches:

“Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:

Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing:

but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.” I Peter 3:8-9.

Peter emphasized that the end of the word of God is seen in the love the Father has shown in providing the blessing of immortality in the kingdom age, through belief in his Son. Paul fortifies this thought when writing to the brethren in Galatia:

“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”

Galatians 5:14-16.

The law under Moses was given to make sin exceedingly sinful, but the spirit of the law contained therein was seen as love for God and for one's fellow man, as Paul emphasized to Timothy:

"Now the end of the commandment is charity (love) out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:"
I Timothy 1:5.

To attain unto the end promised, that love must be singular in purpose. Not false, feigned or with a hidden agenda and ulterior motives, but from a good conscience with all fleshly ambitions removed. Love is not a natural inborn characteristic of the flesh - it must be learned from the spirit and then nurtured and encouraged in order that it grow to fill one's heart and displace what is there naturally. To know love is to know of God and His Son. Therefore, all those who endeavor to be known as His, must display His love in every aspect of their living:

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also."

I John 4:7-8,20-21.

Paul stressed the importance of unfeigned love in his letter to the Corinthians. It is a quality of character so important that without it, any other endeavor is fruitless. His eloquent words in praise of love have been quoted countless times throughout the world, leaving a testimony to his depth of spiritual understanding and devotion to God:

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity (love), I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity (love), I am nothing.

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity (love), it profiteth me nothing. And now abideth faith, hope, charity (love), these three; but the greatest of these is charity (love)."

I Corinthians 13:1-3,13.

What a sobering thought when we weigh Paul's words. Though one may after many years of study, have a deep and intrinsic knowledge of the word, be blessed with the gift of prophecy or have an unshakable faith in the Truth, yet if this person shows no love for his brethren, he is without hope!

Love for one another must be the primary ingredient to be found among those joined in the bonds of fellowship. Yet it was a lesson that needed to be taught repeatedly by many of the apostles to the newly ordained followers of Christ:

"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity (love), which is the bond of perfectness." Colossians 3:12-14.

Paul teaches here that the element, which binds all good spiritual attributes into perfection or completion, is love - not faith, longsuffering, patience or mercy - all noble spiritual qualities, but love alone. If a man truly loves his brother as he would himself, these other qualities will become second nature, for they are all part of love.

The "bond of perfectness" speaks of the singular desire to become complete as that word perfectness means. We know that those found acceptable at Christ's judgment seat will be made complete - changed from flesh to spirit, because of the abundance of love they displayed during their time of probation.

To think upon the magnitude of Christ's love shown for His brethren, in offering His life a ransom for many, brings us to the

humble realization of how far we fall short in doing likewise. Let us dedicate our living anew, showing true gratitude for the love and mercy we have received, by reflecting His mercy to others, as true servants of Christ:

“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.”

Colossians 3:15.

M.C.S.

A BIBLE CLASS

“THOU HAST POSSESSED MY REINS”

Psalm 139:13

David’s mind is revealed for us as we read the 139th Psalm. We don’t know at what time in his life he wrote these words, but they are a help for us to know his spirit, his reverence for God, and his determination to do that which caused God to speak of David as “... a man after mine own heart” (Acts 13:22). With this in mind, let us listen to his words preserved in this Psalm:

“O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me.
Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off.
Thou compassed my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways,
For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.”
Psalm 139:1-4.

David realized the all-knowing power of God, no matter where he was, what he was doing, what he was saying, what he was thinking. Nothing is hidden from God! With that knowledge, David further perceived:

“Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me: it is high, I cannot attain unto it.”
Psalm 139:5-6.

David’s love, care, and fear of God led to his giving glory to the Almighty - seeking His guidance, striving to be subject to Him. David served God faithfully, yet failed in the matter of Bath-sheba, in coveting another man’s wife, committing adultery, and scheming for the death of Uriah. He turned away from God’s word by allowing his fleshly lusts to rule. But when Nathan the prophet came to him, revealing his sins, David quickly repented: “... I have sinned against the LORD.” Was God aware of David’s sins? Did He not search his heart? The Almighty, knowing David’s faithfulness and obedience to His law, forgave him for his weakness in submitting to his fleshly thinking. David expressed his mind as he wrote:

“The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.

Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me; then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.”

Psalm 19:9-13.

God did search his heart. God did discern his secret faults (sins). How great is God’s mercy and grace in discerning, warning, correcting, and chastening! God does not fail; He knows our hearts, and is able to perceive all our thoughts and doings.

Jonah is an example. God said to him:

“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.”
Jonah 1:2.

Jonah did not obey God’s word, and tried to flee from His presence. But he could not hide! God caused him to be cast overboard in a great storm, and he was swallowed by “a great fish.” He cried unto God, who heard him from the depths, and caused him to be saved. There is no escape from God’s view! His eyes “run to and fro through the whole earth,” watching over His people.

Going back to the 139th Psalm, David said:

"Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell (grave), behold, thou art there.
If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea (Jonah);
Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me,"
Psalm 139:7-10.

David continued in his perception of God's presence - His right hand shall hold up His people:

"For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb."
Psalm 139:13.

To possess is to own, to purchase, to recover or redeem. Reins is also used as kidneys - implying the inward parts. The kidneys of the peace offering, and other offerings in Israel, were a part of the sacrifice:

"... he shall offer of the sacrifice of the peace offering an offering made by fire unto the LORD; the fat that covereth the inwards, and all the fat that is upon the inwards, And the two kidneys (reins), and the fat that is on them, which is by the flanks, and the caul above the liver, with the kidneys, it shall he take away.

And Aaron's sons shall burn it on the altar upon the burnt sacrifice, which is upon the wood that is on the fire: it is an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD."

Leviticus 3:3-5.

The reins or the kidneys were offered to God as a sweet savour to bring peace. The kidneys were also a part of the sin offering (Leviticus 4:9), and the trespass offering (Leviticus 7:4), as well as the offering for the consecration of Aaron and his sons (Leviticus 8:16). These inward parts belonged to the LORD, being burnt upon the altar.

David recognized God's possession of the inward parts (reins) as he expressed his mind, when Nathan came to him concerning Bath-sheba:

“Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest (through Nathan), and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.”
Psalm 51, 4,6,9-10.

The Almighty looks upon the inward parts of those who, like David, strive to be pleasing to Him. Let us then join with David, as he concluded his meditations in this 139th Psalm:

“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:
And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”
Psalm 139:23-24.

We sing these words in one of our Anthems. May they be the expression of our inward parts, seeking to make them acceptable to our God, so that He may possess them as an offering pleasing in His sight.

J.A.DeF.

SIGNS OF HIS COMING

“--- Except those days should be shortened.”
(Matthew 24:22)

These prophetic words of Christ are thought provoking. Christ refers to Daniel's prophecy which foretells of desolation. He speaks of false exponents, resulting in many who are to be deceived. He speaks of further suffering to the Jews. Of famine in various places. He warns those striving for the faith:-

“--- because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”
(Matthew 24:12—13)

Oh, what comforting words!

Except these days at the end of the present dispensation are intervened with by Heaven, the world will slide into a hopeless situation; these are the sombre words of Jesus.

Suddenly we find some world leaders very worried about what mankind is bringing about. There are more vehicles world wide than ever before, producing an increasing build up of carbon emissions in the atmosphere. The writer of this article recently saw a photograph from Lebanon, a country which would be regarded as a small, insignificant State, and was amazed to see depicted a road near the port of Sidon, jammed with a long queue of hundreds of cars! If small Lebanon is filled with cars, what is it like elsewhere? But industry also expands. There is a tremendous increase of industry in India and China and inevitably extra carbon emission results.

A recent voice of concern was expressed as follows:-

“Mankind is changing the face of the planet more rapidly than ever, ---

The Dead Sea is 80 feet lower than 50 years ago and could vanish in two decades. Some of the worlds' greatest rivers - the Rio Grande, Yellow, Colorado and Tigris - dry out each summer and may soon be lost entirely. And Lake Chad in North Africa is now 95 per cent smaller than 40 years ago.-
--- Nasa --- said the world is warmer than at any time in the past. ---”

But the earth is a large abundant place, the question might be asked how could such a vast prolific place be really threatened?

We have the significant warning of scriptural history:-

"This they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God - - - the world that then was, - - - perished."

(2 Peter 3:5-6).

This of course, refers to Noah, and the Flood, and the ark. Only eight survived. What happened then can undoubtedly be repeated, except to us the reassurance of the Lord Jesus Christ:-

"- - - for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."

(Matthew 24:22).

At this time of great increasing production there are still people starving. Jesus prophesied and warned when promising He would return from Heaven:-

"- - - there shall be famines - - - in divers places."

(Matthew 24:7).

Should there be!? Let us consider the following report concerning food production:-

"More than 325,000 tons of fresh fruit and vegetables were taken off the market by EU bureaucrats last year. The mountain of farm produce would have been enough to feed (a very large city) for three years. Instead it was dumped to keep prices high - - -. This was done under the - - - Common Agricultural Policy.

- - - instead of putting cheap fruit and vegetables on the market (over two hundred and eight thousand tons) was simply left to rot, - - - the grand total of waste was (over three-hundred and twenty-five thousand tons) last year."

So, at a time of food shortage, there is in some other places, food being, alas, thrown away. What a selfish world, where there are starving children who are ignored. This is really a good earth, but mankind fails it.

There is a great developing of materials that have taken the place of previously more natural products. Consider the following warnings:-

"Man-made chemicals - - - are added to many consumer goods.

- - - They have been found to damage the liver, brain and

nervous system when tested. - - - "

"Buy electrical goods with metal, not plastic casings. Keep house dust to a minimum and all rooms well ventilated."

"Choose stainless steel, cast iron and ceramic Titanium cookware. - - - Avoid 'no ironing required' ranges of clothing and say no to stain repellents. - - -

This chemical (formaldehyde) can affect the - - - membranes of the eyes, nose and throat - - - exposure can result in skin and lung allergies.

(What is it in?) It is in building materials, carpets, paints, varnishes, foods, tobacco smoke - - - hand-washes - - - and soft drinks.

(What is its exposure route?) Answer: in ingestion and inhalation."

Other chemicals are warned about in the report that the writer of this article has seen. Consider what is being said about Polycarbonate:-

"Although first created as a synthetic version of the hormone oestrogen, (it was) quickly adopted by the chemical industry when companies discovered they could make it into a strong lightweight plastic - - - research implicates it in - - - immune system defects, diabetes, insulin resistance (etc.). (It is in) plastic containers, mobile telephones, plastic lunch boxes, spectacle lenses, the lining of cans, various floorings, paints and adhesives. (Exposure routes) Ingestion through contact with food and drinks - - - and can also be inhaled from house dust. - - - Use glass bottles, especially for repeated use — —do not microwave food in plastic containers and minimise your intake of canned food. - - -

If you use non—stick cookware, keep temperatures low - - -."

So this is how house manufacturing has developed. If time was to continue as things are at present where might it lead?

There is comforting assurance however, for those who can believe, given by the Lord Jesus Christ:-

"Behold, I have told you before - - - as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

(Matthew 24:25 & 27).

Christ's coming will bring glorious light to this dark world.

NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS FOR FEBRUARY 2007

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

Gratitude is felt for improvement in health by several members, in response to prayer to our Father.

Our winter get together is scheduled for February 24th, God willing.

Recent letters have expressed gratitude for the help received through the Remnant magazine.

J.A.DeF.

MANCHESTER

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11.00 a.m.

Thursdays: Bible Class 2.00 p.m.

As the Spring is now getting near, we can look forward again to the lighter days and approaching stronger sunshine, it is a witness in Creation that the Eternal, as His Truth testifies, promises spiritual light for His World will certainly come, with deliverance from the "darkness" of mans' present failure of the way He conducts His affairs in this good earth.

What a blessing it is that in this our "fellowship", in which we can help one another to keep such knowledge in the forefront of our minds, we can continue in the comfort of our "hope".

As questions arise in this "the work of our fellowship", we can seek ecclesially, for advice and guidance.