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A WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

and a warning against the deception in the last days
foretold by Christ

"Take heed that ye be not deceived"

"AT THE TABLE OF THE LORD"

"THAT WE MAY HAVE BOLDNESS"

"A BIBLE CLASS"

"THE SPIRIT OF FAITH"

"SIGNS OF HIS COMING"

"FROM R.A.C. (commenting on Magazine articles)"

"NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS"

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AT THE TABLE OF THE LORD

ABILITY TO STAND BEFORE THE KING

In our readings this morning, we have listened to Solomon as he dedicated the temple in Jerusalem, according to the "pattern" given to David his father, by the Almighty. David wanted to build the temple, but was not allowed to do so by God. Solomon spoke of David's desire:

"Now it was in the heart of David my father to build an house for the name of the LORD God of Israel.

But the LORD said to David my father, Forasmuch as it was in thine heart to build an house for my name, thou didst well in that it was in thine heart:

Notwithstanding thou shalt not build the house; but thy son ... he shall build the house for my name."

II Chronicles 6: 7-9.

Solomon did build the temple, and when it was finished, Solomon prayed:

"Now therefore, O LORD God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father that which thou hast promised him, saying, There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit upon the throne of Israel; yet so that thy children take heed to their way to walk in my law, as thou hast walked before me.

Now then, O LORD God of Israel, let thy word be verified, which thou hast spoken unto thy servant David."

II Chronicles 6:16-17.

The temple built by Solomon was a partial fulfillment of the "sure mercies" promised to David by God (I Chronicles 17:11-15).

Solomon prayed as he dedicated the temple:

"Hearken therefore unto the supplications of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, which they shall make toward this place: hear thou from thy dwelling place, even from heaven: and when thou hearest, forgive." II Chronicles 6:21.

Solomon further prayed, seeking for forgiveness:

"If they sin against thee, (for there is no man which sinneth not), and thou be angry with them, and deliver them over before their enemies, and they carry them away captives unto a land far off or near;

Yet if they bethink themselves in the land whither they are carried captive, and turn and pray unto thee in the land of

their captivity, saying, We have sinned, we have done amiss, and have dealt wickedly;

If they return to thee with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity ... and pray toward their land which thou gavest unto their fathers, and toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house which I have built for thy name:

Then hear thou from the heavens, even from thy dwelling place, their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people which have sinned against thee.

O LORD God, turn not away the face of thine anointed: remember the mercies of David thy servant."

II Chronicles 6:36-39,42.

The Almighty heard Solomon's prayer:

"... 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 the priests could not enter into the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD'S house. And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down ... they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground ... and worshipped, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever."

II Chronicles 7:1-3.

Here was the height of Israel under the hand of God, as Solomon reigned in obedience to His will.

Let us move ahead about 400 years, to the time of Daniel. Israel had failed to walk in God's way, and were going into captivity in Babylon. Daniel was among those carried away in 606 BC, in the initial captivity, which became complete in 588 BC, when Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple burned, and almost all of Israel were taken to Babylon. Daniel also was among those who were chosen to serve Nebuchadnezzar:

"Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.

And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's

meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king." Daniel 1:4-5.

Daniel (and his three friends), holding fast to the law of God: "... purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself." Daniel 1:8.

God was with his servant:

"Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs." Daniel 1:9.

The prince allowed Daniel to eat pulse and drink water for ten days, to prove that God was with him. The result:

"... at the end of ten days, their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat.

As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams."

Daniel 1:15,17.

The Almighty, pleased with Daniel and his three friends, helped them in their witnessing to God's mercy and grace. Consequently:

"... in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.

And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus" Daniel 1:20-21.

With God's help, Daniel and his three friends were able to "stand before the king" - trusting in God's hand with them.

Daniel's friends were soon tested of God, when king Nebuchadnezzar made a great golden image, and required that all in his dominion fall down to worship it. Those who refused were to be thrown into a burning fiery furnace. These three, in conformance to God's law regarding images, refused to do so, and stood before the king, saying:

"... O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not

serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up” Daniel 3:16-18.

These three faithful men did not care what the king demanded; they would not break God’s commandment concerning idols! As a consequence of their faithfulness they were delivered from the burning fiery furnace, and Nebuchadnezzar decreed:

“... Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king’s word and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god except their own God.” Daniel 3:28.

What faith these three showed, as they firmly obeyed God, as they stood before King Nebuchadnezzar, the greatest king at that period of time. Their care was to serve God, trusting that He would deliver them.

Daniel also was tested: Would he stand before the king? During the reign of Darius the Mede, the king made a decree that no one should worship any God or man, except himself, for thirty days, or he would be cast into a den of lions. Daniel did stand before the king, as he continued to pray toward Jerusalem to his God three times a day. Daniel refused to refrain from calling upon God for help and strength to do that which pleased Him. He was delivered from the lions, and spoke to Darius as he was released from the lions’ den:

“My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions’ mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.” Daniel 6:22.

These faithful children of God - Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego - stood firm before God through great tribulation, because they were His faithful servants, dedicated to do His work in spite of danger and death. They trusted in God, and looked forward to the promise of standing before God, in worship of Him when Jesus Christ returns to judge God’s people. The Apostle John was shown a vision of the time to come, when the question was asked:

“... What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? ... he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him

day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them." Revelation 7:13-15.

Daniel and his three friends will be among those who, having gone through great tribulation, stand before the throne of God. Their example helps us!

This is our hope, as we also face tribulations and testings, sustained by our faith, our trust, our care for God, and our submission to His purpose.

Paul wrote to his brethren in Rome, giving help to them, and also for us today:

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us." Romans 5:1-5.

Tribulation is the first step toward hope of standing before God. Will we stand before Him, trusting in His mercy and grace? We have the hope of being enabled to stand before the judgment seat, and to hear the words of the Lord Jesus to those on His right hand:

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

Matthew 25:34.

Solomon built the temple, dedicated it, and prayed for God's hand upon him. In his old age, he turned from his love for God to false gods, led astray by his many pagan wives. Daniel and his three friends stood firm, stood before kings, and they have the hope of standing before God. Let us take heed to God's commands that we may hold fast to the hope of eternal life, to stand in the presence of God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who has made it possible.

J.A.DeF.

THAT WE MAY HAVE BOLDNESS
I JOHN 4:17

This fourth chapter of I John is one we frequently refer to because of its important message on the need for love in one's living:

"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 4:20-21.

The Lord Jesus, who willingly gave His life for His friends, perfected this love:

"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.
Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.
Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." John 15:12-14.

Those who have tasted of the mercy and grace of God, through a knowledge of the Truth, are given time during their probation to manifest that love one to another, as a test of faith and obedience:

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.
Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." I John 4:10-11

To apply that love is to love according to the spirit, rather than to live after the flesh. Our consideration in the 17th verse of this chapter emphasizes this thought:

"Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world." I John 4:17.

We may think of "boldness" as a negative characteristic for when motivated by the flesh, it can be a rash and arrogant impulse. However, those with "spiritual boldness", use the knowledge of

the Truth with confidence and courage to change their living in a positive direction. If there is no boldness to do what is right and acceptable during one's time of probation, how can one hope to stand before the Lord on the day of judgment?

John goes on to speak of the paralyzing effect that fear can have on one's endeavor to develop spiritual boldness. Do we fear not being forgiven for our lacks and failures, and so do nothing?

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."
I John 4:18.

Some of those beloved of God were guilty of great failure. King David who coveted his neighbor's wife, committed adultery and attempted to cover his sin with Bathsheba by orchestrating her husband's death in battle, was guilty of great sin before God. Under the law he should have been stoned, yet God had mercy because of his boldness to step forward with honesty and a full and ready confession and seek repentance. He did not fear to ask for forgiveness after these grievous failures, and though he suffered and paid a price for them, he was forgiven of God.

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."
Hebrews 4:16.

Here is the same help given by Paul - a reaffirmation of the need to develop a spiritual boldness in order to come before Him in prayer for strength, help or forgiveness when it is needed.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."
I Peter 1:3-5.

There is only one means of repentance and salvation possible - through the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose blood can cleanse us from our sins when we fail to walk acceptably before God in love:

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” I John 3:2-3.

None can call themselves “pure”, for being flesh, all sin. However, our hope is to be like Him one day - changed from flesh to spirit, if on the day of judgment we are found acceptable, through His mercy.

Just as the Lord Jesus used love to overcome every facet of His flesh, so too has He left us an example of how we must rule our own flesh natures through love for God, His Son and others, rather than ourselves.

John encouraged Christ’s followers to, “have boldness... because as he is, so are we in this world”, reminding that we were given the same flesh nature as Christ, but unlike Him, we fail and sin.

God knows that our natures are prone to weakness and in love has given His Son as a propitiation for our sins. Without His blood shed, providing a covering for all who believe on Him, there would be no recognition when we fail and no hope of life eternal held out at His judgment seat for those found approved.

Every day we experience the love of God, for every day we fail in some way to measure up to the standard set by the Lord Jesus and need our Father’s forgiveness. In order to walk after Christ’s example, we must reflect the love we have been shown with a spiritual boldness, knowing He is the only means to the end God has promised for those that love Him. Only through Him can we seek forgiveness and remission for our sins and hope to appear before the throne of Christ with spiritual boldness:

“AND THEIR SINS AND INIQUITIES WILL I REMEMBER NO MORE.

Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;”

Hebrews 10:17-20.

M.C.S.

A BIBLE CLASS

"THE SIMPLICITY THAT IS IN CHRIST"
II Corinthians 11:3

Paul wrote unto his brethren in Corinth concerning his fear that some of them were going astray from his past teaching concerning Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God. He was bold in his letter:

"Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you:

... I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)"

II Corinthians 10:1-4.

To be "bold" is to exercise courage, to have confidence, which Paul did, to help those whom he feared might be going astray.

In that boldness, he wrote:

"Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me.

For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." II Corinthians 11:1-2.

To "bear with" is to endure, to forbear, to suffer. Paul sought his brethren's patience to heed his writings concerning their hope of being "as a chaste virgin to Christ" - among those as His bride, at Jesus' right hand at His judgment seat. Paul continued in his boldness.

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." II Corinthians 11:3.

We know the circumstances in Eden, as God created Adam

and made him an help meet from his rib. Of this help meet, Adam said:

“... 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.

Previously God had given a command to Adam:

“... Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.”

Genesis 2:16-17.

Adam told Eve of God’s single, simple command, but she was beguiled by the serpent, who professed:

“... Ye shall not surely die.”

Genesis 3:4.

Eve, beguiled by the serpent, and Adam, to whom she gave to eat of the forbidden tree, did indeed die, as God had decreed. To “beguile” is to deceive by subtility. By the subtility of the serpent, Eve was deceived, and as a consequence, all mankind became dying creatures. But God in his mercy has provided a means whereby men might be delivered from that death, through the seed of the woman, who would wound the serpent in the head (Genesis 3:14-15).

Paul, moved by jealousy (zeal), sought to help those whom he had previously taught to believe in Jesus as the seed of the woman. The Lord Jesus conquered the serpent as He died on the cross, as the unblemished “Lamb of God.” Paul feared lest their minds would be corrupted, as was Eve’s, when she disobeyed God’s commandment:

“Ye shall not eat of it (the tree), neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.”

Genesis 3:3.

To “be corrupted” involves a defiling or destroying - a going from life to death. Paul warned his Corinthians brethren:

“Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption;
Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption."
I Corinthians 15:33,42,50.

The serpent - sin in the flesh, Satan - works to beguile, to corrupt from the simplicity of God's purpose, to be accomplished through Jesus Christ. Peter also warned of the beguiling influence of the flesh:

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

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

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

I Peter 5:8-10.

The Almighty works on behalf of those who trust in "the simplicity that is in Christ" as they earnestly strive to obey His word.

We are reminded of the circumstances in Peter's life, when Jesus told His disciples how He would "be killed, and be raised again the third day." Peter spoke:

"... Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee."

Matthew 16:22.

Jesus replied:

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

Matthew 16:23.

Jesus then turned to His disciples, and said:

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"
Matthew 16:24-26.

"The simplicity that is in Christ" was His determination to submit to His Father's will, denying His own desires, and giving His life to God as the unblemished Lamb. He fought to obey His own words:

"No man 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."

Matthew 6:24.

Jesus served His Father right up to His words on the cross:

"... It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the spirit."
John 19:30.

Let us heed His words:

"... let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

J.A.DeF.

THE SPIRIT OF FAITH

Each time we read chapter eleven of Hebrews, or refer to it in our studies, we are impressed with the clarity of its message of faith. The word faith means to convince or believe, and Paul's definition is clear and to the point:

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."
Hebrews 11:1.

We are helped further by Paul as he wrote to the Corinthians encouraging a belief and faith in the coming resurrection through Christ:

"We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I BELIEVED, AND THEREFORE HAVE I SPOKEN; we also believe, and therefore speak;

Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

II Corinthians 4:13-14,18.

A spirit of faith allows one to focus upon those things which are eternal, and disregard those that are temporal, knowing they will not strengthen our spiritual life. This temporal life will pass away in time, but the spirit of faith remains fixed on the promises of God, even though as yet unfulfilled. David had that spirit of faith as he wrote in the Psalms:

"For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.

I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.

I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted: What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?

I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD."
Psalm 116:8-10,12-13.

David knew his temporal life would be full of affliction and tears, but the hope of eternal life through his greater Son, strengthened his faith and belief to push on. He recognized that his flesh nature must be crucified in order to pay his vows of obedience before the Lord and gain the reward held out.

That reward is very clearly tied to faith, as Paul explained to his Hebrew brethren:

“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.

Both David and Paul understood the need for affliction in this life, for that reward will not come without a proving and perseverance in faith under trail.

The record of those who paid their vows of obedience through faith, are well documented in this 11th chapter of Hebrews. Noah’s faithful actions saved his house and God’s heritage, when only eight with a spirit of faith were saved to repopulate the earth after the flood:

“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.” Hebrews 11:7.

Abraham was another who believed God and looked forward in faith to the inheritance promised. In faith he left the familiarity of his homeland and traveled into a strange land:

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac...”

Hebrews 11:8-9.

These all through faith believed in God’s promise of a dwelling place to be established in the Kingdom of God on earth, even though it was not fulfilled during their lifetimes. This is true faith and belief - seeing in hope what will be accomplished one day as promised, even though it is afar off:

“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”

Hebrews 11:13.

In this life, they considered themselves as strangers and

pilgrims - only passers through for a short time, and that full of troubles and affliction. Their hopes were not founded on this life - establishing lands, homes and families, or to make a name for themselves, as is the goal of those in the world. But their eyes were fixed on the hope of a spiritual dwelling, which could only be achieved after a lifetime of victory over their flesh natures.

This same hope is preserved for those today who look for the fulfillment of the hope of Israel through the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. What a humbling prospect to think of standing before the judgment seat of Christ with such as Noah, Abraham, David and Paul. How unworthy we feel our afflictions have been in comparison to theirs, yet in spite of this we are told:

“And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.” Hebrews 11:39.

Do we value the privilege of understanding we have been granted, and the hope held out through the covering of the blood of Christ? Those of old, who believed in the hope of Israel, saw this same hope through the eyes of faith.

Through Paul’s writing to the Hebrews, let us take courage from their record of faith, to strengthen our inner man and grow in faith and belief, regardless of the trials and afflictions, which come daily.

The signs in the world surely herald the soon return of the Lord Jesus, when those that sleep in the dust will be resurrected and gathered, along with those who are alive at His coming. Those from all ages will make a great cloud of witnesses, standing before their Lord, who will judge their obedience and spirit of faithfulness.

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” Hebrews 12:1.

M.C.S.

SIGNS OF HIS COMING

“ - - - In the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations. - - - Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil?”

(Ezekiel 38:8 & 13)

At the time of writing the United States President has been having some criticism about his procedures in Iraq. Nevertheless he pursues his purpose of establishing a government there, friendly to America and the West. The British Prime Minister, who is joined with him in this, is also a recipient of derogatory comments. They, however, stoically pursue the course they have taken in the Middle East. The President is preparing to increase the number of American troops for Iraq. Thus the United States and Britain become the King of the South, for that area. Bible prophecy however also speaks of a power north of the Middle-East territory. It is defined as such in the following:-

“Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog.
- - - Be thou prepared, and prepare for thyself, thou, and all thy company - - - in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword
- - - thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee - - - thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days. - - -”

(Ezekiel 38:2 & 7-8).

(also vs.15-16).

This is a very meaningful specific prophecy. And how significant for a time when, miraculously, in a most unique way the Jews, after centuries of dispersion, having lost their land from ancient times, are now securely established where their forefathers lived. Adding to the significance of world trend in the Middle East, is the position of the United States and Britain in this area. The American and British leaders, in the face of considerable criticism of their political stance, particularly over Iraq, persist in holding on to an important influencing position there. Thus they show that there is a “King of the South” for these last days. That they indeed are the King of the South. Who then is the power of the “north quarters”

(Ezekiel 38:6)? The one great power to the north of Israel is undoubtedly Russia. So the world moves on towards a final position, when, as Ezekiel says:-

“And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the LORD GOD, that my fury shall come up in my face . For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel - - - and all men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence - - - and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the LORD.”

(Ezekiel 38:18-20 & 23).

Divine intervention in a very troubled area is certainly going to shock the world! But meanwhile Bible prophecy will continue to be fulfilled. The President will not bring his troops out of Iraq, and British policy will continue to uphold his stance. But men do not have a solution to world political difficulty, and the deteriorating world situation.

How wonderful is this prophecy from so long ago, giving comfort and hope to those who exercise faith in a heaven that greatly condescends to monitor the affairs of men, and will see they are checked from sliding into sheer hopelessness.

FROM R.A.C.

(Commenting on Magazine articles)

An extract from his letter.

In both your January and February magazines, articles appear under the heading of "Signs of His Coming" and quoting from Matthew 24 v 22 and Mark 13 v 20 as having application to the second coming of our Lord.

In Matthew the signs for the second coming only commence at verse 29 and in Mark at verse 24. Although there may possibly be a reflection of these circumstances before the return of Christ, these verses do not directly refer to these days. It is evident from the records that the time it refers to is that spoken of by Daniel in chapter 9 and concerns the desolation of Jerusalem in AD 70.

Josephus in his record of the advance by Cestius upon Jerusalem describes a lull in the fighting while Cestius was replaced by Titus and that at that moment the Christians in the city fled into the mountains. (Matthew 24 v 16) He describes the event as one when "many of the most eminent of the Jews swam away from the city as from a ship about to sink!" The days were shortened for the Christians to note the warning of Jesus and to escape the terrible events that were to follow. It was the time of the Passover and over a million Jews died in the city and 97,000 were taken away as slaves. The slave markets were saturated with a dearth of persons.

OUR COMMENTS

We would agree with our correspondent that Christ's words had fulfillment in what happened to the Jews in AD 70, but we would query his comment "the signs for the second coming only commence at verse 29" (Matthew chapter 24). We respectfully ask our correspondent to consider:

"And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." (verse 22)

The world has never before been so threatened by the works of man than it is at the present time.

Moreover consider Christ's words of verse 26:-

"Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; - - - believe it not."

We ask, has a zealous religious sect risen to propound a secret return of Christ? Such exists, claiming to be Witnesses to Truth.

Our correspondent also refers us to Mark's record, chapter 13. May we refer to verse 10:-

"And the gospel must first be published among all nations."

This surely was not the situation before AD 70. Undoubtedly the scripture is now in this position of being available world wide.

COMMENTS FROM THE PIONEERS

We will quote a few extracts, which we believe show us that the Pioneers' main focus was on the time of the end, though they would doubtless believe the prophecies of Christ did also refer to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

(From Doctor John Thomas). Herald of the Kingdom.

"It is truly astonishing that any who are acquainted with Jewish history, and reflect on the condition in which this people existed from the period of its return from Babylon until they were utterly ruined by the Romans, can for a moment entertain the idea, that these and other similar prophecies received their accomplishment in that event and in the state of things which followed."

(From R. Roberts) Nazareth Revisited.

"Their fate (the rejected) is to "depart from me ye cursed, into the aionian fire - - - into the countries of the condemned, the whole multitude of the rejected will be driven - - - . The 'few stripes' will probably be exemplified in the shortening of the term of suffering. Such will die before the worst comes. 'many stripes' will be seen in the case of those wretched children of disobedience who will be preserved through all the terrors of 'the time of trouble such as never was' and survive to be engulfed in the finishing strokes of judgment by which wickedness will be finally overthrown, and the way cleared for the kingdom of God."

We believe the main orientation of the Pioneers on all of what Christ prophesied (while not excluding AD 70) was the very end, that which Christ emphasised.

NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS FOR APRIL 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

We rejoice with the coming of spring after the long months of winter. It reminds us of God's words:

"For, lo, the winter is passed, the rain (and snow) is over and gone;

The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;"

Song of Solomon 2:11-12.

It foretells the resurrection of life, for those who are found to be pleasing to God, when His Son returns to establish His kingdom.

Response to invitations for literature is encouraging in this work.

J.A.DeF.

MANCHESTER

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11.00 a.m.

Thursdays: Bible Class 2.00 p.m.

As Spring approaches we think of the marvel of the changing seasons. The coming of greater warmth and fruitfulness has an implied promise of the change coming to this good earth. God's promise of a Kingdom to come is unfailing. We have been blessed with the knowledge of this Truth.