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The Remnant of Christ's Ecclesia

in opposition to the Dogmas of
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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

"GOD... HATH IN THESE LAST DAYS"

Paul wrote to his Hebrew brethren, as we have read recently:

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Hebrews 1:1-3.

In these few words, Paul encouraged his brethren to look to God's word, needful "in these last days," and helps us today as we look for the coming of the Lord Jesus to accomplish His Father's purpose with the world. In God's mercy, we are reminded of His purpose through His Son Jesus Christ.

"... as many as received him, to them gave he power (authority) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name;

Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." John 1:12-14.

God's mercy and grace have been granted through the provision of Jesus Christ as the means of redemption for those who receive Him as the Son of God, promised from the time of Adam and Eve in Eden.

Paul was writing to his brethren who had been Hebrews, but were converted to believe in the provision of Jesus as the fulfillment of the Mosaic law, which was a "schoolmaster to bring us (them) unto Christ (Galatians 3:24)." The Lord Jesus came as the Lamb of God to purge our sins through His perfect obedience to God's word, and now sits at God's right hand to propitiate for His people:

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." II Peter 3:9.

How important that we come to repentance because of our shortcomings! We are reminded:

“Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick (source of light) out of his place, except thou repent.”

Revelation 2:5.

As we read God’s word, we perceive how many from the beginning of mankind have not seen the need for repentance, and thus have perished.

In the beginning God created man and woman. Two sons were born - Cain the older, and Abel the second son. Cain and Abel brought sacrifices to God. Abel’s was of the firstling of his flock, while Cain’s was of the fruit of the ground. We remember that God had respect unto Abel’s offering, but did not respect Cain’s, as he did not perceive God’s purpose to be accomplished through the death of the Lamb of God. Cain was “very wroth” because his sacrifice was unacceptable to the Almighty. God gave him opportunity to repent from his anger:

“... if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door...”

Genesis 4:7.

Cain, still angry, killed Abel - the beginning of the enmity between those who please God and those who please their flesh.

In our recent reading in I Chronicles (chapters 1 through 9), we find the names of many who lived, as they multiplied over the years from the time of Abel and Cain. Among the many named, we recognize a few faithful, who stand out: Adam, Abel, Seth, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses Caleb, and David. How few there were who were faithful! One who stands out is Noah. In his time (about 1600 years since Adam):

“... God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth...

And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created...”

Genesis 6:5-7.

However, there was one, with his family, who pleased God:

“But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.”

Genesis 6.8.

Why did God bless Noah?

“... Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.” Genesis 6.9.

When Noah was born

“... he (Lamech) called his name Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed.”

Genesis 5:29.

God did curse the ground when Adam and Eve disobeyed His command concerning the tree in the midst of the garden (Genesis 3:12-19). Noah and his family were comforted according to God’s promise as he spent 120 years building the ark. Paul reminded his Hebrew brethren concerning Noah:

“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.

When the flood subsided and Noah left the ark, as permitted, he:

“... builded an altar unto the LORD...

And the LORD smelled a sweet savour, and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake; ...

While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.”

Genesis 8:20-22.

When Noah and his family - eight people, a remnant of all the earth left the ark, the land was desolate; there were no people, nor animals, nor plants as all would have been destroyed in the flood. How Noah would be comforted by God’s promise, especially as he looked upon the rainbow created by God as a token of a covenant with Noah!

We are shown God’s mercy and grace in the provision of the ark - a figure of God’s promise of His Son, the Lord Jesus as a means of redemption for those who strive to walk with God. It is striking that Noah was instructed to “pitch” the ark:

“... pitch it within and without with pitch.” Genesis 6:14.

The word “pitch” is also used as make an atonement forgive, be merciful, purge, and reconcile. The pitch was to protect the ark from leaking, saving the eight souls from the destruction of the rest of the living world, who had scoffed at Noah’s building an ark on

dry ground for 120 years. This was the grace of God that Noah experienced as he "walked with God" being strengthened in faith, trusting that he and his family would be saved through the provision of the ark.

As we have read in I Chronicles and Hebrews, there is much encouragement and help as we see God's mercy and grace to a few. In the time of Noah, there were only eight souls. In our reading in I Chronicles, there are only a few who walked with God, among the large number of names recorded. How can we in these last days do so? Jesus made it very clear as he spoke to His disciples:

"... if any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me." Matthew 16:24.

Jesus walked with God perfectly, never departing from the narrow way which leads to God's kingdom, promised from the beginning of His purpose. We remember how He called his Apostles:

"... Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

And he saith unto them. Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

And they straightway left their nets, and followed him."

Matthew 4.18-20.

James and John also left their nets when Jesus called them. It took faith, trust in Jesus' words: "Follow me." They were ready to take up their cross, denying self, whatever God might require of them.

Paul was also one called of God, as he was blinded on the way to Damascus:

"And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Acts 9:6.

He was called to be:

"... a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." Acts 9:15-16.

Paul in faith gave his life to the work of God. He also wrote of his Hebrew brethren who lived by faith: In Hebrews II we read of: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sara, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Rahab, Gedeon, Barak, Samson, Jephthae, David, Samuel, and the prophets - seventeen (plus the prophets) who faithfully walked with God, sustained by their faith. These examples are given

to us in these last days as encouragement, Brethren and Sisters, in our striving to be accounted faithful in the day of Jesus' judgment. Paul wrote:

"... 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 11:39-40.

All these shall be made perfect! So how can there be a better thing? We are uplifted as we perceive the signs of Jesus' near return, though we know not when. We are strengthened by the examples of our faithful brethren of old, who have walked with God, and have known His grace - the gift of eternal life through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, as we have remembered here this morning. Let us greatly rejoice as we look to the hope of an everlasting inheritance in His kingdom, as promised to all His faithful ones from the beginning of His creation.

J.A.DeF.

THOU SHALT NOT SEEK THEIR PEACE

DEUTERONOMY 23:6

Our subject under consideration is part of the Law - the ordinances passed from God through Moses as a guide for His people, the children of Israel. The Law was to delineate what was good from that which was evil, that Israel might walk in righteousness before the Almighty:

"These are the statutes and judgments, which ye shall observe to do in the land, which the LORD God of thy fathers giveth thee to possess it, all the days that ye live upon the earth." Deuteronomy 12:1.

He delivered them from the bondage of Egypt, fed them through forty years of wandering with manna and water from the Rock. Yet after all these blessings, when they entered the land promised, they forsook God's precepts, marrying foreign wives and following after their false gods - idols of wood and stone.

It was important that Israel understand the need for separation from the inhabitants of the land - those who worshipped idols and walked not after the Lord God of Israel, lest they be seduced to follow them in wickedness, therefore He gave them a commandment:

“Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree: And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place.

Ye shall not do so unto the LORD your God.”

Deuteronomy 12:2-4.

The Lord God made a covenant with Israel. If they would walk in His precepts, with obedience and love; He would be their God and Father, above all other people in the earth. And in kindness, His laws were set before them that they might understand what was evil and of the flesh and what was acceptable to the Spirit:

“This day the LORD thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments: thou shalt therefore keep and do them with all thine heart, and with all thy soul. Thou hast avouched the LORD this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice:

And the LORD hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments;

And to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour; and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the LORD thy God, as he hath spoken.”

Deuteronomy 26:16-19.

This set forth the framework for God’s people to know what He required of them. As part of that law, our verse under consideration says particularly regarding the Ammonites and Moabites:

“Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever.”

Deut, 23:6.

God gave good reason why there should be a clear separation between the Ammonites, Moabites and Israel. As the incestual sons of Lot and his daughters, Ammon and Moab were related to Israel

through their father Abraham, Lot's uncle. However, when Israel left Egypt and asked for permission to journey through their land, their outlook should have been one of kindness and cooperation, not the fierce hatred they instead displayed. As an added injury, they hired Balaam a false prophet to curse Israel, yet God prevented him from so doing:

“Nevertheless the LORD thy God would not hearken unto Balaam; but the LORD thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the LORD thy God loved thee.”

Deuteronomy 23:5.

God did not forget the attempted harm done by the Ammonites and Moabites to His people, for much later He prophesied against them through the prophet Ezekiel:

“Son of man, set thy face against the Ammonites, and prophesy against them;

And say unto the Ammonites, Hear the word of the Lord GOD; Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou saidst, Aha, against my sanctuary, when it was profaned; and against the land of Israel, when it was desolate; and against the house of Judah, when they went into captivity; Behold, therefore I will deliver thee to the men of the east for a possession, and they shall set their palaces in thee, and make their dwellings in thee: they shall eat thy fruit, and they shall drink thy milk.

And I will make Rabbah a stable for camels, and the Ammonites a couching place for flocks: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

For thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast clapped thine hands, and stamped with the feet, and rejoiced in heart with all thy despite against the land of Israel;”

Ezekiel 25:2-6.

After seventy years of captivity in Babylon, Israel was allowed back into the land to rebuild the city and the temple by the hand of God upon Cyrus king of Persia:

“Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath

charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

Who is there among you of all his people? His God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem." Ezra 1:1-3.

Those returning to Jerusalem under the guidance of Ezra and Nehemiah, attempted to atone for their many years of spiritual poverty and separation from God. In an endeavor to restore themselves to God's favor, they found and read the Book of the law relating to Israel's need for separation from those of Ammon and Moab:

"On that day they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people; and therein was found written, that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God for ever;

Because they met not the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, that he should curse them: howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing.

Now it came to pass, when they had heard the law, that they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude." Nehemiah 13:1-3.

In an endeavor to put themselves right with God, those of Israel, allowed to return to Jerusalem after the captivity, attempted now to separate themselves from those whom they had married of Ammon and Moab, in obedience to God's word.

It may seem a harsh pronouncement by God against Ammon and Moab, yet there were some even of that nation, who if their hearts could be touched and bow before the God of Israel in fear and obedience, forgiveness would be granted. As an example, Ruth the Moabitess, followed Naomi back to Israel, leaving her own family and country, becoming an adopted member of Israel in order to care for her mother-in-law. Through marriage to Boaz of Israel and the birth of their son Obed, she became the great grandmother of King David and a direct member in the royal line of Christ.

"And Naomi took the child (of Ruth & Boaz), and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it.

And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed; he is the father of Jesse, the father of David."

Ruth 4:16-17.

Israel was admonished not to join with Moab and Ammon nor share their habits and walk and to, "not seek their peace" and thus stray from God's precepts. Yet, mercy was shown in turn to a Moabite who forsook her own land, family and customs, seeking adoption, both physically and spiritually into the nation of Israel, for she recognized the Almighty as the one true God. Ruth sought Him, showing love and obedience while walking in His ways, and was therefore blessed.

Those who failed and were sent into captivity, would be reminded of their past mistakes to not love the ways of the world around them as they recalled His word saying, "Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever."

M.C.S.

**Adam - and "the wisdom of this world".
(1 Corinthians 1:20)**

The Apostle Paul writing to the Corinthian believers referred to the testimony of the prophet Isaiah, which reads:

"- - - the wisdom of their wise - - - shall perish." (Isaiah 29:14)
Isaiah in his message goes on to say:-

"Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potters clay: FOR SHALL THE WORK SAY OF HIM THAT MADE IT, HE MADE ME NOT?"

(Isaiah 29:16)

This remonstrance belongs as much to these times as at the time when Isaiah wrote them.

Looking back to the account of God's wonderful creation, the scriptural testimony is clear:-

"And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so - - -.

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth - - -.

So God created --- male and female --- . And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it. ---”

(Genesis 1:24-28)

There is nothing ambiguous about this heavenly testimony. It obviously CAME TO MAN, it is not of man! But, alas, the intellectual, so called wisdom, that has lifted itself up in these last times, now rejects this heavenly testimony.

God’s scripture becomes more explicit about the creation of man and woman:-

”And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him, ---
And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made (Hebrew - “buided”) he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And 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.”

(Genesis 2:18-23)

So the Heavenly Creator created Man and He created the Woman out of man. But there is even more detail. A time scale is carefully given in scripture:-

“--- In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him;

Male and female created He them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam--- .

And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth:

And the days of Adam after he had begotten Seth were eight hundred years: and he begat sons and daughters.---”

(Genesis 5:3-4)

Following these details scriptural testimony goes on to name the descendants from Adam. Following Seth came Enos, and a careful list of descendants and their life spans is given. There is Cainan and then Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech and then came Noah. In Noah’s day came the flood, and a judgment upon a violent age, and the mercy of God’s saving Ark. In these details is a clear time scale. But what says “the wisdom of this world”? We quote scientific assertion, as follows:-

“Putting your back into it comes naturally to woman. And it’s all down to their baby-carrying role, say scientists. Women have more backbone than men because stronger spines relieve the pressure of carrying the weight of an unborn child, new research shows - - - it all evolves from when humans learned to walk upright. Walking on two legs creates special problems for pregnant women as the growing foetus steadily shifts their centre of gravity. Researchers found evidence of this change from at least TWO MILLION YEARS AGO in the early human ancestor Australopithecus ” - - -

“Natural selection favoured this adaption because it reduces extra stress on a pregnant female’s spine. Without the adaption, pregnancy would have placed a heavier burden on the back muscles, causing considerable pain and fatigue and POSSIBLY LIMITING FORAGING CAPACITY AND THE ABILITY TO ESCAPE FROM PREDATORS. - - - Female spines HAVE EVOLVED to balance the foetal load in front of the hip joints - - - lumber vertebrae are reinforced. Men do not have these modifications - - -. Our research shows their (the womens) spines have evolved to make pregnancy safer and less painful.”

Here than, in these details from the writings of the “wise of this world” is a denial of the heavenly witness, WHICH IS TRUTH. The account in scripture, of how the first parents came, is clear for all who have respect for heavenly testimony. And what of mans’ wisdom, which undeniably has advanced over the years?

The word of God when it conveys Truth, also conveys a warning:-

“Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potters clay: for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not?” (Isaiah 29:16)

A BIBLE CLASS

THE JUBILE

God gave Moses on Mt. Sinai a law concerning a sabbath:

“... When ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a sabbath unto the LORD.

... in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the LORD: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard.” Leviticus 25:2,4.

This law applied to the land that was to be God’s gift to Israel. The first sabbath was appointed by the Almighty after He had created the heavens and the earth in Six days.

“... on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.” Genesis 2:2-3.

With all His mighty power, God did not need to rest on the seventh day, but He sanctified it for His people to rest from their normal labors of six days. This was to remind Israel of a promised time of rest to come about - after 6000 years of probation - at the end of His purpose with this earth, when Jesus returns to gather His faithful people into the kingdom of God for eternity.

God made another law for Israel, to take place when they possessed the land promised to them:

“... thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years.

Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubile to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land.

And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubile unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.” Leviticus 25:8-10.

On the day of atonement in the fiftieth year, the trumpet would sound, announcing the jubile - the year of liberty - when Israel would rest. The word “jubile” speaks of the “blast of the horn” - establishing that year to which all Israel would look, as a rest from their toil. At

the same time, they were to return to their possessions, which they might have had to sell due to poverty or difficulties. As the horn (trumpet) of the jubile sounded, they would be able to recover their property:

“In the year of this jubile ye shall return every man unto his possession.

And if thou sell ought unto thy neighbour, or buyest ought of thy neighbour’s hand, ye shall not oppress one another.”

Leviticus 25:13-14.

The Almighty, knowing man’s possible endeavor to oppress his neighbor, gave instruction how the land or possession was to be returned to its owner:

“Ye shall not therefore oppress one another; but thou shalt fear thy God: for I am the LORD your God.”

Leviticus 25:17.

What joy there would be in Israel as the trumpet of the jubile sounded! They would look forward to that fiftieth year, anticipating the return of their possession. There may have been some who would desire to keep the possession he had made; but God required that all in Israel should keep the spirit of the jubile, of freedom and liberty.

All this freedom of the jubile was to begin on the day of atonement when the high priest went into the most holy place to sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice upon the mercy seat within the veil, to atone for the sins of his people. That day of atonement was required by God:

“... this shall be a statute for ever unto you: that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger that so journeth among you:

For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the LORD.

It shall be a sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls, by a statute for ever.”

Leviticus 16:29-31.

Any one who sought atonement for his sins had to “afflict” his soul. The word “afflict” is also used as abase self, chasten self, humble self, submit self - a putting away of selfish desires and submitting one’s living to the word of God. The Lord Jesus, the only one who completely submitted to His Father’s will, said to His disciples:

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

Matthew 16:24.

Those who sought atonement and freedom in the year of the jubile had to gentle their souls in submission to God's mercy and grace.

The day of atonement and the year of the jubile pointed forward to the work of Jesus Christ, as the high priest who went into the most holy place to sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice upon the mercy seat. We remember as Jesus died on the cross.

"... behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom..." Matthew 27:51.

Paul wrote in Hebrews concerning Jesus' fulfilling the high priest's work:

"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;
And having an high priest over the house of God;
Let us draw near with a true heart (cleansed) in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.
Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised);" Hebrews 10:19-23.

Jesus has gone into the most holy place, God's Presence. For those who have sought to afflict their souls. He has opened the way for their entering into the year of liberty - the jubile, promised from the time of Israel at Mt. Sinai. Let us listen to Jesus' words as He spoke of signs in the earth heralding the day of the jubile:

"... then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh," Luke 21:27-28.

These signs of the coming of that jubile tell us that Jesus' return is very near, to judge those who are responsible. To those found faithful and on His right hand, He will say:

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

Matthew 25:34.

J.A.DeF.

ALL OF ONE MIND

We have begun again to read the Acts of the Apostles during our daily readings. It is the witness of the work continued after the Lord's death and resurrection as recorded after the four gospels.

The Acts are attributed to Luke's writing and we read in the first chapter he addresses one called, "Theophilus":

"The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach." Luke 1:1

Who "Theophilus" was we are not certain, but this name means "friend or lover of God" and indeed this could be a general title given to all those knowing God's Truth and desiring to walk therein.

After the Lord's resurrection, He appeared to His disciples and charged them not to leave Jerusalem but to:

"wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence."

(Acts 1:4-5).

As the disciples gathered together with the Lord after His resurrection, they naturally wondered if He was to now establish the Kingdom of God on earth as God's Son, the Messiah. However, He replied:

"... It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

But ye shall receive power, after the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Acts 1:7-8.

The Kingdom was not to be established then, but only in God's future appointed time. However, prior to this, they were to be given the great work of spreading the gospel message to all peoples throughout the world. We as Gentiles have learned of His name and what is required to walk in God's ways, because of the Apostles' work of witnessing and the precious record they made.

The Lord Jesus was with the disciples for forty days after His resurrection, after which He was taken to heaven to reside at the right hand of God the Father:

"And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:9-11.

Not knowing what exactly to expect, the disciples gathered together to strengthen themselves through prayer and through the bonds of unity and fellowship they shared until the promise of the Lord came upon them:

" These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren." Acts 1:14.

When the gift of the Spirit came upon the twelve, it lit upon them in the visible form of tongues of fire, accompanied by the sound of a mighty rushing wind. This portion of God's power invested them with the gift of healing, miracles and speaking in tongues, in order to spread the gospel of the Lord Jesus to all peoples and nations. These apostles were for the most part, uneducated men, fishermen from Galilee, who could now speak in the language of whomever heard them:

"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Acts 2:4.

As those who heard and believed the word, were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, they joined the apostles as brethren in fellowship - part of God's household:

"And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.

Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Acts 2:46-47.

How the disciples must have been encouraged as they witnessed to so many with their newly founded spiritual power, seeing great numbers joined daily to the body because of their work.

Their lives were not easy, even with this addition of spiritual power. They were threatened, beaten and imprisoned by the council of elders, who sought to halt the belief being spread of Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God and Savior. These men counseled together against the disciples, saying:

"... let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.

And they called them, and commanded them not to speak

at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

But Peter and John answered and said unto them. Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done.”

Acts 4:17-21.

Strengthened by the hand of God, they rejoiced in the deliverance granted and in the unity they felt among their brethren, joined with them in fellowship:

“And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:

And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.”

Acts 4:23-24,31-33

The unity they felt one with another helped to sustain and strengthen them in the work. The same knowledge and understanding we are privileged to know through their witness, is to help us persevere today, although our work of witnessing is not with power to perform miracles, healing or the gift of tongues, as was theirs.

This same unity was experienced by Paul who exhorted his Ephesian brethren to continue to walk in the example of the Lord Jesus, beseeching them to:

“... walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

Ephesians 4:1-6.

Joined in that same unity of spirit and mind, we too can know His care and nearness which strengthens us from day to day. The understanding of His Truth binds us together as we wait for His return, in one accord - in fear lest we be found wanting, but with hope, as did those brethren of old.

M.C.S.

SIGNS OF HIS COMING

"For when they shall say, Peace and safety;
then sudden destruction cometh upon them."

(1 Thessalonians 5:3)

When the Apostle, guided by the holy spirit, wrote the above words, he was thinking about the coming of "the day of the Lord" (Verse 2). In the first place he was writing to those called to the gospel in Thessalonica. But as the context of his writing shows, it was in the work of "sounding out the word of the LORD" - - - "in every place", for their faith to be "spread abroad." (1 Thessalonians 1:8). His words about the day of the Lord coming as a thief in the night obviously were AND ARE prophetic! Paul speaks of a time when there will be great concern for PEACE AND SAFETY. Oh! how aptly they describe this present time. As these comments are prepared for a magazine consideration, media comments that are appearing are most graphic. We will try to quote some of the extracts which are causing world leaders to have considerable concern. For example:-

"Russia - - - tested a missile capable of piercing any defence shield developed by the United States, sparking fears of a new arms race. - - - Russian military experts said the new missile was part of its 'highly effective response' to the so-called Son of Star Wars plan, which the Americans claim is aimed at 'rogue states' such as Iran and North Korea - - -. Kremlin chiefs say the missile can be armed with up to ten warheads - - - strengthening the potential nuclear deterrent of Russia's strategic nuclear forces - - - but the United States

maintains its hi-tech defence shield is not directed at the Russians."

Undoubtedly relations of Russia with Western nations has deteriorated. Talks have taken place over the provision of missile defence systems in Eastern Europe which Russia is not happy about. But concern extends far beyond the position of the United States and Russia "over peace and safety".

The assassination of the Pakistani leading political figure has provoked fear of what might be coming. The following media comment is significant:-

"The assassination makes Pakistan's condition still more dangerous for the world. Britain's Foreign Secretary --- he pinned his hopes on a move to Western-style (politics) ---. If there is a moderate majority in Pakistan - and that must be in doubt - it does not appear capable of instilling order or tackling the menace of militant Islamists. --- In the current climate the thought of a new and untested regime in Pakistan, A FULLY-FLEDGED NUCLEAR POWER, is deeply disconcerting. --- If things go badly in the months ahead it will become a tinderbox of violent Islamism the like of which the planet has never seen before."

The great danger is the extremists who are prepared to give their lives as suicide bombers. A leading member of the British judiciary has condemned certain of plotting to buy a "dirty" nuclear bomb from the Russian Mafia for the purpose of blowing up of a crowded city centre, which, apart from the mass killing, would have left radioactive fall-out over a wide area. Special British Investigators apprehended such, preventing them from proceeding in such a direction. But there have been other laments, such as:-

"--- Suicide bombers are being trained at --- 'finishing schools' in Pakistan, to bring death to our streets, (British streets), new video evidence suggests.--- It features a number of men pledging allegiance (in an opposition) to get justice for the presence of NATO troops in Afghanistan."

So what Paul warned of for these last days has come to pass. There is this call for "peace and safety". One media report voiced "why we should all be scared":-

"Islamist Jihadism is the threat that confronts not simply the West but the Whole planet, including the Muslim community ---. Pakistan has the atom bomb. Its foremost scientist is under house arrest for selling --- deadly secrets to pariah despotisms. There are others --- I lived through all 43 years of the Cold War. But it was nothing like as scary at this."

NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS FOR MARCH 2008

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

Response to our monthly mailing to the general public in Pennsylvania has been encouraging to our "casting of bread upon the waters" (Eccl. 11:1).

The world today is beset with terrorism, so-called global warming and serving of self, all of which is beyond their ability to control, for it is in God's hands. As we perceive this turmoil, it is a sign of the soon return of Jesus Christ to rule the earth with justice and righteousness. Jesus has commanded:

"... when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."
Luke 21:28.

J.A.DeF.

MANCHESTER

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11.00 a.m.

Thursdays: Bible Class 2.00 p.m.

The continuing interest in our magazine from African and Eastern addresses encourages us to continue in this work.

And over in Western places, our Brethren and Sisters in the United States, also continue with their equally important contribution. Scriptural teaching in inexhaustible. It is a great blessing that we are enabled to prepare and produce such a work in this day of "small things".