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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”

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SIGNS OF HIS COMING

NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS

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OBADIAH'S PROPHECY

We have recently read of Obadiah's vision - from a prophet of God whose book is the shortest in the Old Testament, yet it contains help and strength for us today as it did for those alive in Obadiah's time. It warns of the judgment God will bring upon any who oppose His chosen people.

God's word came through Obadiah specifically against the nation of Edom. He also speaks of the conquest of Jerusalem and the captivity of Judah, God's people, while Edom stood by and gloated at their persecution and distress:

"For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever. In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them." Obadiah 1:10-11

Edom was located in the land south of Judah and were Esau's descendants - the son of Isaac and brother to Jacob, but who cast aside God's precepts to walk in his own ways:

"But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress." Obadiah 1:12

Edom was Jacob's twin and the enmity between them was evident from the beginning for God knew that Esau was the seed of the serpent, and Jacob the seed of the woman - eager to walk obediently after His precepts and please Him.

"And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of the LORD.

And the LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb,

and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.”

Genesis 25:21-23

The twins were very different in appearance when born - one was “red, all over like an hairy garment and they called his name Esau”. Esau was the first-born and after him came his brother Jacob, “and his hand took hold on Esau’s heel”. As the twins grew their differences were apparent - poles apart - Esau was a hunter of the field, an adventurer, while Jacob was a plain or quiet man dwelling in tents - content to stay close to home and family. It became obvious by their differing natures that God’s purpose was to be accomplished through Jacob the seed of the woman, even though the first-born Esau should have received the birthright according to tradition.

We are told of Esau’s disdain for the blessings of the first-born when he sold it to Jacob for a mere bowl of pottage when hungry. By doing so he displayed no care for God’s way or the blessings to be bestowed upon the first-born - which was to teach Israel of the blessings to be bestowed upon God’s first-born - Christ and then to His people.

When it came time for the birthright to be passed to Esau the elder, Rebekah helped Jacob deceive his father Isaac by disguising his appearance as Esau. How much better it would have been to explain to Isaac that the blessing had been sold to Jacob earlier - and he was now the rightful owner. But both mother and son valued this birthright so greatly they must have feared Esau would not honor his word, so took matters into their own hands and used one of the flesh’s tools - deception:

“And he (Jacob) went, and fetched, and brought them (young goats) to his mother: and his mother made savoury meat such as his father loved.

And Rebekah took goodly raiment of her eldest son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son:

And she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck.”

Genesis 27:14-16

Isaac being blind, smelled the fragrance of the open field on Esau's garments, felt his hairy hands and arms, yet was puzzled because the voice was different - it was Jacob's. Being deceived he passed the blessings of God which he had received from his father Abraham, to Jacob as God had intended from the time of their birth:

"Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine:
Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee."
Genesis 27:28-29

Against Edom, Obadiah directed this prophecy pertaining to the end of God's purpose when He will rise up to protect and save His people against those that persecute them. He will fulfill Isaac's blessing to Jacob that, "cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee."

"Shall I not in that day, saith the LORD, even destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau?
And thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter.
For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever. For the day of the LORD is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head."
Obadiah 1:8-10,15

God laid the groundwork for this prophecy many years prior, to deliver His people in His own time. This condemnation against the descendants of Esau and all those who oppose the prosperity of His people Israel, along with those who are now grafted in as Gentiles into the hope of the promises extended to them:

"But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.
And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of

Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the LORD hath spoken it.”
Obadiah 1:17-18

This is God’s plan made for the sake of His people whom He will protect. God’s word does not return to Him empty, but He will perform everything He has spoken.

Paul in Romans speaks of Esau and Jacob, that even before their birth one was the seed called and chosen in God’s knowledge and purpose:

“And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac;
(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.
What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.
For he saith to Moses. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.
Romans 9:10-15

Obadiah’s name which means, “servant of the Lord” wrote a short prophecy emphasizing that the Day of the Lord will come as He hath promised, when God will accomplish His purpose in the affairs of men. This is our hope as well as we look with hope and yet with fear and trembling, lest we be found wanting, at His Son’s coming;

“And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD’s”
Obadiah 1:21

M.C.S.

JESUS WEPT

We have been reading in John chapter 11, the record of Jesus' raising Lazarus from the dead. The Gospel of John provides the only record of this event, as there is no record given in Matthew, Mark or Luke. John's gospel is also unique, in that he often seems to give a more in-depth look at some of the inner thoughts and feelings of Jesus. We know that John was called "the beloved disciple" — so perhaps this greater personal insight was due to the close bond that was shared between these two men. We can see examples of that in this account of raising Lazarus from the dead, as John shares Jesus' inner trouble and "groaning in himself."

As we have read, Jesus purposely delayed His journey to be certain that Lazarus was dead. He explained:

"And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him."

John 11:15.

Raising Lazarus from the dead would be a much greater witness than healing a sick man. Upon arriving in the area and seeing the grief and weeping of Martha, Mary, and others with them, He "groaned in the spirit, and was troubled." When he was taken to the grave, John says in verse 35 simply: "Jesus wept." This is the shortest verse in the Bible, and yet it reveals so much about Jesus' character. He knew the minds of those people and could experience their grief. He also knew, more than anyone else, the impact that the curse of death had on mankind in general, and realized that His own life would be required soon, in order to put an end to that curse. Also, no doubt, He was troubled by the knowledge that the vast majority of people would not walk down the path to that straight and narrow gate which Jesus was shortly to open.

We have another record of Jesus' weeping, at the time when He fulfilled the prophecy in Zechariah, by entering Jerusalem while riding on a colt:

"And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,
Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they

are hid from thine eyes.

For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round and keep thee in on every side,

And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.”

Luke 19:41-44.

The people of Jerusalem knew not the time of their visitation. In spite of the prophecies, the miracles performed, and the overwhelming evidence that Jesus was the Christ, the vast majority would not hear. In fact, very shortly they were to crucify the Son of God! It was not some foreign enemy who would kill the promised Savior, but the very people whom He was sent to save! This was about to be done by God’s peculiar people, led by the priests and those who should have been in the best position to recognize the Lord Jesus, in the capital city of the promised land. As a result, that city would be attacked and destroyed shortly after Jesus’ death. The temple, which was so carefully prepared for by David, built by Solomon, and was a source of great pride for the people of Jerusalem, would soon be completely destroyed, as Jesus predicted, with not even “one stone” left standing “upon another.”

Despite this betrayal, and the lack of response to His message, Jesus had great compassion for the people. Whether providing them with physical or spiritual food, or healing their ailments, there are several records in the Bible which specifically state that Jesus did so because He was moved by compassion. One example of His compassion can be seen when He was crucified:

“Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do....”

Luke 23:34.

After enduring the magnitude of physical and mental suffering which Jesus had been subjected to, would we be so compassionate as to forgive the very people who had caused us this misery? Of course, going through this extremely difficult ordeal was His most compassionate act of all — that of sacrificing His life to make possible the hope of eternal life and the end of the curse of death. As Jesus Himself said:

“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 15:13-14.

If Jesus could muster a level of compassion so great that He would forgive an enemy who was in the process of torturing and killing Him, imagine the compassion He affords those who are diligently seeking to follow in the path He has laid out!

Jesus suffered in many ways throughout His life. He could not have a normal life, foregoing family, children, a home, and all of the other trappings that bring joy and fulfillment to man.

Instead, He dedicated Himself to the work that He knew rested on His shoulders, enduring physical, mental and emotional pain; combating ignorance, apathy and hatred from God’s chosen people. Knowing God’s word as He did, He knew beforehand that this would be the case. He certainly would have been familiar with Isaiah’s prophecy:

“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.”

Isaiah 53:3-4.

We have the record of Jesus’ praying in Gethsemane, where He asked, if it were possible for God to spare Him from the ordeal that lay ahead of Him. He became sorrowful and very heavy, and said:

“... My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death...”

Matthew 26:38.

The record in Luke of this same event says that He was in agony, praying earnestly:

“... and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”

Luke 22:44.

These are not the actions of God incarnate, or of someone who was incapable of sin; they are the actions of a man who knows He is

about to suffer greatly and be killed. Also He may have been concerned that He would fall short in this final hour, and fail to accomplish the all-important task which had been given Him.

Paul reminds us, in his message to his Hebrew brethren:

“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. 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 4:15-16.

“For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:

Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.”

Hebrews 5:1-2.

Jesus is in a unique position to be able to make intercession for us - to mediate on our behalf in our times of trial and need, having suffered through the same infirmities, trials and tribulations that are faced by all men.

Paul further helps us:

“Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 8:34-39.

Knowing what we do about Jesus - the impossible task that He accomplished; His great wisdom, understanding, and power; His being able to know the thoughts of those who were around Him - it is perhaps easy for one's mind to forget that He really was just a man! This makes His accomplishments all the more remarkable, and allows Him to be able to truly empathize with our trials and struggles. Any hardship that we may encounter during our lives also has been borne by Him. Although our efforts fall miserably short of the example set by Jesus, as we struggle, we can be encouraged by the thought that He is sitting at God's right hand, interceding on our behalf. How comforting to know that we can benefit from His immeasurable compassion. We are reminded of all of this, not only by the many detailed prophecies and exhortations provided in the Bible, but even from such a simple, yet all-encompassing statement as:

"Jesus wept."

J.N.S.

STRIVING TO WALK IN THE LIGHT

We have recently lost through death a brother from our midst. One who labored faithfully for several decades in the ecclesia - sometimes carrying those responsibilities alone as the only brother present in the early years of our particular ecclesia's formation. The passing of someone familiar and dear to us confirms again the reality of God's sentence upon all mankind.

This time of sadness prompts us to look deep within ourselves, examining our own walk of faith, our speech and our very thoughts - for our time of probation could end tomorrow, leaving us no more time for repentance or the proving of our faith before the Almighty.

The Apostle John helps to focus our attention upon this vital matter and how to manifest a true faith and walk pleasing to the Almighty:

"But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God."

John 3:21

Here is the answer. Those that struggle to walk in His Truth, come to the light- His light - and attempt to walk in a manner that pleases Him, endeavoring to follow His precepts with obedience and love. Only where the flesh and all its impulses, which love the darkness, are crucified, will the spirit be revealed in light - and this alone is pleasing to the Almighty.

We think of the Lord Jesus and the works He was able to achieve because of faith and love for His Father. His acts of faith were done, not bound by the traditions of sacrifice, or done for the approval of men, but by perceiving the spirit of love and understanding inherent in God's laws and precepts. In following them he thus displayed a love for God and His fellow man every day of His life.

“Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?

Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? Micah 6:6-8

The prophet Micah lived during the time of the Law where the ordinance of sacrifice was required, yet he perceived what God really required of man.

“The word of the LORD that came to Micah the Morasthite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.”

Micah 1:1

To the faithful like Micah who saw the sacrifice of the Messiah reflected in those daily sacrifices, there was mercy and blessing granted from God. However to those who brought the sacrifices as a matter of duty with unperceptive hearts not seeing Christ within them, was there no repentance granted, for all the lambs or bulls whose blood they spilled.

The rivers of oil or blood of animals offered was not important

to God - but rather the submissive and humble character seen in such a man bringing the offering is what gave Him delight. One who took no pride in his own accomplishments or gloried in his own strength, but one who looked to the Lord for mercy and repentance, and instruction in order to walk faithfully in His ways, was blessed in His sight.

“And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul,
To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?”

Deuteronomy 10:12-13

The fear which the Lord requires, is not a fleshly fear that so often invades our thoughts and living from sources surrounding us. It is rather a fear that we may fail to reverence and love Him as we should and in transgression thus disappoint our Father and Creator.

“For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward:

He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.

Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.”

Deuteronomy 10:17-19

How kind and merciful is God to His people and to the strangers among them. For the people of Israel were strangers in Egypt and knew real fear and torment from their captures. Yet when God delivered them from Egypt, they went out “a mixed multitude” - those of Egypt were among them - those who came to respect the God of Israel and desired to become grated into His spiritual household of faith.

Just as we today have been privileged to have a knowledge of His Truth and have embraced it through the light of Jesus Christ, we too have become engrafted into the hope of Israel — brought from darkness into His light. Only as Christ’s example works within us to put down our fleshly thinking, can we overcome our carnal natures. We must endeavor to walk in the light while we still have time to prove ourselves, lest in slackness we leave undone the work given us and be found wanting at His coming.

M.C.S.

A BIBLE CLASS

“TAKE HEED THEREFORE HOW YE HEAR.”

Luke 8:18

As we ponder the verse under consideration we might question: Is there more than one way to hear? Why would Jesus speak to His disciples in this manner, unless there is truly a difference? The dictionary tells us that to **hear** is to experience or be aware of sound; and unless we are deaf or have some other hearing problem, we all can hear. There must be something more.

In the verses previous to the one under consideration Jesus speaks to a crowd, and to his disciples, the parable of the sower.

“A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.

And some fell upon a rock and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.

And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it.

And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

Luke 8:5-8.

Again Jesus had asked all those present to **hear**. Obviously Jesus is showing us something significant that we all need to heed about the process of hearing. Jesus’ disciples inquired of Jesus: “What might this parable be?” He proceeded to tell them:

“... Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and **hearing** they might not understand.”

Luke 8:10.

There is a difference between the people of God and the people of the world in regard to their understanding of God’s word. Jesus tells us that through the parables the Word of God is hidden from “others.” Jesus then continues to inform His disciples the meaning of the parable:

“Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.”

Luke 8:11.

As the word of God is sown, what is done with it is described in the verses to follow:

“Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.” Luke 8:12.

Here are those who hear the Word but their flesh does not allow it to even begin to grow. There is no interest in the ways of God and the hope that it brings. They cannot be bothered by a new way of life - one that will greatly change their current ways.

“They on the rock are they, which, when they **hear**, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.” Luke 8:13.

Those on the rock gladly hear the Word but do not allow it to truly take root within them. The Word is allowed to wither away out of their lives. In the beginning it seems right, but as time goes on temptation prevents the seed from flourishing.

“And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have **heard**, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.” Luke 8:14.

Those among thorns are they who have heard the Word of God, but it is smothered by the lusts of the world. In each of the previous cases it is the influence of the flesh that prevents the seed from bringing forth good fruit; however, in the next verse there is a great difference:

“But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having **heard** the word, **keep** it, and bring forth fruit with patience.” Luke 8:15.

In all these examples, there is not any change to the seed. The seed remains constant, always seeking a receptive plot of ground in which to grow and produce good fruit. We know God is unchangeable and it is we who have the choice to prepare a spot within us to accept His word or to let His word fall by the way side. With that choice also comes a warning:

“Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.” Luke 8:18.

The warning is: “Take heed... how ye hear.” Otherwise, one’s hope can be taken away! The Word must be **kept** after **hearing** it. For any who think they have the Word of God, but in reality do not, to him all hope will be removed. But any who keep that Word with patience and a good heart, to him will be granted much fruit.

Every person represented by a type of ground hears the word but only one bears fruit. What is the difference? Jesus says in the 15th verse that they, “in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.” Is this the different “**hearing**”?

No doubt, we have all had to deal with hearing something but not truly absorbing what was said. If our hearts are not set to hear what is being said, it will “go in one ear and out the other” - as the common saying goes. As an example, think of two students within a classroom: one will hear what the teacher says but is more occupied with what he will do that afternoon after school. The other takes notes and listens attentively wishing to be able to apply that knowledge and succeed on the upcoming test. Isn’t this why we must take heed how we hear?

Let us consider and contrast the words hear and hearken. To **hear**, as stated earlier, means to be aware of sound. To **hearken** is to listen or pay attention. To hear is something that happens passively. To hearken is an activity, one where a choice is made to listen attentively in hope of understanding. Those who listen, and not just hear, have an interest in the subject and attempt to cultivate the ground (prepare their minds) to make it a better place to receive the seed (Word of God). They have an “honest and good heart”. This indicates a person is receptive to the Word of God, or is someone whom God has called. For God knows who is capable of accepting His Word and allowing it to flourish. This type of person will **keep** the word after hearing it, indicating an effort to internalize that seed, or one who values that seed.

Everyone who has ever gardened knows that a seed tossed onto the surface of the ground likely will not sprout and flourish to bring forth fruit. This is due to the curse which God put on the earth because of the sin in the Garden of Eden:

“And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;

Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;

In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” Genesis 3:17-19.

The ground must be tilled, fertilized and have all foreign objects removed for a plant to be truly successful. But even with such care, one plot of land can still bring forth a different amount of fruit when compared to the next one. It is the same with man. Even though one knows the Word of God, it needs to be applied in all one's life. One's heart must be cultivated to accept His word and allow it to grow to its fullest. The bad must be weeded out so that the growth of the seed is not hindered in abundantly bringing forth the good fruit. God, the husbandman, requires His people be attached to His vine, Jesus; and through the sustenance received from the vine, much fruit can come. Where there is failure to bring forth fruit, such will be pruned from the vine to make room for a more productive branch. God has provided the vine (Jesus), enabling one to bring forth that fruit.

“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit...”

John 15:5.

Truly we are to take heed how we hear! It is not a separate way of hearing to which Jesus refers, but rather what is done after we hear. For it is the responsibility of a God-fearing man to carefully listen to the words of God and to then apply them to the best of his ability to his life every day. It was not long after Jesus told the parable of the sower, that He learned His mother and His brethren had come, desiring to see Him. Upon hearing this, He responded:

“My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.”

Luke 8:21.

E.J.M.

IN THE LATTER YEARS"

An important focus of Christ's gospel is recorded in the book of Mark:

"... he appeared unto the eleven...
And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach
the gospel to every creature." Mark 16:14-15

Elaborating on what we are told here, there is further testimony in the book of Acts:

"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 steadfastly towards 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

There had been twelve disciples very close to Jesus, but one of these, Judas, whom "Satan entered into", covenanted to betray Jesus for money and thus ceased to be a disciple. The eleven we find:

"...gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias: and
he was numbered with the eleven apostles." Acts 1:26

The Apostles thereupon went forth with many others to influence the people of the nations into that balanced thinking which led to Christ but which also ultimately resulted in what is described as Christendom. What a tremendous work that early effort was! All working out according to what is required by heavenly direction.

Scripture defines what is to be at this last time. We look at national groupings which have formed and are forming in accordance with what heavenly holiness requires.

After World Wars One and Two, the nations of Europe joined up to form what was the European Common Market and is now the European Union. The United Kingdom became part of this

grouping. But if the prophecy of old is examined we find the Bible speaks of the emergence of other groupings which are to follow a Biblically defined course. For example the prophet Ezekiel says that these include:

“Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof...” Ezekiel 38:13

And:

“...Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal...” Ezekiel 38:2

The prophecy of Daniel also speaks about two great groupings of the nations in the last days describing them in the following terms:

“At the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall come into the countries, and shall overthrow and pass over.
He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown:”

Daniel 11:40-41

So at the time of the end there will be two great world entities - the King of the North and the King of the South. These are political configurations described by scripture which enable us to focus our attention on world events. And this is why, as we look at these world events, we find the United Kingdom provides substantial political support to the people of the land of Israel, and we also understand why Britain is so attached to the United States as well as the various countries of the English speaking world. Therefore we see a king of the South emerging in opposition to a grouping of the North. And this is a part of the gospel!

SIGNS OF HIS COMING

**“This know also, that in the last days
perilous times shall come” II Timothy 3:2**

God has inspired the writers of the scriptures to give clues of conditions which will exist prior to the return of His Son, the Lord Jesus. Although we and even Jesus Himself, have not been given the exact time of His return, He tells us in Mark:

“But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.”
Mark 13:32

Jesus goes on to exhort us to:

“Take heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is”
Mark 13:33

We are to be mindful of those events taking place around us in order to inspire us to be ready and watching for His return.

As Jesus rebuked the Pharisees and Sadducees in Matthew warning them:

“...When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red.
And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?
Matthew 16:2-3

We are told to discern the signs of the times and we would have to be blind not to see all about us that we are in the midst of these “perilous times” of which Paul spoke. It is not difficult for us to see that people today truly have fashioned themselves as being after the flesh, as Paul says:

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.
For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents,

unthankful, unholy,
Without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers,
incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,
Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than
lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the
power thereof: from such turn away." II Timothy 3:1-5

What a list of fleshly condemnation! These characteristics are displayed in the depravity of mankind all over the world. At the heart of this noxious growth of self-will is man's misguided notion of, "what's in it for me?" Almost every response of man today is his questioning, how will this benefit me - giving no thought to others. Very seldom do we find people doing things because it is the right thing to do, but rather the desire of one's own heart is put first. Love of self is the rule of the day.

Just look at the various political leaders and government officials today - their example is one of self-serving. They forget the constituents they were elected or employed to represent and turn to their own desires now that they have official power. Such attitudes as this have always been present, but they were normally covered up in guile. But today these blatant attitudes are on full display with total disregard to repercussions since most of these political hacks are returned to office time and time again. It is no wonder worldly attitudes have changed to self-serving with such open displays of corrupt leadership evident for all to see. The wholesale response says, "well if they can get away with corruption, I will too"!

Just one corrupt activity alone - bribery by government officials worldwide, is estimated to involve over one trillion U.S. dollars annually (BBC News, July 10, 2007). This is just one small aspect of the "perilous times" we are in which we hope to explore in the coming months to help us take heed and watch in these latter days.

M.C.S.

NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS FOR MAY 2012

HAMBURG, NEW YORK

Sunday: Breaking of Bread 11:30 am

Thursday: Bible Class 3:30 pm; Forestville, Hamburg and Fredonia

Every Third Week: Revelation Study

Our thoughts and prayers are with our brethren in Manchester for their strengthening and healing, that only our heavenly Father can oversee and provide.

With spring weather comes renewed encouragement as we feel the warmth of God's unchanging natural cycle of rebirth. To know God's plan and His power to bring it to pass, helps us patiently await the return of His Son's healing rays. How great a hope is set before us as we struggle to redeem the time.

M.C.S.

MANCHESTER

Sunday: Breaking of Bread 11:30 am

Thursday: Bible Class 2:00 pm

Another month has passed and across the world there is no absolute peace. We of the Ecclesias have a bright prospect and rejoice in the calling through Jesus Christ to His Kingdom of Peace. This directs our attention to what will go on forever and the hope of a place in eternity. We feel the goodness of the Spirit's calling and we thank our Heavenly Father for His provision.

For more information or to read our literature, log onto:

www.remnantofchristecclesia.com