

DECEMBER 2013

A Monthly Magazine issued by

The Remnant of Christ's Ecclesia

in opposition to the Dogmas of
Papal and Protestant Christendom

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"

RUTH

HUMBLE THYSELF BEFORE GOD

DAVID

A BIBLE CLASS -
THOU ART A PRIEST FOREVER AFTER THE ORDER OF
MELCHIZEDEK Psalm 110:4

THE LIVING GOD

EVERY IDLE WORD

NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS

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RUTH

The record in Ruth is an important lesson teaching of love, compassion and duty one for another. These are traits to be commended and admired and pleasing to God, therefore they are to be embraced and incorporated into our living if we hope to be found acceptable before Him.

The exact date and writer of this record is unknown, but in the 4th chapter we are told of the lineage of Ruth's child Obed, who was the grandfather of King David:

“And Naomi took the child, 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

David's birth must have occurred before this record in Ruth was written, but perhaps the story of Ruth's was handed down verbally from family to family to teach of her steadfast and pleasing example.

Ruth was not born of Israel, but was rather a Moabite and her name means, “friend”. What a true and loving friend she was to her mother-in-law Naomi who suffered a sore trial, losing her husband and two sons, while living in the land of Moab.

Naomi, her husband Elimelech and their two sons had moved to Moab to escape the famine in Israel. The two sons took Moabitish women as wives but eventually they and their father Elimelech died. Now Naomi was left alone in a strange land, except for her two daughters-in-law. She had heard the famine had lifted in Israel so intended to return to Judah by herself, leaving her two daughters in law in their native land:

“Then she (Naomi) arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread.

Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her: and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah.

And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me.” Ruth 1:6-8

Naomi urged her daughters in law to return to their parent's homes as the best course for them both. They were grief stricken to leave Naomi, yet Orpah did return while Ruth, because of her greater feeling for Naomi, refused to leave her side:

“...Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: they people shall be my people, and thy God my God; Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.”
Ruth 1:16-17

What gratitude Naomi would feel for Ruth's compassion and care - a young woman willing to leave her homeland and travel to a nation and land she did not know in order to be with her mother-in-law. She was willing to start over - to uproot and change her life in order to serve Naomi.

They returned to Bethlehem in Judah where, to provide food for them both, Ruth went gleaning with the other women in the barley fields. She found favor with Boaz, Naomi's kinsman from Bethlehem for her good character was well known, as Boaz is recorded saying to Ruth:

“...It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.”
Ruth 2:11-12

Ruth was later joined to Boaz in marriage and their son Obed became the grandfather of David in the line of Christ. What a great blessing was granted and what a great joy it would be for Naomi, Ruth and Boaz to be joined together as a family, to nurture and care for one another and the new child:

“So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son. And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the LORD, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel
And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him.” Ruth 4:13-15

One thousand years later a descendant of Obed was born in this same city of Bethlehem - One who would be a Restorer and Nourisher to all who believe on Him as the Savior. To have the greater son of David, the only means of salvation and restorer of life in one's family line would be the greatest of honors. It was no doubt because of Ruth's love and compassion for Naomi that God rewarded her in this way.

The Lord Jesus through His sacrifice brought the ordinances of the Law to fulfillment - all done through the love He bore His Father and those that believe on Him as the Messiah and Savior.

“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Galatians 5:14

God's plan has been founded on love - His love for His people and His Son's love for Him and His followers and His people's love for one another. In that same spirit of love, the Lord Jesus has called His followers not servants but friends - as close as the relationship was between Ruth and Naomi.

If we can be guided by the principle of love, our life too may be restored by the nurturing care He daily provides, as well as in the hope of life everlasting held out to those who endeavor to please Him now during their time of probation:

“Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.” Romans 13:8

If this could be our daily motto, how much this thinking would take the perverse behaviors of the flesh out of the way and instead nurture a spirit of love and compassion to all we encounter, as was displayed by a Moabite woman to her Israelitish mother-in-law.

M.C.S.

HUMBLE THYSELF BEFORE GOD

In a recent reading in Isaiah, we have considered the king of Assyria, Sennacherib's invasion of Judah. Sennacherib sent Rabshakeh with a great army to Jerusalem, and Rabshakeh brought word from Sennacherib to Hezekiah, king of Judah. The words that Rabshakeh spoke told Judah not to rely on Egypt for assistance, nor allow Hezekiah to convince them that

God could deliver them, because neither could deliver them from the hand of Sennacherib:

“Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying The LORD will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?”
Isaiah 36:18

When Hezekiah heard the words of Rabshakeh, he rent his clothes, put on sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD. And Hezekiah sent servants to Isaiah to enquire of the LORD, and they were told:

“... Thus saith the LORD, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me.
Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.”
Isaiah 37:6-7

Rabshakeh returned to Assyria because they were warring with another nation. But Rabshakeh sent messengers with a letter to Hezekiah, again warning him not to rely on God:

“... Let not thy God, in whom thou trustest, deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands by destroying them utterly; and shalt thou be delivered?”
Isaiah 37:10-11

Hezekiah **humbled** himself before God after he had read the letter and prayed for God’s assistance. God’s word to Hezekiah through Isaiah said that he would save Jerusalem, and Sennacherib would not shoot an arrow or come up against it, but would return the way that he came:

“For I will defend this city to save it for mine own sake, and for my servant David’s sake.”
Isaiah 37:35

God sent an angel to destroy part of the army of Sennacherib, causing him to return to Nineveh. While he worshipped in the house of his god, his sons came in and slew him with the sword. The combination of Sennacherib’s blasphemy and Hezekiah’s humbling himself gave God an opportunity to show His power to protect Hezekiah and destroy Sennacherib. This example shows us what should be our reaction and attitude toward God. When we fail to acknowledge God for all that we receive from Him, we also can be brought low.

Another example of a king failing to give honor to God was Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of a great tree that reached to heaven; in that dream the tree was cut down by an holy one, and the stump was banded with a band of iron and brass. The stump was left for seven times, and was wet with the dew and shared its portion with the beasts of the field. Daniel interpreted the dream for Nebuchadnezzar:

“This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king:
That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.”
Daniel 4:24-25

After a year had passed, as Nebuchadnezzar walked in the palace, he failed to give glory to God:

“The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?
While the word was in the king’s mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee.”
Daniel 4:30-31

It was then that the interpretation of the dream came to pass, as predicted by Daniel, until the seven times had passed over:

“And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation:
Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.”
Daniel 4:34,37

Nebuchadnezzar’s lack of humility brought the wrath of God upon him, but in the end, even the great Gentile king came to understand that it was only by the will of God that he was king, and God could easily remove the kingdom from him.

Another example of false pride being brought low, and an empowering of the humble is seen in the example of Samson. Samson was a judge of Israel who was given great strength by God to fight against the Philistines. He was captured by the Philistines when he told Delilah of how his hair was the source of his strength. She had his hair cut off so that he could not escape capture, and then they put out his eyes.

The Philistines were gathered to sacrifice to their god Dagon, when they brought out Samson:

“And when the people saw him, they praised their god: for they said, Our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us.” Judges 16:24

Since the time of his capture, Samson’s hair had grown back. He asked to be allowed to lean upon the pillars for support. And then prayed to God:

“... O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.” Judges 16:28

Having received strength from God, he pulled down the pillars and destroyed more Philistines in his death than he had in his life. As he humbled himself before God, Samson was allowed to regain his strength and destroy the Philistines as they proudly boasted against God.

The Almighty overrules the world of man, and will bring low those who do not honor and submit to Him. We must try to remember that God has provided a way for us to attain to His salvation through His Son, the Lord Jesus. We must strive to humble ourselves to God’s greatness by following the example of Jesus, who, as the Master, washed the feet of His disciples, to demonstrate the great importance of humility.

E.J.M.

DAVID

As a result of David’s victory over Goliath, the champion of the Philistines, we read:

“And as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him, and brought him before Saul with the head of the

Philistine in his hand.

And Saul said to him, Whose son art thou, thou young man? And David answered, I am the son of thy servant Jesse, the Bethlehemite.

And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house." I Samuel 17:57-58, 18:2

What an honor for someone like David - one day a shepherd boy caring for his father's sheep and now summoned by the King of Israel to stay as a member in his court as one of his family. What a temptation this could have been for David - to be placed in such an honored position - close to the king and his household and admired by all Israel for slaying the Philistine champion. He could have been overwhelmed with pride for the prestige and honor bestowed upon him. Yet, we read of David's humble demeanor:

"And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely; and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants." I Samuel 18:5

These words "behaved himself wisely" mean to be circumspect - looking around oneself with caution and care - not rushing blindly forward, but being watchful and cognizant of all the ramifications of a situation. When told by Saul that he was unable to defeat the champion of the Philistines because he was a man of war, and David but a youth, David used his prior experiences, knowing God would help him, saying:

"...Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock:

And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him.

Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God." I Samuel 17:34-36

He must have been fearful confronting both a lion and a bear who had taken a lamb from the flock - yet his faith and trust in God to deliver and help him was absolute. These experiences fortified his faith in God and this trust was foremost in mind to order his walk as he grew as a man and warrior of Israel:

"And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned

from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of musick.

And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.

And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more than the kingdom?

And Saul eyed David from that day and forward.”

I Samuel 18:6-9

Saul’s jealousy and paranoia grew as did David’s success in battle, for he was clearly loved and esteemed among the people. Saul’s spitefulness turned into hatred through injured pride, for it was plain that David was loved and helped by God - this too was fodder for his resentment. He had years before forsaken God, choosing to order the direction of his own life, rather than submit to God’s guidance. Now to see David’s walk of humbleness and circumspection before God, and in return receiving His help and care, must have rankled, increasing the abhorrent feelings within him.

His rage towards David became uncontrollable:

“And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it. And David avoided out of his presence twice. And Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul.”

I Samuel 18:11-12

Instead of valuing the addition of David in his kingdom (and the presence of God with him), which would ultimately benefit him as well, Saul sought to destroy him by putting him in the forefront of Israel’s battles, hoping for his death:

“Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people. And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the LORD was with him.”

I Samuel 18:13-14

David knew that with God’s protection and care he would be delivered from harm - both from Saul and from the Philistines he fought. His gentle spirit - one striving to please God, must have been evident to all, for we read:

“Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely,

he was afraid of him.

But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them.”
I Samuel 18:15-16

He was valued in the people’s eyes, not only because he was a great warrior successfully leading Israel’s armies against the Philistines, but also because they saw a gentle man of God, endeavoring to walk in a way that was pleasing to Him:

“Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.”
Proverbs 19:19

Without the spiritual restraint taught from God’s word, Saul succumbed to his inner flesh nature, giving it full reign and therefore lost his relationship with God. The difference between Saul’s angry, jealous attitude, a product of his flesh nature, and David’s circumspection, endeavoring to walk pleasing before God, is very evident:

“He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife: but he that putteth his trust in the LORD shall be made fat.

He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.”
Proverbs 28:25-26

To trust in one’s own heart is to ignore God’s counsel and wisdom, given to guide us in the path of life. David knew God’s word and sought to live it. He had many opportunities to avenge himself upon Saul, but never did because he endeavored to be humble and circumspect, attempting to seek God’s guidance and deliverance and follow His word throughout his living:

“To me belongeth vengeance and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste.”

Deuteronomy 32:35

Saul’s calamity did come in due time - without any intervention from David. His judgment came from God’s hand who used the Phillistines to slay him in battle. His kingdom was removed and given to God’s faithful servant David. David’s trials under Saul were long and fearful, yet he faithfully endured in a right spirit and was in the end delivered by God’s hand and given the Kingdom of Israel as his reward.

God places us in circumstances to teach and test our behavior as well - to see if we will seek His help and deliverance when difficulty arises,

waiting on His guidance, or instead rashly take matters into our own hand to resolve the matter quickly:

“Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto thee. Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day when I call answer me speedily.”

Psalm 102:1-2

If we earnestly seek Him, displaying a humble and circumspect spirit, as did David, He will hear and in mercy deliver those who endeavor to serve Him:

“Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.

Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.

For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.”

Psalm 100:2-5

M.C.S.

A BIBLE CLASS

“Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”

Psalm 110:4

In this psalm, David is speaking of the Lord Jesus’ place as king in the ultimate purpose of God, as verse 1 confirms:

“The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.”

verses 1-2

He refers to the Lord Jesus as an eternal priest, for He now serves as a Mediator for His people with the Father. But why did he add that Christ would be a priest, “after the order of Melchizedek”?

It is helpful that the word Melchizedek comes from two words, “to reign” and “to be right” - being interpreted as the king of righteousness. It is immediately clear that this aspect would apply to the Lord Jesus, for this

will be His title during the Kingdom age, where He will rule as the rightful and righteous king.

But who exactly was Melchizedek? The first reference to him is in Genesis as he met Abraham who was returning after the rescue of Lot from the kings who had attacked Sodom and Gomorrah:

“And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.

And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth:

And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hands And he gave him tithes of all.”

Genesis 14:18-20.

We perhaps do not think of an established priesthood at the time of Abraham, hundreds of years before the Levitical priesthood was instituted. Yet here was a priest to whom Abram gave tithes. This implies that God’s laws had already established such an order, pointing forward to Christ’s priesthood. Abraham in giving tithes undoubtedly recognized this. This is further confirmed when, bestowing the blessings of Abraham upon Isaac, God mentioned these laws:

“And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;

Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.” Genesis 26:4-5.

Likewise, Noah and his sons, who also lived long before the Mosaic law, were not left in doubt as to how they were to serve and please God. We remember that Noah took into the ark seven clean animals and only two unclean, enabling him to offer sacrifices:

“Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female.

Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth.” Genesis 7:2-3.

There is also reference to a priesthood in Exodus as God’s voice was heard at the mount, so that Israel might hear and fear. This of course was before Moses was given the law which established the Levitical priesthood.

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people,

lest they break through unto the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish.

And let the priests also, which come near to the LORD, sanctify themselves, lest the LORD break forth upon them.”

Exodus 19:21-22.

David’s reference to Christ being after the order or manner of Melchizedek, is similar to other places in the Scriptures where such types point forward to Christ.

Paul mentions Melchizedek in great detail writing to his Hebrew brethren:

“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. And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.

And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.

So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.

As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”

Hebrew 5:1-6.

Paul repeats David’s words concerning Melchizedek who was a reminder to Abraham, of God’s calling and mercy, helping him to look forward in hope to the promise of the Messiah to come.

Under the law, the High Priest once a year, with the blood of the sacrifice, was to pass through the veil into the Most Holy Place - the presence of God. When the Lord Jesus died, the veil of the temple was rent, signifying the way into the presence of God was now possible through His death, and now by His office as High Priest for His people.

Paul further speaks of Melchizedek and the manner in which he typified Christ.

“For this Melchisedec king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;

To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by

interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;

Without father, without mother without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the son of God; abideth a priest continually.

Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils!

Hebrews 7:1-4.

Paul points out however, that the hope of salvation came not by the law or the priesthood:

“If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?

For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.

For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

And it is yet far more evident for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest,

Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”

Hebrews 7:11-17.

Jesus did not come from the tribe of Levi, but rather Judah, again tying together the similarities between him and Melchizedek, who came before the Levitical priesthood was established.

Melchizedek’s title as King of Salem, or King of Peace as it is translated, is so fitting, for the Lord Jesus as ruler over the Kingdom of God will reign from Jerusalem the capital, truly a king of peace over all nations, indeed a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

THE LIVING GOD

Our reading this morning of Paul's words to Timothy help us to contemplate the end before us, as we endeavour to be children of God.

In the 3rd chapter of I Timothy, Paul wrote about the work of a bishop and a deacon and the overall spirit that such men were to have.

“These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” verse 14

We too need to learn these same things within the ecclesia of our God, defined by Paul as the pillar and ground of the truth. The word pillar means support, while the word ground comes from the word basis. So within the true house of God is found the support and basis of the Truth, the only place on earth wherein the human manifestation of God's Truth may be found. We know from Paul's other writings that His people, united is to be as the temple of God and that His dwelling is within them. The aspect of a living God is important, as the word living, means to be alive and when applied to God, gives the thought that one's behavior is seen because He is real and aware, witnessing our deeds and the intents of the heart at all times.

The examples of our early brethren, who valued the presence of God in their living, show what our own behavior should be. David, called a man after God's own heart, exclaimed:

“How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.”

Psalm 84:1.

and verse 4

“Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah.”

The great blessing within God's dwelling place can be seen and felt, as one endeavors to make Him the power in his living.

David as a young man heard the defiling words of Goliath directed against the God of Israel and said:

“...What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? for who is this

uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" I Samuel 17:26.

Darius, obviously influenced by Daniel's faithful witness made a decree proclaiming:

"... That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast forever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed and his dominion shall be even unto the end." Daniel 6:26.

How different was David's reaction compared to that of the others:

"When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid." I Samuel 17:11.

These were soldiers of Israel, hardened men of war who were not stirred to respond to the giant's slander against their God, but rather fought only from a sense of loyalty to their king Saul, and the rewards he could bestow upon them. Yet here was a young lad who took umbrage for God's sake, whose fight and ultimate victory was done for the honor of God's name - not his own.

The enemy within continually questions or doubts the ability of God to know what we do or to help in times of trial. Often these tests come from Him to see if we will trust and believe that He is alive. It was so as Israel was tried at the time of entering the promised land:

"And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, Come hither, and hear the words of the LORD your God. And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Jebusites." Joshua 3:9-10.

Most of Israel's enemies were put to flight because there were men like Joshua, sure in the knowledge that the living God was guiding their ways. Such belief can influence others who witness it, as when Daniel came forth from the lion's den. Undoubtedly, King Darius felt great awe for what God had done on Daniel's behalf:

"And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the King spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever.

My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: for as much as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt."
Daniel 6:20-22

What a remarkable witness Daniel made to this pagan king. An example for all of Daniel's brethren, even to the present time.

How surely these examples speak of the behavior most acceptable to God, as Joshua, David and Daniel saw in faith the Messiah who would fulfill His Father's will: becoming the perfect offering by which the faithful of all time could hope for life eternal in His Kingdom. This same message is given to us by Peter:

"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."
I Peter 1:3-4.

The abundant mercy of God provides a hope of life for all the faithful who value that care during their time of probation. It is a lively hope only as there is a belief in the living God who alone can grant all we need. In warning however, Paul writes:

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry."
Hebrews 10: 31-33, 35-37.

Paul reminded his Hebrew brethren of the great hope they shared, having been enlightened to a sufficient knowledge of the living God, and warned of the fearfulness in store at the judgment seat of Christ for all those who have not lived acceptably.

Let us then be mindful of our privilege and responsibility, permitted a portion in the dwelling place of God, to respond in a way which reveals the support the Truth provides within the church of the living God.

EVERY IDLE WORD

While reading Proverbs we see many observations made by Solomon concerning man's relationship to the world around him and to his creator. These Proverbs have been of interest and importance since their inception to many who have valued them, as implied in Proverbs 25:1:

"These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out."

There must have been hundreds of proverbs attributed to Solomon, and we find they help us today, for they focus our attention on a particular aspect of the qualities God looks for in His people. How clearly they are defined, for Solomon was inspired by the hand of God.

Proverbs 26:20 is one such example:

"Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out..."

No one would question the logic of this, for wood supports a fire and without fuel, the flame is soon extinguished. Because the mind can quickly grasp the reasonableness of this thought, Solomon continues the verse:

"...so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth..."

Where there are no tales nor talebearers spreading gossip, there is no discord or contention. The simplicity of this message reveals how God's word is given in easily understood terms, to make known His ways to those sensitive to His will.

The word talebearer used in this instance, means to "roll in pieces", giving the thought that repetition of gossip or harmful talk may be done to hurt or break down, not to edify the one discussed.

Jesus has warned of the seriousness of this matter:

"...every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

Matthew 12:36-37.

It is important to recognize that the Judgment is to be based upon God's book, wherein is recorded all the words and actions of each

man and woman. This focuses attention on the consequence of our speech in the varied situations of communication. We speak with fellow workers and those we come in contact with in the world, as well as with our brethren and sisters, and of course we communicate with God in prayer and worship. When Jesus speaks of idle words He is referring to those that account for nothing constructive, do not build up, encourage or strengthen others.

The Lord Jesus in the 34th verse said of the Scribes and Pharisees:

“O generation of vipers, how can ye being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”

How true this is that whatever is spoken by the mouth comes from the heart. People are judged by what they say and how they say it. It is revealing that from the mouth's utterances judgment can be made - it is done every day. It is not surprising then that based upon our own words we will be judged by God, who knows not only our words but even the thoughts and intents of our hearts.

Proverbs 26 then gives us help in our struggle not to use idle words by emphasizing:

“As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a continuous man to kindle strife.”
Proverbs 26:21

We have all known people who are contentious—they act and speak in a way which aggravates and riles up others. Sometimes children are very adept at this when teasing playmates. This is part of the flesh, but cannot remain part of the spirit man's make-up.

The Proverb continues to warn:

“The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost part of the belly.”
Verse 22

A talebearer's words revealing secrets, often are intended to tear down or hurt another. Again help is given:

“A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.”
Proverbs 11:13

The desire that the man of spirit must have is to conceal a matter to save hurting another - not to overlook a wrong that should be corrected,

but a determination to cause no harm by spreading malicious talk and meddling in others' matters or repeating idle gossip.

In Leviticus 19:2 God reminds His people of their high calling and responsibility:

“...Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy.”

He then goes on to exhort of the things to be done or guarded against in order that they become holy, such as:

“Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people:”

How important it is in God's eyes that one does guard against being a talebearer, or slanderer, as the word means here. This reveals to us the high standards, God looks for in those who desire to be holy as He has instructed.

In contemplating Solomon's words today, we are helped to be more aware, especially as we contact others in the work place where so much of this hurtful behavior is seen. We must remember Jesus' admonition, “every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment”, and govern our words carefully, that we avoid being meddlers or busybodies, but rather that our conversation is a witness that we are mindful of His precepts, and desire to be holy as He is holy.

NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS FOR DECEMBER 2013

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

We come to the end of another year anticipating the return of the Lord Jesus. Another year of waiting in hope for the promise of the Kingdom of God. This time to work patience on our parts is granted of a merciful Father as we work out our own salvation.

As we think back upon the past year, the knowledge of God's Truth has blessed us in many ways. God's help, guidance and direction has been seen and provided assurance in the things we believe. To have shared this understanding with all our brethren and sisters sustains us in the time left until He comes.

M.C.S.

MANCHESTER

Sunday: Breaking of Bread 11:30 am

Thursday: Bible Class 2:00 pm

As each month passes by, we the Ecclesia in Manchester know that we have been granted help from above. To support us in our faith we have our precious fellowship with the Ecclesia from across the waters - a special relationship as people of the "call".

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

www.remnantofchristsecclesia.com