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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"

GLORIFY THE LORD

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A BIBLE CLASS -
BUT GODLINESS WITH CONTENTMENT IS GREAT GAIN

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ALL THE EARTH IS MINE

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GLORIFY THE LORD

Recent readings from our Daily Portions in Jeremiah have given insight into our Father's requirements and how we can better serve Him:

“Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches:
But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight saith the LORD.”
Jeremiah 9:23-24

To “glory” means to be clear, shine or boast, while the word “delight” means to incline or find favor. We see all around us the glorying that is done through the flesh as men boast of their position, knowledge or wealth. Yet this is not the glorying that pleases the Lord - this is just another way to vaunt the flesh and its achievements. The glorying that the Lord desires is a life focused on knowing and understanding His word and endeavoring to live it, without thought for self - this is a worthy boast!

We read of David's understanding of God's way and his desire to glorify God in his living:

“I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.
My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.”
Psalm 34:1-2

Here David reflects the mind of the spirit as he sought to glorify God in his living through humility - not with fleshly boasting or pride as a worldly man might do:

“O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.
I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.”
Psalm 34:3-4

To “magnify” is to make large, and only by keeping God foremost in our thoughts and actions (to magnify Him), can fleshly impulses be controlled and our fears conquered. God is the embodiment of loving kindness, mercy, righteousness and justice - so too He desires that these characteristics be found in those that serve Him:

“For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me.
But thou hast saved us from our enemies, and hast put them to shame that hated us.

In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever. Selah
Psalm 44:6-8

We must learn to truly glorify God all the day long - giving praise to Him for the knowledge of His promise of salvation given us and all the daily benefits and blessings He bestows. To truly glorify Him we must give Him praise by endeavoring to reflect His righteousness in our living:

“The righteous shall be glad in the LORD, and shall trust in him; and all the upright in heart shall glory.” Psalm 64:10

Why are the righteous glad in the Lord? Because they value the direction God gives in their living. They are not living in fear and doubt as the world does, for they know through His word, the plan that God has established for this world. Their hope is centered on a life of faith and obedience, trusting in His care until the end is accomplished, looking for a place of peace and prosperity in that kingdom He has promised, if they endure faithfully unto the end.

“Many, O LORD my God are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.” Psalm 40:5.

David was proud of his relationship with God - he did not boast in his prowess as a mighty warrior or as the King of Israel, but instead that God was close at hand to guide and direct in all his circumstances. He was chastened as a son when he failed, that he might be united again more closely with his Father and walk again in His paths more carefully. Even in the midst of chastening, God corrects out of love that we may be a delight to Him:

“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.
If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?” Hebrews 12:6-7

If a parent does not care for the welfare of their children - as we often see in the world today - they do not bother to chasten or correct and let the child be guided by its own fleshly thinking and whims, which result in errant behavior. As a loving parent sees these traits developing, they discipline and guide their children into more acceptable behaviors, showing them what is acceptable and pleasing.

In the prophet Zechariah's day, the traits God was looking for in His people were once again revealed, so that they might be pleasing in His sight:

“These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates:

And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD.”
Zechariah 8:16-17

The Word of God gives the knowledge of how to use His precepts in our living in order to attain unto the kingdom of peace He has promised. He looks today for the same qualities of loving kindness, judgment, truth and righteousness in His people as he did in the times of old:

“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”
Jeremiah 31:31,33-34

God in loving kindness has promised a new covenant of spirit to those who would endeavor to overcome their own fleshly thinking and apply His righteousness within themselves.

At the end of His purpose, when the Lord Jesus returns and the gospel is preached world-wide, all will know of Him and what He requires - that His loving kindness and righteousness might be applied in their living. What a different place the world will be when all are truly subject to Him and His ways. Until that day arrives, let us endeavor to show forth His praise in our living, that He might delight in us and that our boast may be in the spirit of closeness He affords to them that endeavor to serve Him now.

M.C.S.

VALUE GOD’S CALL

In a recent reading in Luke 14, Jesus told a parable of a man who made a great supper and invited many to attend:

“... A certain man made a great supper, and bade many:
And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready.
And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.
And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove

them: I pray thee have me excused.

And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.

And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.

And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.

For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.”
Luke 14:16-24

The parable was meant to be a warning to the Jews, but can certainly apply to anyone who has been called to partake of God’s feast. As the words of the man who sat at meat with Jesus said:

“... Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.”

Luke 14:15

It is truly a blessing to be given the call from God to have a hope of attaining His kingdom! But even that pales in comparison with being judged righteous, and being granted a part of that Holy kingdom.

In the parable, those who were bidden represent the Jews as a nation. They were the chosen people of God, the ones with whom God had made a covenant. As seen in the parable, they did not value the call and made excuses as to why they could not attend. Those excuses given were very similar to the circumstances, in God’s mercy, which allowed a man to be excused from war:

“And the officers shall speak unto the people, saying, What man is there that hath built a new house, and hath not dedicated it? let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man dedicate it.

And what man is he that hath planted a vineyard, and hath not eaten of it? let him also go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle and another man eat of it.

And what man is there that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her? let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man take her.”
Deuteronomy 20:5-7

The difference between circumstances of the parable and the law is that in the parable the excuses were to get out of coming to the great supper (the kingdom), because they had made things in this world their priority. However, the excuse from going to war was a merciful act to allow a person to enjoy the recently acquired fruits of this life. A person seeking God will understand that God’s kingdom will be the greatest blessing that can be attained, and that the things of this world are just temporary by comparison:

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:
But lay up for yourselves in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:
For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

Matthew 6:19-21

Further words of Jesus from Matthew warn of how the things of this world can draw us away:

He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.”

Matthew 13:22

The servant of the man who made the great supper was told to bring the poor, maimed, halt, and blind. These people represent the Gentiles who had not yet received the call of God, and are given the opportunity because the chosen ones had refused the call, as the words of the Lord Jesus to His disciples remind us:

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit:
Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.
Amen.”

Matthew 28:19-20

The man who had prepared the feast told his servant that those who had been bidden would not taste of his supper. These words were echoed by the Lord Jesus as He spoke to the centurion who had great faith:

“... Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Matthew 8:10-12

Let us take care to value our call to God’s feast, because we too can lose our hope in the cares of this world:

“For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches.
And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;
Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.”

Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.

Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear:

For it God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.”
Romans 11:16-21

We must humbly ask for God’s help and guidance to be granted the strength to overcome our flesh, so that we may more fully value God’s call:

“Ask, and it shall be given you, seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”
Matthew 7:7-8

We have been invited by God to participate in **His** feast. Let us recognize our path to that hope - the Lord Jesus - and seek Him and His ways with all our heart, mind, and spirit so that we may be blessed and “eat bread in the kingdom of God.”

E.J.M.

THE GIBEONITES

We have recently read in II Samuel chapter 21 of a situation involving Israel and the Gibeonites. We are told there was a three year famine during David’s reign, which prompted him to ask of the Lord why this was so:

“Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David enquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites.”

II Samuel 21:1

This famine was brought upon Israel to bring to light the wrong that King Saul had done in breaking the oath made by Israel to the Gibeonites in the days of Joshua:

“..(now the Gibeonites were not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; and the children of Israel had sworn unto them: and Saul sought to slay them in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah.)”
II Samuel 21:2

As Israel entered the land under Joshua’s leadership, the inhabitants feared their coming, knowing what had happened to Jericho and the other nations who opposed them. Many of the nations banded together in an attempt to fight and withstand them:

“And it came to pass, when all the kings which were on this side Jordan, in the hills, and in the valleys, and in all the coasts of the great sea over against Lebanon, the Hittite, and the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, heard thereof; That they gathered themselves together, to fight with Joshua and with Israel, with one accord.” Joshua 9:1-2

Fearful of Israel, the Gibeonites took a different tact - one of cunning:

“And when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done unto Jericho and to Ai, They did work wilily, and went and made as if they had been ambassadors, and took old sacks upon their asses, and wine bottles, old, and rent, and bound up; And old shoes and clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them; and all the bread of their provision was dry and mouldy. And they went to Joshua unto the camp at Gilgal, and said unto him, and to the men of Israel, We be come from a far country: now therefore make ye a league with us. And the men of Israel said unto the Hivites, Peradventure ye dwell among us; and how shall we make a league with you? And they said unto Joshua, We are thy servants. And Joshua said unto them, Who are ye? and from whence come ye? And they said unto him, From a very far country thy servants are come because of the name of the LORD thy God: for we have heard the fame of him, and all that he did in Egypt.” Joshua 9:3-9

The elders were wary of these ambassadors seeking peace, for they had been commanded by God to destroy all of the nations that dwelt in the land, lest leaving any they should become a snare unto them and turn them from serving the Lord. Joshua and the elders believed their story without asking for God's help or guidance and were thus deceived:

“And the men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD. And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live; and the princes of the congregation swore unto them. And it came to pass at the end of three days after they had made a league with them, that they heard that they were their neighbours, and that they dwelt among them.” Joshua 9:14-16

The subtlety of the Gibeonites caused Joshua and the elders to make a peace pact with them because they, “asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD”:

“And the children of Israel journeyed, and came unto their cities on the third day. Now their cities were Gibeon, and Chephirah, and Beeroth, and Kirjathjearim.

And the children of Israel smote them not, because the princes of the congregation had sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel, And all the congregation murmured against the princes.

But all the princes said unto all the congregation, We have sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them.

This we will do to them; we will even let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath which we sware unto them.” Joshua 9:17-20

They had made peace with the Gibeonites confirmed by an oath through the Lord God of Israel, and this could not be broken without incurring God’s anger upon themselves. However, because of their deception, Israel made them servants unto the congregation - their freedom in return for their lives:

“And Joshua called for them, and he spake unto them, saying, Wherefore have ye beguiled us, saying, We are very far from you; when ye dwell among us?

Now therefore ye are cursed and there shall none of you be freed from being bondmen, and hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God.” Joshua 9:22-23

The Gibeonites acted out of fear - fear of the armies of Israel and more importantly, fear of the power of the Lord their God. They did not try to fight or oppose them, as did those of Jericho or the other nations in the land. The Gibeonites believed in the report that this land was given them by God through the hand of Moses, and that they were to destroy all the inhabitants therein. They were not a weak or cowardly nation, for we read further in the next chapter of Joshua 10:

“Now it came to pass, when Adonizedec king of Jerusalem had heard how Joshua had taken Ai, and had utterly destroyed it; as he had done to Jericho and her king, so he had done to Ai, and her king; and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel, and were among them;

That they feared greatly, because Gibeon was a great city, as one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all the men thereof were mighty.” Joshua 10:1-2

They submitted peaceably, although done with subtlety, because of their fear and respect for Israel’s God, and were allowed to live among Israel as servants to the congregation:

“And now, behold, we are in thine hand: as it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do.

And so did he unto them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, that they slew them not.

And Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water

for the congregation, and for the altar of the LORD, even unto this day, in the place which he should choose.”

Joshua 9:25-27

From that day forward Israel defended Gibeon against others who opposed them - because of the oath of peace they had made with them. They were now under God's protection.

This famine in the time of David, hundreds of years later, came upon Israel because Saul did not respect the oath made to the Gibeonites. David knew he must put things right, for God had brought this famine as punishment because of Saul's disrespect and murderous interests towards those of Gibeon. - he had violated the oath made in God's name.

Even though the Gibeonites used subtlety, they did so out of fear and respect for God, therefore He honored the oath made with them, covering them with His care and protection. A lesson of His merciful kindness, not only to His own people, but to all who would bow down before Him. Just as His words to Abraham promised:

“And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”

Genesis 12:2-3

All families of the earth will one day be blessed through Israel - more particularly through the name of God's Son, the Lord Jesus - the King of Israel, who will unite all of natural and spiritual Israel in the Kingdom of God at His return. In that day, those that fear His name and seek refuge under His protection, will know a care and covering from the wrath that is to come upon those that oppose His righteous rule.

M.C.S.

A BIBLE CLASS

“But godliness with contentment is great gain.”

I Timothy 6:6

As one considers the 6th chapter of I Timothy, it is found that Paul is giving instruction to Timothy to help him in the circumstances which would arise in his ministry - circumstances that Paul no doubt had faced as well in the work given to him by God. His advice centers on the need to have a balance in one's living, for as he points out in verses 9-10, the rich are faced with great temptation:

“But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

Also verses 17-19:

“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;

That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;

Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”

Paul in essence says that if there is conceit, high-mindedness or love of money in those who have it, how can they develop the humbleness and meekness of character so prized by God in those who love Him? As verse 6 summarizes, “But godliness with contentment is great gain”. There may naturally be those who have riches, but wise men will restrain self-gratification while using them in a spiritual way such as in the work of the Truth or assisting those of the household of God who may not be so well endowed. As Paul points out in that 17th verse, there is the danger that those with riches will learn to trust in the security they offer, rather than in God, the bestower of all that is good.

There are examples of many in the Scriptures who had wealth such as Job, Abraham, Solomon. Job, for instance, lost all of his possessions, including his family, yet through this hard trial retained his integrity and accepted his circumstances because they were wrought by God. He stood against his wife, rebuking her for the lack of contentment she displayed when she urged him to “curse God and die”. When Job’s trial was over, God blessed him again with riches, twice as much as in the beginning.

“And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.”

“So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning:...”
Job 42: 10,12.

When one looks to his own life in consideration of Paul’s instruction, recognition must be given to the true riches to be found in His word namely, a peace of mind and contentment acknowledging His care. This is perfectly seen in looking to the example of the Lord Jesus who was not rich in this world’s goods but had wealth beyond price in the eyes of God because He had true contentment with His circumstances as He obeyed His Father in all ways.

The word godliness in this consideration is rendered as piety, to do well,

to revere. The Concordance ties it with the thought of the gospel, which is God's message of hope through the name of Jesus Christ. A good illustration of this is seen in I Timothy 3:16 where in describing godliness it is speaking of the Lord Jesus:

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”

If godliness is reverence, how true it is that the Lord Jesus was really the only one who totally revered God, showing this by His perfect obedience. He had no desire for worldly gain, for with singleness of purpose He gave it all up in order to serve God, even the simple things of life which are taken for granted were denied Him such as a home, wife and family.

Clearly, the flesh is not content with godliness, yet all would do well to remember that no one will carry anything out of this world except the promise and hope for life everlasting one can gain if accounted worthy through passing their time of probation in godliness with contentment. How important it is then that Paul's advice be heeded to help achieve balance in one's living.

WALK IN WISDOM TOWARD THEM THAT ARE WITHOUT

Our portions in the books of Joshua and Judges relate the details of the final possession of the land by the children of Israel. We have read Joshua's instructions of how important it was to remember all that God had done on their behalf, in order to value the presence of the Almighty's help in conquering the enemy which stood in the way of their inheritance.

We know further that the exact instructions of God were not carried out, namely the removal of all the inhabitants of the land. We remember how the Hivites deceived, which resulted in their remaining amongst the Israelites. Likewise, we read in Judges, how the fragments of the various nations that remained amongst Israel, ultimately caused them greater problems. This relationship between the heathen and Israel speaks of the importance of the separation necessary between the people of God and those of the world. In Judges chapter 2 we read of God's word spoken to Israel in verses 1- 5:

“... I made you to go up out of Egypt. and have brought you unto the land which I sware unto your fathers: and I said, I will never break my covenant with you.

And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land: ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this?

Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you.

And it came to pass, when the angel of the LORD spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept.
And they called the name of that place Bochim: and they sacrificed there unto the LORD.”

This word Bochim means to weep, and indeed this was a place of weeping for Israel because of their disobedience. Those inhabitants who remained would be as thorns and their gods would be as snares - in other words, a trial in the midst of this wonderful land of milk and honey.

This situation should prompt us to question our relationship with those without and what that relationship should be.

We read that when the children of Israel left Egypt under the hand of Moses in Exodus 12:38:

“... a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle.”

As they came out of Egypt there was a mixed multitude, undoubtedly composed of those who came to know the power of the God of Israel as they witnessed the wonders performed by God through the hands of Moses and Aaron. These individuals were permitted by God to leave Egypt with Israel because possibly they desired to serve him. Yet in Numbers 11:4 we read:

“And the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting; and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat?”

Circumstances were felt to be unbearable and so there was murmuring over the manna. It would seem that the mixed multitude goaded Israel into lusting and their subsequent failure. The fifth and sixth verses of this same chapter go on to say:

“We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely: the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick:
But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes.”

What caused the children of Israel to murmur? They failed to remember the deliverance that God had shown them in Egypt. Perhaps the mixed multitude had known other luxuries in the land of Egypt that Israel as a captive people had not known, and so despised the light bread - the manna.

Today we find ourselves amongst those who know not the God of Israel, and do we not find that they are a present test to us? In II Cor. 6:17-18 the words of the Spirit tell us:

“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”

These words spoken by Paul, stress the importance of a firm balance in the relationship there must be between those striving to be children of God and those of the world who do not know Him. Yet we can remember the circumstance when Peter was shown a vision of unclean animals caught up in a sheet and instructed to eat - contrary to what he had practised as a Jew under the law. Shortly after this, Cornelius, a Gentile and a Roman centurion, was brought to Peter desiring to know the Truth. We also think of Rahab, an inhabitant of Jericho who became an Israelite by adoption because of her fear of God. These situations speak of the balance required in our relationship to those who desire to seek the God of Israel. We know that Cornelius, though lacking knowledge of Yahweh, was seeking Him for we are told in Acts 10:2 that he was:

‘A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.’

Cornelius must have been influenced by someone who knew the Truth and in making inquiry through prayer to God was led to Peter.

In I Thess. 5:15 we read:

“See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.”

Here is the key factor that the children of God need to exercise as they find themselves amongst those that are without. In essence, to do that which is right in the sight of all men, knowing it is done in the sight of God. By their doing this is revealed the influence of God’s hand upon them. Solomon’s words likewise help in Proverbs 3: 27-28 having regard to the relationship between a man of spirit and one without.

“Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.
Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee.”

This speaks of the true understanding and application of spirit of one to his neighbor, to provide, when in one’s power to do so, whatever is right and appropriate in the sight of God. This reminds of Paul’s instructions in Gal. 6:10:

“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”

It is obvious that in our relationships with our brethren and Sisters our desire would be to do good, but Paul also reminds that when opportunities arise

we must do good to all men. It is a help to get this spirit of understanding in regard to the relationship with those without, for in II Thess. 4:12 we are told:

“That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without and that ye may have lack of nothing.”

This thought of walking honestly toward them that are without conveys the fact that we never know what the witness of our living may do for viewing our actions. If this is our determination, it helps us to get the balance as well as recognize the obvious dangers so that we are not pulled into wrong ways but instead witness by our living of God’s hand upon us. Paul in Col. 4-5-6 summarizes this thought:

“Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.”

Walk in wisdom? This speaks of God’s wisdom of course, and conveys the need to recognize that God watches how we redeem the time (buying up every opportunity) proven by our actions and words.

Let us then remember God’s goodness in permitting us to see His glorious light and heed our responsibility to let that light be reflected and show forth in all of our living. If we can govern our walk by this wise standard; will we not be helped in our relationships toward them that are without?

“ALL THE EARTH IS MINE”

In late November of last year an earthquake occurred at Chicoutimi, Quebec, 90 miles north of Quebec City, Canada, which was felt by many in the vicinity of Eastern Canada and U.S.A. - an area not frequented as is the West Coast by such an event. A phenomenon such as this, happening so close to home, prompts us to think upon the purpose of God with this earth and in particular of the relationship between God and His children. As events such as this occur, our thinking naturally turns to Jesus’ words in Matthew 24:7-8 as He instructed His disciples concerning the last days:

“For nation shall rise a against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in diverse places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.”

It is true that famines, pestilence and earthquakes have occurred in varying places throughout history, just as this earthquake in November which hit so close to home. In researching various aspects of earthquakes, it was found that

in excess of 100,000 occur each year in the world, however, most happen under the sea and go unnoticed, except to the scientific community. Technically, an earthquake is simply ~ vibration of the earth's crust when stress is released after two different layers of the earth's strata can no longer stand the force placed upon them. The crust fractures, creating a fault line and as the force is released, subsequent vibration is felt. Quakes vary in magnitude but in a major tremor thousands may be killed and severe property damage occur. Although there was little property damage or personal injury witnessed in the November quake in Canada there was much attention focused on this event in our region. The general awe of the area residents is reflected by the newspaper headlines which read, "Quake Caused Fear, But Little Damage - 'Earthquake Rocks Eastern Canada and Northeast U.S.'" Yet to those sensitive to God's purpose, how very convincing should be this evidence of His tremendous power and might in such an event, and perhaps more importantly, it should be realized that it is He alone who controls the elements which govern the earth and its inhabitants.

We read in Exodus how God used the power of an earthquake to impress Israel with the majesty of His presence, in chapter 19: 17-18:

"And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly."

We can well imagine the wonder and fear in Israel's minds as they witnessed such a display of power and might, yet the message sent to them through Moses was one of care and concern:

"Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:"
(Exodus 19:4-5)

As that mount quaked and smoked, these words, "all the earth is mine", were to warn against the fearful wilderness journey that lay ahead and to instill in them a trust in the mightiness of their Father who would guide them.

The presence of God has also been manifest in an earthquake to bring chastening and judgment. In Isaiah we read of the punishment against Jerusalem (Ariel) in chapter 29 verses 1-3 and 6:

"Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt! add ye year to year; let them kill sacrifices.
Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow: and it shall be unto me as Ariel.

And I will camp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with a mount, and I will raise forts against thee. Thou shalt be visited of the LORD of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest. and the flame of devouring fire.”

Here the wrath of God was to be unleashed and bring them low because of their evil ways.

In a like manner, God’s judgment came to the rebellious children of Israel in Numbers where we read of the insurrection of Korah, Dathan and Abiram who challenged the leadership of Moses and Aaron as recorded in chapter 16: 28-33:

“And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the LORD hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind. If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the LORD hath not sent me. But if the LORD make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the LORD.

And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them:

And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up. and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods.

They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them; and they perished from among the congregation.”

God’s evidence of power and might gave verification to the Work done by Moses and Aaron, that they were following His instructions only and not leading the people on their own initiative. Korah, Dathan and Abiram’s end left no doubt of the power that was in their midst. How impressive a lesson this would be to any who might dare to frustrate the work of the Almighty.

We know also of earthquakes from many references in the book of Revelation, and that they will occur in the last days at the return of the Lord Jesus. As we are now allowed to see the dreadful force of an earthquake, we can understand more clearly the might of God that will bring about the final destruction at the end of His purpose. Revelation 6:12-14 speaks of bringing down the old heavens and old earth:

“And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;

And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.”

The reaction to this great power is recorded in verses 15-17:

“And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?”

A very discerning question by the inhabitants of the earth who wish death instead of the wrath of God to be prolonged. Only those influenced by their recognition of God’s power and might will struggle to make their living conform to His Word. Also in Revelation 11:13 we read:

“And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted and gave glory to the God of heaven.”

Again judgment inflicted through the power of an earthquake but upon only portion of the earth’s inhabitants in order to instill a godly fear and to bear witness of His might to those that remained. In Revelation again we read of the final destruction of Babylon in chapter 16:18-20:

And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found”.

No island or mountain will be left standing - nothing which was raised up in the old heaven and earth will remain - all will be destroyed. Even in the recent history of mankind earthquakes have killed thousands of people in an instant, yet the Scriptures tell us that this particular one will be without comparison. Can there be any doubt of who wields this power?

Amos 1:1 brings out another facet of God’s presence seen among us:

“The words of Amos, who was among the herdsmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.”

Not a great deal is known about this earthquake, but it is clearly given as a reference point, a signpost to the time of Amos' witnessing. In Zechariah 14:1-5 it speaks of the coming of the day of the Lord with reference made to the earthquake in the days of Amos:

“Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee.

For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.

And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.

And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountain; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.”

The prophecies of the future, combined with developments from the past, help us to understand that as these events unfolded in times past, so will they occur again, to usher in a time of healing with the establishment of God's kingdom - a time of peace for all who will bow their knee to Him.

In Matthew 27:50-54 it speaks of the earthquake at the time of the death of the Lord Jesus:

“Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

And, behold the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom: and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;

And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,

And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.”

What power, what might was here revealed that men should be convinced of God's purpose and desire for mankind in the death of His Son. It is this sensitivity which is called for in us as we view the circumstances about us

during these days which must soon culminate in His return.

Yet, how easy it is to find ourselves caught up in the everyday cares of life, but let us take the example of Elijah to heart where in I Kings 19:2 we find him fleeing to the mountains in fear for his life at the hand of Jezebel. He no doubt was feeling alone and dejected, perhaps discouraged by the lack of response to his witness. God knowing of his fear, displayed the magnitude of His power to this steadfast prophet:

“...And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake:
And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire:
and after the fire a still small voice.” (I Kings 19:11-12)

God realized the comfort needed in the midst of this trial and so provided help through “a still small voice”. Elijah could see the power that would be unleashed against His foes, but to God’s own was revealed a quiet gentleness to encourage him onward. To also cheer and support Elijah in his work of witnessing to the rebellious house of Israel, God strengthened him with this news:

“Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.”
(I Kings 19:18)

What comfort Elijah would feel knowing that there were other faithful brethren and sisters in the land of Israel.

We see then throughout the Scriptures that the expression of God’s great power displayed in an earthquake was often used to draw attention to His purpose with the earth but if we are sensitive to His Word, we must also hear that still small voice that speaks to those who strive to walk in His ways, valuing the undisputable fact that the earth is the Lord’s.

Let us then as we are afforded the opportunity to witness God’s power in the events which surround us today, take heed to strengthen our faith, knowing His presence is near at hand to guide those who will hear and fear.

NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS FOR JANUARY 2014

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

The old year passes and a new year begins and the seasons come and go, confirming the unchangeableness of God's creation. What has been will be - assuring us of God's undeniable purpose with this earth.

Whether this will be the year of Jesus' return is unknown, but that He WILL return we are confident. Let us value each day given, striving to do His will

M.C.S.

MANCHESTER

Sunday: Breaking of Bread 11:30 am

Thursday: Bible Class 2:00 pm

Time goes by and we reflect on the faith from above that is such a comfort to us and so reassuring. Oh! how great is the blessing from heaven that we do know the purpose of this divine creation. We live in a day of small things but we continue to bear witness - the few here linking with the few across the seas in this work.

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

www.remnantofchristsecclesia.com