

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

TRUE ZIONISM

But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

Hebrews 12:22-24

There are various years that stand out in the past as we look back at the unfolding of GOD's purpose in the history of mankind. In our country the year 1776 is a very important one because it is from that time that we begin to consider ourselves as a sovereign nation. Then the year 1812 comes to mind as our independence was again tested. Neither can we forget the years from 1861-1865 as Civil War decimated our land. 1929 is remembered as the year of the great "crash" as the bottom fell out of the stock market and our nation was plunged into the Great Depression. Then came December 7, 1941, truly a day that shall live in infamy and marked our entry into war. 1945 brought an end to WWII but also ushered in the atomic age as horrendous destruction was wrought upon the Japanese. Those alive at the time can tell you where they were on a day in 1963 when John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas. We could fast forward to September 11, 2001 and who can forget the events that transpired that day? These are a few dates which have great significance in our nation's history.

Some would have us believe that the year 1948 is such a year. They point to this year as the one in which the earthly nation of Israel was formed by the United Nations. There is no doubt that this event has great implications in natural history since the Arabs and Jews have fought over these ancestral lands for hundreds of years. Each party claiming to have "rights" to this real estate and each believing themselves to be the rightful heirs and owners of these lands. So it is somewhat significant in the course of the world's history that this particular year was the first establishment of a people, who call themselves Jews, in a physical country which they could call their own since the times of the Roman Conquest in 70 AD.

We have no problem in recognizing the historical significance of such an occurrence. However we do find ourselves a bit confused with those who claim to be the followers of CHRIST and claiming to have an understanding of the nature of the kingdom which HE came to establish in the earth, placing any spiritual significance in the transfer of real estate in this time world. Did not our LORD say, "*My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.*" (John 18:36)? The Kingdom of GOD (or of Heaven or HIS kingdom) is not concerned with natural soil anymore than it can be inhabited by those whose

only birth is that of a woman. (see John 3:3-8) Those who are a part of this kingdom are born *"not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."* (John 1:13)

The word *"Zion"* appears 146 times in the scripture, with the Psalmists mentioning it 38 times and the prophet Isaiah 47 times along with Jeremiah who speaks of it 32 times. It first appears in Deut.4:48 but the physical location defined by it there seems different than in any other reference to it in the rest of the Bible. The physical location of this "mount Zion" which is talked about numerous other times seems to be a fortress or mountain inside the city of Jerusalem first mentioned as the *"stronghold of Zion"* which David took from the Jebusites, and it was ultimately called the *"city of David"*.

There are numerous references to Zion in the scripture as an exact location yet most of the time that reference is made to it; the context leads us to see it used more as a metaphor for the place where GOD is pleased to dwell with HIS people. *"Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion."* (Ps 2:6) does not have reference to a "place" so much as it does to the fact that HE has a kingdom which is an everlasting kingdom. (see Ps.145:13; Dan 7:37; 2 Pet.1:11)

Zion is a place with an unshakeable foundation. *"Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation"* (Isa 28:16) The LORD JESUS CHRIST is that CORNERSTONE which the builders of earthly kingdoms have rejected. Yet *"other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."* (1 Cor, 3:11) HIS righteousness alone is the hope of those who dwell there.

Zion is a place of great joy. *"And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."* (Isa 35:10) The word of reconciliation is sent out to all those who have been purchased by JESUS CHRIST. *"The year of my redeemed is come."* (Isa 63:4) The gospel is sent by HIM to publish glad tidings and comfort those that mourn. (see Isa.40:9; 41:27; 61:1-3)

Zion is a city built to be inhabited by a particular people. *"Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean."* (Isa 52:1) Those that are its inhabitants are not those circumcised in the flesh but the heart. Those who are born Jews are not those who are the Israel of GOD. *"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."* (Rom 2:28-29)

Zion is an everlasting city. *"And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD. As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever."* (Isa 59:20-21) That true Zion is not built upon a conditional covenant nor with a people who can trace their lineage in the flesh, but upon the promises made to the KING of ZION. (see Ps.2:8; Gal.3:16)

SAVIOR, if of Zion's City, I through grace a member am,

Let the world deride or pity I will glory in THY name.

Fading is the worldling's pleasure, All his boasted pomp and show.

Solid joys and lasting treasure, None but Zion's children know. John Newton (1725-1807)