

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

A MAN NAMED JOHN

But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

Luke 1:13

The LORD always saves the best for last. We can see that demonstrated in the first few days of HIS ministry when HE turned water into wine at a wedding in Cana. HE was not content simply to make drinkable wine, but made the very best of wine which caused the governor of the feast to remark to the bridegroom, *"Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now."* (John 2:10)

We see that illustrated again and again. HE gave the law by Moses but grace and truth came by JESUS CHRIST. HE offered up HIMSELF to die on Calvary's cross, that HE might cancel our sin debt, but then HE arose from the dead and became the FIRST FRUITS of them that sleep. Having now ascended back into the heavens, HE shall come again to receive us into HIS very presence. And so shall we ever be with the LORD. It can't get any better than that state in which all of those who are in CHRIST shall enjoy forevermore.

Every prophet that the LORD raised up under the old covenant testified of the LORD JESUS CHRIST in one way or another. Yet once in the end of the age it pleased the LORD to send John as that one which was prophesied in Isaiah 40:3-8, to be the only one to actually see him face to face in the flesh even as Moses surveyed the promised land. When he saw him he said, *"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."* (John 1:29)

John was chosen by the the LORD to baptize JESUS CHRIST in water, "to fulfill all righteousness." Under the Levitical law the sacrifice had to be prepared by washing in water and this baptism (which was unto repentance, see Psalm 51) was that which symbolically prepared the LORD to begin HIS ministry as the ONE sent from GOD to save HIS people from their sins. In performing that task it demonstrated HIS purpose to fulfill every prophecy and every jot and tittle of the law, so that no accuser can be found against those for whom CHRIST satisfied that law and manifested the fact that HE came not to destroy the law but to fulfill it. *"To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."* (Rom 3:26)

John's baptism of repentance was indeed that which was but a foretaste of the baptism which CHRIST HIMSELF would administer which is testified of by John when he said, *"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire."* (Mat 3:11) This is a far better baptism than that which John administered, *"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."* (1Co 13:10)

The Jews thought themselves to be the children of Abraham and therefore inheritors of the promise but the revelation of the New Covenant (of which CHRIST is the head), is that *"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) These are indeed the true inheritors of the promise given to the SEED (not seeds) of Abraham WHO has made them kings and priests in the earth and heirs and joint heirs with HIM in the ages to come.

John occupies a place of great preeminence among the Old Testament prophets even as the LORD testified, *“But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.” (Mat. 11:9-11a)*

Then saving the best for last HE finished the declaration, *“notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” (Mat 11:11)* John is emblematic of the closing of an era and CHRIST is the ushering in of the new. The greatest man born of woman under that old covenant even though he was ordained of GOD to be the forerunner of CHRIST, must be buried with Moses on Mt. Pisgah looking into the promised land but not allowed to enter. For though John was present to see the beginnings of the ministry of CHRIST in the behalf of his people he was not permitted to view HIM hanging upon a cross with HIS very life blood flowing from HIS body as a sacrifice for the sin of HIS elect.

Nor was he a witness of HIS resurrection, nor did he behold HIM ascending into the heavens to sit at the right hand of the FATHER. *“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” (Heb 11:13)*

Yet those to whom the kingdom is given both have seen the HEIR of all things and witnessed the completion of the basis of HIS redemptive work as HE bled for their sins, rose for their justification, and is coming back to redeem them in the day of the resurrection. We are presently in no place of doubt as to the absolute finality of that which JESUS CHRIST has performed, unlike John who, from prison (how symbolic) sent messengers to inquire if the LORD JESUS was the ONE. *“Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?” (Mat 11:2-3)*

No dear friends those who have been given NT faith in CHRIST look for no other but CHRIST. They entertain no notion that there is salvation in any other, but testify with Peter, *“This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” (Act 4:11-12)* The very least of the privileged saints which have been made heirs of the new covenant can see far more clearly than the greatest of those prophets of the old. But the best is yet to come.

Now as clearly as we see with undimmed vision of the finality of the work which CHRIST has performed in the behalf of all of those whose sin HE bore, we yet see through a glass darkly, but live in the light of that promise, that we shall see HIM face to face. The prospect we have is not different from that which was given to the OT saints for even Job testified, *“And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.” (Job 19:26-27)* Yet none of those OT saints ever saw the accomplishment of the basis of that redemption like those to whom such privilege has now been given. The best is yet to come.

Now we would be remiss to speak of John the Baptiser (Immerser) and not to consider the purpose of water baptism in the NT as it differs from that of John. John's baptism was one of preparation but that which the LORD commanded HIS disciples to perform is one of completion. There is no sacramental importance to this baptism but it is merely that which is a profession of one's faith in the person of CHRIST even as Peter described it. *“The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:*

(1Pe 3:21) www.gracechapelobrien.net

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