

GRACE GAZETTE

Volume XIV

Issue 45

Published occasionally for Zion's mourners

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

ZERUBBABEL AND THE BAG WITH HOLES

Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but Ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. *Haggai 1:6*

The LORD gave Zephaniah a very grave and dire warning to give to the people of the region where he dwelt. *"I will utterly consume all things from off the land, saith the LORD."* (Zeph 1:2) Many modern day "prophets" (using the word quite loosely) tell us that GOD has now changed and mellowed out and no longer is angry with the wickedness of mankind. HE is only doing "good" (as they define it) things now and is just trying to bless and help as many folks as HE can as long as they will cooperate with HIM, and quit thinking negative thoughts.

Yet we read in the book of Hebrews that *"our God is a consuming fire."* (Heb 12:29) HE who changes not is still angry with the wicked every day, (see Ps.7::11) hating the workers of iniquity (see Ps.5:5), with the same vengeance as HE expressed through Zephaniah. By nature, men think that they have some means at their disposal to mollify HIS anger and by adopting some form of religion, that HE will ultimately be pleased. Cain is the perfect example of this mindset.

The LORD demonstrated HIS regard to all forms of man's religion in these words which HE gave to Zephaniah to deliver, *"I will also stretch out mine hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, and the name of the Chemarims with the priests; And them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops; and them that worship and that swear by the LORD, and that swear by Malcham; And them that are turned back from the LORD; and those that have not sought the LORD, nor enquired for him."* (Zeph 1:4-6)

Something that stands out quite plainly from this verse is that HE groups all forms of religion together, even mentioning those that *"worship and swear by the LORD."* Most of those today who call themselves Christians honestly believe that the LORD has regard to them because of their devotion, faithfulness, or good deeds. Others believe that HE is pleased with their adherence to sound doctrine, setting forth the parameters whereby a man could be considered to be "saved", which are directly in keeping with their definition of what "sound doctrine" is. Most often they have a group of "pastor kings" who define this doctrine for them, in no uncertain terms. These constituents are proudly identified together, on the basis of their agreement with these precepts, as found in their creeds, confessions of faith, and historical literature.

The Jew's religion was much the same. *"But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken."* (Isa 28:13) They had confidence in their doctrine, going about to establish their own righteousness, never realizing that they were snared by their own "shibboleths".

We then fast forward to the prophecy of Haggai as he recounts, to much the same audience (especially the Jews), the weakness and barrenness of their own efforts. Though he literally speaks to them of their temporary and futile earthly endeavors to provide for themselves, we recognize that he is actually speaking to them of their general impotence and inability to do any

thing that would produce lasting or eternal results. The description he makes of their endeavors (most especially those of religion) are illustrated as trying to fill a "bag with holes." Solomon tells us the exact same thing in the Proverbs, *"For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven."* (Pro 23:5) Whatever a man trusts in, which is of his own making or participation is sure to perish, and he along with it.

Thus man has no ability to either procure his own salvation nor to even approach unto the LORD in true worship, in his own power. *"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."* (John 4:24) Literally HE can only be worshipped as HE is. Since HE is the GREAT I AM, HE alone is the ONE who determines when and how HE will be worshipped.

If this were the only message that the LORD had brought to us we would certainly have a bleak future and would have no prospect of anything but doom and our own demise. At the same time, if the message of supposed deliverance which the "will worshippers" and "positive thinkers" set forth, were true, then our hopes would surely be as a "bag with holes". *"O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."* (Jer 10:23)

The glorious TRUTH which is brought forth in the unveiling of the Gospel of the glory of the blessed GOD, which is brought to us by JESUS CHRIST, is the only hope that poor, barren, and impotent sinners can find comfort in. For the LORD has declared that HE would raise up Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, and the Governor of Judah (see Hag. 2:21) to build HIS temple. *"And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof."* (Rev 5:5)

This ZERUBBABEL is the CHOSEN of GOD, the PROPHET of the MOST HIGH, and the REDEEMER of Israel, that people whom the LORD has loved from before the foundation of the world. *"And again the word of the LORD came unto Haggai ----- I will shake the heavens and the earth; And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother. In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the LORD of hosts."* (Hag 2:20-23)

CHRIST JESUS is that ONE who alone has made the barren wasteland to spring up as a fruitful field. HE alone has purchased the eternal redemption of HIS people, and has established HIS kingdom in the earth, *"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it."* (Isa 2:2)

These are indeed the "last days", (see Heb.1:1,2) wherein ZERUBBABEL has made known that the FOUNDATION of the LORD's house standeth sure, *"the LORD knows them that are HIS"*. HE has redeemed them, not with silver or gold, acts of faith, or the blood of bulls and goats, but with HIS own blood, as of a LAMB without blemish or spot. *"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."* (John 6:37) These are those building blocks (i.e.; lively stones see I Pet.2:5) of this TEMPLE which ZERUBBABEL has built. It is only in this TEMPLE that the true worship with which the LORD is pleased can be brought.

No act of man, can cause himself to be a part of this building, nor is the LORD waiting to find out who the inhabitants of HIS kingdom are. HE is presently calling those whom HE loves with a call which will only be heard and heeded by those who are made the objects of HIS grace and mercy and revealed by the gift of faith.

What a blessing the declaration of the gospel is to those who are given ears to hear it. They are even as those described in the book of Acts, *"And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."* (Act 13:48) Our ZERUBBABEL, unlike natural religious men, is the possessor of bag without holes. *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."* (John 10:27-28) What a glorious place to be found!

mam