

GRACE GAZETTE

Volume XV

Issue 20

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

A CHOSEN HABITATION

For the LORD hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. Psalm 132:13

King Ahab, the ruler of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (i.e.; Samaria), set his eye upon a piece of property which belonged to Naboth the Jezreelite. Ahab really desired to have this vineyard for his own, since it was next door to his palace. He envisioned planting an herb garden there. He approached Naboth about acquiring the property from him and made him a fair offer for the parcel. But this property was precious to Naboth since it had (likely) been in his family for several generations and he desired to keep it that he might pass it to his posterity as it was given to him.

King Ahab became very distressed at Naboth's refusal to sell, so much so that he couldn't even eat because of his disappointment. So Ahab's "lovely" wife, Jezebel, promised to get the vineyard for him. Through treachery and false witness (in the name of religion) she brought about the unlawful stoning and death of Naboth. Then Ahab was able to claim the vineyard as his own property, in this devious and unlawful manner.

There are some today who preach a message which they call "the gospel", wherein they picture GOD as in many ways like Ahab and his dilemma in acquiring the property of Naboth. First of all they depict man as being in control of his property (i.e.; his free will) which is sacrosanct and unassailable. Then they tell us that GOD really wants to acquire the property of the man but is powerless to obtain it since HE cannot or will not "violate" the man's freewill. Thus the LORD (according to their theory) can only wait helplessly by, hoping that the man will change his mind.

They tell us that the LORD has made man a very generous offer in exchange for this "property", and is willing to bless the man if he will but give in and take the LORD up on HIS offer. In somewhat the same fashion as Ahab's wife sought to bring relief to Ahab's "distress", some have come up with various schemes to persuade the man to relinquish his property. They might use carnivals, soup kitchens, fine buildings and wonderful programs for the whole family which promote various religious orders, persuasive orators preaching either health and wealth for all who have "faith", or the certainty of hellfire and damnation for all who reject the LORD's offer. Practically no "method" is unacceptable as long as it can produce results.

The desired "result" is to get men (by whatever means is available or useful) to take the "offer" which the LORD (according to them) has made and turn over their "property" (i.e.; freewill) to HIM, thereby making HIM happy and relieving HIS distress and them gaining great benefit, thereby. This, they tell us, is how men are saved and the LORD is made joyful.

There is nothing in the scriptures that would lead us to believe that such a scheme as this is true in any sense of the word. The GOD who rules in the army of Heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth has made all things for HIS own pleasure. *"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."* (Rev 4:11) HE is the CREATOR of all things from nothing which does now appear and no one has any right or standing to question HIS doing or HIS disposal of that which is HIS. *"Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?"* (Rom 9:20)

Thus, HE is not “trying or hoping” to gain anything from the creature. Rather, HE has revealed to the creature that HE has chosen the place of HIS own dwelling, delighting in that which is HIS. *“For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” (Isa 57:15)*

The very amazing and unexplainable truth of the gospel is that the LORD of glory, needing no one and lacking nothing has determined according to HIS own purpose to dwell with those whom HE has chosen in CHRIST from before the foundation of the world. It has pleased HIM to choose Zion, (i.e.; the city of GOD, the location of HIS TEMPLE, and the dwelling place of HIS elect) as that place where HE would meet with men who are all alike unworthy sinners. It is here in the midst of these poor, afflicted, and unprofitable servants, that HE has taken up HIS abode as HE molds their wills and gives them repentant hearts which run after HIM, declaring allegiance to the Glorious KING of Zion. *“Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.” (Psa 2:6)*

HE makes no demand upon them but demonstrates HIS love and affection for them by laying down HIS life for them in order to purchase their redemption and set them free from the curse of the law and the dominion of sin. *“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.” (Rom 5:6-9)*

The Hebrew word which is translated into English as “*habitation*”, literally means “a seat”, which by extension means “an abode or place of dwelling”. Since the LORD is the CREATOR of all things, then it is certain that HE is the ONE who has determined HIS own “*habitation*”. We often hear men say, “Let the LORD into your heart”, as if HE is in need of a dwelling place.

The LORD never makes any such request, but rather is pleased to come into that place which HE prepares according to HIS grace and mercy. Chosen sinners are given the privilege of entering into HIS habitation rather than vice versa, since HE is the ONE who determines all things. *“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit,” (John 15:16) “Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.” (Psa 65:4)*

Solomon was given the privilege of building an earthly temple (or house) for the LORD and had a measure of glory in it as he surveyed its magnificence, saying, *“But I have built an house of habitation for thee, and a place for thy dwelling for ever.” (2Chron 6:2)* The LORD suffered it to be so for a short season that HE might demonstrate the temporary and passing nature of all of man’s efforts and works. In just a short number of years, HE was pleased to bring all of its magnificence down to rubble than it might be clearly manifested that *“God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.” (Acts 17:24-26)*

The display of HIS mercy to the helpless of this world defines HIS habitation. *“A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation.” (Psa 68:5) “Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.” (Psa 89:14)* HE has demonstrated that HE will show mercy in perfect concert with HIS justice as CHRIST is that ONE who does not only dispense mercy but does so by satisfying the demands of HIS holy law. *“Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” (Rom 3:25-26)*