

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

ELIJAH THE PROPHET AND THE GREAT DAY

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. Malachi 4:5

One of the great battle cries of some who would purport to be great defenders of the faith, is the proud declaration that they believe the Bible to be literally true. While we certainly would not purport that the Bible is not true, literally; we would also recognize that many of the scriptures cannot be taken at face value and certainly cannot be understood "literally" except as the SPIRIT is pleased to unfold the literal truth which is set forth in the words on the pages of the Bible. I remember hearing Rolfe Barnard say, "The Bible does not mean what it says, rather it means what it means." This is wise counsel and takes the ability to understand the scriptures out of the realm of carnal interpretation and leaves the would be readers to wait upon the teaching of the SPIRIT of GOD for proper enlightenment.

So just because someone may quote the scriptures quite literally, does not mean that what they purport to teach about the truth of those scriptures, is not skewed from the meaning which is often hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed only unto babes. One thing that has become increasingly clear to me over the years is the inability of men to enlighten other men as to the "truth" found in the Bible. Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain that build it.

While we must earnestly contend for the faith, we must do so without a contentious spirit, recognizing that the LORD alone can give a man a proper understanding of the truth as it is in JESUS. If the LORD intends for a man to grasp the truth, then HE will open the man's understanding to receive it. HE sometimes uses men to deliver that truth to other men, but the ability to embrace it with proper perception can, alone, be imparted by HIM who calls HIS own by name and gives them HIS SPIRIT to guide them into all truth. (see John 16:13)

Most of the false doctrine that is spread among those who profess to be the followers of CHRIST is done by "teachers" who love to gain a following. Sadly they often find many who are eager to follow those who speak with an air of authority and appeal to their carnal reason and emotions. This describes those with itching ears. In every age, (even from the beginning days of the church) there are those who are eager to depart from sound doctrine. *"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."* (2Tim 4:3-4) The rise of the "professional" preacher and the one-man ministry among the churches has greatly enhanced the speed at which this envelops those eager to hear some new thing and to give deference unto carnal learning.

Paul was not describing an occurrence which was to take place at some time in the distant future, but was rather telling Timothy that he would see this in his own lifetime. We see it on every hand, even as it has taken place, from the time when Paul warned the Ephesian elders of this very thing. *"For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."* (Act 20:29-30)

The LORD JESUS CHRIST laid HIS axe to the root of those who would seek to discover the establishment of HIS kingdom from a "literal" or "carnal" perspective. HIS disciples asked HIM,

"Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?" (Mat 17:10) HE answered them quite plainly. "But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them." (Mat 17:12) Then we read that HE gave them a proper understanding of that which the scriptures taught, which the great learned teachers of their day (and even ours) could not understand. "Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist." (Mat 17:13) How quickly the LORD can open a man's mind to see the truth and make him wiser than his teachers. This SOURCE of wisdom, is demonstrated in the book of Acts, "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." (Acts 4:13)

Malachi was given a prophecy which literally said that Elijah would come before the "great day of the LORD". The Pharisees failed to see the unveiling of the Messiah, because they believed that Malachi was instructing them to look for the "literal Elijah" who had performed miracles and been taken up to heaven in a fiery chariot. Yet the LORD revealed that this prophecy while "true literally," was not literally true as to their carnal understanding of it.

Malachi was "literally" speaking of John the Immerser (i.e.; Baptist) who would come as the harbinger of CHRIST. For he was an even greater prophet than the literal Elijah, who destroyed the prophets of Baal and showed to Israel the true and Living GOD. "For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist." (Luke 7:28) While these other prophets spoke of the coming of the Messiah in colorful, futuristic prophecies, John saw the DOVE descending upon HIM, in person, and heard the LORD say of HIM, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Mat 3:17) No other Old Testament prophet could have picked HIM out in a crowd. Yet John was sent to HIS own family (his mother Elizabeth was Mary's cousin.); and had as his life's purpose to testify of the "great and dreadful (i.e.; filled with awe and amazement) day of the LORD."

This "day" is indeed a "literal" day, but it is not a "literal 24 hour day". Rather this "day of the LORD" speaks to the "times of the MESSIAH" or the age in which HE would come. These are indeed the "last days", the day of HIS appearing, and most importantly the "day of SALVATION". This is the "accepted time", the "acceptable year of the LORD", as HE would come into the Earth to establish HIS Kingdom.

Many are those who become enamored with times and seasons and a future "predicted day" yet to come, which they speculate about, with fanciful interpretations of prophecies. We do believe that the LORD is coming back to this Earth, but it shall be but the culmination of this same "Day of the LORD" of which John came to declare. The scripture speaks of but two times (or ages) in the Earth, the former times which were occupied by the prophets who spoke of HIM who was yet to come, and the latter or last days which John was given the privilege to see begun and in which the New Testament church presently abides, awaiting the last TRUMP and the voice of the ARCHANGEL when the fullness of the "day of the LORD" shall be manifested as HE gathers HIS sheep from out of every tribe, nation, and tongue where HE has scattered them according to HIS determined purpose. HE shall lose none which were given to HIM.

There is probably no clearer passage in the scriptures which testifies to the very message which John was sent into the world to declare that this one found in Hebrews: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." (Heb 1:1-4)

We look for no other signs that that which has been testified to in the gospel of the glory of the blessed GOD. This is the day of salvation. We see "Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb 12:2) "But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. ---And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." (Act 3:18-21) Even so come LORD JESUS. mam