

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

THE PERFECTION OF BEAUTY

Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. Psalms 50:2

One of the most glorious manifestations of love set forth in the scriptures is seen in the delight which the LORD has in Zion. Zion first appears in the scriptures immediately after David was anointed as the King of Israel. His first official act as the king was to conquer the stronghold (i.e., fort) of Zion, destroying its inhabitants, and taking up residence there. (see II Sam.5:3-10) "*So David dwelt in the fort, and called it the city of David.*" (2 Sam 5:9) This city is in all probability, the same as Salem, which was the dwelling place, in ancient times, of Melchisedek who was the PRIEST of the MOST HIGH GOD. (see Gen.14:18) It is one and the same with Jerusalem which is the city chosen by GOD to put HIS name there. (see II Chron.6:6; 12:13)

Now some "literalists" (i.e.; those who believe the bible is most often to be understood literally) miss much of the glory which surrounds Zion in the scripture, because they think of a geographical location whenever Jerusalem is mentioned. While we believe that the bible is literally true, we do not believe that the primary meaning of it is always literal. As Rolfe Barnard said, so eloquently, "the Bible does not always mean what it says, but it always means what it means". So when the scriptures speak of Zion or Jerusalem, they on occasion do so in a historic sense speaking of a spot on a map, but they are most often referring to a municipality which cannot be seen with the natural eye. Some think that there are pieces of real estate on planet earth that are "holy". Some lead tours to these spots on the globe, which are supposed to bring spiritual renewal because of the "sanctified" soil upon which one's feet tread. Blood is even being shed at the present time over the right to call these places one's home. Now while we are mindful of the historic nature of the literal city of Jerusalem and as such have great respect for it, we are quite certain that the primary reference in the scripture to this place is not concerned with its physical location or attributes.

Zion is indeed a city wherein the LORD dwells. (see Ps.9:11; 135:21; Isa.8:18) "*Howbeit the MOST HIGH dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet.*" (Acts 7:48; see Isa.66:1,2) The apostle Paul said "Know ye not that ye are the temple of GOD, and that the SPIRIT OF GOD dwelleth in you?" (I Cor 3:16). The only place where the LORD dwells in the earth is in HIS people. That is why the LORD JESUS said, "*He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.*" (John 6:56) The LORD is pleased to indwell those who belong to HIM in the eternal covenant of redemption. HE has sent HIS HOLY SPIRIT to dwell in each one of HIS elect and regenerated children individually. (see John 14:17; I John 4:15) Yet when the scriptures speak about the LORD's dwelling in ZION, the primary references emphasize the fact that HE dwells in "the midst" of HIS children as a gathering or assembly (Greek is ekklesia) which is often translated as church. The LORD JESUS said, "*For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*" (Matt 18:20) Of HIM it is said "*But thou art holy, O THOU that inhabitest the praises of Israel.*" (Psalms 22:3).

Some would make this a literal fleshly habitation by establishing denominations and other earthly kingdoms whereby to gather and scatter GOD's people in one fell swoop. The tendency of the flesh is to hold on to those things one finds comforting to the flesh and to find rest in traditions handed down from one generation to another. That concept in itself is not bad except that it is most often used by the flesh as a substitute for the anointing power of the LORD's presence. We often see groups of GOD's people gathering together week after week content to live on the glory given in time past. Organization and habit rather than power is that elixir which is drunk by many of the LORD's people who cannot see Ichabod (i.e.; the glory is departed; see I Sam.4:19-22) written over the doors of their meeting houses. Many saints go through the same motions they've gone through for years, singing the same songs, praying the same prayers, hearing the same messages, occasionally being stirred to desire some of that "old time religion". The problem is that "old time religion" is like day old manna, it breeds worms and stinks in the present time. We should learn from the past, thank the LORD for a godly heritage and the examples of those who have walked with GOD in time past, but we need a present outpouring of HIS presence for the time in which we live. I do not mean we need to adopt the ways and entertainments of the world in order to build "kingdoms in the earth" as many are doing in the present hour. *"Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it."* (Psa.127:1) But we need to be on our faces before HIM, asking for HIS presence. Has not our LORD said, *"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me"* (Rev 3:20)? Though this verse can be applied individually we must remember that this letter is written to the church at Laodicea and the whole church is affected by this invitation. It is the LORD's purpose to dwell in the midst of HIS people and bring forth the perfection of beauty in HIS church by :

Establishing fellowship among HIS people. *"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of JESUS CHRIST his SON cleanseth us from all sin."* (1 John 1:7, see also verse 3)

Giving them a delight in HIS ways. *"If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my FATHER will love him, and WE will come unto him, and make OUR abode with him."* (John 14:23)

Conforming them to HIS image. *"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even CHRIST: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."* (Eph 4:15-16)

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