

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 END AND THE BEGINNING

God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.
Hebrews 11:40

When I was a young boy my mother would occasionally take us to see a movie. Of course those movies were of a somewhat tamer type than most of the drivel and filth that is plastered across those same screens today. My mother was a very virtuous woman but promptness was not one of those areas in which she excelled. Invariably we would arrive at the theater after the feature had begun and then we would have to stay after it finished to catch the first part of the movie which we had missed. I was quite a bit older before I discovered that you could actually see a movie from the start and see the plot unfold chronologically rather than being puzzled at what was going on till the show was over and the first part of the story could be viewed.

Unlike those movies, which needed to be seen from the first to the last in order to make sense, the unfolding of the kingdom of GOD is just the opposite. It cannot be understood without seeing the end first. GOD has ordained to reveal HIS purpose in the earth here in the last days rather than in those former times. Some think and teach that the New Testament is just an extension of the old. One time I heard a fellow preach that the Old Testament is a commentary on the new but I believe he was in error (I told him so, but I am not sure it was to any avail). He said one cannot understand the New Testament unless he first understands the Old. But I believe that just the opposite is true and this passage of scripture indicates that my hypothesis is correct.

The purpose of GOD (revealed in the scriptures) is that HE determined to save an elect people in JESUS CHRIST before the world began. Yet no one in the Old Testament could have any direct knowledge of how that was to transpire until it did. In fact the Jews thought that they were the objects of GOD's redemption by physical birth. Redemption by and through the work of JESUS CHRIST is not an afterthought but is the very foundation upon which all of that which GOD has revealed in HIS word was built. Isaiah wrote some of the most glorious prophecies concerning the redemptive work of JESUS CHRIST but he had no complete understanding of what he wrote. He saw through a glass very darkly. John the Baptist was the greatest of all of the Old Testament prophets, but the LORD said that he that was least in the kingdom of GOD was greater than John the Baptist. (see Luke 7:28) The weakest of saints can clearly understand what neither John nor Isaiah could see.

Those that think the New Testament is an extension of the Old usually try to perpetuate the practice of circumcision because they cannot understand the temporary nature of all of those covenants set forth in the old testament except that one which is built on the promise of HIM

who was to come. The Judaisers wanted to make literal circumcision a necessity for believers. (see Gal.5:6; 6:12-17) However there are some who make the same mistake in trying to equate circumcision with New Testament water baptism, claiming that it is the seal or sign of the covenant of redemption rather than a simple act of obedience which is the answer of a good conscience toward GOD. Some of them err by baptizing infants who have not confessed and believed the gospel while others make an even more egregious mistake by making water baptism a necessity for a man to enter the kingdom of GOD claiming that it washes away sin and thereby demonstrate an ignorance of the finished work of CHRIST. All of this is caused by not seeing that what has taken place at the end of the world is the very purpose for which the world was created and that the unfolding of the redemptive work of CHRIST fulfills all things which were in part before the clear revelation of GOD's eternal purpose to manifest HIS glory in the salvation of a people without money or price.

A man can in no wise find a place of acceptance with GOD through any act of his own. Apart from the applied righteousness of JESUS CHRIST which HE has imputed to HIS elect in all ages by HIS redemptive work manifested on Calvary's cross, all men shall perish in their sin. HE alone is the SAVIOR of sinners. Unless and until this is seen clearly by those to whom the LORD is pleased to reveal it can any man have a realistic hope of entering the kingdom of heaven. It is in the revelation of the preaching of the gospel that those for whom CHRIST shed HIS blood can view with gladness that which has already been imputed to their account. As Paul said, *"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."* (2 Cor.4:6) Now that we see the end all of those things, which went before, they can be used for our profit and instruction, rather than us having to wait to see what will be revealed. There is no other age in this earth nor is there any redemption outside or in addition to that which is forever sealed to the elect of GOD by the glorious purchase which HE procured by HIS blood.

Once in the end of the world HE has (see Heb.9:23-28):

"Put away sin by the sacrifice of HIMSELF." Those who labor under the law are still trying to satisfy GOD even as those did who perished in the law. *"But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."* (Gal 3:23-25)

Fulfilled the law. Some are still trying to put Christians under the lash of the law by laying duties upon the freeborn sons of GOD. They make a believer's sanctification, a function of law keeping. Yet CHRIST has completely fulfilled the law and forever removed its principle of sin and death from the Christian. *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."* (Romans 8:1-2) HE has been made our sanctification (see I Cor.1:30; 6:11) and we are complete in HIM.

Given HIS people a hope that fadeth not away. *"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."* (Heb 9:28) We yet groan in these bodies but even as Job of old confessed but understood not how it could be, we know that in our flesh we shall see HIM. Though the skinworms destroy these bodies and they go back to the dust from whence they came, we shall be raised from the dead in a glorified body not subject to decay. Job surmised that it would be so but we are witnesses of HIS resurrection. *"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept."* (1Cor. 15:20)