

GRACE GAZETTE

Volume XII

Issue 48

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

THE PROPHECY OF ZACHARIAS

And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people.

Luke 1:67-68

Most of the time when people hear the word “prophecy” or “prophesy”, they immediately think of a message or declaration having to do with events that shall occur in the future. It is true that the Greek word (propheteuo), which is used here, can literally mean “foretelling or forecasting future events”; but it also means “telling forth the DIVINE counsels”, “announcing the truth of GOD,” or “testifying of the imminence of the fulfillment of foretold events.”(see Mat.7:22, Rev.11:3)

The latter is how we see the prophecy of Zacharias. The purpose of GOD in the world's creation was to manifest HIS glory in the redemption of a people which HE has loved with an everlasting love. To this end HE gave prophecies to men in times past describing the various details of the manner in which HE would accomplish that end at a future time.

Zacharias, whom we know as the father of John the Baptist (i.e.; baptizer or immerser); is declaring that the birth of his son is the precursor (see Mal.3:1; Mat11:10) to the actual unfolding of this blessed event which was foretold by these prophets of old, and the announcer of the very HOPE of all of those who waited for the REDEMPTION of Israel.

We see this same sort of “prophesying” and fulfillment of personal longing in the prophecy of Simeon. *“And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.”* (Luke 2:25-32)

While Zacharias “prophesied” of the imminence of this redemption, Simeon prophesied of the actual REDEMPTION itself as he held the REDEEMER in his hands. Can any wonder exceed that moment when one whose chief desire in life is to see the deliverance of Israel, holds that DELIVERER and CHAMPION in his own hands and gazes upon HIM with his eyes. There was no doubt in Simeon's or Zacharias' words that CHRIST is the SALVATION of which all of the prophets in every age had declared.

This ONE of whom Zacharius spoke was not ONE who would merely make salvation a possibility nor make some sort of provision by which men might be saved if they are obedient, but rather was ONE who would fulfill the purpose of GOD to actually redeem HIS people.

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people,” (Luke 1:68) In the appointed time HE has come down (visited; i.e.; has relieved) HIS people, which are synonymous with HIS elect. The Greek word which is translated “people” here is “laos” which

means a particular people in contrast to the Greek word "demos" which simply means "people" in general, not to mention the fact that the personal pronoun, HIS is used to describe this "people."

"And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David." (Luke 1:69) A "horn" in the scriptures is usually indicative of a "seat of power or authority". Indeed CHRIST JESUS the LORD has come in such power. *"Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."* (Isa 9:7) HE came to occupy the "throne of David" as the KING of kings and LORD of lords. This is an everlasting kingdom over which HE presently and forever reigns.

"As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began." (Luke 1:70) There has never been an age in which HIS redemption has been untold. Even from the beginning, as the LORD told Satan, the woman's SEED "*shall bruise thy head*" and Abel's blood sacrifice attested to that SACRIFICE which is alone satisfactory in the FATHER's sight.

"That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us." (Luke 1:71) HIS purpose is to completely deliver HIS people from all condemnation and to render useless all accusations brought against them.

"To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he sware to our father Abraham." (Luke 1:72-73) This was a covenant of promise which is established by HIS mercy and not the works of the flesh of Abraham who could never have inherited any blessing at all, had such depended upon his own power. This "covenant" was not made to Abraham's carnal children in their multitude but rather to HIS SEED. (see Gal.3:16)

"That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." (Luke 1:74-75) The LORD has made perfect provision for HIS people, not simply in the deliverance of them from all enemies (see Col.2:15) but by imputing HIS righteousness to them (see II Cor.5:21) and indwelling them by HIS SPIRIT. *"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."* (Eph 2:10) They serve HIM without "fear" of rejection, rather than in a slavish manner. *"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"* (Heb 9:14)

"And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins," (Luke 1:76-77) Here Zacharias speaks of the lesser work of his own son, John, who was ordained to be the greatest of all of the Old Testament prophets. (see Luke 7:28) Yet John died without having seen the total work of CHRIST as the REDEEMER, though he surely went before HIM and declared who HE was to his own generation. In this declaration, he is like all of those who are ordained to proclaim the gospel of the glory of the blessed GOD. The preaching of the gospel is designed to give the knowledge of salvation unto HIS people by declaring to them in no uncertain terms that CHRIST JESUS is the only REDEEMER of sinners. (see II Tim.1:10)

"Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." (Luke 1:78-79) This "tender mercy" is the same as the "bowels of mercies" which the sons of GOD are exhorted to display to one another. GOD's mercy is sovereignly dispensed but it is dispensed with immeasurable kindness and great compassion to those who are its objects. It has neither bounds nor limits. It is this "tender mercy" that has caused HIS people to behold this "DAYSPRING from on high". The LORD said that HE is the "LIGHT of the world" and indeed HIS coming is like that LIGHT which dispels all darkness even as Paul has 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."* (2Cor 4:6) May we ever bow in thanksgiving to HIM for the unspeakable gift of CHRIST, our REDEEMER. mam