

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 JOY OF THE EARTH

Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. Psalm 48:2

Jerusalem is one of the oldest cities upon the earth. For a city whose name in the Hebrew, literally means peaceful, it has seen its share of wars and conflicts from its very inception, even until the present day as Jews and Muslims are at odds with one another over who has a right to control it. It is first mentioned in the scriptures in Joshua 10:1, where we find it described as a city over which the Amorite, Adonizedek ruled as its king. He, along with his compatriots from the surrounding city/states, were ultimately vanquished and put to death, by Joshua who would demonstrate the utter triumph of the LORD over all of the enemies of Israel.

Perhaps the most famous battle that took place there, was when David, conquered the stronghold (i.e.; fortress or fortification) of Zion which was inhabited and controlled by the Jebusites, who were not the friends of Israel. The tribe of Benjamin had failed to drive these Jebusites out when the Israelites took control of Canaan. Zion (or Mount Zion) was/is a prominent hill on the southwestern corner of Jerusalem. Zion is often used in the scriptures to describe the whole city of Jerusalem which in turn is often synonymous with Israel itself.

The LORD is not in the "real estate business", nor is there any ground upon the earth which HE would regard as holy because of its GPS coordinates. So, it is not scripturally correct to speak of the carnal nation and territory of Israel as the "Holy Land". Surely, we would not deny the historical significance of that region, but we must not fall prey to the notion that a man can gain closer access to the LORD by a visit there. Holy ground is that place where the LORD is pleased to meet with HIS people, regardless of where that might be on a map. HE alone determines both the meeting and the place according to the good pleasure of HIS will.

The LORD arranged the circumstances which prevailed in HIS first coming into the Earth just as HE has ordained the circumstances which will surround HIS return to the Earth in order to manifest HIS ownership of that possession which HE has purchased with HIS own blood. Thus, we see HIM draw a clear distinction between that which is carnal and that which is spiritual, by using the Pharisees, and their understanding of the Kingdom of GOD, as an illustration of the sharp contrast to that Kingdom which HE came to establish. "*And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you (i.e.; in your very midst).*" (Luke 17:20-21)

They were convinced that the Deliverer of Israel, would come in some glorious fashion, conquering her carnal oppressors and, in the process, exalting them to some higher station. Little did they know that HE would manifest the redemption of HIS people, by and through suffering and self-denial, and that HE would establish HIS Kingdom among the poor, the halt, the lame, and the blind. HE taught HIS disciples the true nature of HIS kingdom and those who would have a part in it. "*And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say*

unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.” (Mat 18:2-5)

The Kingdom of GOD has a beauty which is all its own. There is nothing about it which in any wise appeals to the flesh, but rather, is at odds with it. Man, in his fleshly nature rebels against every precept of the Kingdom of GOD. *“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” (Prov 14:12)* In HIS fleshly nature, man is in rebellion against that Kingdom, because HE is in rebellion against its KING, despising HIS authority, and desiring to run contrary to HIS precepts.

Paul, in writing to the Ephesians, describes the very thought process and desire of the natural man as he reminds them of their former condition, contrasted with the results of the new birth. *“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.” (Eph 2:1-3)*

In a demonstration of HIS general mercy towards HIS creation, the LORD has placed restraints upon the absolute wickedness of men and does, in various measures, cause them to embrace certain forms of morality and societal order. Yet men do not, by nature, love these restraints, because each man desires his own freedom to do as he wills and will pursue such a path even to his own destruction unless kept from it. *“Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.” (Psa 76:10)*

By contrast the LORD displays HIS particular mercy to that people whom HE has loved as HE promises to bring them unto HIMSELF, delivering them from the darkness which they have readily embraced. *“And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.” (Isa 42:16)* Thus the Kingdom of GOD is manifested in those who are the objects of HIS grace. Their joy is made full as the purpose of GOD for the creation of the Earth is manifested. HE delights in them and they in turn delight in HIM and rejoice in this city of the GREAT KING.

The Psalmist praises the greatness of the LORD as he declares the wonders of the redemption which HIS hands have procured for those, whom HE is pleased to make its recipients. For it is this “city” (or kingdom), wherein HE is worshipped; *“in the city of our GOD, in the mountain of HIS holiness.”* This “mountain” cannot be located by natural reckoning but, appears quite clearly to those who have been privileged to dwell in the SHADOW of its lofty heights. *“Sing praises to the LORD, which dwelleth in Zion: declare among the people his doings.” (Psa 9:11)* *“LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth.” (Psa 26:8)*

Just as mount Zion, in David’s Jerusalem, was “situated” in a most scenic and lovely setting, so too, is the “true Mount Zion”, “situated” in CHRIST who sits at the right hand of the MAJESTY ON HIGH. What better place for her, than hidden in the SAVIOR’s side? Is it any wonder that the SPIRIT of GOD moved the Psalmist to write, *“beautiful for situation”?*

The LORD does magnify the glory of HIS grace, as HE puts HIS bride on display, as the marriage of the LAMB is come. *“But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” (Eph 2:4-10)* This is the “joy of the whole earth”. mam