

JUNE 2015

A Monthly Magazine issued by

The Remnant of Christ's Ecclesia

in opposition to the Dogmas of
Papal and Protestant Christendom

A WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

and a warning against the deception in the last days
foretold by Christ

"Take heed that ye be not deceived"

GRACE

THE LORD DELIVERS

WHY SPEAKEST THOU UNTO THEM IN PARABLES?

A BIBLE CLASS -
TAKE HEED THEREFORE THAT THE LIGHT
WHICH IS IN THEE BE NOT DARKNESS

THE HANDMAID OF THE LORD

THE FIRSTBORN OF THE POOR SHALL FEED

All Communications

M. C. Steiger
836 King Road, Forestville
New York 14062
U.S.A.

GRACE

In the second epistle of Peter written to his brethren, he greets those of like precious faith:

“Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:
Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.” II Peter 1:1-2

In this salutation, Peter made it clear that the increase of grace and peace was possible through the “knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord”. “Peace” means shalom; and grace is to favor, - God’s favor extended to those having faith in Him. It is only through the grace of God in the provision of the Lord Jesus, that communion with Him is possible. It is in this knowledge that Paul’s words to his Ephesian brethren are further enlightening:

“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 not of yourselves it is the gift of God:
Not of works, lest any man should boast.” Ephesians 2:4-9

To be “quickened” is to be made alive! We are not worthy of the grace of God except that such grace is God’s favor towards mankind - it is a gift by a most merciful Father.

This is the knowledge that Peter was trying to convey, as well as Paul who expressed the same understanding in Ephesians 1:3-10 stating:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:
According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good please of his will,
To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved..

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;
Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;
Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:
That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; even in him.”

Having the knowledge of God and the Lord Jesus, helps us to perceive His wisdom in all of our ways, and in all we do, by the grace of God! It is His grace which is such a help - His gift and goodness towards us; and the knowledge of His will. All the faithful down through the ages have needed the comprehension of His grace. It is not surprising that the vast majority of Paul’s letters to his brethren begin with sending them “grace and peace”. He certainly was afforded grace on his way to Damascus as he heard the voice of the Lord Jesus; and was given a charge to convey that grace and peace in all his witnessing.

What took place at the time of Paul’s conversion - for he had struggles just as we all do? Much enlightenment had been given to him:

“...lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

II Corinthians 12:7-9

The flesh fails but overcoming perfects us in the sight of God and His Son. In the weakness of our flesh can we grasp this grace and peace offered? In Paul’s case, his infirmities helped him to focus on the grace of God, knowing nothing else was needed. He could see beyond his infirmities believing that, “My grace is sufficient for thee”

“Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then I am strong.” II Corinthians 12:10

This weakness in all must be recognized as a frailty of our flesh. What more is needed than the grace of God to overcome, for it is truly sufficient! To be in God’s favor, what more do we need? As trials come upon us, so do the frailties of the flesh surface in our character. Recognizing them in despair for our shortcomings, can we allow them to work in us the motivation to look for that peace of God - to change our behavior that we may endeavor to become more like the Lord Jesus in word and deed?

Going back to II Peter chapter 1, there is listed there a progression of qualities that are to abound in us - patterned after the Lord Jesus’ life:

“....giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;
And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness.
And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity (love).
For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” II Peter 1:5-8

How important are these qualities, which are to be exercised in our journey Zion-wards. By growing in these, we can know the grace of God and His love. His love is for those who exercise themselves in the knowledge that God’s word exists. We are to be conscious of this grace, of what His word conveys. Only in this way will we know the love of God:

“Nevertheless, we according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.
Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.” II Peter 3:13-14

Only by being covered by the Word of God - the Lord Jesus - can His grace allow us to perceive and be strengthened to overcome; particularly allowing our faith to be increased, and finding the peace which God’s word can afford:

“But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen.” II Peter 3:18

We are to be committed to His Word, so that we can go beyond the cares and desires of this life, which are prompted by the weakness of our flesh. To perceive how important God's word is, will make us wise unto salvation. We are to spiritually increase through what God has given to us, seeing in that grace His kindness and direction throughout our living. We can be sustained and helped to overcome weakness through all of our trials, for God's grace is sufficient.

God's love shines forth in those who are His as for example, Peter and Paul's exhortations have helped us to know more fully the, "peace that passeth all understanding" through the grace of God.

"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

II Corinthians 9:15

M.C.S.

THE LORD DELIVERS

As we read about the circumstances of Esther, we come to realize that God's hand is seen throughout the book as He guided the circumstances. There can be no doubt, as we will see, that God influenced the events to the benefit of His chosen people.

Ahasuerus was king of Persia during the time of Esther and he lived in Shushan the palace. His kingdom compassed the land from Ethiopia to India. In the third year of his reign he called for a feast and included all his servants and princes of the kingdom. During the feast he called for queen Vashti to be brought forth that her beauty might be seen by all, but she refused his summons. This made Ahasuerus very angry, and it was commanded that a new queen be found for him. So a decree went out to the rulers of all the provinces that fair young virgins be brought to Shushan so that the king could select a new queen:

"Now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite; Who had been carried away captive from Jerusalem with the captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchanezzar the king of Babylon had carried away.

And he brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter.

So it came to pass, when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also unto the king's house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women." Esther 2:5-8

Esther found more favor than the other maidens, but her heritage as a Jew was not known because Mordecai asked that she not reveal it. When it was Esther's turn she was selected by the king:

"So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which is the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

And the king loved Esther above all women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti." Esther 2:16-17

While Mordecai sat within the king's gate he had heard how two of the king's chamberlains sought to lay hands upon the king and he reported their plan to Esther, who informed the king on Mordecai's behalf. The chamberlains were hanged and the incident was written within the chronicles.

After a time the king promoted Haman to a position above that of the princes of the kingdom. Most of the king's servants bowed to Haman as he passed, but not Mordecai. Eventually Haman became aware that Mordecai was a Jew and he plotted to have all the Jews destroyed because of his anger with Mordecai. Haman sought the king and asked that a decree be proclaimed that the Jews would be destroyed within all the land of Ahasuerus. The king agreed and had his scribes make the decree and had it sent to all the provinces, that the Jews were to be destroyed.

When Mordecai heard of the decree he rent his clothes and sought Esther's help. He asked Esther to go before the king and to ask for his help

in saving her people, the Jews. Esther knew that those who came before the king without being invited risked death if the king did not wish to see them, but Mordecai convinced Esther to go before the king with these words:

“For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and they father’s house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”
Esther 4:14

Esther dressed in her royal apparel and came to the inner court of the king to seek his audience:

“And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre. Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom. And Esther answered, If it seem good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him.”
Esther 5:2-4

The king had Haman summoned to come to the banquet that Esther had prepared. While at the banquet the king asked what Esther’s petition was; she asked that both the king and Haman come to another banquet the following day.

Haman returned home in a good mood because only he had been invited, with the king, to the queen’s banquet. On his way home his mood soured when he encountered Mordecai and saw how he still refused to bow before him as he passed. When he arrived home he declared, to his wife and advisors, how he had been invited to another private banquet with the king by the queen; but was continually vexed by Mordecai and his refusal to respect him. His wife and advisors suggested that he build a gallows and inquire of the king if Mordecai could be hanged on them, and then he would go with joy to the banquet.

That evening the king had trouble sleeping and requested that the chronicles be read to him. While they were being read, he discovered that Mordecai had potentially saved his life and inquired what had been done for Mordecai as a reward. The king learned that nothing had been done.

He then inquired who was in the court, and it was told him that Haman awaited. Haman was seeking to ask to have Mordecai hanged on the gallows; but instead the king asked him: "What should be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour? Haman thought that he was the one to be honored and said, to array him in the king's robes and crown, and place him on the king's horse and have the horse led by the most noble prince through the city. The king commanded that such things should be done to Mordecai by Haman:

"And Mordecai came again to the king's gate. But Haman hastened to his house mourning, and having his head covered.

And Haman told Zeresh his wife and all his friends every thing that had befallen him. Then said his wise men and Zeresh his wife unto him, If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him.

And while they were yet talking with him, came the king's chamberlains, and hastened to bring Haman unto the banquet that Esther had prepared. Esther 6:12-14

At the banquet the king asked Esther what her petition was. She answered that her life and the life of her people be spared because Haman sought to have her people destroyed. The king became angry and commanded that Haman be hung on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Haman was hung and Mordecai was given Haman's position of honor and, was told by the king to write a decree for the Jews. Mordecai wrote a decree that was sealed with the king's ring that told the Jews to fight back against their enemies.

When the king's decree came to the Jews, they had joy because they had been saved:

"The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour. And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them." Esther 8:16-17

There can be little doubt, to those who believe in God and believe that He does guide and protect His children, that God's influence was evident throughout the book of Esther. The Jews were in captivity in a

strange land; yet a Jewish maiden was chosen to be queen from all the maidens in Ahasuerus' vast kingdom. Mordecai was in the right place to hear about the conspiracy against the king and was later given a place of honor, as a reward for his exposing the plot. Esther was shown favor as she sought audience before the king and eventually exposed Haman's plot to destroy the Jews. The Jews' enemies were destroyed after Mordecai took Haman's place of honor in the king's court. All these circumstances happened even though we do not see mention of God, or a prayer to God, in the entire book of Esther. Does that mean Esther and Mordecai did not have faith in God? Not likely. We see Mordecai state that if Esther did not go before the king, she and her father's house would be destroyed, but some other circumstance would arise to save the Jews. We also see Esther ask for Mordecai and the other Jews to fast three days and nights as she was preparing to come unannounced to the king. Both of these instances hint of the faith that Esther and Mordecai must have had in God.

These examples should give us heart, knowing that no matter how bad a situation may seem, God can direct the circumstance to bring His people through it safely. It demonstrates God's grace and mercy in that even though the Jews were in captivity for disobedience, He still did not allow them to be destroyed. We cannot know or understand God's plan for our lives, or for this earth. We need to have faith in Him that He will finish His work while we wait in patience for our deliverance from this world, in hope to inherit the next.

E.J.M.

“WHY SPEAKEST THOU UNTO THEM IN PARABLES?”

During His ministry, the Lord Jesus often used parables to teach the Word to His disciples and to the multitude. In so doing He fulfilled prophecy:

“All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them:
That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying,
I will open my mouth in parables;
I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.”
Matthew 13:34-35.

The prophet spoken of here was David—One whose words often prophetically spoke In the spirit of the Messiah, his greater Son.

The parables taught the spirit of God’s Truth by revealing a hidden message—a jewel of wisdom visible to those with willing and eager minds, yet overlooked by those not spiritually motivated. The disciples questioned their use by Jesus:

“...Why speakest thou unto them in parables?
He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.
And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive”
Matthew 13:10-14.

What a great provision it is to know the mysteries of God, but with this knowledge comes not only responsibility but also the danger of becoming unheeding and complacent, as did those in Jesus’ day, of whom He said:

“For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.”
Matthew 13:15.

The Lord Jesus directed many of His parables to the Pharisees, a sect of the Jews concerned more with the letter of the Law and the traditions of their elders than with the spirit of Truth. Because of their own coveting esteem and a self-righteous attitude, they refused to receive His message of salvation. Their legacy survives today for in the Dictionary “self-righteous, hypocritical person” is described as pharisaical. They sought to promote self, enjoying the esteem of their position, and giving an appearance of superiority over the common people. For this they were condemned by the Lord Jesus:

“Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.” Luke 16:15.

He endeavored to bring to light this hateful attitude with a short simple “story”—a similitude from which a valuable lesson of Truth maybe received. This parable of the rich man and Lazarus He directed to the Pharisees:

“There was a certain rich man who was dothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day;
And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate full of sores,
And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.”
Luke 16:19-21.

This paints a picture of striking contrasts—a rich man living in luxury, much like the Pharisees, and the deplorable condition of the beggar Lazarus. The rich man had everything he could desire of life, while Lazarus suffered in want. In the parable, death—the end of all flesh, came upon both with this result:

“And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;
And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.
And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.
Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.”

Luke 16:22-26.

In death the rich man’s predicament was unchangeable and so, unable to help himself, he implores Abraham to visit his father’s house that his five brothers might learn from his mistakes, but was told:

“They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.”

Luke 16:29-30.

The Pharisees held Abraham, Moses and the prophets in great esteem, for their own doctrine was based upon the Law given to Moses. However, they had created a philosophy which was a mockery of Truth by combining the traditions of their elders with a harsh twisting of the Law, resulting in man-made doctrine which laid heavy burdens upon the people, while leaving themselves free to enjoy a life of privilege and affluence. Therefore the Lord Jesus’ use of Moses and Abraham in this parable could and should strike a powerful reaction within them as Abraham answers the rich man:

“Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.”

Luke 16:25-26.

This parable was used by the Lord Jesus to preach directly to the Pharisees and any of a pharisaic mind, yet is mistakenly used to the Christian world today to confirm their false beliefs regarding death: going to heaven or hell and being able to communicate to or from such a state. This confirms Jesus’ words regarding the use of parables.

“Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand”.

Matthew 13:13

It is important to note that this parable is not giving a literal description of the after death state, but rather using the false beliefs of the Pharisees to point out their covetous, unjust lifestyle, which would one day be brought down, while those poor in spirit would be exalted.

Robert Roberts explains in his book, “Christendom Astray” why the Lord Jesus would teach using a false doctrine such as heaven-going:

“The parable of the rich man and Lazarus is founded on fact but not necessarily on a literal possibility. That the dead should speak was necessary for the purpose of the parable, and It would not surprise the Pharisees to whom it was addressed. For in fact, it embodies their belief.... It may be asked. Why did Christ parabolically employ a belief that was fictitious, and thus give it his apparent sanction? The answer is that Christ was not using it with any reference to itself, but for the purpose of being able to introduce a dead man’s testimony. He wanted to impress upon them the lesson conveyed in the concluding words of Abraham, “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead”; and in no more forcible way could he have done this, than by framing a parable based upon their own theory of the death-state, which admitted of the consciousness of the dead, and, therefore, their capability to speak on the subject he wanted to introduce. This did not involve his sanction of the theory, any more than his allusion to Beelzebub carried with it a sanction of the reality of that god of the heathen (Matt. 12:27).” (Christendom Astray, pages 62-63)

Therefore we see how the Lord Jesus, rather than endorsing the Pharisee’s false doctrine of heaven and hell, used their own beliefs to condemn their covetous and superior attitudes.

How blessed we are, brethren and sisters, to know His word, but we must also be quick to “hear” His warnings and rebukes, endeavoring to reveal a heart full of that humility, repentance and submission so that God may direct His salvation, through the One who has fulfilled all that is in the law and prophets.

M.C.S.

A BIBLE CLASS

“Take heed therefore that the light
which is in thee be not darkness”
Luke 11:35

Our verse under consideration was spoken by the Lord Jesus as He preached to the multitude, exhorting them to walk in the light of Truth:

“No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light.

The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness.

Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness.”
Luke 11:33-35.

Christ’s ministry was like a candle, bringing the enlightenment of the gospel to a people who had been lost in the darkness of ignorance and tradition as taught by the scribes and Pharisees. These blind leaders sought to extinguish that light because it exposed their unrighteousness cleverly hidden beneath the guise of piety. Because of them, the Lord Jesus warned the people:

“... except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”
Matthew 5:20.

Those who received the Lord Jesus’ teaching were exhorted to follow Him in singleness of purpose, reflecting the light of Truth in their living.

“And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.” John 3:19-21.

So important was it to divide the light from the darkness that it was the first task of creation - an important lesson given by the Spirit of the need to separate the light of godliness from the darkness of wickedness:

“And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.
And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light
from the darkness.” Genesis 1:3-4.

As in the body, the eye must focus in order to see clearly, so too in a spiritual sense, attention must be focused upon the life of Christ with singleness of purpose, in order to develop those spiritual qualities He exhibited, so pleasing to the Almighty. If light turns into darkness, or the knowledge of God’s Truth is not kept pure, it is worse than if one had never known the Word, for enlightenment brings responsibility to the judgment seat of Christ to either acceptance and eternal life, or rejection and death.

How can we follow Him in order to receive the blessing of life eternal? John explains:

“This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.
If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:
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.” I John 1:5-7.

How does one walk in darkness? When the eye is not fastened or focused on the light of Truth as illustrated by the Lord Jesus’ example, the mind can be distracted by the lure of worldly desires or be led astray by flesh-pleasing doctrine, thus contaminating the purity and there by losing the fellowship with God and His Son. Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians warns of losing sight of the deliverance from darkness:

“Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:
And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” Ephesians 5:6-8,11.

This is what the children of light must fasten upon- a walking in the light seen in Jesus, given by the grace of God, so that the precious hope of salvation is always foremost in their living:

“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

Matthew 5:14-16.

Christ is the candle illuminating the way for those who seek to walk in Truth. Let us turn to that Light, allowing its radiance to shine forth in our living, knowing with surety that He is the Light and His footsteps are the path to the kingdom of God.

THE HANDMAID OF THE LORD

The record in Luke permits us to once again reflect upon the inspiring message of the Lord Jesus' birth. These events are viewed with a misdirected sentimentality by the world today, yet are recorded that those understanding the word of God, may better perceive the hope set before them.

The Scriptures tell us how Gabriel, an angel of the Lord, came to Mary, a virgin of the house of David, to convey to her the wondrous part she was to play in God's purpose:

“Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end... the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” Luke 1:30-33,35.

This birth would ultimately fulfill the promises made both to Abraham and to David, as well as to Adam and Eve, of the One who would bruise the serpent's head - the Messiah and Son of God. Mary, being a faithful Jew, would know of these prophecies and perhaps even as she heard this blessed news from Gabriel would recall Isaiah's words:

“Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel (God is with us).

Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.”
Isaiah 7:14-15.

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

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.”
Isaiah 9:6-7.

Mary received the news that she was to be mother to the Savior with an acceptance and calm derived from faith and humility saying

“Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.”
Luke 1:38.

The word “handmaid” comes from a prime root meaning to bind - an appropriate thought for one revealing a mind bound to God’s word in submission, grateful to be chosen to play a part in its fulfillment. Undoubtedly, this was why the Almighty had selected her, for the events following the conception and birth of the Lord Jesus would require great courage and strength of character. Was she afraid of what lay ahead? Perhaps, but her initial response reflected willingness, gratitude and joy at being chosen, a vessel for the Spirit’s work:

“My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.”
Luke 1:46-47.

David, in his time, also magnified the Lord, making His word large in his living, revealing a spirit kindred with Mary’s, as he responded in submission and humility:

“...I am poor and sorrowful: let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high.
I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving.”
Psalm 69:29-30

David, though king of Israel, viewed himself an afflicted and lowly man in need of God’s mercy and direction - bound in faith to His word and grateful for the promises given. Mary’s mind was much the same - not lofty in pride, but responding with awe and perception to the Spirit’s blessing:

“... he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.”
Luke 1:48-50

She must have realized that a complete trust and submission to God would be required of her - allowing His hand to guide in the years ahead, knowing the great responsibility that was hers, to nurture and lead this child in His early years.

Hannah, another mother who raised her son Samuel to magnify the Lord, exhibited the same submissive gratitude, opening her heart to God as she prayed:

“... My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation. There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God. He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king and exalt the horn of his anointed.”
1 Samuel 2:1-2, 9-10.

Her response displayed a keen spiritual understanding of God’s purpose with His people and the promised fulfillment to come through the anointed One, permitting her to feel as did Mary, a handmaid of the Lord, filled with thanksgiving for the power of His hand in her living. A reminder to us today that we too are called upon to respond with humility and thanksgiving as did Hannah and Mary.

Mary’s example teaches of the need to submit to God’s indication with acceptance and trust - watchful and perceptive of His guidance in our living, knowing that like Mary, David and Hannah we may not realize all of what lies ahead, but must in faith submit with humbleness and trust to whatever comes. Mary’s obedience is an inspiration that we too may respond with joy and thanksgiving for His help and guidance, trusting ultimately in the deliverance promised to all those who, out of love and obedience, are bound to Him.

“THE FIRSTBORN OF THE POOR SHALL FEED”

The background of this chapter is needed to help us discern the Spirit’s message in the verse under consideration. The Almighty through His prophet spoke of a future time when He would give to His people:

“...rest from thy sorrow, and from thy fear; and from the hard bondage wherein thou wast made to serve.” Isaiah 14:3.

Isaiah then prophesied concerning the enemies of Judah who were the cause of this fear, revealing how Babylon, Assyria and others who came against Jerusalem would be brought down; in so doing it would be evident that:

“This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth: and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?”

Isaiah 14:26-27.

God’s word through Isaiah also dealt with another adversary of His people - one who, like those just mentioned, was determined to make Israel “poor” in all ways: Palestina (Isaiah 14:28-32). Who or what is palestina? It is a name given to a portion of what was then Syria, including the region more recently known as Palestine. Moses in his song of the redeemed (Exodus 15), spoke of Palestina involving Moab, Edom and Canaan. The name Philistine in the original is also Palestina. These people were the avowed enemies of Israel since the time of the judges. Today the enemies of Israel devoted to its destruction, in spite of the apparent and fragile movements toward peace, are essentially the Arab nations (those immediately surrounding Israel) and those who neighbor them- Iran, Iraq, Jordan, etc.

Isaiah spoke God’s word against these particular enemies of Israel, Palestine:

“In the year that king Ahaz died was this burden. Rejoice not thou, whole Palestina, because the rod of him that smote thee is broken: for out of the serpent’s root shall come forth a cockatrice, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent.” Isaiah 14:28-29.

During the reign of Ahaz over Judah, the departed ten tribes of Israel allied themselves with Syria (Palestina), seeking to conquer Ahaz (II Kings 16:5-6). King Ahaz, using gold and silver from the temple, hired the King

of Assyria to fight against these foes and defeated them. Shortly thereafter Ahaz died and the son born of this root, Hezekiah, became king in Jerusalem. Palestina (these same enemies) thus were not to rejoice that Ahaz had died, for Hezekiah his son would also be a conqueror of them. That victory occurred, enabling

“... the firstborn of the poor shall feed, and the needy shall lie down in safety:...”
Isaiah 14:30.

Thus in Hezekiah was a partial fulfillment of God’s promise.

A closer examination of this prophecy helps us to see the ultimate of God’s pattern and purpose. Going back now to the destroying “fiery flying serpent”, we find the word here - “fiery serpent” - is seraph. Its plural form (seraphim) is found in Isaiah 6, where the prophet was shown the vision of “the LORD sitting upon a throne”. As Isaiah saw that throne:

“Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.”
Isaiah 6:2.

How like the cherubim, vehicles of the Spirit, which Ezekiel envisioned as he too was called to be the Almighty’s prophet. Also this word is used in Numbers when the rebellious in Israel were bitten by the serpents and died. In response to Moses’ plea:

“...the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent (seraph), and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.”
Numbers 21:8.

How helpful to be able to discern, through the inspired original word, the comforting message of God to His people. Thus the Almighty’s delivering power was made manifest. Jesus referred to this deliverance as He taught His disciples:

“...As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:
That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life!’
John 3:14-15.

Jesus, the Son of man, having never sinned, got the victory over His flesh, that serpent nature, culminating as He was lifted up and died on the

cross. Through that victory, those who believe in Him have the hope of eternal life, which brings our mind back to Isaiah's prophecy:

'And the firstborn of the poor shall feed, and the needy shall lie down in safety...'
Isaiah 14:30.

Those who are poor in spirit, recognizing their lack and need for help in the struggle to please their Father, will know the blessing of true peace and safety when Jesus returns. He will conquer all His people's adversaries and establish God's kingdom, faithful Israel, forever. Let us keep this certainty in the front of our minds as we strive to be faithful and devoted to our Father and His Son. We are laboring and longing for deliverance from this life of struggle against self", the greatest enemy. We are keenly aware of the world and its ever-expanding wickedness and evil intent, its godlessness and despising of those who are otherwise minded. We are "poor" indeed, yet there is deliverance promised to those who remain steadfast. David was one who watched and longed for the "sure mercies" promised to him by the Almighty God. He wrote:

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures (feeding?):
He leadeth me beside the still waters (lie down in safety?).
He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my
life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever."
Psalm 23:1,2,3,6.

Surely here is the hope of all who are striving to be among the firstborn of whom Jesus spoke:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."
Matthew 5:3.

For more information or to read our literature, log onto:

www.remnantofchristsecclesia.com