

GRACE GAZETTE

Volume XVIII

Issue 49

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 WORMWOOD AND THE GALL

Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. Lamentations 3:19

The LORD raised up many prophets over the years in natural Israel. HE used these prophets to deliver various messages at particular times. Yet HIS primary purpose in sending these prophets was to manifest HIS peculiar and singular love to the nation of Israel according to the end for which HE raised them up. While HE did from time to time send HIS prophets to other nations (as we see when Jonah was sent to Ninevah and Elijah was sent to widow of Zarephath), HE did so in order to teach the people of HIS choice various lessons concerning HIMSELF and to whom HE is pleased to show mercy. *“What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.” (Rom 3:1-2)*

The word “oracle”, literally means “an utterance of GOD”. We could concisely state that it has reference to HIS spoken WORD. The manner in which it pleased HIM to deliver “HIS WORD” unto men was through the lips of HIS prophets. A man could not learn to be a prophet of the LORD nor could he devise a message which would be “the WORD of GOD.” Yet no man could be a prophet without being taught the TRUTH of GOD from HIS own lips.

John the Immerser (i.e.; the Baptist in the KJV) was the last of the Old Testament prophets who was ordained by the LORD to usher in the ONE who is the TRUE PROPHET of GOD, who is the FINAL WORD to the sons of men. *“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” (Heb 1:1-3)* HE is the FULFILLMENT of all prophecy and we need look to no other. *“Worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” (Rev 19:10)*

CHRIST JESUS is the ONE who has prevailed to unveil all of the mysteries of GOD which HE has ordained to reveal unto men. *“Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, --- And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.” (Rev 5:5-10)*

Isaiah was given more messianic prophecies that any other of those men whom the LORD sent into the earth, yet he had a very limited understanding of the things which he wrote and confessed with the other OT prophets that these things were written for those to come. *“Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which*

are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels (messengers) desire to look into.” (1Pe 1:10-12)

He was told to write of HIM who was “despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.” (Isa 53:3-8)

While Isaiah was given the gift to write of those sufferings and the great anguish of our REDEEMER, yet Jeremiah was given the gift to experience (in a limited measure) those very soul sufferings, which are recorded for us in the book of his “Lamentations”. Jeremiah was sent to warn the nation of Israel of their coming judgement and captivity by the Babylonians, but the LORD shut up the ears of Israel that they would not hear his word, even though it was an “utterance from the LORD.” Whereas Isaiah was given to prophesy of the glory of the coming KING and HIS redemptive work, Jeremiah was called upon to endure great rejection and sorrow at the hands of those to whom he was sent.

We are not then surprised that he is known as the “weeping prophet” or the “mournful prophet”. His sufferings were in no wise imagined but rather experienced with each of his emotions and felt by each of his senses. While he records those things that he experienced, we are blessed to understand that he was but an illustration of the sufferings of that PROPHET which was to come. His heartaches were in part and he was upheld in the midst of them, whereas CHRIST, our PROPHET, PRIEST, and KING was brought into hell itself in our behalf as HE endured the wrath of GOD poured out upon HIS head. “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin.” (Isa 53:10)

Jeremiah recorded the very thoughts of CHRIST when HE spoke of the “affliction and misery” which was visited upon HIM as HE knelt in the Garden of Gethsemane. “And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” (Luke 22:44) Has ever any mortal ever been so tried and bereft of comfort? Has any endured such grief as swept over HIM? No man stood with HIM, HE was well-nigh unto death except that HIS time was not yet come.

This is indeed that “bitterness” of soul and mind which is described by Jeremiah as “*the wormwood and the gall.*” We are not exactly sure what “wormwood and gall”, as a substance actually are. But we are sure that both of them denote great bitterness and sorrow. These words appear together in four verses in the KJV. “Wormwood” appears five times by itself and “gall” is mentioned ten times by itself, two instances being in the NT. In all cases they are associated with bitterness, even unto death.

It is interesting to note that whereas Matthew records that the soldiers gave CHRIST (as HE hung on the cross), vinegar “mingled with gall”, yet Mark records the same instance as “wine mingled with myrrh.” We are sure that the substances are the same and find it striking that even as a babe, HE was given “Myrrh” by those wise men from the east. Thus, foretelling the life of sorrow and bitterness which lay before HIM. “Myrrh is mine; its bitter perfume; Breathes a life of gathering gloom; Sorrowing, sighing, Bleeding, dying, Sealed in the stone-cold tomb.”

Our hearts are made to worship HIM as we “consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself. (Heb 12:3)

All hail the power of Jesus' Name! Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown Him Lord of all.
Sinners, whose love can ne'er forget the wormwood and the gall,
Go spread your trophies at His feet, and crown Him Lord of all.

mam