

569 “There they are”

We read in our last Reflection of God’s gracious promise to His covenant people the Jews, “I will make thee an eternal excellency” (Isaiah 60.15). This blessed state has already been fully prepared, via the Jews and through Jesus the Jewish Messiah, for the Gentile Christians of the Church (eg., Romans 11.11-22). In God’s good time and manner all Christ-believing, that is, Messiah-believing, Jews will also be granted this same glorious status of being “an eternal excellency” (Romans 11.23-32).

Meanwhile we see all too clearly that the Jews of Israel are involved right now in another horrible war against their numerous vicious enemies, whose desire remains the eradication of both the state of Israel and of the Jews themselves. Because all of our spiritual blessings - yes, all of them! - have come to us through the Jews, may we Gentile Christians never be slack in giving the Jews our Christian gratitude and supportive prayers; such prayers are vital, for the Jews find themselves in the front line, many presumably without realising it, of the mighty spiritual battle going on both in the heavenlies and on the earth below (Psalm 122.6 / Ephesians 6.12 / Concordance “war” references in Revelation, present and future).

So we now come to that simple scene in the temple that day, given to us in Luke 2.22-38. After the forty days of Mary’s purification after childbirth “were accomplished” (v.22 / Leviticus 12.2-6), Joseph and Mary “brought him (Jesus) to Jerusalem, to present [him] to the Lord” (v.23 / Exodus 13.2,13b / Numbers 18.15-16). The temple would be as crowded and noisy as ever, with nothing to mark out this little family from anyone else at that stage. But in the midst of the hustle and bustle were two dear, elderly “special ones”, Simeon and Anna, humble representatives of “the faithful remnant” of Jews who had “kept the faith” down through the centuries regarding the coming of the Messiah, the promised “seed of the woman”.

Limited space means we will focus this time just on Simeon, who “[was] just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him” (Luke 2.25, KJV). Simeon had been beautifully “tipped off” by the Holy Spirit, perhaps years before, that he would see “the Lord’s Christ” before he died (v.26), and by the prompting of this same Holy Spirit he entered the temple that day, as he must have done

hundreds of times before. The all-too-familiar scene of jostling crowds and noisy confusion confronted old Simeon on his arrival. What was he to do? Why was he there, today? Perhaps he prayed “What now please Lord?”, as he stood or sat or wandered, watching, waiting and wondering.

And then came into his view that ordinary little family, with, we can assume, the Lord’s “still small voice” for Simeon, “There they are”. Simeon must have approached them with awe, perhaps with tears of praise streaming down his face. Did he introduce himself, blurting out who he was and why he was there? Or, rather, without words did he just reach out his arms to receive the little fellow from the arms of His mother? - who in turn must have known that her yielding up her Son to this dear old saint was “of the Lord”: “Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God ...” (v.28).

Simeon’s first thought was thankfulness - “Lord, you have kept your promise, please allow me now to depart in peace ...” (what an example for us when contemplating our own physical death). Then Simeon showed his deep scriptural insight into who Jesus was and is: “thy (God’s) salvation”; “prepared before the face of all people” (not just the Jews); “to be a light to lighten the Gentiles” (egs., Isaiah 42.6-7; 49.6; 52.10; 60.1-3 / Romans 15.8-12), “and the glory of thy people Israel” (egs., Isaiah 45.25; 60.19; 62.1-4 / Zechariah 2.4-5).

We read that “Joseph and his mother”, (KJV, crucially, not “his parents”, as some modern translations have it), “ marvelled at those things which were spoken of him” (Luke 2.33). Simeon then “blessed them”, warning Mary that her Son would bring salvation and judgment to many, and that she herself would be metaphorically “pierced by a sword” because of her Son’s sufferings to come (vv.34-35).

We realise afresh from all this just how much the Lord God asked of Mary and of Joseph, and – on a completely different scale - of His own Son the Lord Jesus Christ, who “humbled himself, and became obedient even unto death, even the death of the cross” (see Philippians 2.6-8).

Mary, Joseph, Simeon and Anna, along with numerous others of course, were in one sense unremarkable people. But their simple love for God and His Word meant they were “sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, [and] prepared unto every good work” (from II Timothy 2.21). In this “New Year of our Lord 2024” and beyond, may we be found equally

faithful, ready to be used in the Lord's service where, when and how He may wish.

© December 2023 Faithful Sheep Ministries - www.fsmins.org