

NEWS AND VIEWS
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*“Southern Baptists with the Full
Gospel for the Whole World”*

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Are we there yet? The question of impatient children traveling on some journey echoes in my mind today. Remember traveling as a child and getting bored with the scenery? It seemed everything was the same. All that mattered was the destination. Not much joy in the journey. So today I'm thinking to myself, *...Self, will this New Year be different than all the others, or am I just traversing what seems to be the same landscape, and the only thing I can see changing is my aging body and fading memories?* I think I need more hope than listening to my own self-counsel. Listen to this...

He will swallow up death for all time, and the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces, and He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; For the Lord has spoken. And it will be said in that day, "Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited that He might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; Let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation." (Isaiah 25:8-9)

Are we as God's people at the end of our journey, at a place where we are satisfied with the salvation that the Lord has secured? This seems to be a messianic prophecy that gives hope to the people of God in Isaiah's day. It follows the promise of the Lord's judgment and the destruction of what the people have become used to seeing. Human institutions surely crumble and all men stand in equality as to the judgment on their sin. The priest and the poor...the borrower and the lender. God is good at building up. And He is good at tearing down. The common judgment on all of mankind is the sentence of death. All are born to die. But here we get a glimpse of death being *swallowed up*, the Lord drying the tears of men, removing reproach from all the earth. The Lord did this...when He filled the cross...and emptied the tomb. We wait for the day when there are no more tears...no more crying there when we go to see the King. Our salvation is secure. The Lord has made an investment in the redemption of His people. *No...we aren't there yet.* Every day and every year spent in this realm is a reminder of where we are. But when we follow Christ we are on the way. The joy of our salvation sustains us in the journey. When we walk with God, the journey *is* the destination. God's presence is our joy.

Therefore thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, a costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed. I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the level; Then hail will sweep away the refuge of lies and the waters will overflow the secret place. Your covenant with death will be canceled, and your pact with Sheol will not stand; When the overwhelming scourge passes through, then you become its trampling place." (Isaiah 28:16-18)

The Lord had a plan when He spoke through His prophet. Hope was on the way. Help was at hand. This prophecy is strong to the hearts of God's people. Although we are often slow to wake up to spiritual realities, humanity has been born into a place of bondage. We are born slaves to sin. We have a covenant with death, a pact with Sheol, a deal with the devil. We were sold into bondage by our ancestors. We were born into sin. We were born of sin. We were born to sin. But God has given this word to His people. When that foundation stone was laid in Zion, something solid was being built that we may depend upon. The coming of Jesus into our world to die for our sin is what it took to cancel the certificate of death's decree. Only God can set aside the judgment of God. Only God can satisfy His requirement of justice. The death of God traded for the death of humanity. Only when we believe, when we trust that God has canceled our debt of sin, can we truly live righteously. And a righteous man will be secure in this world. When death comes, the redeemed man will trample upon it, and cross over into life eternal. It is only when we walk with Christ as we live in this world can we truly live at all. We can look around and see many dead men walking. But it takes a live person to follow Jesus. The regenerated man is victorious through what God has done. This foundation to believe in is the *Crucified God, Man, Messiah*. A godly life is built upon that foundation. A holy habitation is what God has in mind. He is working on a place for Him to dwell...in our hearts. Make room for the King this year...we are almost there! So get yourself ready. Jesus is coming...soon and very soon...we are going to see the King!

Blessings to you,
Pastor Sam