



October 29, 2006

The Visitation Of God

We usually think of the word visit to imply that we spend time with those who are sick, in need or to fellowship with. Throughout the scriptures the word visit appears with other meanings as well. The word visit also carries with it an action on the part of God. At times this visitation is negative and demonstrates a judgment by God against evil. At other times the word conveys a positive meaning as God performs a work that blesses or otherwise sustains those who are “visited”. Studying passages that use this language shows us how God works and leads us to a better appreciation not only of the Lord but also emphasizes the need for faithfulness to Him. One of the first occurrences of the word appears in a prophetic statement by Joseph as he prepares his family for his death. **“And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.”** (Gen 50.24-25). Joseph, a patriarch, had undoubtedly been told by God that his family would be delivered from the land that they had come to live in, Egypt. This statement was made before slavery and oppression had been inflicted upon them. Following the history of the Hebrews we know that they were enslaved and treated harshly. 430 years later, acting through his messengers Moses and Aaron, God did exactly as Joseph had stated. **“And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you.”** (Ex 13.19). The visitation of God in this instance took the form of deliverance and a display of power by God as the pagan deities of the Egyptians were shown to be powerless before the Lord. The Psalmist points to the positive nature of the visitation of God as well. **“Remember me, O LORD, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation..”** (Psm 106.4). Here we find a plea for the blessing of favor in the sight of God and depicts that the faithful are subject to the goodness of the Lord when he blesses them. Another aspect of God’s visitation, in a positive sense, is that God waits patiently and acts in His time to render His will. The performance of the will of God not only blesses His children with His actions, but also teaches us to be patient as well. The children of Israel waited for 400 years for their deliverance from bondage and the Psalmist reminds us that we should desire the blessings of God and pray for them. In Luke 18, Christ told a story of a widow who was avenged of her adversary by an unjust judge because of her pleading (Lk 18.1-5). Using this to emphasize perseverance and trust in God, Christ stated, **“Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?”** (Lk 18.6-7). The children of Israel had to wait for many years for their deliverance, but it was done just as Joseph had foretold. Christ knew that his followers would be hated by the world and told his disciples, **“And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.”** (Matt 10.22). Christ was aware that the trials that would come on his followers would cause some to fall away. Later, as he was praying in the garden of Gethsemane, Christ reminded his disciples of the need to rely on God in prayer. Finding the disciples asleep, Christ stated, **“Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.”** (Lk 22.46). They slept because they were overwhelmed with sorrow (Lk 22.45) not understanding the things that they had been told concerning Christ’s resurrection. In a similar sense we can allow ourselves to be overwhelmed with the cares of the world and life. We may fall asleep spiritually as a result of this and miss the visitation of God as he seeks to bless us with his strength and mercy.

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