

CHRISTMAS INTERLUDE

Acquiring God's Peace On Earth: Lessons From The Infant Jesus' Presentation At The Temple Part III: Acquiring God's Peace Like Anna By Relying On God's Grace To Establish His Kingdom (Luke 2:36-38 et al.)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Luke 2:14 KJV reports that the angels at Jesus' birth proclaimed, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace good will toward men," but Clifford May's November 28, 2015 Republican-American op-ed, p. 6A claimed that though "(p)ease on earth' is a lovely Christmas wish . . . (w)e live not in a global village but a global jungle -- and the law of the jungle operates." He supported this claim, referring to several recent acts of terrorism and oppression, *Ibid.*

Actually, the better manuscript reading at Luke 2:14 has the angels pronouncing "peace to men on whom His [God's] favor rests," Luke 2:14 NIV. (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 208; Bruce M. Metzger, A Text. Com. on the Greek N. T., 1971, p. 133) One must be a personal recipient of God's favor to know His peace in a troubled world.

However, even many Christians struggle to be at peace within when they hear of beliefs by religious groups about a final world kingdom that allegedly *excludes* peace or even room for Jews and/or for Christians (as follows):

(a) The Jehovah's Witnesses claim God set aside Israel, leaving His promises of blessing for spiritual Israel, the Jehovah's Witnesses. (Salem Kirban, Jehovah's Witnesses, 1973, p. 62-63, 77, citing "Let God Be True," p. 218)

(b) Then, the Mormons teach that God's end time Zion will be built in America (Salem Kirban, Mormonism, 1973, p. 49), for like the Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons hold Israel's ten northern tribes migrated to Britain and then on to America (J. K. Van Baalen, The Chaos of Cults, 1973, p. 162) so that Americans replace Israel in God's plan.

(c) Evangelicals D. James Kennedy and R. C. Sproul with "dozens of others" in 2002 "declared that Israel has no special title to land in the Middle East, having been replaced by the church" (D. Hunt, "A Call to Repentance," The Berean Call, Nov. 2006, p. 1), a view long been held by the Roman Catholic and Protestant Reformed churches (J. F. Walvoord, The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation, 1976, p. 12; C. C. Ryrie, Dispensationalism Today, 1970, p. 95)

(d) Of great concern to many is the fact that their holy book, the Qur'an, at Sura 5:51, tells Muslims: "'O ye who believe! Take not the Jews and Christians for your friends . . .'" and a tradition (hadith) that Islamic scholars hold is "reliable," Sahih Muslim (821-875 A. D.), book 41, no. 6985, claims: "'The last hour would not come unless the Muslims will fight against the Jews and the Muslims would kill them . . .'" (Robert Spencer, The Truth About Muhammad, 2006, p. 26, 178, 180) Then, the *most* "reliable" tradition (hadith) at Sahih Bukhari (810-870 A. D.), vol. 4, book 60, no. 3449 claims: "'How will you be when the son of Mary (i.e. Jesus) descends amongst you and he will judge people by the Law of the Qur'an and not by the law of Gospel.'" (*Ibid.*, p. 26, 180) Thus, writings authoritative to Muslims claim that Jesus will return to destroy Jews and Christianity and rule by Islamic Sharia law!

Meanwhile, the Qur'an at Sura 9:5 calls Muslims to "fight and slay the Pagans wherever you find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem" (Chuck Sligh, "The Bloody Legacy of Islam," The Biblical Evangelist, Nov.-Dec. 2001, p. 1, citing the *Yusufali* trans. from "Translations of the Qur'an" from the Moslem Students Assn. of the Univ. of S. Calif.). Webster's Dictionary defines "strategem" as a "trick in war for deceiving," so the Qur'an itself leads a lot of non-Muslims to mistrust every peaceful effort by every Muslim!

Seeking to settle concerned non-Muslims, Professor Mohammad Idrees of Orlando, Florida, in his letter in The Wall Street Journal, December 17, 2015, p. A18 wrote: "(W)e, as American Muslims, must obey the law of the land, as Islam dictates. We must fight back against the xenophobic [intolerant] ideology coming from Saudi Arabia and elsewhere." (brackets ours) Yet, to make such a statement convincing in light of what Sura 9:5 of the Qur'an states, the "moderate" Muslim must deny "Qur'anic literalism," leaving himself "vulnerable to charges from jihadists" of being "disloyal to Muhammad and Islam," what not even "moderate" Muslims dare do, *Ibid.*, Spencer, p. 191.

Need: *So, we ask, "If we want to know God's peace this Christmas, how do we deal with strong claims by some religious authorities about a future Kingdom that EXCLUDES peace especially for Jews and/or for Christians?!"*

- I. The Greek New Testament text at Luke 2:36-37 can be translated to mean Anna was either 84 or over 100 years old (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Luke 2:37), so her life history would have greatly motivated her to look expectantly for the LITERAL arrival of ISRAEL'S Messianic Kingdom:**
- A. The elderly prophetess Anna met the infant Jesus in the Jerusalem temple shortly after His birth that occurred in the winter of 5/4 B. C. (Harold W. Hoehner, Ph. D., Chron. Aspects of the Life of Christ, 1979, p. 27)
 - B. Thus, at age 84 to over 100, she had been born and wed under the upheaval caused by competing Jewish descendants of the Maccabees -- the Hasmonean rulers, *Ibid.*, Ryrie, p. 2028; Z. P. E. B., v. Three, p. 39-45.

- C. Then, her husband had died and the Roman general Pompeii in 63 B. C. had invaded Israel amid unrest by rival Hasmoneans, so Anna had been hit with a lot of personal and national crises, Luke 2:36-37; *Ibid.*, p. 45.
- D. In 44 B. C., she then saw the crisis to Israel's future that arose at Caesar's assassination, only to see Jerusalem then get invaded by Parthians with Rome shortly thereafter re-invading Jerusalem to set up Herod the Great, a ruthless Edomite, to rule Israel, to the dismay of the Jews, F. F. Bruce, *New Testament Hist.*, 1972, p. 13-14.
- E. For the last 33 years, then, she had witnessed seething national unrest under Herod, *Ibid.*, p. 14; *Ibid.*, Ryrrie.
- II. Thus, with great intensity, Anna had served God with fastings and prayers night and day, yearning for Messiah's arrival and His Kingdom, her husband's resurrection and peace upon ISRAEL, Luke 2:36-37.**
- III. When Anna by God's leading then entered the temple and saw Simeon holding the Infant Messiah, she was overcome with joy and burst into thanksgiving to God and spoke of Him to all who looked for the "redemption in Jerusalem," Luke 2:38. That phrase in this context can only refer to ONE other Scripture passage, one predicting Israel's LITERAL FUTURE WORLD MESSIANIC KINGDOM:**
- A. Only in Isaiah 52:9 elsewhere does Scripture refer to Jerusalem's redemption, and its context even anticipates the "watchmen" who **look** for and who then lift up their voice in joy upon seeing the Lord's return to Zion -- much as the "watchmen" Simeon and Anna **looked** for and rejoiced at Jesus' arrival in the temple, Isa. 52:7-8.
- B. Also, Isaiah 52:10 predicts God's baring His holy arm before all nations like ancient warriors would bare their right arm and shoulder upon entering into battle (J. A. Alexander, *The Prophecies of Isaiah*, 1974, p. 280).
- C. We know by the word "redemption" that Anna would not understand it to refer to Israel's initial return to the land after Assyrian and Babylonian captivities: those events were past, and we have learned that she had faced a tumultuous Hasmonean era give way to Roman rule followed by Parthian invasion in turn followed by a Roman invasion and ruthless Herod's rule, so Anna looked for a *still future* kingdom of *blessing* for *ISRAEL*.
- D. Also, Anna was of the tribe of Asher (Luke 2:36), one of the ten northern tribes Assyria had captured, so the Ten Tribes had **returned** to the **land** of **Israel** versus what the Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons believe, and Anna's allusion to Isaiah 52:9 meant she did not think the "redemption in Jerusalem" phrase meant the Church had replaced the initial nation of Israel as is thought in the Roman Catholic and Reformed Protestant churches!
- E. Since no Kingdom of worldwide blessing for Israel has yet occurred since her era, Anna's forward look with Isaiah's description of God's baring His arm with implications of world war means that Isaiah foretold Christ's Revelation 19:11-20:6 Second Coming when the **world** will see the salvation of Israel's God, Isaiah 52:10.
- F. Thus, the Isaiah 52:9 reference to God's redeeming **Jerusalem** alludes to His ultimate restoration of **Jewish Jerusalem following the Great Tribulation period** as the location of Christ's rule on the earth in the Messianic Kingdom in *literal* fulfillment of God's Bible promises of **blessing** for **Israel**. (J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible With J. Vernon McGee*, 1982, v. III: Proverbs-Malachi, p. 309)

Lesson: *The prophetess Anna predicted that Messiah's arrival would lead to God's worldwide Jewish Messianic Kingdom centered in Jerusalem, countering all claims to the contrary. She with Simeon were "watchmen" in their generation, believers looking for and rejoicing in sighting Messiah's arrival in hope of His future Kingdom!*

Application: *May we (1) trust in Christ to escape hell and gain eternal life, John 3:16. (2) May we like Anna and Simeon rely on the indwelling Holy Spirit to live for Christ and tell of His future Kingdom to disciple others!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

Jesus, the Messiah, told His disciples in Matthew 16:18 KJV that "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," and we have evidence that this work of God is occurring even in Muslim countries today:

A missionary we know has told us that though there were only 300 believers from a Muslim background in Iran in 1979, a 2014 book by Mark Bradley, *Too Many to Jail: The Story of Iran's New Christians*, puts that number at 370,000 while others estimate it to be around 700,000! This missionary also reported that Operation World claims that out of 225 countries and protectorates worldwide, the church in Iran has the fastest growth rate of 19.6%, and Afghanistan is second at 16.7%. A friend of the missionary who has worked for 25 years in Lebanon and saw one or two Muslims come to Christ yearly in that time told him that in 2014, he saw 400 receive Christ and 600 have believed as of mid-October this year, 2015! In Algeria, the largest Church has 1,600 people, and those who wish to attend it must arrive an hour early to get a seat! Indeed, more Muslims have come to trust Christ in the last 36 years than in the previous 13 centuries combined!

Christ is truly building His Church. If we have not yet done so, may we put our faith in Him, and like Anna in Luke 2:36-38, may we rely on the Holy Spirit to worship God and testify of Christ to a needy world!