

1 Peter 1:13-25

Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy." And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because "All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, But the word of the LORD endures forever." Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.

WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS NOW

Columnist Mark Steyn captured the dark state of societies moral ethic in his National Post article entitled "Lights, Camera, Death" (Saturday, December 12, 1998). Here he cited the television coverage of an assisted suicide, the American Civil Liberties Union opposition to the respectful burial of aborted babies, and a teenager's calloused delivery and immediate garbage disposal of her new born, in the ladies washroom during a school dance. Is there any doubt to human degradation, to human spiritual lostness and bondage to sin?

With acknowledgement of a living and Holy God, true honest reflection will join with John Bunyan who said: "Sin and corruption would bubble up out of my heart as naturally as water bubbles up out of a fountain. I thought now that everyone had a better heart than I had. I could have changed hearts with anybody. I thought none but the devil himself could equal me for inward wickedness and pollution of mind."

It was into this sin bound world that the Son of God came to bring deliverance. Zacharias prophesied of Christ's unique mission: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David" (Luke 1:68-69). In Christ is seen God's passion for delivering mankind; "to visit" is to look upon in order to help. The Bible is filled with evidence of God's agony and timely intervention for man's in trouble. The greatest expression of this is the sending of His Son to die for man: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

Zacharias's words also reveal the price of mankind's deliverance; The Son would "redeem" his people. To redeem is literally to pay a ransom, that ransom was Christ's substitutional death for man: "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed.. but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" (1 Peter 1:18-19 NIV). Zacharias also expressed the power of Christ's deliverance as "a horn of salvation." The horn of rams or cattle was a cultural expression of power or might. Christ's power of deliverance was evidenced through His resurrection from the dead, by which he has secured a believer's full pardon and forgiveness (Romans 4:25).

The real message of Christmas peace begins with the understanding and acceptance of Jesus Christ's work of salvation. The cradle is meaningless without the cross! Man's deplorable fallen state must be dealt with before Holy God. To this end Jesus came, as John Bunyan also declared: "Far better news the Gospel brings. It bids us fly and gives us wings. Doubt not his sacrifice can save. God sealed it with an empty grave. And by his blood and life we live, and now have freedom to forgive."

And the angels said "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14).

What is my response:
