

THE LITTLE CITY

"There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it: Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man" (Eccles.9: 14.15).

No one would expect to find the basics of the Christian Gospel in this Book of Ecclesiastes which majors on things "under the sun" (ch.1: 3 onwards), and deals with the "vanities" of this world (1: 2; 14 etc.). It is said that Solomon wrote the Book "when he was away from God", and it stands as a solemn warning to any and all who are inclined in that direction .How true it is that we were made for God, and men find no rest until they rest IN God!

Yet, in this Book, we do have what we may call the true "basics" of the Gospel, -not least in the verses above quoted. There we are told about a "small city", and a vicious assault on the city by a strong and powerful enemy, and then the saving of the city by a poor wise man; all of it depicting, we believe, the essence of the Gospel. We propose to look briefly into the story, but with the earnest prayer that some who read may perhaps find God's own answer to some of the deep needs that are in their hearts.

First let us think of: THE GREAT TRAGEDY

The scene is indeed a sad one; -a great king going to all lengths to annex to himself a small and sparsely populated city. Perhaps it reminds us of the avarice sometimes displayed by powerful nations in our own day, but more reminiscent, we believe, of the early chapters in the Bible. There we read that when Adam and Eve were the sole occupants of the Garden of Eden, the great ambitious "Lucifer", avowed enemy of God, mounted his hellish attack on "infant humanity", determined to possess for himself the whole human race. Reasons for the assault are given elsewhere in the Bible, but our point, for now, is that the assault was made, and, in this case, "the city" actually fell to the tyrant. Adam and Eve willingly yielded themselves to Satan's control, with the result that their off-spring, right up till today, are integral parts of his "kingdom". Here is the root explanation of all the miseries of mankind; -Satan has become "the prince of this world" (See John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). There, indeed, is the "great tragedy" and all of us are part of it. Thank God, however, that was not the end, for we now read of what we may call

THE GREAT VICTORY

The same story goes on to tell us of a poor wise man who, by his wisdom delivered the city (v.15). Here, we believe, is a foreshadowing of the redeeming work of Christ; -at least an illustration of it. Some may not quickly see the connection, but let us notice a few Scriptures, which speak to us about Christ, so that the parallel may become apparent. In Corinthians we read, "...though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor" (2Cor.8:9). How true indeed! We recall how He was born in a stable (Luke 2:12), and later known simply as 'the carpenter's son'. He Himself declared, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Luke 9:58). And when finally He died, the very clothes He wore were stripped away from Him (Matt.27:35). A "poor

man" indeed, but He was the One Who "delivered our city" through His redeeming work on Calvary.

And how all-surpassing was His "wisdom"! Again and again, throughout His earthly ministry, He was able, with a few penetrating words, to confound the cleverness of His enemies, as, for instance, when He said to the crafty Pharisees, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John 8:7). Countless examples could be given, and it is no wonder that He was later called the very "wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1: 24).

And what can we say of the all- surpassing wisdom" of His Cross? It was by that wisdom" that He indeed "delivered the city". By His dying for us; -accepting in Himself the death that we deserved, He met all the righteous claims of God and purchased a glorious deliverance for us. Yes, it was at Calvary that the strong enemy was defeated and our city" delivered. Even the willing slaves of Satan (and such we all are by nature) can now be set free from their sins, and know anew "glorious liberty" (Rom.8:21) -IN CHRIST! The Bible tells us that those who will call Christ "Lord" from the heart (Rom. 10:9, 10), and place their total trust in Him will be saved (Acts 16:31). In closing, we note the final emphasis in the Ecclesiastes story

THE GREAT MYSTERY

The actual words of the text are these; -"yet no man remembered that same poor man" (v.15). It reads like an anti-climax, and that, indeed, it is. We naturally ask' "How could such a deliverer of such a needy "city" ever be forgotten or despised?" But how true to life this is, -specially as regards the Christian Gospel! Even up till today, the Great Lord Jesus Christ IS "despised and rejected of men" (Isa.53:3), and whole multitudes still "hide their faces from Him", -foolishly neglecting His "Great Salvation" (Heb.2:3). This, surely, is the mystery of all mysteries. Please think of it. God's own dear Son came into this world to save sinners, and by His own atoning death "unpicked" the works of the devil (Heb. 2:14), purchasing the most amazing "liberation" the world has ever dreamed of, and yet we still have to say, "Who hath believed our report?" (Isa.53: 1). How many of earth's millions, hearing the Gospel story, have personally enthroned this "Great Deliverer"? What have you, for instance, done with "Jesus, which is called Christ?" (See Malt.27: 22). We urge you, right now, to come personally to Him. Kneel at His feet, confessing all your sins, and trust Him, and Him alone, to be your Lord and Savior. It is then, and then only, that you will personally experience His glorious deliverance. He is ALIVE today; He loves you personally; He will hear your cry and forgive all your sins. We tell you from experience, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be FREE INDEED" (John 8:36). You dare not delay longer. Come to HIM right now. C.R.G.