

A NEW YEAR MESSAGE (PSALM 122)

This is a festive season - Christmas for Christians and New Year for the whole world, irrespective of religious backgrounds. This is a time of beautiful decorations in public places, schools, places of worship and particularly in Christian homes. It is an expression of gladness and joy that we have entered into a New Year. And why should not we as believers decorate God's Dwelling place? David in his love for God and His Sanctuary gave a command for the building of His tabernacle saying, "...and the house that is to be built for the LORD must be exceeding magnetically, of fame and of glory throughout all countries" (1 Chro. 22:5). Every true child of God should determine and Endeavour to beautify, not his or her house but the House of the Lord during the New Year. The disciples pointed to the temple in Jerusalem and said, "Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!" (Mark 13: 1). But we who are the living stones of God's Spiritual House should show forth a greater and lasting beauty. There are five beautiful and attractive spiritual characteristics of God's Dwelling place mentioned in Psalm 122, which make us glad to go to God's House, and with which we can decorate His House.

Firstly, it is a place of Praise "Whither the tribes go up, ...unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks..." (v.4}. Yes, that is the kind of habitation God desires -and habitation of praise. "O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel" (Psa. 22:3}. Moses said, "He is thy praise, and he is thy God, that hath done for thee these great and terrible things, which thine eyes have seen" (Deut. 10:21). Israel's first reason of praise was their miraculous and marvelous SALVATION from the bondage and sorrow of Egypt through the BLOOD OF THE SLAIN LAMB. That day became the beginning of the year. "It shall be the first month of the year"(Exo. 12:2). So Moses and the children of Israel sang, "He is become my salvation" (Exo. 15:2). Let us in the New Year bring into God's House the decoration of grateful praises for His great love that made Him to give His Son as the Lamb of God for our salvation.

Secondly, it is a place of Priestly Ministry. "For there are set thrones of judgment..." (v.5). Amidst God's people, there are always bound to be controversies which if not attended to, will take away the beauty of God's House. The Lord, through Moses told the children of Israel, "If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, between blood and blood... thou shalt come unto the priest the Levites...and they shall shew thee the sentence of judgment... thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall shew thee " (Deut.17.8-11). They zealously preserved the beauty of God's House by the priestly ministry of Levites. And, what beauty there will be in God's House today, if only we could discern and decide righteously in the FEAR of God, controversies that come up in our midst! The last words of David were, "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God" (2 Sam. 23:3). O that the House of God may be so decorated with the beauty of true, humble, sincere Levitical Priestly ministry and services!

Thirdly, it is a place of Peace: "Peace be within thy walls" (v.7). Yes, let us never forget that it is the Dwelling place of the Man of Peace (Micah 5:5), the Prince of Peace (Isaiah. 9:6), the King of Peace (Heb.7:2), the God of Peace (Heb. 13:20), and the Lord of Peace (2 Thess. 3: 16). Dear Reader, what is your contribution to this peace with in God's House? In Isaiah 2:3,4 we read, "And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up... to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: ... and they shall beat their

swords into, plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Then, surely the carnal weapons will be laid down and we will accept His ways and paths of peace. Fourthly, it is a place of Prosperity: "Prosperity be within thy walls" (v.7). These are days of much material prosperity. Indeed, we believers are in the last days in the Laodicean church age who said, "I am rich... and have need of nothing..." (Rev.3:17), we must not be envious of and long for the prosperity of this world (Psa.73:3). If God blesses us with material blessings, let us accept them with humility. But that will not beautify God's House. It is the spiritual prosperity of love, compassion, forgiving one another, forbearance, patience and God's Word that is needed. Look at Joseph; God made all that he did to prosper, but his spiritual prosperity was greater: "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well..." (Gen. 49:22).

Finally, it is a place of Precious Ointment a fragrant perfume. "Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together" (v.3). In Psalm 133, a Psalm of degrees, David longs for unity: "Behold, I how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to I dwell together in UNITY. It is like the precious ointment" (vs. 1, 2). As we enter the New Year, how much then should we Endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). Should we not remind ourselves, "There is one body, and one Spirit, ...One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is... in you all" (Eph. 4:4-6). Let us draw near the cross, where alone we will not pull ourselves apart but draw towards one another as one New man. "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify he might present it to himself a glorious church..." (Eph. 5:25-27).

May the Lord help us all to beautify the House of God in this New Year.