



¹ Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. . . . The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. (Isaiah 40:1,3)

¹⁰ Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people. ¹¹ Behold, the LORD hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. ¹² And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken. (Isaiah 62:10-12)

The City which the Pilgrim Children of God seek is one not made with hands and not forsaken – the same City which Father Abraham sought out: ⁸ By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. ⁹ By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: ¹⁰ For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. ¹¹ Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. ¹² Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable. ¹³ These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. ¹⁴ For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. ¹⁵ And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. ¹⁶ But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city. (Heb 11:8-16)

That City has been in the making from the dawn of Creation, but conceived in the omniscient Mind of God in Eternity Past before there was a Garden at Eden, or a man to tend it. It is a splendid city with Gates of Splendor and bathed in eternal Light, and that Light is Christ! ¹ And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. ² And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. 4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. 5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. 6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. (Rev 21:1-6)

Now, the Architect and Engineer of that wonderful City not made with hands is our Lord Jesus Christ. The premises and superstructures were purchased at an exceedingly precious cost – the very blood of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. We are reminded that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. (John 14:6) In that reminder, Jesus said, ***I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life***. In every mention of the great I AM's of Jesus, there is no past or future tense because He exists in the Eternal Presence – a concept that the feeble minds of men cannot fully grasp. But it is fully true and we must accept it on the face value of its meaning. He has ALWAYS been the WAY for Adam, for Abel, for Noah, for Abraham, for Isaac, for Joseph, for Moses, for David, etc. He is that endless Highway that emerges from the misty Eternity Past through our lives and into disappears beyond human eyes into the vast vapors of Eternity Future – ALWAYS the great I AM!

In the process of time in the days of the prophets, God gave many evidences of the coming Redeemer, but principally to Abraham and his spiritual and even a portion of his lineal descendants. ***THE WAY must*** be introduced in a manner in which the heart does not fail for the shock of the revelation. Man cannot behold the glory of the Heavenly Christ and live. Therefore God sent His Son as a gentle baby at Bethlehem – the Incarnated Word of God who is fully Man, and fully God at once. We can identify with our own kind in the flesh, thus came Jesus to us as the Word Made Flesh to dwell among us.

Preparation must be made by the emissary of the King for His Coming into His Province. That emissary was John the Baptist, son of Zacharias and Elizabeth – both too aged to have children. (But with God, all things are possible). We remember that Isaac came by way of miraculous birth; so did John the Baptist and our Lord Jesus Christ. But Christ is very different since His miraculous birth was by the agency of the Holy Ghost through a virgin young woman named Mary.

Perhaps the prophecy of Malachi had little impact on the imagination of a poor priest named Zacharias in the Temple at Jerusalem at the close of the dark and foreboding centuries of the silence of the prophets. There was nothing of particular note to cause him to believe that Malachi's prophecy had anything to do with him in any special way. We are all like that. God has spoken by the prophets and often the prophecy applies directly to us, and we know it not until God must emphasize its meaning through correction or chastisement. *1 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. (Mal 3:1)* What could this possibly have to do with aging Zacharias and his likewise aging and barren wife, Elizabeth? Well, it has altogether EVERYTHING to do with the two lowly servants of the Lord.

It is interesting God most often uses the lowly and common to achieve His purposes. The great Angel Gabriel appeared to a lowly young lady who was a virgin for the highest calling with which any woman could have conceived. That same Angel appeared to the lowly shepherds (not the king and priests of Israel) on the hills overlooking Jerusalem the night of the Nativity. God brought strangers from the East

(Wise Men) following a Star that seemingly escaped the sight of the locals of Israel. And now, Gabriel – the Archangel, appears to Zacharias while he is executing his priestly office in burning incense in the Temple as the people waited without. The appearance of so majestic a heavenly figure is quite noteworthy. ⁸ *And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course,* ⁹ *According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.* ¹⁰ *And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.* ¹¹ *And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.* ¹² *And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.* (Luke 1:8-12)

It is not likely Zacharias had been confronted by an Archangel on a daily basis. Of course, he was stricken with great fear. When we are confronted by God's Holy Angels as messengers in our own lives, we could be pardoned for our fear. Men often fear God most when He comes near to them in beneficent love. But God ALWAYS takes our fears away with gentle words and remonstrations. He tells us to "Fear not!" ¹³ *But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.* ¹⁴ *And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.* ¹⁵ *For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.* ¹⁶ *And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.* ¹⁷ *And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.* (Luke 1:13-17) Well that should have satisfied the priest, but man always has a habit of making conniving objections – even to God! ¹⁸ *And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.* (Luke 1:18) It is never a good idea for us to question God and His Word. We may bring much trouble on our souls when we do so, and no less did Zacharias bring upon himself. If it is not wise to argue with a police officer, how much less an Archangel!

¹⁹ *And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings.* ²⁰ *And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.* (Luke 1:19-20) So poor Zacharias, though a good and righteous man, was struck dumb for his doubt. Perhaps that is why so many ministers are dumb when it comes to sin in the society about them today – they question the wisdom of God's Word. Once we have come into close contact with God, we are changed even if it means we are struck dumb: ²¹ *And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple.* ²² *And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless.* (Luke 1:21-22)

When we question God's Word, and are made certain later, we may desire to share, but are dumb to speak. When we have healthy tongues to proclaim the Gospel that has set us free, why do we choose to remain dumb as was Zacharias? The words of the Mighty Angel were fulfilled in Elizabeth!

²³ *And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house.* ²⁴ *And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying,* ²⁵ *Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.* (Luke 1:23-25) The woman who was barren, old and could not conceive DID conceive as the mother of the greatest of prophets. How strange, but nothing is impossible with God. Can you imagine how fervently Zacharias wanted to boast of the good news, but his doubt had made him dumb to speak it!

Just as Sarah questioned and laughed, so had Zacharias questioned. But please note that though we may pay a penalty for our doubt, God does not change in His

purpose. Sarah, despite her questioning laughter, did, indeed, conceive a son at the age of 90 years. Though Zacharias questioned the logic of the Archangel, Elizabeth nevertheless conceived and bore John the Baptist in her old age and barrenness. She thought the pregnancy so ridiculous that she hid herself away for five months until the pregnancy was beyond doubt. Once the child was born, Zacharias was restored his voice to speak.

¹¹ Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. (Matt 11:11)

When it is the will of the Lord, we may have no choice but to standby and wait to see His marvelous works.