

GRACE GAZETTE

Volume XX

Issue 1

Published occasionally for mourners in Zion

Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

MERCY, MOST ASTOUNDING

But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. Psalm 130:4

The scripture hints that before the creation of man in the Earth, Satan and one third of the angels were cast out of the presence of the LORD. “*And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.*” (Luke 10:18) “*And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.*” (Jude 1:6) “*And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*” (Rev 12:9) We have little information about this event and so we tread lightly in even discussing it. One thing that we are certain of is that all of the events surrounding and resulting in this outcome were ordered according to the purpose of the Sovereign GOD who rules in the army of Heaven as well as among the inhabitants of the Earth.

The judgment of the LORD upon the wicked is demonstrated quite clearly here as HE will not acquit the wicked nor by any means clear the guilty. The angelic creatures that inhabit Heaven have witnessed these terrifying happenings which demonstrate the unchanging nature of the KING of Heaven’s resolve to destroy all transgressors be they heavenly or earthly creatures. Imagine their consternation when they have beheld this same KING determining to deliver those elect sons of flesh and blood who are rebels against HIM, and sending HIS own SON into the world to cancel their debt of sin and erase their rebellion by the shedding of HIS blood. Is it any wonder that they should marvel at the gospel and be exceedingly curious about these matters, so that Peter might say, “*which things the angels desire to look into.*” (1Pet 1:12)

The justice and judgement of GOD form the very foundation of HIS revelation of HIMSELF to the understanding of men, and I might add, the angels. If a man fails to understand HIS immutable justice, then all else that he might consider about HIM will be skewed. When Isaiah was given his vision “*in the year that King Uzziah died*”, he was humbled in the dust as the HOLINESS of GOD was displayed to his sight. The same was true of Daniel and later, of John. They trembled before HIM, desiring to be hidden from HIS view, falling as dead men in HIS awesome presence.

This is the very substance that is missing from preaching in the era in which we live. The absolute unbending justice of a Holy GOD is quite a foreign consideration in the minds of the multitude who profess faith in CHRIST. It has been replaced with a consideration of the LORD of heaven as being something of a pathetic would-be benefactor who desires to do more than HE is allowed to do by the creation which HIS own hands have made. HE is presented as ONE who is helplessly standing by as men determine whether or not HE can save them and bless them or even be their LORD, apart from their permission. HE is believed by many to have HIS hands completely tied by the free will of HIS own creation.

Yet HE is that ONE whom the singers of the song of Moses and the LAMB, describe, “*Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.*” (Rev 15:4) HE is that

ONE who John saw and testified, *“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.”* (Rev 20:11) *“Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth.”* (Psa 46:8) *“He is the LORD our God: his judgments are in all the earth.”* (Psa 105:7) GOD is fundamentally just, will not wink at sin, hates the workers of iniquity, and will uphold HIS justice in the destruction of the wicked. *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.”* (Pro 9:10)

Moses was called by the LORD to behold a BURNING BUSH which was not consumed and was inhabited by HIM who is a CONSUMING FIRE. Later on, HE appeared to Moses on a mountain that was filled with fire and smoke, giving to Moses a law which promised cursing and destruction upon all who would stray from it. Moses asked the LORD for a glimpse of HIS glory. Surely Moses must have expected some conflagration of terror to be set forth. We can only imagine the consternation that must have gripped him in heart and mind when the LORD responded to his request with a display of HIS goodness and mercy. *“And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.”* (Exo 33:18-19)

Thus, we are made to understand that the “glory” of the LORD is in HIS goodness and mercy which HE is pleased to shew to the sons of men in the LORD JESUS CHRIST who is the FULNESS of the GODHEAD bodily, the express IMAGE of HIS PERSON. It is in CHRIST that all of the knowledge of GOD which is possible for men to grasp, is found. Even as HE said to HIS disciples, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”* (John 14:6)

But it is impossible that sinful men could begin to have a true appreciation of this revelation until they are made to see the dire condition they are in as aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, being rebel sinners, whose fists are raised against the LORD of GLORY. By nature, men will not bow the knee to a Sovereign GOD who dispenses mercy as HE, alone, sees fit. They will worship the god(s) of their imagination, thinking that HE is altogether such a one as themselves. (see Ps.50:21) They will assume that HE can be reasoned with according to their own standard of justice and righteousness. The natural man finds no wonder in the mercy of GOD, because he thinks that GOD should show mercy to him, and that the LORD regards sin as lightly as he does.

Yet when a man is born again by the SPIRIT of GOD in the time and place of GOD's own choosing, he is made to shudder before a broken law, and to tremble at the prospect of standing before the JUDGE of all the earth covered from head to foot in filthy rags. The work of the SPIRIT is to convince men of sin (their own), righteousness (perfection revealed in CHRIST), and judgment (by HIM who destroys sinners). He is slain before GOD as Paul describes, *“For I was alive without the law once (i.e.; in ignorance of the true holiness of the law): but when the commandment came,(i.e.; a true revelation of that Law and the LAWGIVER) sin revived (i.e.; I saw myself to be condemned sinner), and I died.”* (i.e.; I fell at HIS feet as a dead man) *And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.”* (Rom 7:9-10)

That same SPIRIT, granting the gift of FAITH, to those so slain, overwhelms them with the wonder of HIS mercy and the taste of HIS forgiveness, striking in them an abiding sense of awe that HE would take them in HIS arms and love them who had willingly disobeyed HIM without true regard to HIS holiness. As the Psalmist says, *“there is forgiveness with THEE that THOU mayest be feared.”* This fear of GOD causes them to desire to depart from evil, which thing the terrors of the law could never do. *“By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil.”* (Pro 16:6) *“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.”* (Rom 8:2-3) Do you fear HIM? mam