

# GRACE GAZETTE

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*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*

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## TAKING AWAY THE STONE

*Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.* John 11:39

The phrase “a certain man” appears twenty-two times in the KJV New Testament. Each time that it does we know that reference is being made to a specific individual as set apart from the rest of the people gathered in a particular place. The LORD deals with all humans as individuals. While HIS judgment may fall on various groups of people at one time, HIS condemnation of them is as individuals. We see this illustrated in the destruction of the people of the world in Noah’s time and also in the conflagration which befell Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham appealed to the LORD based upon his understanding of this tenet, in the behalf of Lot. (see Gen.18:22-33)

We read this principle clearly stated in the prophecy of Ezekiel. “*The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.*” (Eze 18:20) Religious men take great comfort in this verse as they think that it secures their escape from destruction. They assume that they will be found among the “righteous” because they are convinced that a partial obedience to the law is the same as obedience to the law. Yet the scripture plainly declares otherwise. “*For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*” (Jas 2:10) “*For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.*” (Gal 3:10-12)

So, while the law has a provision for acceptance before GOD, it provides no power to enable anyone to keep it in its jot and tittle. Therefore, it becomes a minister of condemnation to all who fail to abide by its every precept in every detail. We often hear men gladly declare that the “LORD looks upon the heart” as if HE will see their partial obedience compared to others who disregard the law, and thereby will judge their works to be acceptable. Yet the truth of the fact that the LORD “does” look upon the heart, should cause men to tremble before HIM for every man’s heart is deceitful and desperately wicked. “*As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*” (Rom 3:10-12)

All men shall stand before the LORD in judgment not as a group but as individuals just as each one must face death alone. “*And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.*” (Heb 9:27) The writer goes on to point out that upon this very principle, the LORD JESUS tasted death in order to procure redemption for “certain men” as individuals. “*So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; (i.e.; a limited and specific number) and unto them (the same “many”) that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*” (Heb 9:28)

Just as surely as all men shall individually face judgment for their sins, so too did CHRIST make atonement for HIS people (i.e. many) as individuals which were chosen in HIM before the foundation of the world. This very fact overturns the notion that HIS atonement is general in nature as a blanket

covering for the sins of all men. HE died for "certain men", atoned for "certain sins", and obtained a certain redemption for them. *"Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." (Heb 9:12)* This is the basis upon which the sons of GOD have the HOPE of ETERNAL LIFE and expect to stand in the day of judgment, as those whose sin is covered by HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS. The judgment unto condemnation which rightly should have been theirs has fallen upon HIM who has delivered them from the curse of the law and granted unto them the right to be called the sons of GOD.

The curse of the law came upon a "*certain man*"; Lazarus of Bethany, (see John 11:1) as he fell sick and ultimately died as all men will. Lazarus death, while like all mortal men, was not unto "death" but unto "life" as the LORD ordained both his sickness and death to demonstrate HIS power over death itself in a most striking fashion. There is no doubt that the LORD could have prevented HIS friend Lazarus's death by healing him of his disease, just as HE had many others, yet HE tarried on purpose upon being told about the illness of Lazarus, so that Lazarus might die.

"Certain men" were present on that day when the most startling of all of the miracles which the LORD JESUS performed was carried out. "Certain" of those that gathered there were those who already believed the LORD's teachings and loved HIM. They would be strengthened by what they saw. "Certain men" had perhaps heard of this MAN JESUS, who after what they witnessed, would be caused to believe in HIM. (see v.45) "Certain men" were there as spies who would report to the Pharisees of what they perceived to be a MAN of power who threatened the religious structure of the Jews. Not one of these "certain men" was there by chance or happenstance. Every step that each took was ordained by HIM who would demonstrate the power and sovereign right of GOD to make one vessel unto honor and another to dishonor as pleased HIM.

Martha, being of a very practical mind, expressed an objection when the LORD told the men to take away the stone which covered the tomb's entrance. She was right to be concerned about the stench which would surely come forth from the rotting corpse of Lazarus. Yet this stench was itself ordained by HIM so that there might be no doubt that Lazarus was dead, beyond any hope of reviving. The LORD would have those "certain men", which were present there to smell death itself and to understand that it is impossible for a man to live again apart from a supernatural work of GOD even as Job surmised, *"If a man die, shall he live again? (Job 14:14)* A tree may be cut down and yet sprout from its root, but, when men die they return to the dust from whence they came. *"But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up: So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep."* (Job 14:10-12)

The LORD had the stone removed as an illustration of the fact that the graves shall be opened and the dead in CHRIST shall be raised from that dust to whence they go. With a shout, which was heard by the dead, the LORD *"cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth."* (John 11:43) This was a call to a "certain man", elsewise all of the dead would have come forth. Even so is the call of the LORD to each one of HIS children, (both in life and death) quite specifically addressed to them, rather than some general invitation to all of mankind. *"The sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice."* (John 10:3-4)

HE removed the stone from the grave's mouth so that Lazarus could come out. The living have no place among the dead. *"And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go."* (John 11:44) This is an illustration of the preaching of the Gospel to the sons of GOD who are made alive in CHRIST. *"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."* (2Cor 4:6) Until a man is awakened by the SPIRIT he cannot see the LIGHT which is shed forth in the preaching of the Gospel. *"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles."* (2Tim 1:9-11) Have you seen this LIGHT shed forth abundantly by HIM who moves the stone. mam