

# 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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## JEZREEL

*Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel. And it shall come to pass at that day, that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.* *Hosea 1:4-5*

We often speak (as do the scriptures) of an Absolute GOD who predestines all events as well as the destinies of all men, devils, and angels. There are those (actually the vast majority) who cavil against this truth on the grounds that unless a man has a sovereign free will, then he cannot be held accountable for his actions. Such a notion is disproven time and again in the pages of the Bible even as the LORD declares through the prophet, "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." (Jer 10:23)

GOD has by HIS own decree, not only created all things (including men) according to the good pleasure of HIS will, but HE has also decreed that men would be accountable for their every action, and unable to bring any accusation against HIM who declares "*the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:*" (Isa 46:10) This accountability is spoken of by Solomon, "A man's heart deviseth his way: (according to his natural depravity) *but the LORD directeth his steps.*" (Pro 16:9); in the same verse in which he speaks of the LORD's ordination of the steps he takes.

This accountability and man's innately corrupt nature is spoken of by James as he says, "*Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.*" (Jas 1:13-14) By nature, men love their sin and take delight in it at every opportunity, and are unable to blame their sinful actions upon anyone but themselves. GOD alone keeps men from total destruction to which they gladly run apart from HIS restraint. "*Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: (for HE has ordained it to this end) the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.*" (Psa 76:10) Thus we can surely say that man runs to evil without any outside impetus.

Yet every sinful action and activity which occurs in the earth, cannot take place apart from the ordained purpose of GOD who will have glory in HIS creation and the order which it follows. The LORD could have created a present world wherein there was no sin, had it pleased HIM to do so. But in order that HE might magnify the glory of HIS grace and exalt the wonders of HIS mercy, HE has directed all things to occur in the Earth to that end, whether it be Light, Darkness, Peace, or Evil. Only the wicked impudence of men would cause them to balk at the revelation of this truth.

Paul understood the natural inclination of men to accuse GOD of unrighteousness as he sets forth the ground and basis upon which GOD has created some vessels unto mercy and some to destruction as it hath pleased HIM. "*Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"* (Rom 9:18-21)

Thus we see the LORD ordaining the sinfulness of men, in order to accomplish HIS purpose of the redemption of HIS elect bride through the suffering, death, and resurrection of HIS only BEGOTTEN SON. The most glaring example of HIS right to predestine the wickedness, greed, and malice of men to accomplish HIS purpose while holding them completely accountable for their

despicable actions is seen in Judas Iscariot, whose betrayal of the LORD JESUS, set the stage for HIS subsequent crucifixion and death as the SIN OFFERING of those whom HE loved yet according to HIS own words, Judas would have been better off never to have been born.

But this is not the only example of this truth. David was prohibited from building the Temple, because the LORD said that he had too much blood upon his hands. (see I Chron. 22:8) David was a man of war, according to the predestined purpose of GOD. The LORD used him to slay the enemies of Israel, too numerous to count. He obeyed the will of GOD in these battles, yet he was held accountable for this bloodshed and cruelty. (see II Sam. 12:31) In like fashion he numbered the people (having been "moved" by the LORD; see II Sam. 24:1) and he along with the nation of Israel was summarily punished for it with a pestilence that slew 70,000 of his men.

We see HIM direct Hosea to take the whore, Gomer, for a wife and to name his firstborn son of that union, Jezreel. The name, Jezreel, literally means, "*GOD will sow*". Thus the LORD would declare HIS intention to destroy the kingdom of Israel, most notably as a judgment for the actions of Jehu who was used by the LORD to destroy the house of Ahab along with Jezebel. There is a principle which is quite clearly taught in the scriptures, that "*whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*" (Gal 6:7) Yet the LORD would make it known that HE is the SOWER of all things. Nothing can be planted much less come to fruition apart from HIS purpose. HE will hold no man guiltless, nor can any of the obedience of man, atone or mitigate his sin.

The name "Jezreel", as mentioned in the scriptures sometimes has reference to a region or valley in Israel. It was in the Valley of Jezreel where the Midianites and the Amalekites gathered to do battle with Gideon, who famously whittled down his army from thirty-two thousand to three hundred before defeating them in battle. (see Judges 6:3-7:25) David got his wife, Ahinoam from the town of Jezreel. She was the mother of Amnon who was slain by Absalom for raping his sister. This all resulted in great heartbreak for David as Absalom's rebellion and ultimate path to destruction was begun.

It was in Jezreel that David camped with his men and companied with the Philistines when he fled from Saul. It was from Jezreel that Mephibosheth's (the son of Jonathan) nurse received the news of Saul and Jonathan's death and as she fled in fear of reprisals to protect Mephibosheth; that she dropped him, causing him to become lame, and thus giving rise to David's pity and provision for him. Jezreel was the home of Ahab and Jezebel. It was here that Jezebel plotted to kill Elijah and here that she forged Ahab's name to documents that led to the stoning of Naboth in order that Ahab might possess the vineyard belonging to Naboth.

Jehu, who was a prophet, was raised up by the LORD to become the King of Israel. In doing so he destroyed many of the enemies of Israel and most notably saw to the demise of Jezebel in Jezreel as well as a multitude of the prophets of Baal in that same locale. Jehu was surely a "sword" in the hand of the LORD to destroy many wicked characters. Yet he did not destroy the graven images that were instituted by Jeroboam. Apparently his motive was political gain and in order to consolidate his power as an absolute ruler. So while he performed the purpose of GOD in killing the descendants of Ahab and Jezebel, in Jezreel, his zeal in this was more set in gaining power for himself and thus benefiting himself by the harshness which he meted out against Ahab's family. The LORD will sow according to HIS purpose and men will reap the reward of their own wickedness.

The LORD is pleased to demonstrate HIS sovereign prerogative to do HIS will without hindrance through the activity and actions of imperfect and sinful men who by nature seek their own benefit. Yet quite in contrast to that scenario, we see HIM manifest HIS grandest purpose in the earth through the actions and activity of ONE who "*knew no sin neither was guile found in HIS mouth.*" The LORD JESUS CHRIST is that perfect MAN who came to do HIS FATHER's will, not only fulfilling HIS law in every jot and tittle, but doing so with a perfect motive and joyful heart. "*Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*" (Heb 12:2)

Men cannot and shall not resist the will of GOD who does all things according to the good pleasure of HIS will. (see Rom.9:19) Yet not one sin which they commit shall go unpunished or escape the gaze of HIS justice. This is demonstrated most clearly as the only perfect and upright MAN to ever live upon the earth is made a SIN OFFERING for those to whom the LORD would show mercy. How just and true are HIS ways and how wide is HIS mercy, to all who call upon HIM, confessing their sins and bowing before HIS sovereign rule.

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