

GRACE GAZETTE

Volume XVIII

Issue 32

Published occasionally for Zion's mourners

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

THE LOWEST HELL

For great is thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.

Psalm 86:13

As we peruse the Psalms it becomes clear, that for the most part, these Psalms comprise the prayers and expostulations of CHRIST. We believe that these Psalms were written by men under the direct inspiration of the LORD HIMSELF as HE ordained their steps and caused them to experience these heartfelt expressions. So, while there is an element of the human author's experiences in them, yet, they are given to us that we might gain an insight into the very heart of the MAN CHRIST JESUS. To read the Psalms and not see CHRIST is to miss their import even as we say the same about the whole of the Bible.

The mention of the word Hell stirs up many different thoughts in the minds of most. It may be simply an expression of disgust and a place to tell those to go; with whom one might disagree as they think of it as only a convenient swear word. To others it is but a sort of mirthful place that one might warn another to avoid along with the devil who has a pitchfork and forked tail as he stokes its flames with evil delight awaiting his next guest. There are also those who on a more serious note think it to be a mere figment of man's imagination much like they would consider Satan to be, along with the certainty of approaching judgment.

Then we find a great religious multitude who paint pictures of it as a great caldron of flames and endless suffering which they believe will strike fear into the hearts of men who otherwise might go blindly upon their way. This fear is believed by them to be quite useful as a tool of "evangelism", to scare converts into the fold. To this end, we have, in our lifetime (especially in our youth), heard many so called "evangelists" who were quite adept at making one's shirt tail run up and down their back like a window shade, as they vividly described those, who happened to wind up there, as being like a french fry in scalding grease without any reprieve or end.

Now we have no doubt as to the existence of hell, nor to its eternal nature, nor the fear and torment that are associated with it. It is not a welcome place nor is it a place where the living would have any desire to be. We do wish to make a distinction, however, between hell and the "lake of fire" which John mentions in the Book of the Revelation. "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." (Rev 20:14-15) The concept that many have of "hell" is solely described as this "lake of fire". Now we would be the first to admit that we tread lightly in discussing such matters, since we can only formulate our "opinions" as our understanding is opened. We do not claim to have unequivocal answers to many questions which arise in the study of such an august and, frankly, terrifying subject. Yet we feel compelled to go to the scriptures alone to discover what little knowledge we might possess on the matter at hand.

There is only one Hebrew word which is translated into English as "hell" in all of the Old Testament. (31 times) That word is "shehole" and is literally defined as a grave, a pit, or the place of the dead. There are basically two Greek words which are translated into English as "hell" in

the KJV, New Testament. One is "hades" which literally means the abode or place of the dead, and is most analogous to the Hebrew word "shehole" in its use. Another is "geenna" and is often associated with "fire". This word derives its usage from the Valley of Hinnom which is generally thought to be the place where refuse was burned outside of Jerusalem. This is the word which the LORD used in eleven verses of the NT. The LORD's use of the word "hades" occurs on two occasions. (Mat.11:23; 16:18; Luke 10:15; 16:23)

When John describes the "*lake of fire*", into which "*death and hell*" are cast, he uses none of these words. *Hell* and the "*lake of fire*" cannot be said to be synonymous unless one is willing to turn a blind eye to the fact that the "*lake of fire*" is the place of destruction for both death and hell. We would never deny that there is a lake of fire which is prepared for the destruction of, the beast, the false prophet, death, hell, Satan, and all whose names are not written in the book of LIFE, of the LAMB slain, from the foundation of the world. Any man who does not tremble at such a prospect has never learned the fear of HIM who is a CONSUMING FIRE.

So when we read the words of the Psalmist as he says, "*thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell*"; we understand that he has no reference to a place of burning, gnashing of teeth, nor everlasting torment, but rather the finality of the grave. The very first lie that Satan (the father of lies) told to Eve, is when he said, "*Ye shall not surely die.*" (Gen 3:4) He was wrong, "dead" wrong.

The LORD commanded Adam not to eat of the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil and prophetically told him what would occur in the day that he ate of it. "*in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*" (Gen 2:17) There were no "ifs" involved in HIS decree nor was any probationary period set forth. Adam demonstrated what he was by nature and embraced his own "free will" which resulted in his "death". "*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*"(Rom 5:12) All of Adam's posterity have followed their father's footsteps according to their nature which they have inherited from him. Not only are they sinners by choice and action but they are born into this world with the sentence of death hanging over their heads, since Adam's sin was imputed to them in the same fashion in which the righteousness of CHRIST is imputed to HIS seed.

Believing that the Psalms are by and large the utterances of the LORD JESUS as HE prayed when HE learned, "*obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.*" (Heb 5:8-10), we rejoice to see HIM call upon HIS FATHER seeking deliverance for our sake. HE came into the world surrounded by this promise, "*For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.*" (Psa 16:10) "*There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.*" (Psa 91:10-13) Yet in order to fulfill all righteousness and to be manifested as that ONE who is able to take away sin, it was necessary that HE tread the winepress of GOD's wrath alone, with no one to aid HIM nor any eye to pity HIM.

If any MAN has ever been fully acquainted with the import and horror of death, it was JESUS CHRIST as HE poured out HIS soul unto death and was heard in that HE feared. HIS deliverance from the "*lowest hell*"; which is the utter finality of death, was absolutely necessary to the redemption of those whom HE came to save. Thus, upon the third day HE broke the shackles of death, which had long bound every human being which sprang from the loins of Adam. HE arose as a VICTOR over sin, death, and hell (i.e.; the grave or abode of the dead), and became the FIRSTFRUITS of them that sleep (i.e., are presently in a state of natural death).

HIS resurrection is the grounds upon which the HOPE of the sons of GOD rests. "*But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*"(1Thess 4:13-14) We expect to be delivered yet from the "*lowest hell*", since HE has triumphed over it.

mam