

GRACE GAZETTE

Volume XX

Issue 39

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

SLEEP

It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep. Psalm 127:2

When the great surgeons of our day ply their trade, they generally always have someone on hand to put their patients to “sleep”. The proud medical community basks in their knowledge of this procedure (which they call anesthesia) and consider it to be a relatively modern practice. The reality is that before there was ever a woman on the Earth, the LORD HIMSELF instituted “sleep” and restorative surgery. *“And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof.” (Gen 2:21)* In this action we see the mercy and kindness of the LORD demonstrated. HE could have just snatched the rib from Adam’s side, leaving him writhing in pain and blood.

Yet HE took delight in that which HE created and painlessly, took Adam’s rib in order to create a “help-meet” (i.e.; a companion exactly suited to his need) for him. *“And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” (Gen 2:22-23)* Adam had no say in the matter yet was made to greatly benefit from the one whom the LORD gave to him, and to rejoice in her and love her.

This account of the creation of the woman, as one taken from and given to the man is quite at odds with the philosophy of the modern day. Yet throughout the scriptures we see the wisdom of GOD in this arrangement which is given to mankind as a demonstration of the everlasting love which the LORD JESUS CHRIST has for that Bride which was given to HIM from before the foundation of the world. The rebellion of society against this natural order and arrangement is in reality not simply a desire for women to be considered equal with men but is a sign of the utter rebellion of the sinful flesh of mankind in rejecting the HEADSHIP of CHRIST. *“And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner.” (Mar 12:10)* *“Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.” (1Pet 2:7-8)*

Now lest men should be overtaken with “prideful” thoughts of “superiority” over the woman or to seek to “subjugate” her to his whims, the LORD has reminded him that it is his weakness in paying heed to the counsel of the woman that plunged the human race into the darkness of sin. Also, he is made aware that he owes his life to her as well. *“For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God.” (1Cor 11:12)* And an even greater honor is given to the woman as the one who bears the SEED of GOD. *“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” (Gal 4:4-5)*

How glorious are the ways and works of GOD to bring forth the benefit of those who are the called according to HIS purpose. (see Rom.8:28) The LORD instituted a principle which is for the benefit of mankind as HE gave the Sabbath day wherein men should turn aside from their labors and give their bodies rest. When men disregard this principle it will always be to their detriment. Many religious men have juxtaposed GOD’s purpose for the Sabbath and turned what the LORD meant

for the benefit of men, into a burden laid upon them, just as the Pharisees of old did. *“And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath.” (Mar 2:27)* While there is great benefit to men in resting upon one day out of seven, there is an even greater benefit which is manifested in this principle, which is to see that CHRIST JESUS is the REST (or SABBATH) for the sons of GOD. Therein we cease from our labors as HE has from HIS. The SALVATION of the LORD’s people is complete in HIM. HE is our REST.

The LORD has also instituted another benefit for men (especially those whom HE has loved in CHRIST) when HE gave them “sleep”. Nothing can replace it nor can any go very long without it. The LORD has given men “sleep” in order for them to recognize their weakness. The bravest and most energetic of men will soon be reduced to ineffectiveness and vulnerability by a lack of sleep. *“So HE giveth HIS beloved sleep.”*

There are several “types” of sleep mentioned in the scriptures. We read of that “deep sleep” which the LORD brought upon Adam. This is that which a man cannot deliver himself from, like the anesthesia of modern medicine. This is as close to death as a man can come without actually dying. This is that state into which both Daniel and John were brought when they beheld the glory of the ANCIENT of DAYS. (see Daniel 10:8-10; Rev.1:17)

There is, of course, the natural sleep which men generally partake of in order to restore vigor to the body. The ability to enjoy this sleep sometimes seems wasted on the young who gladly imbibe it, while those who gain years of age often desire it but cannot find it. Few natural trials weigh more heavily upon a man than being unable to restfully sleep. This sleep is a blessing from the LORD. Yet this blessing is often corrupted by men who give themselves to an overindulgence of it as the Proverbs warn, *“Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger.” (Prov 19:15)* *“Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man.” (Prov 24:33-34)*

Peter fell into a “trance” upon the housetop, which is another type of sleep often associated with visions and dreams. This is the same as that which occurred on the Mount of Transfiguration and to Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus. This “sleep” is sent by GOD for the particular purpose of bringing instruction.

Yet of nineteen verses in the NT which use the word “sleep”, nine of them have reference to natural death. *“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” (Heb 9:27)* This is an appointment which all men shall keep. *“For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption.” (Acts 13:36)* We see the same with Stephen, *“And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.” (Acts 7:59-60)*

When word came to the LORD that Lazarus was sick, HE did not rush to his bedside, but rather HE tarried until Lazarus had been dead for four days. HE told HIS disciples, *“Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.” (John 11:11)* They were quite relieved until HE made it plain that HE meant *“Lazarus is dead”*. The LORD then demonstrated the fact that HE is the GOD of the living as HE raised Lazarus from this “sleep”.

“Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of HIS saints.” (Psa.116:15) This is a sleep which is omnisciently planned and tenderly administered, even as a loving father or mother holds their infant child in their arms until sleep overtakes them. Regardless of the “time” HE has appointed for each to depart from this mortal realm, all shall arrive at the same time and the same place HE has prepared for them in those bodies which HE will raise from the far reaches of Earth where HE has laid them, even as HE did with Moses. *“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. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” (1The 4:13-17) mam*